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THE ORGANIZATION OF WILL

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The combining of the efforts of a number of persons for the accomplishment of a particular purpose results in the *organization of effort.*[1] Such an organization may receive its direction either from the will of an individual or from the will of a group. The process by which a group will is arrived at may be termed the *organization of will.*

In the *organization of effort,* the movement is from the one toward the many, i.e., from the controlling purpose to the co-ordinated efforts of the various persons who contribute to its accomplishment. In the *organization of will,* the movement is from the many toward the one, i.e., from the wills of individual members to the single purpose which comes to direct and unify the activities of the group.

Organizations may be represented graphically by the cone, the base of the cone representing the individuals organized, the apex their unifying purpose. The organizing of will may be thought of as a movement from base toward apex; the organizing of effort as a movement from apex toward base.

These two types of organization may exist separately or combined. In an army, a railroad, a government department, and a

[1] See paper on this topic in the July number of this *Journal.*

municipal service, we see only *organization of effort.* In a church framing its creed, a party drawing up its declaration of principles, a Futurist group hammering out its manifesto, a gild standardizing mercantile usage, and a labor union passing upon a trade agreement, we see only *organization of will.* On the other hand, workingmen engaging in a strike which has been ordered by the union, farmers delivering their milk to a creamery established by their co-operative effort, the fellows of a learned society prosecuting co-operative research upon lines laid down by the society illustrate how, with respect to the same matter, both will and effort may be organized within a single group. This double process marks what is at once the most difficult and the most evolved type of organization.

An extremely informal organization of will is presented in the assembly of the Russian *Mir* or village community as described by Wallace.[1]

> The meetings are held in the open air . . . . and they almost always take place on Sundays or holidays, when the peasants have plenty of leisure. . . . . The discussions are occasionally very animated, but there is rarely any attempt at speech making. If any young member should show an inclination to indulge in oratory, he is sure to be unceremoniously interrupted by some of the older members, who have never any sympathy with fine talking. The assemblage has the appearance of a crowd of people who have accidentally come together and are discussing in little groups subjects of local interest. Gradually some one group, containing two or three peasants who have more moral influence than their fellows, attracts the others, and the discussion becomes general. Two or more peasants may speak at a time, and interrupt each other freely—using plain, unvarnished language, not at all parliamentary—and the discussion may become a confused, unintelligible din; but at the moment when the spectator imagines that the consultation is about to be transformed into a free fight, the tumult spontaneously subsides, or perhaps a general roar of laughter announces that some one has been successfully hit by a strong *argumentum ad hominem*, or biting personal remark. In any case there is no danger of the disputants coming to blows.

The village elder is the principal personage in the crowd, but to call to order those who interrupt the discussion is no part of his functions. He comes forward prominently—

> when it is necessary to take the sense of the meeting. On such occasions he may stand back a little from the crowd and say, "Well, orthodox, have you

[1] Wallace, *Russia*, pp. 116, 117.

decided so?" and the crowd will probably shout, *Ladno! Ladno!* that is to say, "Agreed! Agreed!" Communal measures are generally carried in this way by acclamation; but it sometimes happens that there is such diversity of opinion that it is difficult to tell which of the two parties has a majority. In this case the Elder requests the one party to stand to the right and the other to the left. The two groups are then counted, and the minority submits, for no one ever dreams of opposing openly the will of the *Mir*.

The chief improvement that has been made in this procedure is the regulation of discussion to the end that it may be kept to the point and not be smothered in confusion and disorder.

How far general assembly makes for a free organizing of wills depends upon a number of factors:

a) To what extent is the assembly protected from disturbance, interruption, or intimidation?

b) Is it in the power of anyone to dissolve the assembly against its will?

c) Can it consider any matter? Or may it consider only such matters as are mentioned in the summons or are brought before it by the summoners?

d) Is the assembly convened for the purpose of ascertaining the wills of the members as to a matter, or in order to make known and win support for a policy which has already been decided upon by the head men?

e) Who may speak? Only officials, chiefs, or distinguished persons; anyone invited by the presiding officer; anyone called out by the assembly; or anyone "recognized" by the presiding officer?

f) Is the prevalent will expressed by cheers, shouts, or clash of weapons—which method expresses intensity of conviction as well as numbers—or by registering the wills of individuals?

g) In case voting is *viva voce* instead of by ballot, is the order of voting haphazard or according to age, rank, or other mark of distinction? This is important because in the latter case the early voters may have an influence upon those who vote later.

