

figures, was an aberration from beginning to end. And I knew exactly how to make my point.

“Compromise” was the watchword of this constitutional exercise; anyone attuned to the media or participating in the actual process heard it many times a day. As I said at the time—and continue to believe—Canadians are truly the great compromisers. It is one of our great strengths—we are a tolerant people, ready to adjust to the needs at hand. (That is probably why we have such a good record as United Nations peacekeepers.) But compromise wasn’t going to work this time, as the results of the October 1992 referendum later made dramatically clear. Despite the almost unanimous support of all the major political figures and political parties in the country, the population at large rejected the proposal—collectively and pervasively.

The metaphor from which I drew the title of my paper came directly from Mary Parker Follett, in words she wrote more than half a century ago. When you read them, I think you will be struck by just how contemporary her writings truly are. This commentary repeats some of her material from the chapter that follows, but frankly I am inclined to agree with her assessment of it: it may well be “the most important thing in the world.”

As I told my audience in Kingston, politics is the art of compromise. But was compromise, and politics, the best way—even a possible way—to resolve the kind of difficulties Canada was encountering in 1992? I pointed out that in the essay that follows, Mary Parker Follett explained long ago that differences can be settled in three ways, which she called “domination,” “compromise,” and “integration.” I quoted her at length.

Domination, obviously, is a victory of one side over the other. This is not usually successful in the long run for the side that is defeated will simply wait for its chance to dominate. The second way, that of compromise, we understand well, for that is the way we settle most of our controversies—each side

gives up a little in order to have peace. Both these ways are unsatisfactory. In dominating, only one way gets what it wants; in compromise neither side gets what it wants. . . . Is there any other way of dealing with difference?

There is a way beginning now to be recognised at least and sometimes followed, the way of integration. Let me take . . . a very simple illustration. In a University library one day, in one of the smaller rooms, someone wanted the window open, I wanted it shut. We opened the window in the next room where no one was sitting. There was no compromise because we both got all we really wanted. For I did not want a closed room, I simply did not want the north wind to blow directly on me; and he, the man in the room with me, did not want that particular window open, he merely wanted more air in the room. Integration means finding a third way which will include both what A wishes and what B wishes, a way in which neither side has had to sacrifice anything.¹

Domination has sometimes been used in Canada—for example, over the French schools in Manitoba in the last century and the English signs of Quebec more recently. It has never been acceptable. Mostly, however, Canadians have relied on compromise. And it has often worked—more or less. But compromise would not resolve the constitutional crisis in 1992. We had already tried to create one constitution by domination; when that failed, having alienated many people in Quebec, we tried to create two more by compromise. These efforts failed too, succeeding only in alienating everyone. “If we get only compromise,” Follett added, “the conflict will come up again and again in some other form, for in compromise we give up part of our desire, and because we shall not be content to rest there, sometime we shall try to get the whole of our desire.” It seemed to me that our one possibility, therefore—indeed our great opportunity—was her “third way”: “when two desires are integrated.”

Integration means moving the debate to another place, going back to basics to find a common ground. As Follett puts it, "Integration involves invention . . . and the clever thing is to recognize this and not to let one's thinking stay within the boundaries of two alternatives which are mutually exclusive. In other words, never let yourself be bullied by an either-or situation . . . Find a third way." Fresh air without the draft—a nice metaphor for Canada, her approach literally and her solution figuratively. Hence the title.

I did not quote Mary Parker Follett that day just because the ideas and the metaphors fitted so well. I quoted her because the eloquence and the inspiration of her words set the tone for a people who had lost their way. I know of nothing written before or since that comes anywhere close to this. I recount all this here to show how relevant Mary Parker Follett's writings are to today's problems—really, to *every* day's problems.

The second experience that encouraged me to write this commentary was my more recent need to respond to a French professor's criticism of my study of managerial work. The author resurrected Henri Fayol, or at least condemned me for having had the gall to criticize the French master.² Reacting to the critic (a chore compared to writing this!) reminded me of how out-of-date Fayol really is. Managers who believe they plan, organize, command, coordinate, and control are not technically wrong, they are just misguided. These are not the managers who see themselves in the role of facilitating the work of other adult human beings, or who build organizations predisposed to flexible learning, or who are open to interesting thoughts unfolding in their own peculiar ways. Follett's concepts of "integration," "constructive conflict," "cross functioning," "collective responsibility," and "reciprocal modification," likely have little meaning for these people. Instead, they see themselves perched atop metaphorical hierarchies, there to impose the control of their "superior" minds over everyone else, the "subordinates."

