

# Perspective. . .



## Key to Progress—the Uncommon Man

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**M**ODERN SOCIETY, leaning so heavily on technology, simply cannot exist without many large units. As our technological horizons broaden and increase in complexity, the demand will be for increasing rather than decreasing aggregations of talent, manpower, and resources. . . .

The trend can be seen, as I have indicated, in the inevitable and quite essential growth of our organizations. Science and production and administration have become necessarily dependent upon team effort. Our trade and labor unions almost by definition are dedicated to the sublimation of the individual to the general level.

Our taxing methods have the present effect of leveling the rewards of individual performance and, for the future, the often frightening prospect of curbing the will toward individual accomplishment.

Even the folklore admonishes us with pious phrases to put our trust in mass rather than man, as in the tired, old doctrine that no man is indispensable. It seems to me that this country and the world have been enriched and invigorated most conspicuously by indispensable men, for the right man with the right idea at the right vortex of history has always been the indispensable man. Think of Newton, Lavoisier, Franklin, Archimedes, Gutenberg, and a host of others.

Certainly the world could ill afford to dispense with their discoveries.

Despite these trends, we seem thus far to have gotten by; it is the future about which we must think. . . . Just when we will realize this promise of the future and how far the new developments will take us depends on how well we are able to recognize and encourage individual achievement. We cannot move very rapidly if we shut the door on our ablest people by absorbing them in the lifeless tomb of mediocrity. . . .

Try as we will, we can create no synthetic genius, no composite leader. Men are not interchangeable parts like so many pinion gears or carburetors; genius, as John Adams said, is bestowed "imperiously" by nature upon an individual. And behind every advance of the human race is a germ of creation growing in the mind of some lone individual, an individual whose dreams waken him in the night while others lie contentedly asleep. . . .

I know of no problem so pressing, of no issue so vital. For unless we can guarantee the encouragement and fruitfulness of the uncommon man, the future will lose for all men its virtue, its brightness, and its promise.

*(Excerpts from a speech before the Forty-third Anniversary Dinner, American Newspaper Publishers Association, New York City, April 26, 1956)*