VARIETIES OF WILL ORGANIZATION

As the matters to be settled become numerous or technical, the method of always taking "the sense of the meeting" becomes too burdensome, so that a board will be chosen to make minor

decisions for the group, major matters still being reserved for the general assembly. These men may be granted power for only so long as the majority of the members are satisfied with them, or for a stated term. If experienced management and continuity of policy be essential to the prosperity of group affairs, and if the superior fitness of certain members for handling these affairs be evident to all, the group may clothe them with authority for a long term or for life and cease to reserve certain fundamental matters for popular decision.

In case an association becomes large and the membership scattered, the periodical convening of all in general assembly has to be given up. The local assemblies sometimes take turns in looking after the common concerns of the entire society, as was the practice during the early years of certain British trade unions. Then delegates are sent by these local assemblies to sit in a deliberative body which acts for the entire group, save perhaps in certain reserved matters. When the delegate becomes member of a permanent body during a fixed term and speaks for his constituents on all matters that may come up, he becomes a representative and the group comes under representative government.

With the officials who execute or serve the will of the group, this representative assembly may have various relations. It may appoint them, or they may be the choice of the group membership. It may mark out their sphere, or they may have a sphere independent of it. It may make laws which they are to enforce, adopt policies which they are to carry out, or it may leave them for the most part a free hand, contenting itself with granting money according to its degree of satisfaction with their conduct. In the case of a hereditary executive, claiming rule as a matter of inheritance or of divine right, the representative body may serve as little more than a forum for free speech where the "state of the country" may be discussed, grievances ventilated, and criticisms brought to the attention of the government.

In short, the will of an organized group may be derived directly and in the simplest way from the wills of the members, or it may be so independent of them as to be able to defy them or to mold them at pleasure. The members may decide everything, they may

decide only certain fundamental matters, they may decide only who shall decide, or they may be powerless respecting quondam agents who have come to be their masters.

Now, what is it that determines how the will of a group shall be organized?

HOW THE COMPOSITION OF THE GROUP DETERMINES ITS WILL ORGANIZATION

It depends for one thing on *how the group is composed.* Is membership in the group a matter of free will? So far as association is voluntary, there is a curb to the overriding of the wishes of the rank and file by the head men. Arbitrary, high-handed action may provoke so many withdrawals as to weaken or break up the group. It is because one cannot quit civil society at will that in political government persist abuses of power which would never long be tolerated in a voluntary association. Modern facilities for travel, however, have made population so mobile that by migration people react in a very noticeable way to local differences in the excellence of government. This imposes, no doubt, a certain check upon the irresponsible use of political power.

In case quitting the group entails a serious sacrifice, members will be slow to resent the unauthorized exercise of power. Therefore, the more solid and obvious the advantages an organization offers, or the worse the lot of the man who stands outside it, the more patiently will the members submit themselves to a will not their own. The doctrine, "No salvation outside the Church," reconciles the devout to the control of a hierarchy. The vows of a religious order hold the brothers in line with the policy adopted by the head men. In China, where "the craftsman who is not a gild member is as one exposed to the wintry blast without a cloak," the deference of the member to gild authority is very great.

Much depends on whether or not a society is in its formative period. A young society, holding out to the public rosy prospects rather than realized benefits, will be ostentatiously democratic, for it must be able to assure the inquirer that the members control everything, that there is no "inside ring," and that every penny

officials spend is accounted for. One of the forces which favored the extension of political democracy in the United States during the period of settlement was the sharp competition among western states to attract settlers.

On the other hand, a society that has a good record of service and has accumulated property, prestige, reputation, or other valuable assets, will attract members even if it denies them an immediate voice in its management. This is one reason why old and successful associations are free to develop a government as centralized as their affairs may require, whereas young associations must be democratic whether or not their affairs prosper under democracy. It also helps to explain why an old association is liable to become the prey of a narrow governing clique.

When the members of a group differ little in experience or intelligence, none of them are plainly marked out to govern and hence the head men will be limited in power and held to account for their official acts. In reform associations, social clubs, professional bodies, and learned societies one never finds blind submission to the dictates of the executive council or board. But in religious orders, religious sects, and communistic groups, the great inequality among members in respect to wisdom, fervor, and vision often lodges mastery in the natural leaders. If, however, outstanding individuals have ample opportunity to act upon and lead the opinion of the rest, they need no large grant of authority, seeing that they bring their superiority to bear through *influence* rather than through *power*. This is why a community under direct membership control may still be guided by its best men. Sam Adams, working within that purest of democracies, the town meeting of Boston, came nevertheless to be known as "the master of the puppets," and "the king of the caucus."

