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before the
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS
RAILROAD COMMITTEE ON EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
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MANAGING IN A MULTI-ETHNIC, MULTI-RACIAL WORKFORCE
IN THE 1980's: PROBLEMS AND PROMISES

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored by this invitation to address you during the Executive Development Days planned by the faculty of the Federal Executive Institute, in conjunction with the Federal Executive Alumni Association. The subject assigned for discussion is: "Managing in a Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Racial Workforce in the 1980's: Problems and Promises."

At the time our nation was founded, the idea "to form a more perfect form of government" espoused by our founders was alien to a large segment of the universe. The turmoil of Europe, the growing doctrine of "liberty and justice for all", and the quest of adventure, among other romantic ingredients, brought men and women of diverse views to the shores of a land later to be known as

the United States of America. In an effort to secure the liberty obtained and attained by military victory and much human sacrifice, a metaphysical democracy was established through the seed of profound and revolutionary ideals embodied in a constitution. It is from this document, and the principles which have emerged, been refined and redefined therefrom, that any qualitative discussion may take place concerning managing in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce.

Of course, those who planted the seed of liberty could not foresee the ultimate implications of this theme: that is, an ambassador of Afro-American descent at the United Nations, women as heads of departments, Hispanics as advisors to presidents; a person of Jewish descent as Secretary of State or a Catholic president. However, a review of the Federalist Papers does provide us with a sense that the framers of the American dream were planners of "things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Over the past two centuries the measured, political decisions of the nation have changed the face of a nation once segregated by time and space to one which affirmatively strives for reason and diversity. What events or decisions have influenced or forced change in the theme of a constitutional order in a representative government?

Certainly, international conflict waged for freedom has augmented the theme of liberty in America as people and refugees-turned-citizens have become a vital part of the political fabric of our nation. Certainly, the economic and moral issues surrounding the domestic question of slavery of Black Americans was the linchpin of the theme of liberty. Certainly, executive and congressional decisions on important questions concerning lifting ceilings on immigration quotas has allowed people of all races, colors, creed, and religious and national origin to add new and exciting chapters to the theme of liberty. Certainly, the recognition of self-worth and the quest for dignity so much a part of America took on new dimensions starting in the early 1950's when the United States Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional the "doctrine of separate but equal." Certainly, the thrust of women for recognition and equality has forced decisionmakers to re-think the definition of liberty. And, certainly, religious differences in the nation require and have required new chapters written into the decisionmaking process to secure the liberty of free speech and association. And, certainly today, questions being raised by Hispanic citizens in connection with education and language are influencing the theme of liberty.

The American workforce today is a reflection of the dynamics of war, peace, politics, religion, race, gender, and, of course, a host of other important ingredients. The manager in the 1980's is directly confronted with the changing dynamics of liberty at all levels of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce. In every instance outlined above, it has been people -- all kinds of people -- who have influenced or forced changes in the theme of liberty, arguing persuasively that the government order secured by the constitution and the laws of the nation guarantee a unique right. This unique right may now be considered as a possessory interest in the job. See Drucker, "The Job As Property Right." The Wall Street Journal, March 4, 1980.

It is not arguable that the workforce today is multi-ethnic and multi-racial. So, what's new? To some degree, the American workforce has always had multi-ethnic characteristics. However, the theme of liberty which is cemented in the constitution presents contemporary managers with the difficult task of proving that the theme of liberty and a representative government can be refueled with dreams of hope, freedom from fear, quests for harmony and eagerness for a cooperative spirit in the workforce with an economy which giveth jobs and opportunities and limits the same.

In connection with the multi-ethnic and racial workforce, Congress has passed rigid anti-discrimination laws which simultaneously urge voluntary affirmative action in the private sector. Congress has codified the concept of affirmative action as a mandatory matter in the Federal sector. Without going into detail of affirmative action plans and programs, I believe that the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Weber opinion, and its progeny, compel the manager of today to fully understand that the theme of liberty in the workforce is again under review. The Weber decision which reaffirmed the concept of affirmative action, coupled with various other fair-employment practice laws, and underscored by the notions of due process, job security and seniority in the workforce, not to mention issues of minimal job qualifications, efficiency and productivity -- are compelling dynamics which challenge the creative spirit of any manager. The Weber decision did rekindle the promises of a free and participatory society. The promises of a free society have not always been "attain-worthy." Time, space, economics, the natural political forces and coalitions of interest groups are coming to grips with the dynamics of liberty of a multi-ethnic workforce's recognition that being male, white, protestant are alone insufficient qualifications

to work in or to manage the American government, or the giant multinational corporations of our nation.

I recognize that the problems presented by the reality of diversity in the workforce is more than skin deep. Diversity in the workforce is a competitive concept in the personnel office and a theory for planners and policy givers whose edicts of diversity may be met with shouts of discrimination and reverse genderism. However, the theory of access to the workplace by notions of affirmative action is jarring loose status quo vested interests to the job in the face of other vested interests. And, while the implications of such dynamics are being debated, I do agree with Drucker that the "various fair employment regulations in the U.S. . . . treat promotion, training, job security and access to jobs as a matter of /property/ rights." My concurrence is based on the premise that the property interest "is compatible with limited government, personal freedom and the national allocation of resources through the free market."

