PREREQUISITES TO PROFESSIONALISM

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There is probably no doubt in any of our minds concerning what we think we mean when we discuss the term "profession". In 1948 Dr. W. P. Shepard (1) outlined the criteria of a profession and emphasized educational qualifications as a primary consideration. He very wisely called attention to the need for each school to develop its own curriculum and warned against a freezing of thought and initiative. Macaulay, the great historian, advised that "To know the past is to predict the future". Now in order to look forward more intelligently let us consider the recent history of professionalism for the sanitarian.

In the Fall of 1950, a group of interested professional public health workers formed a Steering Committee to meet with and advise the Subcommittee on Undergraduate Training of the Engineering Section of the APHA. Our assignment was undergraduate education in Sanitary Science. Thus, a need has been recognized. We formulated a request to the W. W. Kellogg Foundation, which generously provided financial assistance for a meeting of educators, held in Battle Creek, Michigan, April, 1951 (2). And what was the purpose of the Conference? It was to outline the professional training required for sanitarians. The first thought which came to our minds, and on which we expended all of our time and energy was the content of a proposed curriculum leading to a college degree.

The first objective in the training of a sanitarian is to produce an educated individual, we said, with the hope that he will have developed a competence in the formulation of intelligent judgements. A professional person is expected to be able to do this to some degree. We went on to conclude our objective with a discussion of the general content of professional training needed in the field of environmental health and how this might be accomplished. Thus, the first prerequisite to professionalism appears to be educational preparation. Let us consider briefly a few recent examples of job opportunities in public health.

In September of 1963, the U. S. Public Health Service announced examinations for its Regular Commissioned Corps for Physicians, Sanitary Engineers, Health Educators, Veterinarians, and Sanitarians. In every case the applicant was considered as a professional person, and a minimum of a bachelor's degree was a requirement which ran like a thread through every announcement. Obviously, some categories required more extensive graduate training than others, but the foundation stone of the basic college degree was present in all cases.

The bachelor's degree, incidentally, was originally called a "determinant" (3). It was regarded as a preliminary step towards Mastership, or Doctorate, and was awarded without a diploma. The awarding of degrees by universities (a practice dating back about 800 years) had its roots in the need for an official recognition of competency, according to one scholar. In 1849, Sir G. C. Lewis, in his definitive "Authority on Matters of Opinion" wrote sternly, "The granting of degrees by universities and other learned bodies proceeds on the supposition that the public require some assistance to their judgement in the choice of professional services, and that such an official scrutiny into the qualifications of practitioners is a useful security against the imposture and incompetency of mere pretenders to skill". Thus, professional services are different from those of a skilled tradesman.

What has been said above concerning the need of a college degree should not be misunderstood. We all know college graduates who seem unable to add two and two and we wonder how in the world they ever managed to get through. Unfortunately, it is true that it is possible to memorize course content, to deliver a warm body, regularly and on time, to lectures, to memorize facts and regurgitate them in recitation classes or on quizzes, and to so conduct oneself morally as to enable one to attain a degree after four years.

This is aimless, fruitless, worthless wandering. It is stuffing a student with facts as one would fill a sausage casing. It is the antithesis of that most essential trait of the real student, i.e., some form of intellectual curiosity. It should be understood clearly that the degree is merely a means to an end. Otherwise, as Oscar Wilde said, we might have a graduate who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing (4). We are not interested in producing a learned ignoramus (5). One might feel in agreement with the remark made in a professional journal (6), to the effect that "it is really a question of how best to do what is most likely to be right if what probably will happen happens before what is being done is no longer the best thing to do."

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The undergraduate training should give the student a command of fundamentals in the humanities and science; it should give him a method of attack on problems that are new and difficult; it should give him an intellectual self-reliance. In a similar vein, the Chief Executive Officer of the Rhodes Scholarships, Lord Elton says (7) "I regard as the great pride of Oxford its ability to present an entirely useless training in that it doesn't concentrate on technical know how . . . Science at Oxford is still taught mainly to make brains work better." The pragmatism of business cannot afford this luxury. Yet this is how we press forward in the pursuit of excellence and how some of us fondly hope that our graduates will be uncommon men.

For another view, let us briefly summarize the attributes of a profession given to me by an officer of the U. S. Public Health Service (8). They are as follows:

1. Requires a prolonged period of educational preparation, including appreciation of the arts as well as scientific learning.
2. A profession assembles a body of knowledge relating to its field and of necessity develops a glossary of scientific terms needed for exchange of information.
3. A profession is able to attract and hold people to it because of what it does.
4. A profession is not an intermediate stage or "route to" any other form of human endeavor.
5. The practice of a profession meets a basic human need.
6. The practice of a profession is not for the monetary consideration alone, but more for the satisfactions of giving service.
7. The attainment of a profession carries with it an obligation where possible to share in the teaching of those that are learning.
8. The practice of a profession is not solely a technique or scientific procedure, but in addition, requires a high order of judgement.
9. A profession shares knowledge among its members for the betterment of the profession. There are no secrets.
10. An organized profession will reject individuals from it that do not govern their actions to conform to the ideals and purposes of the profession.
11. The strength and personal satisfaction of a profession is the service that it gives.
12. A profession offers only its highest order of skill to those whom it serves. In other words, there is no second class service.

