

ROTARY CONFERENCE

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA
April 29, 1958

VOCATIONAL SERVICE

Paul Harris, the founder of Rotary, once said, "Rotary is made up of unselfish men". In my opinion he could have truthfully added that most Rotarians are usually seeking ways and means of exemplifying that unselfishness. But, fellow Rotarians, we cannot and should not be satisfied with past accomplishments. There is always room for advancement and improvement. Each of you has a spotlight beamed in your direction, and having accepted the obligations which go with membership, one of your greatest contributions can be a continuous effort to raise the ethical standards of business and professions with the thought constantly in mind that the brightness of the spotlight will reflect your accomplishments.

The underlying principle of Vocational Service is very simple. It is nothing more mysterious or complex than the Golden Rule applied with very liberal proportions of plain old-fashioned honesty and a high sense of honor. Yes, if we could rely upon the universal application of the Golden Rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them", then we would not need to have any great concern about our Vocational phase of Rotary. Unfortunately, the business world has not yet reached that goal.

A Rotarian has little opportunity to devote every hour of every business day of every working week to Club Service, Community Service, or International Service. But, just as surely as he is a business or professional man, and he must be one to be a Rotarian, he will enjoy the opportunity and carry the responsibility of practicing Vocational Service during every hour that he is engaged in the conduct of his business or practice of his profession. Every Rotarian's work day is comprised of a continuing series of contacts with his suppliers, his clients, his

customers, his competitors, his patients, or his employees. Now every one of these contacts involves a decision or an act that is either ethically right or ethically wrong.

Back in 1932 Herbert J. Taylor was assigned by the creditors of the Club Aluminum Company the task of saving the company from being closed out as a bankrupt organization. The company owed its creditors over \$400,000 more than its total assets. It was bankrupt, but still alive.

With these tremendous obstacles and handicaps facing him and his company, he felt that he must develop in his own organization something which his competitors would not have in equal amount. He decided it should be in the character, dependability, and service-mindedness in his personnel. His task was not easy.

Herbert Taylor decided the logical place to look for guidance and inspiration in formulating his code was the Bible. Through the years this book had been the source of many of the world's great moral and spiritual truths. In a certain passage, he found four basic words around which to build his code. These are: "Truth", "Justice", "Friendliness", and "Helpfulness".

Considerable time was spent in developing these into a short Code of Ethics. Herbert Taylor spent about 60 days of faithful effort to live up to the code before he felt he had made sufficient progress to feel qualified to talk to some of his associates about it. He talked with his four department heads. You may be interested to know the religious faith of these four. One was Roman Catholic, the second was Christian Scientist, the third was an Orthodox Jew, and the fourth a Presbyterian.

Each was asked whether there was anything in the code contrary to the doctrines and ideals of his particular faith. All four agreed that truth, justice, friendliness, and helpfulness not only coincided with their religious ideals, but if constantly applied in business, they should result in greater success and progress.

This short Code of Ethics was four questions. Here they are:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build good will and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

These four questions have become known to Rotarians through^{out} the world as the Four-Way Test. This test has been called the shortest, effective code of standards of correct business practice so far devised, and its application is a perfect exemplification of Rotary's Vocational Service.

Some years later, Herbert Taylor reported, "We have found you cannot constantly apply the Four-Way Test to all your relations with others eight hours each day in business without getting into the habit of doing it in your home, social, and community life. You thus become a better father, a better friend, and a better citizen".

Admittedly, we are all in business for profit, but there are people who sometimes blink at the mention of the word "profit", and there are others who are inclined to apologize for it. The difficulty lies in our interpretation of what "profit" is, but I believe the true answer can be obtained from what the Master once said, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his own soul".

George Lorimer contributed this thought, "It is good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it is good too, to check up once in a while to make sure we haven't lost the things money can't buy."

This thing we call Rotary has developed as a world-wide influence during a period of transition in human relations. One has only to recall certain practices and procedures which were considered normal at the turn of the century, and compare them with present day conceptions in order to realize how far we have traveled in the last half century. Whether Rotary has contributed to that progress or merely adapted its program to the tide of events need not cause us too much concern. What is important is whether we are using our full potential in the present day world.

We are not, if we are content to listen to inspiring addresses at our Rotary Club meeting and then feel we have fulfilled our obligation in Vocational Service. The perimeter of our opportunities extends beyond the membership of our club. The club should be the starting point, and not the finish line of our efforts.

There is another side to this question which could be best put as a question.

WHO AM I?

I have more influence on a certain Rotarian than anyone else has, even more than his boss. I can so stimulate him that his sales go up, or I can so depress him that his sales go down. I can make him succeed or I can make him fail. Really, I have a great responsibility. Whether he has peace of mind or whether he has worries that will end in a nervous breakdown depends mostly upon me. You see, he is working for me as well as his firm - I AM HIS WIFE.

We are well aware that the reputation or character of a vocation can be nothing more nor less than the sum total of the reputation of all the individuals who have and who now engage in it.

Is it not then a worthy ambition for each of us to strive to so conduct ourselves in our daily contacts in our vocation that the result will be an increase in the respect in which we and our vocation are held. This is "dignifying our profession" by dignifying ourselves. The simple fact is if we wish to be respected we need only to be respectable. And again - if we wish to bring honor to ourselves and our profession - we must relegate thoughts of economic reward and credit for our worthy conduct to the background. We can accomplish so much more if we refuse to waste our time and energies worrying about who gets the credit.

All this and a great deal more were said much more effectively a long time ago by a very wise man in words like this: "He who would be greatest among you, let him be the servant of all".

