UNIVERSITY TRAINING FOR THE NATIONAL SERVICE



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UNIVERSITY TRAINING FOR THE NATIONAL SERVICE

PROCEEDINGS OF A CONFERENCE HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

JULY 14 TO 17, 1931





MINNEAPOLIS
THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS
1932

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JA88 .4501 1931

PREFACE

The Conference on University Training for the National Service held at the University of Minnesota from July 14 to 17, 1931, served to bring together individuals who, while separated in educational institutions and government departments, are in a position to do something authoritatively about a vital subject of concern to all. Men and women in official positions, when sympathetically familiar with different points of view and when protected from unnecessary or inaccurate publicity, become free and prepared to speak rather frankly to each other. Anxious to point their separate forces toward a common end, they may lessen their differences, strengthen their common purpose, and open the way for change or advance.

The program arrangements were sponsored jointly by the United States Civil Service Commission and the University of Minnesota together with cooperating agencies of the national government and the guests of the conference from other educational institutions. The objective, as suggested, was mere to provide opportunity for the several representatives of American universities and colleges and of the United States Government to discuss their responsibilities in training and recruiting university graduates for the national service.

While consideration was given to the entire range of administrative, professional, and scientific services, special attention was centered upon the fields of agriculture and forestry, law, the consular and diplomatic service, physics and chemistry, engineering, social welfare, and economics and statistics. The general aspects of the problem dealt with by the conference included the functions of universities as training centers and the resulting problems of curriculum; the career opportunities in the federal service; student and faculty attitudes toward the service; types of examinations for entrance; methods of informing qualified students as to vacancies in the service; and procedures for university and government cooperation.

Now that the conference is an event of the past, it is gratifying to observe retrospectively that the meetings did satisfy the hopes of those who served as the sponsors. For four days the conference met, exchanged papers, debated, and finally, quite unofficially and informally, passed some resolutions. The deliberations are herewith reported. That the meetings brought forth a spirit of frank understanding is clearly demonstrated by an interest which has since been sustained. Particularly enlightening has been the very helpful attitude of government officials toward the problems as viewed by universities. Again, university officials, some for the first time, were apprised of the tremendous advances made in the public service in recent years. Indifference to an obligation has changed to wholesome and earnest regard. A sense of responsibility has been quickened.

Especially encouraging is the evidence or résumé of accomplishment in the federal government on subjects discussed by the conference. This development was reported, five months after our adjournment, in a paper read by Dr. L. J. O'Rourke, director of research of the United States Civil Service Commission, at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, D. C., December 30, 1931. This paper, while not a part of the proceedings, is included here as an appendix. Many of the advances suggested by Dr. O'Rourke were in process when our conference was held; others, however, are subsequent. They are a part of a federal program initiated long before our gathering. All signs indicate that the universities and the United States Government are fast remedying imperfections in the system.

The Committee on Arrangements and Program for the conference extend appreciation to all those who so generously contributed time and thought and experience to this ever continuing and exceedingly important problem of the public service. They are also indebted to the University Press, and especially to the editor, Mrs. Margaret S. Harding, for advice and assistance in planning and supervising the publication of the proceedings. The material is presented in book form rather than as a transcript of the proceedings in recognition of the permanent value of the contribution made by the participants in the conference.

MORRIS B. LAMBIE

University of Minnesota July, 1932

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I. GENERAL PROBLEMS

DEAN JAMES C. LAWRENCE and DEAN GUY STANTON FORD, Chairmen

| Introduction |
|---|
| Lotus D. Coffman, President of the University of Minnesota |
| Courses in American Universities Adapted to the National Service |
| WILLIAM ANDERSON, Chairman of the Department of Politi- cal Science, University of Minnesota |
| Opportunities in the United States Civil Service for College- Trained Men and Women THOMAS E. CAMPBELL, President of the United States Civil Service Commission |
| The Relation of the Examination Standards of the United States Civil Service Commission to University Curricula. H. A. Edden, Chief Examiner of the United States Civil Service Commission |
| An Approach to the Problem of Career Opportunities in the Federal Service |
| Personnel Classification and University Training ISMAR BARUCH, Assistant Director of the Personnel Classification Board |
| Positions in the Professional and Scientific Service of the United States Government ISMAR BARUCH, Assistant Director of the Personnel Classification Board |
| The Professional and Scientific Service as Viewed by the National Federation of Federal Employees LUTHER STEWARD, President of the National Federation of Federal Employees |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART II. AGRICULTURE

