

## Observations on the Selection of Our Professional Leaders

We are indebted to a fellow editor—who is also a current member of the APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Science's Executive Committee—for the "idea germ" that triggered this month's editorial. We refer specifically to Professor Joseph R. Robinson of the School of Pharmacy, University of Wisconsin.

Among his many concurrent responsibilities, Dr. Robinson serves as Editor of the *Journal of Parenteral Science and Technology*, and he authors the editorial column that regularly appears in that bi-monthly periodical.

His column—or more precisely, the "Editor's Page," as it is actually headed—in the January-February 1984 issue, is entitled "Leading Versus Managing." We recommend that the article be read in its entirety to get the benefit of Professor Robinson's full message. However, for our purposes here, we will briefly summarize his points as: (a) bringing out the important distinction between leadership and management; (b) noting that a good manager is not necessarily a good leader, and in fact only rarely does a single individual possess both attributes; (c) observing that it is easier to be a good manager than it is to be a good leader; (d) pointing out that new executives often start out as good leaders but then gradually drift into an operating style wherein managing replaces leadership; and (e) concluding that the awareness of the value of, and the need for, leadership represents a vital first step in developing this very rare quality in one's self.

We would now like to take Professor Robinson's thoughts and observations a bit further.

Granted, virtually all of us profess to want leaders in our positions of authority, and we profess to want them to lead in a forceful and effective manner. But although we profess these desires, are they truly what we want or only what we have deluded ourselves into believing that we want?

These thoughts particularly come to mind as the American Pharmaceutical Association is currently in the throes of selecting a new President and chief executive officer. The criteria mentioned by all involved or in any way interested—from the APhA Board of Trustees, to the general membership, to the professional press—universally include "strong leadership" as a prime qualification for the person to be chosen for the office.

Certainly, the person who held the position for the past twenty-five years—the late William S. Apple—was unquestionably one of the strongest leaders that the entire health care community has ever produced. He was acknowledged by fan and critic alike as a dynamic, forceful personality who was able to achieve a level of success in his objectives far beyond normal expectations—and that this was primarily due to his strong leadership, his political astuteness, and his forceful personality.

Indeed, except perhaps for a few isolated criticisms in his later years, never did anyone fault either Dr. Apple or the organization he led, as being inactive, lethargic, unimaginative, or inflexible. When Dr. Apple took the reins at APhA, it had an image of being a conservative, outdated, and stodgy organization. He quickly reversed that perception, and by the early 1960s APhA was acknowledged as the frontrunner organization in pharmacy and among the forefront of all health care organizations.

But interestingly, criticism of Apple and APhA grew proportionately with their leadership influence. It appears that many members down deep really prefer the *status quo*. They want the appearance of activity, but they don't want change. The new APhA policy positions and initiatives were unpopular among many of the "rank and file" within the profession. Drug product selection, patient consultation, and clinical roles for the pharmacist were just some of the policies that APhA espoused first within organized pharmacy and which were vigorously resisted for a long time by much of the profession itself.

The role of APhA as an organizational "leader" for the profession—rather than simply a "protector" or "caretaker" for the profession—meant that, as an organization, it was out in front of the general membership and the profession as a whole. But the reaction of many pharmacists to APhA and Apple suggested that they didn't really want leadership. When they called for a *strong leader*, they really meant to say that they wanted a *dynamic manager*.

We see this same phenomenon repeated time-after-time in other areas. Journal subscribers and authors also profess to want a strong leader as the periodical's Editor. However, when changes are initiated, innovative approaches are established, or new policies are adopted, these developments are usually met with shocked disbelief if not outright resistance.

Scientific societies, including the APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences, almost universally will contend that they want an established, prominent scientist as their chief executive officer. Purportedly, this is so that the individual can serve with a high profile for the group in its dealings with other scientific organizations, with government agency officials, with the press, and with the general public.

But in contrast to industry and trade groups, experience shows that scientific societies and professional associations usually prefer to retain the leadership visibility role for their chief elected officers or for some comparable elected officials.

Although the motivating reasons are natural and quite understandable, this sort of *modus operandi* is bound to impede the full exercise of the most effective leadership for the organization.

Consequently, we felt that Professor Robinson's observations have special relevance and application to the pharmaceutically related organizations, groups, and institutions with which we are involved or in which we participate.

If it is strong leadership that we truly want from those we select to staff and run those operations, then we must be prepared to accept the "fall-out" associated with new ideas, new directions, and new approaches. If we are not willing to do so, then let us be honest and admit candidly that what we really desire is simply good *managers*—and not good *leaders*.

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