The above is somewhat reminiscent of the list published by Dr. Shepard in 1948 and so eloquently expanded by Chanlett in 1958 (9). I thoroughly agree with his sentiment concerning education and its relationship to the moral fibre of the student. For years we have agreed that first and foremost we want men who can get along with others, men who have generally accepted desirable traits usually associated with the term "gentlemen". As an educator, I know that given such a man, we can teach him the technical portion of his work and produce a professional public health worker.

There is another aspect of professionalism which certainly has its pros and cons. This is the matter of Registration Laws for Sanitarians. If a state legislature passes a law relating to the registration of sanitarians, does this action make the sanitarian a professional man? Does it add to his stature? Is it necessary in the public interest? There are many present at this meeting who have worked very hard to get such laws passed in their home state. Without going into this matter in great detail, let me point out that surgeons and plumbers are each licensed by an appropriate governmental group to practice a particular body of knowledge and skill which they possess. The requirement of a license, or registration is a political expedient which is done in the public interest. It does not confer professional status on either the physician or the plumber. Professional status is something to be earned, by virtue of training and experience and cannot be attained because a legislative body waves a magic wand. Perhaps you feel that the end justifies the means. That sanitarians need this in order to be regarded as professionals by the public or by other public health personnel. A chemist, or a mathematician, a zoologist, or a health educator is just that because of his training. He has a job specification in civil service because of his background and the sanitarian in my opinion, is not different from these professions. If the registration law is primarily aimed at a salary adjustment, then let us recognize it for what it is. The lawyer, the accountant, the metallurgist, bacteriologist, or sanitarian can be defined professionally by his training.

The chief prerequisites to professionalism, then, relate to the need for proper training at the college level. Perhaps it is time to reevaluate the thinking of our group of 1951 when we formed a Council to study the means for accreditation of undergraduate schools having a degree in the general area of Environmental Health.

The profession of the Sanitarian is time honored. Such men as Sedgwick, Rosenau, and Winslow were proud to be known as Sanitarians. Perhaps you may recall a thought from Emerson who said that an institution is but the lengthened shadow of one man. To give just one example of such a shadow, we have the William T. Sedgwick Medal of the APHA. The Sanitarian has just arrived on the public health scene.
as a professional person. He can assure the respect of other professional groups if he will continue to improve by showing leadership, initiative, and technical competence as new problems arise.

References


AMENDMENT TO SANITARY STANDARDS FOR STAINLESS STEEL AUTOMOTIVE MILK TRANSPORTATION TANKS FOR BULK DELIVERY AND/OR FARM PICK-UP SERVICE

Serial #0505

Formulated by
International Association of Milk, Food and Environmental Sanitarians
United States Public Health Service
The Dairy Industry Committee

The 3-A "Sanitary Standards for Stainless Steel Automotive Milk Transportation Tanks For Bulk Delivery And/Or Farm Pick-up Service", Amended April 28, 1954, Serial #0501, are further amended by adding a new sub-paragraph D-8. Air Under Pressure and/or C-I-P, and a new section O - Air Under Pressure and/or C-I-P, and by deleting sub-paragraph E-2. and Section A of the Appendix.

D-8. AIR UNDER PRESSURE AND/OR C-I-P:

Openings for air agitation and/or C-I-P applications shall be protected against contamination by means of a removable dust cover, except where such opening is within the pump and/or hose cabinet or compartment.

O - AIR UNDER PRESSURE AND/OR C-I-P:

Means for applying air under pressure or solutions for C-I-P shall conform to the applicable provisions of the "3-A Accepted Practices For Supplying Air Under Pressure In Contact With Milk, Milk Products And Product Contact Surfaces," except that clamp type fittings shall not be used in the product zone.

Tubing and related fittings within the tank shall be readily and easily removable for cleaning outside the tank or be designed for mechanically cleaning in place. The C-I-P system shall be so designed that the solution is applied to all product contact surfaces of the tank, except those areas requiring manual cleaning which include such areas of the tank as vents, valves, manholes and gaskets. If designed for cleaning in place, the tubing and all related fittings shall be self-draining.

Permanently mounted air or solution tubing shall be constructed and installed so that it will not sag, buckle, vibrate or prevent complete drainage of the tank or tubing and shall be located so that the distance from the outside of the tubing and the inside lining shall be at least two inches, except at point of entrance.

This amendment shall become effective May 15, 1964.