| DEAN | WALTER | C. | COFFEY | Chairman |
|-------|---------------|----|---------|----------|
| TOTAL | A A SPITITION | 0. | CULLEI, | CHUCHION |

| 2 | |
|--|------|
| The Personnel Problem in the United States Department of Agriculture | 81 |
| W. W. Stockberger, Director of the Personnel and Business Administration, United States Department of Agriculture | |
| Colleges of Agriculture and Training for the Federal Service E. M. Freeman, Dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics, University of Minnesota | 106 |
| Agricultural Science in the Professional and Scientific Services in the United States Department of Agriculture | 114 |
| Some Problems in Forest Education. Henry Schmitz, Chief of the Division of Forestry, University of Minnesota | 122 |
| Discussion | 131 |
| W. L. Burlison, Head of the Department of Agronomy, University of Illinois | |
| J. A. James, Dean of the College of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin | |
| A. F. Woods, Director of Scientific Work, United States De- partment of Agriculture | |
| PART III. CONSULAR AND DIPLOMATIC SERVICES | |
| Professor DeWitt Clinton Poole, Chairman | |
| The Department of State and the Foreign Service as a Career. WILBUR J. CARR, Director of Consular Service, Department of State | 146 |
| University Training for the Foreign Service of the United | 1 00 |

DEWITT CLINTON POOLE, Chairman of the School of Public

CHESTER LLOYD JONES, Director of the School of Commerce,

and International Affairs, Princeton University

Discussion ...

University of Wisconsin

PART IV. LAW

| | DEAN EVERETT FRASER, Chairman | |
|----|--|-----|
| , | Training for the Legal Services in the National Government EVERETT FRASER, Dean of the Law School, University of Minnesota | 171 |
| 1 | University Training of Lawyers for National Service E. A. GILMORE, Dean of the Law School, University of Iowa | 175 |
| | The Legal Profession in the United States Government G. A. Youngquist, Assistant Attorney General of the United States | 182 |
| | OLIVER S. RUNDELL, Acting Dean of the Law School, University of Wisconsin | 189 |
| | PART V. SCIENTIFIC SERVICES | |
| | Professor Samuel C. Lind and Dean O. M. Leland, Chairmen | |
| | Professional Employment in the Bureau of Standards and Its Relation to University Training L. B. Tuckerman, Bureau of Standards, United States Department of Commerce | 204 |
| | Discussion Samuel C. Lind, Director of the School of Chemistry, University of Minnesota | 232 |
| | Graduates of the College of Engineering and Architecture, University of Minnesota, in Federal Service, 1920–1930 Otto S. Zelner, Associate Professor of Surveying, College of Engineering and Architecture, University of Minnesota | 234 |
| | O. M. Leland, Dean of the College of Engineering and Architecture, University of Minnesota | |
| | PART VI. PUBLIC WELFARE | |
| o, | PROFESSOR GERTRUDE VAILE, Chairman | |
| | Public Welfare Positions in the Government at Washington Lewis Meriam, National Institute of Government Research, Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C. | |

| Discussion | 260 |
|---|-----|
| Louis Brownlow, Director of the Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago | |
| PART VII. ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS | |
| DEAN RUSSELL A. STEVENSON, Chairman | |
| VAV VAV AA | 264 |
| E. Dana Durand, Chief Economist of the United States Tariff Commission | |
| C VW VID VIV | 273 |
| CHESTER LLOYD JONES, Director of the School of Commerce, University of Wisconsin | |
| Discussion ISIDOR LOEB, Dean of the School of Business Administration, Washington University F. A. Middlebush, Dean of the School of Business and Public Administration, University of Missouri | 281 |
| PART VIII. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND RESOLUTION | NS |
| PROFESSOR WILLIAM ANDERSON, Chairman | |
| General Discussion John M. Gaus, Professor of Political Science, University of Wisconsin L. D. White, Professor of Political Science, University of Chicago | 286 |
| Harvey Walker, Professor of Political Science, Ohio State University Samuel C. May, Director of the Bureau of Public Adminis- tration, University of California S. Gale Lowrie, Chairman of the Department of Political Science, University of Cincinnati | |
| Resolutions Presented by Special Committees and Accepted Unofficially and Informally by the Conference | |
| Conference Personnel | , |
| Appendix | 319 |

PART I. GENERAL PROBLEMS

INTRODUCTION

LOTUS D. COFFMAN

President of the University of Minnesota

A university is an institution dedicated to public service. But the kind of public service with which it is concerned is confined largely to instruction and research rather than to administration. One of the things that it attempts to avoid in all its relations with the public is the assumption of administrative responsibilities or duties. Government, on the other hand, is concerned more with administration than with instruction and research.