Manifest integrity inspires trust and a willingness to confide power. It is possible that the decline of interest in local civic assemblies, which has become so marked among Americans in the course of a century, and the disposition to leave everything to the local board reflect a growing confidence in the honesty of the fellow-citizen. Conversely, one reason for the "almost pure democracy" of the Chinese craft gild appears to be "the deep-rooted

distrust of delegated authority or agency which is constant in every Asiatic mind."[1]

The shift from direct democracy to a representative system may come about as a consequence of mere growth in membership. When an assembly includes more than four or five hundred, oratory and crowd feeling are apt to run away with good judgment. Advocates of sane and conservative policies are often hissed down, rational deliberation is easily upset. The history of the *ekklesia*, or general assembly of Athens, shows what happens in a gathering so large as to induce in both speakers and hearers the theatrica spirit. At this point it is necessary to form a small representative body to take over all questions which cannot be answered by a simple "Yes" or "No." The town meeting gives way to government by mayor and common council. Boston, which did not go over to representative government until 1822 when it had 40,000 inhabitants, went about as far with the popular assembly as it is possible to go.

Again, if the members of the group dwell dispersed over a large territory, its control will be monopolized by the members who live near the place of meeting, together with such as have the leisure and means to attend from a distance. A continual shifting of the place of meeting may solve the former difficulty, but not the latter. In political society such an advantage by the well-to-do is most serious and calls for the early introduction of the representative system.

HOW THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP DETERMINES ITS WILL ORGANIZATION

Other determiners of the mode of organization of will depend upon the *purpose* of the group. In an association formed for a temporary purpose, the will of the majority naturally prevails; while in an enduring group there are others to be considered than the present members. The rule of the older and wiser is urged on behalf of members past and to come. A society for registering and focussing opinion will be directly controlled by its members; whereas a group formed for action is likely to feel the need of

[1] Morse, *The Gilds of China*, p. 12.

conferring broad powers upon its executive. In case this action is to bear directly upon the members themselves, they will be more careful to define and to hedge the powers of their agents than if this action is to be exerted only upon outsiders. In missionary, propagandist, philanthropic, and educational societies, one finds less jealousy of delegated power than in town meetings, co-operative societies, trade unions, and communistic groups.

In case the interests to be cared for are minor matters in the eyes of the members, they allow the more zealous to go ahead and do whatever they think best. The willingness to leave everything to the leaders, which is so marked when one risks merely an annual contribution, does not appear when the ordinary member has much at stake. In a society which may by its action compromise the safety, liberty, property, or prestige of the individual member, the rank and file are likely to be tenacious of their right to be consulted and to hold officials to strict responsibility.

Usually the head exists to serve the body, but sometimes the body is called into being to serve the head. When an active group of municipal reformers feels the need of a sounding board, it builds up a "Committee of One Hundred" of well-known citizens and professes to be the mere servant and mouthpiece of this committee. In churches which claim for their heads an authority derived through an unbroken line of succession from the Apostles, the bishops do not regard themselves as organs of the body of believers, but rather regard these believers as in duty bound to furnish support and backing for the bishops.

When an organization considers itself sole custodian of a precious body of doctrines, mysteries, or rites, its control will be highly centralized. Only the well-tested and fully initiated are held worthy to be intrusted with the transmission of the sacred lore. In religious orders, in the Masonic order and other hoary secret confraternities, in venerable gilds and ecclesiastical bodies, the care to hand on an uncorrupted tradition centers authority in some Supreme Chapter or Grand Lodge, composed entirely of head men, or else confides it to a select circle of the older and more experienced. The early appearance of presbyters or elders, bishops and metropolitans in the Christian church seems to have been due to

the felt need of keeping the faith pure from the heresies spread by unauthorized teachers and prophets. Thus Clement urges: "Let us esteem those who have the rule over us, let us honor our presbyters," while Ignatius declares he heard the voice of the Spirit proclaiming the words: "Do nothing without the bishop." But for the independence of the clergy, the simplicity of the gospel would ere long have vanished in diversity and confusion. Ignatius, no doubt, had in mind this danger when he wrote to Polycarp: "Have a care to preserve unity than which nothing is better."

The administering of corporate property is not favorable to the keeping of power by the general assembly of the members. A group that becomes wealthy is likely to lose its pristine democracy. A town meeting, to be sure, may make wise decisions as to roads, ferries, and common lands, for these are simple forms of property well understood by all. But diversified property interests requiring intelligent care if they are to remain productive press home upon a membership the wisdom of entrusting their management to a select few. From his study of village communities, Sir Henry Maine concludes that "the autocratically governed manorial group is better suited than the village group for bringing under cultivation a country in which waste lands are extensive. So also does it seem to me likely to have been at all times more tolerant of agricultural novelties."

