



**CIRCULAR OF MANAGEMENT
OF PERSONNEL**

26 January, 1938.

From: Commandant.
To: All Commissioned, Chief Warrant,
and Warrant Officers of the Coast Guard.
Subject: Management of Personnel.

1. It is proposed, from time to time, to direct the attention of all officers to the subject of leadership and the management of men. It certainly should not be necessary to stress the importance of this subject. The value of an officer is not reflected by his efforts as an individual alone but by the results he obtains through the efforts of the men under him. Nor is it enough that he is able to give sound directions and to see that his orders are carried out. Men will, generally speaking, obey the orders of any officer, but is more than blind obedience that is desired and it is much more than blind obedience that a man can give. The leader, as distinguished from the driver, obtains not only obedience to his commands, but he obtains also a wholehearted cooperation on the part of his subordinates that multiplies many times the results he would otherwise obtain.

2. There is no reason to believe that Coast Guard officers as a whole are less well-endowed with the qualities of leadership than the members of any other group or organization similarly placed. There is, however, and always will be room for improvement and there is no excuse for riot attempting to improve. There is a general belief that great leaders, like other men of genius, are born and not made. There is undoubtedly much truth in this belief. One feature that does stand out in the life of every genius is the intense application and study he has given to the field on which he excels. Apparently, the gift with which a genius is born is the desire, will, or ambition that drives him to this application and study. It is not anticipated that every officer in the Coast Guard will become a great leader as a

result of study and application. It may well be imagined that if such a condition did arise it might be quite embarrassing all around. The point being made is that it is not necessary to be content with those qualifications with which we were born or which we now have.

3. A few months ago, there was distributed to the service a pamphlet entitled "Management of the American Soldier" by Major General David C. Shanks. It is believed that no one could read this pamphlet carefully without a certain amount of introspection. If, during this self-examination, the reader could find no fault with himself, could detect no imperfection in his methods of dealing with men, then indeed he is either perfect or beyond help. To correct a fault, it is first necessary to recognize it. It is not necessary to agree with every theory advanced or every practice suggested but it is important that officers do some active thinking along these lines.

4. One feature of the relationship between officers and men that comes to the attention of Headquarters more frequently than any other is that having to do with punishments. A wide variation in the manner of handling offenses and in the punishments awarded therefor, has been noted. Within certain limits, this is to be expected and is not undesirable. There will always be a difference of opinion among officers as to the relative gravity of various offenses. There will also be considerable variation in the circumstances surrounding offenses committed and in the temperaments and motives of the men committing them. Occasionally, however, cases are noted in which there is such a wide divergence that it would be difficult to explain it on any grounds. Some man with an otherwise good record, apparently, will be sentenced to dishonorable discharge for overstaying leave for a period of one or two days or even a matter of hours. It is obvious that the court must have had some reason, either in connection with the case or with the man, to be so severe but the record of proceedings will be utterly barren of any information indicating the nature of this reason. In a few number of cases what appear to be totally inadequate sentences are awarded. When cases reach the reviewing authority, there is a natural tendency to level down the more severe sentences, not to any set schedule but toward a general coverage, considering of course the nature of the offenses and the entire service

record of the maxi. It is urged therefore that prosecutors and counsel endeavor to bring out for the benefit of the record and the reviewing authority any aggravating or extenuating circumstances that may be present.

5. In too many of the records of proceedings of courts received at Headquarters, the offenses charged are trivial and sentences of extra duty or deprivation of liberty alone are awarded by the court. There appears to be a tendency on the part of a small percentage of commanding officers to turn over to courts for decision, all disciplinary affairs, no matter how trifling where any conflict in testimony is involved. If John Jones, Seaman] 2c., is brought to mast for failing to turn out after being called three times by the Master-at-Arms, and tells his commanding officer that it was all a mistake, that the Master-at-Arms did not call him at all and even then he didn't hear him, he will be given a deck court and the deck court officer will award him ten hours extra duty. Whether the commanding officer prefers not to be bothered to the extent of making a reasonable investigation and rendering a decision himself or whether he has more confidence in the judgment of his dock court officer does not appear. The morale of his crew should be one of the first considerations of any officer and nothing, has none effect on morale than the manner in which disciplinary matters are handled. For this reason, commanding officers should be more than willing to devote as much of their time as is necessary, and to bring their more mature and experienced judgment to bear on the problems of their men, rather than to turn these problems over to a subordinate. The exercise of a little patience in listening to the viewpoint of a man and in explaining to him where his views are faulty, if they are, will far more than repay the trouble taken. After all, it is not so important that justice be meted out to some offender as it is that the man believe that a serious effort is being made to accord him justice.

6. In awarding punishment the effects of the punishment on the man and on the Service should be carefully considered. The primary purpose of punishment for an offense is that of deterring the offender, and others, from again committing that particular offense. When this condition has been met, any further penalty is usually superfluous and may even be harmful. The type of punishment awarded is as important as the amount. Considering, theoretically, that the members of a court might agree that

the loss of one month's pay is equivalent to deprivation of liberty for two months plus twenty- five hours extra duty, it is then necessary for there to decide which of these punishments will have the more salutary effect. An example of the apparent lack of such consideration was contained in a case received at Headquarters not so long ago, in which a man was sentenced to three hundred hours extra duty. It is very doubtful that the court gave much thought to the fact that to work off this amount of extra. duty normally would require the best part of a year, that only a man of very strong character could perform his regular duties satisfactorily and willingly over such a length of time under a handicap of this nature, and that almost inevitably the man would become, malcontent and a source of disaffection to the rest of the crew.

7. No hard and fast rules can be laid down with reference to the handling of men, either singly or collectively, and no attempt is being made to do so. The object of these discussions is simply to arouse interest in the subject and to stimulate a desire for further study and improvement on the part of all officers. Any discussion, comment, criticism, or suggestions for future discussions will be welcomed by Headquarters. Some criticism has been received to the effect that too frequently the sentences awarded by Coast Guard courts have been mitigated by the reviewing authority. Further comment or criticism on this subject is particularly invited.

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