Whatever intellectual notions that are spun concerning liberty and access to jobs in a multi-ethnic and racial workforce, it is the line manager who has the principle responsibility to assure that this government attains diversity in every job category. It is at this level that concepts of liberty and diversity face their greatest

challenge -- for it is at this level where personal judgments, perhaps, sameness of religious beliefs, sameness of gender and identity of race or national origin, along with extra governmental pressures from interest groups could influence a policy best referred to as the status quo. Such conduct could evoke the remedies of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, bring denials of discrimination, countercharges of discrimination and industrial disruption.

This is a period in American history to make equality work under rules set by neither worker who may compete for an available job. The rules of equality in the workforce are derived from the constitutional authority of the Congress in order to secure the liberty and to secure the domestic peace and tranquility of a nation. Affirmative action is a promise associated with liberty by a vast number of workers in the population. Affirmative action in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce may present problems which the contemporary manager must convert into a solution dictated by the policy of this nation in the same fashion and with the same vigor that we are trained and are expected to resolve other vital domestic issues.

A multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce has long been a part of this government. In this connection, I believe that in the 1980's the rule of reason must reign in managing a multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce. The quest for what is reasonable, what is fair, just and equitable is the subject matter for the Federalist papers of the closing years of this century.

The scholars of public administration have guided the nation through difficult times with positive themes of motivation and productivity. The scholars of today must focus on themes motivating a workforce to come to grips with the mandate of diversity, also. And, specifically what I mean is this: (1) that stereotypes of yesteryear may no longer govern who is excluded from a job; (2) that segregated job categories require strict scrutiny; (3) that callous insensitivity to religious beliefs cut against notions of liberty; (4) that language differences not a qualification for the job cannot be evoked as a barrier for disqualification of an applicant.

It is generally believed by certain racial communities that in times of economic downsides, minorities suffer disproportionately to non-minorities in the republic. There is evidence that this belief is a concrete reality. As we peek at the opening innings of the 1980's, there are economic indicators which point to negative responses to

severe social indicators.

The number of jobs available is a social as well as an economic indicator. The policy of access to jobs or affirmative action cannot subside with economic slow downs in our economy. Fewer jobs make no less important the sensitivity of the compelling need for a representative government. In fact, such conditions urge, if not compel, all of us who have the authority to make a difference more acutely aware of the need to secure the liberty through diversity efforts. A lack of concern and objective standards for job selection and job allocation may endanger the fabric of the republic, especially during this period of American life when citizens may view the job and access to a job as a property right. Hence, new themes of due process in the workplace will emerge -- I suspect to secure industrial peace and domestic tranquility. In the March 4, 1980 Wall Street Journal article, Drucker raises the question of due process himself. He asks,

How can modern economics cope with the emergence of job property rights and still maintain the flexibility and social mobility necessary for adapting quickly to change?

Drucker's response to this question is this:

At the very least, employing organizations will have to recognize that jobs have some of the characteristics of property rights and cannot therefore be diminished or taken away without due process.

Drucker then charts the course of informed decision-making by this statement:

Hiring, firing, promotion and demotion must be subject to pre-established, objective, public criteria. And there has to be review, a pre-established right to appeal to a higher judge in all actions affecting rights in and to the job.

I predict that employment conduct influenced by economic decisions which do not flow from "pre-established, objective and public criteria" will find themselves in the grievance mechanisms in great numbers. However, the quest for the right to a job as a property right should not be received with sighs of disdain, for, after all, it is better to quest for a property right through employment than to quest for a property right through public relief.

Before closing these remarks, I would like to address a phenomenon which the republic must be prepared to accept. A multi-ethnic and multi-racial society must be prepared to allow minorities to lead. There are going to be more minority and female managers in the system before this century closes. The mentality which questions

competence, loyalty of the minority or female manager in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce by the process of summary judgment will severely cripple the creative reservoir of this nation. We must brace ourselves to be led by persons who are ready, willing and able to carry their fair share, as a result of affirmative action and the common development of a free society.

On the other hand, before this century comes to an end, all workers may have to revisit the principles of "liberty and justice for all" as a theme for daily living. The manager of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial workforce will surely have to review the difference between authoritative vs. authoritarian rule. And, managers will have to exert leadership to assure that this government remains diverse. Laski, of course was right when he said: "A democracy in a world must be led . . ." Managers in the 1980's must lead. They must dare to make a difference; they must dare to think and to probe, to evaluate the representativeness of the workforce. For you see -- in the final analysis the constitutional peace of the nation is at stake. This nation cannot afford constitutional disruption between and among its people on the question of economic survival in the workforce. And, yet, fewer jobs, technological

fringes and increased job applicants in the population will challenge all segments of the republic to pull together as a nation of one as opposed to a nation of many.