Generally there is a division of responsibility within a group, certain questions being handed up to committee or council while other questions are reserved for the decision of the members. Whether a particular power shall be delegated or reserved depends chiefly upon the *nature of the matter* that is to be decided.

HOW THE NATURE OF THE MATTER TO BE DEALT WITH DETERMINES WILL ORGANIZATION

If a matter lies within the ken of all and the proper disposal of it does not call for technical knowledge, it may well be settled in general assembly. The folk-mote of the ancient village community was quite at home in considering the time of mowing the common meadow, the rights of pasturage on the waste, the reallotment of plow land, and the upkeep of roads and irrigation

canals. In the town meeting of our ancestors, the opening of highways, the building of bridges, the treatment of strayed stock, the maintenance of the school, and the care of the poor were well within the grasp of common minds lit up by sober discussion.

But when a group is obliged to deal with matters outside the experience or knowledge of its ordinary members, power is likely to be delegated. The running of a co-operative store, elevator, or creamery lodges decision in a manager subject to a board of directors. The proper adjustment of dues and benefits is so technical a problem that, once the insurance feature has become prominent in a fraternal order or a friendly society, power tends to concentrate. The miners' courts of the Sierra gold diggings dispensed a rough-and-ready justice so long as disputes related to sluice-boxes and claims; but as soon as property relations became complicated by leases, contracts, and debts, the camp chose an *alcalde* to try cases.

When external relations thrust internal affairs into the background, the members of a group are conscious of being on thin ice. Knowing little of the outside forces with which the group must come to terms, they come to lean heavily upon the few who appear to understand them. Hence the delicate process of *adjustment*—to church, to law, or to civil authorities, to other like groups, to a central body, to antagonists, or to competitors—causes a more liberal grant of power to the head men of a group. When attention shifts again to internal affairs, the membership is likely to shorten the tether of these men. When home affairs are overshadowed by foreign affairs, the situation strengthens parliament against public, ministry against parliament, throne against people. The security of a sea-girt or mountain-girt people favors the growth of popular government, but the pendulum swings the other way if wide-flung empire permanently exalts remote matters above near matters. Imperialism is of necessity anti-democratic in its tendencies.

Does the question to be dealt with relate to policy or to the means of carrying out a policy? The latter is likely to involve technical considerations and naturally will be passed up to the better informed. The full congregation will decide on the question of church union, but hardly on the exact terms of such union.

The members of a co-operative society are fitter to debate the formation of branches than to formulate the rights and duties of the daughter society respecting the mother society. To the citizens may well be referred the questions: *Shall we build a capitol? Shall we bond ourselves for highway improvement? Shall we establish "mothers' compensation"? Shall we protect game?* but not questions as to the plan of the state house, the type of road to be built, the conditions of granting aid to the mothers of dependent children or the length of the closed season for game. No matter how intelligent and alert its members, a large group with numerous interests must leave most of its concerns to committee or board.

Again, a membership may institute certain agencies or institutions, leaving their precise mode of operation to be otherwise determined. Whether a scientific society shall found a research laboratory, a town organize a fire brigade, a trade union start an out-of-work fund, or a church establish a mission board may be decided by the members; but the many subordinate decisions which hinge upon their affirmative action in such cases must be made upon the basis of a fuller knowledge of details than they can hope to acquire.

A further distinction to be made is that between the adoption of a rule and its application to particular cases. Usually the former calls for a more general participation of wills than the latter. The chapter of the Knights of the Order of Hospitalers prescribed the rules of discipline which the superior enforced. The town meeting passed ordinances which were to be carried into effect by its chosen officials. The assembled gold miners agreed upon the laws of the camp and their standing committee or *alcalde* caused them to be obeyed. The organized physicians adopt a professional code of ethics, leaving the punishment of its violators to individual practitioners or to the local medical society.

But even if the time comes when, feeling the need of expert judgment, the members of a group confide to a select body the making of laws, creed, ritual, declaration of principles, or code of discipline, they will keep their hands on matters in the deciding of which their agents may have an interest contrary to that of the general membership. It is, therefore, in *financial affairs* that the

resistance to the centralization of power is most stubborn. Let the head men hold the steering wheel if only their constituents grasp the brake! In a jealous control of the alienation of corporate property, the incurring of debt, the audit of accounts, the tenure and compensation of officials, the appropriation of funds, the distribution of burdens, or the entering into trade agreement, alliance, or merger, the spirit of self-government may show itself long after all other corporate decisions have been passed up to the select or the expert. We have but to recall constitutional restrictions on the size of the public debt, the requirement of a referendum on a bond issue, and the rule that the vote on appropriation bills shall be larger than on other bills and shall be recorded.