As employers of our fellow men do we fully appreciate that our job involves

humility, understanding, and leadership? Have we recognized that the street sweeper, the bootblack, and the garbage man fill jobs that are just as worthy, just as dignified, and just as useful in their sphere as any company president or business tycoon in their sphere. Be the job humble or otherwise, it can be made worthy and dignified.

In the 16th Century, an overgrown, gawky youth entered a monastery in southern France, and was given the name of Brother Lawrence. Brother Lawrence was so totally lacking in skills that finally the good prior assigned him the task of being a kitchen scullion. As he worked at this menial task he, at first, resented his position. But through prayer and meditation, he reached a mature conclusion that God ranked every service the same. That if he performed his work faithfully and well, it was just as important as the work of the priests who held the services in the Cathedral. And lo! One day he became the prior of the Monastery.

Ever since the writing finger of history or the brush or chisel in the artist's hand has sought to picture man, he has been revealed to be in conflict with himself. He is two selves - his best self and another.

His best self is usually described as "the soul", "the spirit", "the higher nature" or "man's divinity". This self evidences itself chiefly in the realms of religion, ethics, philosophy, and metaphysics. To be wholly commonplace, it is man's Sunday or Holy Day self and often hangs in the closet the rest of the week.

That other self - ironical as it may be - has come to be man's working-day self. It is the self that is concerned with and engaged in man's vocational work. This very ancient concept of a division in man's nature has caused business work to be looked on as sordid. The Bible story of the creation sets the seventh day apart from the working days. It is the Holy Day. The others are something else.

Under this devisive idea of the economy of human life one may grapple with his everyday problems, be soiled in doing such work, and look on the soil as an integral part of work. But then, when the slanting sun turns in a sloping course

toward the western realm, he may wash, go home to his family, his love, and his best self that he symbolically left behind when he went to work.

At work he may be harsh, relentless, ruthless, vindictive, morally crafty, even cruel and no proprieties are offended. But, at that other time and place - at home, in church, at Rotary - he puts on the mask of his best self and walks upon the stage in the role of the kindly and genial Dr. Jekyll and the sordid Mr. Hyde is consigned to the shadows of the wings off-stage.

Rotary's Vocational Service is an effort to erase the line of demarcation between our divided selves and make us one. To do so one must reshape some of his concepts.

In the vast drama of life of which the Deity is the author and producer, there are no stars on the one hand and supporting cast on the other. Every true man is a star. Every role is important. Life - this thing that we call society - needs what men at work are doing. And if it needs what you are doing, what you are doing is worth doing honestly and well.

The trends of life during the past 50 years have been toward a high specialization of skills. An American humorist is quoted as having once said, "What this country needs is a good 5-cent cigar". I would say what this age needs is a good handy-man - someone who can repair a sagging doorstep, replace a fuse plug, paint a new plank, or stop a leaking pipe. Maybe he wouldn't be so highly skilled in any particular line. At least he would be human. Much of the humanity is squeezed out of the specialists of today. They are looking so intently at the point of a pin that they can see neither the shank nor the head of the pin.

Once more before I die, I want to go to a genial-faced doctor who will sort of thump around awhile, stick the handle of a tablespoon in my mouth, and then smile as he pats me on the back and says, "You are sound as a dollar". Even that phrase is meaningless now, and maybe I am not that sound, but it would do me a lot of good just the same.

The medical specialist subjects you to a lot of mechanical gadgets, takes

enough blood away from you to make you anemic, courses enough electricity through your body to electrocute you, and when he gets through, he tells you that hairs on your legs look pretty healthy, but he is worried about the appearance of your skin. Of course, skin work is out of his line - although he may skin you with his bill - and so he sends you to a skin specialist. That one finally approves the skin, but expresses some doubt as to the condition of your arteries, and sends you to a blood man. He thinks maybe your arteries will not show any leakage for awhile, but he looks serious when he talks about the possible condition of your bones. And after they are all done, all you remember are the repeated doubts and you go home and call a lawyer to fix things up for you.

To put an atom bomb or a jet airplane into the hands of a people who know only how to build or operate these things and have no training as to when, why, or for what purpose to use them is to forecast the destruction of the human family. The moral and cultural deflation of our day is more foreboding than the monetary and economic deflation, although the one may have some logical connection with the other.

Man's responsibility for man is his rejected task. In the dawn of the human family, Cain eschewed any responsibility for his brother, and we have never been fully able to disengage ourselves from that declaration. In the biography of Mary, Queen of Scots, this significant statement comes, "In political life it is only the vanquished that are wrong; and history strides over them with iron-shod heels".

Rotary is sometimes identified with the well-to-do. In a proper sort of sense that may be true. And if it is true, it may be a landmark in Rotary's course of growth. Jesus of Nazareth made little headway during his life with the well-to-do. His greater successes were with the lesser men. Maybe he left for you and for me the task of selling his concept of the good life to that stratum of society. Maybe the job is ours to proclaim man's responsibility for man, and to shout down the dictum of our ancestor, Cain.

A rusty shield once looked up at the sun and cried out "Illumine me". And the sun replied, "First, polish thyself".

Rotary summons you and me to merge our whole being into our best selves. It adjures us to support with all our might its tower of light, so that it may shine beneficently upon the faces of men and point them - even though yet unborn - toward the Upward Way.

Rotary speaks to us in the lines of Eddie Guest:

"I want to go out with my head erect,
I want to deserve all men's respect;
But here in the struggle for fame and wealth
I want to be able to like myself.
I don't want to look at myself and know
That I am bluster and bluff and empty show.
I can never hide myself from me;
I see what others may never see;
I know what others may never know,
I never can fool myself, and so,
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting and conscience free."