Of course, we might argue that Fayol wrote in another time. Things were different. How can we fault him for seeing organizations as they were then?

Well, Follett wrote in another time too, not long after Fayol and overlapping with him for a period, in fact.³ But we have no need to make such excuses for her; quite the contrary, in fact. Peter Drucker points out in his introduction that her work got lost not long after it was written, and stayed lost for decades. Just look at the dates of publication of her major works: years, even decades, after her death. Imagine if we had spent most of this century heeding Follett instead of Fayol!

Peter Drucker also mentions the central role of the citizen in Follett's work. The citizen of the corporation might well be a natural extension of this, for especially in the essay that follows, Follett plays down the commanding role of the manager (so important to Fayol) and plays up the cooperating role of the employee.

All that we make such a fuss about these days—currently the words are "empowerment" and "total quality management," although not long ago they were "participative management" and "quality of work life"—are crystal clear in Follett's work. "All of this is now being increasingly recognized," she writes at the outset of this essay, her optimism perhaps clouding her judgment. Indeed, having not read some of these works for a long time, I was taken aback by her discussion of "group responsibility" and the example of the elevator operators—total quality management, long before even the Japanese!

There may be nothing new under the sun, but one person seeing it does not necessarily illuminate the vision of others. We are still mesmerized with hierarchy, after Fayol, and are all too often blind to the insights of the cooperation of equals, that wonderful concept of "collective responsibility," after Follett.

Will the republication of Follett's work change things? Even though we need her message now more than ever, in American

business no less than in Canadian politics, will enough of the powers that be *really* listen? I don't mean some hype in the business press, trendy reviews in the best newspapers, or glitzy lectures about Follett's teaching that are forgotten on the way home. I mean a real change in attitudes.

I wonder. For we live in a world in which the most superficial among us, those supposed wizards of Wall Street, still have immense influence; in which barely experienced MBAs still command high salaries to command and control (albeit through empowerment or reengineering or whatever is the latest fad, the medium inevitably drowning out whatever may be valuable in the message); in which business school academics are mesmerized with a theory that is based on "opportunism," specifically "self-interest seeking with guile," to the explicit preclusion of "trust."⁴ Compare these crude, negative, atomistic views of the world with that of a woman who wrote that "Everyone in an enterprise should feel responsible for its success," or "Our own part is not a fraction of the whole, it is in a sense the whole," or of "each man learning to fit his work into that of every other in a spirit of co-operation"

Integration requires understanding, in-depth understanding. It requires serious commitment and dedication. It takes effort, and it depends on creativity. There is precious little of all of these qualities in too many of our organizations today. But there are other kinds of people too, and other kinds of organizations, including those willing to invest the effort to republish this wonderful work. Let us only hope that a sizable number of readers will make the corresponding efforts to appreciate a set of messages that remain so critical in this world.

NOTES

1. L. Urwick, ed., *Freedom & Co-ordination: Lectures in Business Organisation by Mary Parker Follett* (London: Management Publications, Ltd., 1949) pp. 65-66.

2. Henri Fayol (1841-1925) was a mining engineer by training and managing director of a French mining company between 1888 and 1918. In 1916, the *Bulletin de la Société de l'Industrie Minérale* published Fayol's *Administration Industrielle et Générale—Prévoyance, Organisation, Commandement, Coordination, Contrôle*. This work first appeared in English in 1949, with the title *General and Industrial Management*. As the French title of his work suggests, Fayol conceived of managers as engaged in five essential tasks: planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling.
3. Mary Parker Follett lived from 1868 to 1933, and the essays collected in this volume were, for the most part, written in the 1920s.
4. Oliver E. Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications* (New York: Free Press, 1975); also *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism* (New York: Free Press, 1985).