On several occasions in the past attempts have been made to survey the relationships of universities to public service. A committee of the American Association of University Professors made a study of this problem in 1912, and a committee of the American Political Science Association, appointed in 1913, recommended the introduction of courses giving practical training for public service, to be supplemented by field work. At about the same time an organization called the Society for the Promotion of Training for the Public Service was named at Madison, Wisconsin, for the purpose of informing the public of the importance of establishing an official training school under the auspices of the state government. Two national conferences on the general subject of training for public affairs have been held, one in New York City, in 1914, under the auspices of the Committee on Practical Training for the Public Service of the American Political Science Association, the other in Cincinnati, in 1916, under the auspices of the Association of Urban Universities. Two other conferences have been held in Washington to consider the possibilities of training men for the foreign diplomatic field. Several universities have established courses for training in different branches of public work, for example, public health and foreign relations.

It is my understanding that the primary purpose of these conferences has been to enable representatives of the universities and of the government to discuss their mutual responsibilities in providing and in securing an efficient type of government worker.

The University of Minnesota, like every other state university and particularly like every land-grant college, has a number of intimate relationships with the federal government. We have a federal military unit located upon the campus. Various federal laws providing funds for the promotion of activities in the field of agriculture bring us into intimate contact with the federal Department of Agriculture. Then, too, we find that a very considerable number of our students, like students in other institutions, are preparing themselves for some kind of federal work—in the fields, for example, of public health, medicine, dentistry, education, engineering, nursing, economics, agriculture, welfare, diplomacy, and mining.

In recent years the federal government has expanded its activities and increased enormously the number of opportunities available to youth. Furthermore, it has introduced a personnel department, an examining system, and a pension system, thus insuring a better selection of talent, greater security of position, and protection in old age. We can readily understand that young men may desire to enter government service because they see some protection for themselves in their old age, because their salaries will be fairly secure, because they have fairly regular work; but these reasons alone are not sufficient to justify a university in providing training for government work. A man whose conduct is governed by such considerations is likely to fall victim to routine types of thought and effort.

One of the dangers that men in government service encounter was indicated not very long ago by a federal official in high authority when he said, or is reported to have said, that he would like to get rid of all the scientists with the Ph. D. degree every five years. Whether or not this remark was made in sober earnest, it nevertheless expresses an attitude of mind that is all too prevalent in regard to the public service. There may have been some point to the remark, however; it may reflect a condition that deserves thoughtful study and consideration. It has been assumed, we hope erroneously, that after a man has spent a certain number of years in government service he has lost a certain measure of his adaptability. The federal offices are supposed to be so bureaucratized and departmentalized that a public officer has little opportunity for that cross-fertilization of ideas or that stimulation from men in related units and divisions in government service that is essential to growth and satisfaction. If this be true then the situation is not unlike that which has been developing in university circles. The danger has been ever present that specialization would be carried to such an extreme that students would receive no synthesizing overview of any field of learning. Departmentalization and specialization lead to the same end, illiberal and narrow minds.

In university circles two things of special significance are happening, viz.: (1) The specialties are being liberalized by training in other fields, and especially in the humanities; and (2) research is now carried on by men working in cooperation rather than alone.

The most significant and important contributions to science come not from specialized fields but from the overlapping of related areas. Practically every doctor of medicine today needs to have associated with him a doctor of biochemistry, a chemist, a botanist, and perhaps a psychologist. This is the reason why group medicine with its scientifically conducted clinics is superseding individual private practice of medicine. The important and significant researches today are cooperative researches. To be sure, there will always be some isolated souls working in attics with a test tube or retort or with a knife and a cat, endeavoring to discover something unusual in their fields, but the truth is that in the future the most significant investigations will in all probability be those conducted by men in related fields working in overlapping areas, each one supplementing the activities and efforts of the others.