WHY FIGHTING GROUPS CENTRALIZE DECISION

Frequent emergencies, calling for quick decisions, favor the concentrating of power in a small nucleus. When *promptitude* is clearly essential to success, the molding of many wills into one is felt to be too time-consuming. While the meeting deliberates or the election goes on, the golden moment for action may have passed, never to return. Under such circumstances, the handicap democracy imposes is plain to all. Hence, the more recurrent the need of prompt decision, the more willing are the members of a group to confide large powers to a few.

The need of *secrecy* has the same effect. Not only is public debate likely to let out group secrets, but it is impossible for many to take part in making a decision if that decision is to be concealed from foes or competitors.

Now, in all forms of strife—commercial rivalry, industrial struggle, political contest, negotiation, diplomacy, and warfare—both promptness and secrecy are necessary. Hence, fighting groups finally lodge large power in the hands of the trusted few. Stockholders limit themselves to the opportunity at stated intervals of turning out one board of directors and putting in another. Unionists may insist on the ballot for the calling or ending of a strike, but, while the fight is on, they allow decisions of the gravest import to be made by their officials. The rank and file of political parties may pick the nominees, but the conduct of the campaign is left in

the hands of an irresponsible committee. A democratic government at war is evidently handicapped as to promptness and secrecy of decision. The consequence is that during a serious national war public discussion is damped, the press is curbed, the legislature becomes less responsible to the electors, and the executive becomes less responsible to the legislature.

CHARACTER AS AFFECTED BY MODE OF ORGANIZING GROUP WILL

Taking part in the making of group will strengthens character and exclusion therefrom weakens it. In Canada, under the old French régime, no local self-government was tolerated. Roads and bridges were under a royal official. Only in church matters had the people a voice, but no parish meeting to consider the cost of a new church could be held without the special permission of the intendant. Municipal officers there were none. The ordinances of the intendant and the council were law. All aspirations for a larger liberty were thwarted by governor, intendant, and bishop acting on instructions from the king of France. Reduced at last to a state of passive obedience, the people accepted the orders and edicts of the king without a murmur.

What was the type of character produced? When during the Revolution the American conquest brought the French creoles of the Illinois country under institutions of self-government, they were, in the words of Mr. Roosevelt, "hopelessly unable to grapple with the new life. They had been accustomed to the paternal rule of priest and military commandant and they were quite unable to govern themselves, or to hold their own with the pushing, eager, and often unscrupulous new-comers." The early withdrawal of the Americans left the French free to do as they pleased. "Accustomed for generations to a master, they could do nothing with their new-found liberty beyond making it a curse to themselves and their neighbors." The judges they had elected "had no idea of their proper functions as a governing body to administer justice. At first they did nothing whatever beyond meet and adjourn." Finally they went to granting one another immense tracts of adjacent wild land. Plunged into chaos, the creoles sent petition after petition to Congress. "There is one striking difference

between these petitions and the similar requests and complaints made from time to time by the different groups of American settlers west of the Alleghanies. Both alike set forth the evils which the petitioners suffered, and the necessity of governmental remedy. But whereas the Americans invariably asked that they be allowed to govern themselves, being delighted to undertake the betterment of their condition on their own account, the French, on the contrary, habituated through generations to paternal rule, were more inclined to request that somebody fitted for the task should be sent to govern them."[1] Yet these creoles were descendants of people who had once managed their common affairs in local assemblies. The most beautiful products of the Middle Ages, the churches, town halls, and cathedrals of France and Flanders, were financed by the people living all their lives near them, every man having a voice in the matter.

THE OUTLOOK

Various modern developments are affecting the current mode of organizing will. Thanks to the rising plane of popular intelligence, the members of open groups continually gain in capacity to judge common affairs. The printing press and improved electoral methods facilitate among dispersed persons the forming and focussing of will. On the other hand, questions once plain have become technical, and simple matters have become complicated. Large-scale effort being called for, small societies are often obliged to merge into wider organizations, the result being that decision is farther removed from the members. In many lines mere experience is no longer enough and the trained man steps into the shoes of the amateur. To the expert, restrained by his professional conscience, strict control is nagging and hampering. Nowadays, too, at the elbow of the power holder stands imperious public opinion, so that there is less need to tie him down in advance by the mandate of his constituents.

The net outcome of these changes is not the same in different fields. In some kinds of association the trend is democratic, in others it is unmistakably toward small boards and expert permanent officials. What is to be the general trend is by no means clear.

[1] Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, II, 184.