Similar situations must arise in governmental circles unless both men and the government they are expected to serve are to become the prey of routine habits of thought and action. Cooperation over broad areas by men whose one interest is public welfare would aid mightily in disposing of some of the problems now pressing upon the American government. There rests upon the representatives of government, as well as upon the representatives of our universities, a new and somewhat heavier obligation and responsibility than has rested there before. It is trite, of course, to say that we are living in a world filled with problems that are intricate and difficult of solution. I suspect that one of the reasons why we do not know the solutions is the failure and weaknesses of our colleges and universities and schools in the past. I suspect that if we had been less concerned with administration and more with the real problems of education during the last ten or fifteen years, we should know better how to solve some of the problems we now face. Perhaps we did not teach those principles because we were ignorant of them ourselves, or perhaps we were afraid to teach them. And if government officials in turn had been less concerned with administration and

4 UNIVERSITY TRAINING FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

more with public welfare, many problems we now confront would have been mitigated or perhaps would not have arisen at all.

We are facing in our public life a whole series of complex problems the solution of which depends upon a knowledge of the principles of economics. Again, we are facing a series of intricate relationships growing out of international affairs. Yet we are still listening to a philosophy that says we can be safe and secure because we are three thousand miles away from Europe, that we can be prosperous by living behind our own tariff walls, that although we are interested in the peace of the world we nevertheless see no reason for becoming a member of the League of Nations. In other words. provincialism, localism, national selfishness stand in the road of progress in national affairs as truly as do departmentalism and specialization in university circles. With the whole world interrelated economically and the interest of one country bound up with the interest of all, it is important, indeed it is imperative, that government on the one hand and the university on the other free themselves from the administrative fetters that bind them and before it is too late engage more actively in an educational crusade to develop a more catholic and cosmopolitan citizenry.

This series of conferences, starting back in 1912 and continuing down to 1931, should serve eventually to bring about a better understanding of these and other problems; sooner or later the government must pay more heed to the scholar; sooner or later facts must displace politics, and intelligence, emotion in the consideration of public problems. There will then be less inclination to pass hasty and ill-advised legislation, and university-trained men will become increasingly useful in public affairs.

One hears considerable criticism in these days of the several commissions that the President of the United States is appointing. I for one believe they are only forerunners of what we may expect in the future. More public questions will be disposed of by commissions in the future than in the past. With the spread of education and the improvement of our universities the demand for an intellectual rather than a political leadership will become increasingly insistent. This demand may be hastened as effectively by shattering the walls of government and university administration that isolate the worker or the learner as by providing courses for the training of men for public service.

COURSES IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES ADAPTED TO THE NATIONAL SERVICE

WILLIAM ANDERSON
Chairman, Department of Political Science
University of Minnesota

For better or for worse the era in which we live has discarded the strict laissez faire theories of Adam Smith and Thomas Jefferson and is feeling its way steadily toward a policy of social cooperation and governmental action in the solution of common problems. Whoever casts his eye backward over the course of events, even if no farther than to the American Civil War, can see how amazing has been the change in that short time, both in public attitude and in public activity. A national government, which even in the days of Presidents Pierce and Buchanan did little or nothing for the social and economic welfare of the people or for the promotion of public works, has in recent administrations extended its functions until they touch almost every phase of our everyday lives. State and local governments, where they have not set the pace, have at least followed close after, matching function with function and sometimes dollar with dollar of national government funds. This majestic upward sweep of the public services in the past sixty years has unquestionably been one of the three or four outstanding social changes of the age. It is not too much to say that we have left far behind the age of the mere police-state and that we approach the era of the publicservice state.

This term, "the public-service state," has perhaps a French origin, and it is closely bound up with the idea of social welfare and social solidarity as the ends of government. The ideal is perhaps not far from that expressed by Aristotle, who pointed out that the state is founded that man may live but continued that he may live nobly. It "exists for the good life, and not for the sake of life only." And again, "The end is a good life, and the state is the union of families and villages having for an end

a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honorable life."

Centuries later Edmund Burke expressed much the same thought when he spoke of the state as not a mere temporary partnership for the low purposes of trade, but "a partnership in a higher and more permanent sense—a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection"—a partnership which links the living with the dead and with the yet unborn. It is a partnership, if we may so phrase it, which endeavors to focus all that is best in man's knowledge and thought upon the solution of great common problems, and which to this end draws into its service, directly or indirectly, every skill, every intellectual discipline, and every moral force that can be utilized to common ends.

We have at this point come very close to giving a definition of the civil service of a great modern state, let us say of our own national government, for it includes almost every skill, almost every vocation, almost every profession, known to an occupational census. But we have come very close, also, to describing the objective of a great modern educational system and especially of a modern university. A university is not, perhaps, what Ezra Cornell, the founder of Cornell University, defined it as, "an institution in which any person can find instruction in any study." To our own first president of the University of Minnesota, William Watts Folwell, a university was "a federation of schools . . . embracing potentially all subjects of human and practical interest; teaching always with reference to principles; occupying ever an attitude of investigation; knowing no favorite studies; at all times thoroughly imbued with the scientific spirit; that," he said, "is the University."

A university draws together, as its resources permit, teachers, scientists, and investigators of every kind and description for purposes of instruction and research. A government draws together a parallel staff of specialists in every field for purposes, partly of research, but mainly of direct public service. Men young and old go from their university classrooms and laboratories into the national service, and from it many return again to the university, enriched by their practical experience. There

is hardly a scientist or other specialist in the national service whose place could not be filled by a man of the same specialty from a university, and there is scarcely any university professorship in many fields of science, engineering, agriculture, law, and other branches of learning that could not be filled by some one now in the national service. The national service at the professional and scientific levels has the makings of a large and splendid university faculty, whereas, on the other side of the shield, university faculties and student bodies have the makings of a splendid national service.

These things have been said to indicate that, in a broad sense, all university education is training for national service. Without fully realizing and largely without intending it, colleges and universities have been supplying national, state, and local governments with their specialists, scientists, and professional workers. Even in the days when the spoils system was most rife, men of special training were so much needed that they could not entirely be kept from the government's service. The passage of the Civil Service Reform Act in 1883 presaged the introduction into universities of special courses of training for the public service, and the rapid increase of governmental functions since that time has done much to quicken in universities a sense of responsibility for such training. Let us survey at least a part of this development in order that we may know where the training movement now stands.

For the information of this conference a study has been made, under my direction, by Miss Myrtle Eklund, of the courses offered by leading colleges, universities, and professional schools that lead to certain branches of the public service. The study was limited to a small number of fields in which the national service is particularly interested, but of course the training is in many cases of interest also to state and local governments as well as to private institutions and companies. The study has been based upon published bulletins of 1929, 1930, and 1931, and there has been no opportunity to verify the data either by extensive correspondence or by personal visits to the institutions concerned. It is doubtful whether in most cases such verification would be worth the expenditure that would be required.

COURSES IN CHEMISTRY AND PHYSICS

During the years 1928, 1929, and 1930, the national government appointed well over a hundred new chemists each year and about a third as many new physicists. Most of these appointees entered the service as "junior chemist" or "junior physicist" upon completing courses for the bachelor's degree, but many of higher rank and more extensive training also received appointments. Some entered the service as specialists in distinct lines such as explosives, X-ray, and textiles. The specifications for the position of junior chemist call for a bachelor's degree with at least 30 semester credits in chemistry. In the examination, knowledge of "general chemistry and elementary physics" is weighted 50, and knowledge of a special optional subject (advanced inorganic, analytical, organic, or physical chemistry) is also weighted 50.

How close the various schools and departments of chemistry come to training their candidates to pass this examination it would be hard to say. A capable graduate of any one of the leading schools would probably have little difficulty in meeting the requirements. The fact is that although a few of the bulletins of schools of chemistry refer to opportunities for employment in state and national government laboratories, there is no surface evidence that the curricula have been planned with this end in view. This is perhaps as it should be, since chemistry is the same science, whether in private industry or in government laboratory. The problems to be solved and the technics used may be somewhat specialized in different branches of the government service, but the fundamental training required is the same as that for chemists everywhere, and it is not the function of the school of chemistry to teach those special manipulations that have but a limited application here or there. To some extent, however, schools of chemistry do give courses that are of special interest in the government service. Such courses include the chemistry of explosives, food chemistry, and water and sewage chemistry, the latter being perhaps of main importance to local governments.

In general the curricula of the leading schools and departments cover rather well the main classes of chemists listed in the specifications for the field service of the national government. These classes are: general chemistry, analytical, biological, electrochemical, explosives, fuels, inorganic, organic, petroleum, physical,