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TVA AND THE GRASS ROOTS; A STUDY
IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF FORMAL
ORGANIZATION**

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PHILIP SELZNICK

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R. L. BEALS
FRANKLIN FEARING
W. S. ROBINSON



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Organization*

BY
PHILIP SELZNICK

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PREFACE

THIS STUDY was made possible by a field fellowship granted me in 1942-1943 by the Social Science Research Council; and by the cooperation of the Tennessee Valley Authority, which opened its doors to scientific inquiry "with no strings attached." To both of these organizations I am indebted for the opportunity they created.

The materials of this inquiry were gathered during 1942-1943. The analysis was not committed to paper until three years later—a wholly incidental consequence of the war years. Subsequent developments in the TVA program and organization have not been taken into account. But since the primary interest of the study is in theoretical considerations, the delay is not, perhaps, as consequential as it might otherwise be. On the other hand, the situation within TVA as it was in 1943 represented the close of a decade of its operation, a point to be borne in mind by those interested in TVA's history for its own sake.

The files and the personnel of the Tennessee Valley Authority were the primary sources of research data. The unpublished "record" has been accorded the same status as personal interview materials, so that sources and quotations cannot always be given specific reference. I have endeavored to protect the anonymity of those in and out of the Authority who have helped me to an understanding of the TVA's methods and program. At the same time, informants on questions of detail have been restricted to those within TVA who have worked on the programs discussed. A check with the written record was made wherever possible. Interviews with officials in Washington and in the Tennessee Valley states were also of assistance.

It is hoped that a contribution has been made here toward the evolution of a theory of organization. In that sense, the study is not practical or programmatic. It is believed, however, that a practical relevance will be discerned by those involved in action who must take into account such general relations within and among organizations as are studied here. It must also be emphasized that what is presented here is only one aspect of the total TVA picture. For more general presentations of the Authority's program, the reader is referred to such volumes as David E. Lilienthal's *TVA: Democracy on the March*, C. Herman Pritchett's *The Tennessee Valley Authority: A Study in Public Administration*, and Herman Finer's *TVA: Lessons for International Application*.

It is unfortunate that the nature of the materials makes impossible explicit acknowledgment of my debt to the many individuals who gave

liberally of time and faith so that I might have the materials for a realistic analysis. Without the guidance which only participants can give, much of this analysis could never have been made explicit. In addition to those unnamed, I wish to thank Daniel Bell, Edmund de S. Brunner, Patterson H. French, Max M. Kampelman, Robert S. Lynd, Robert K. Merton, and John D. Millett. To the critical intelligence of Gertrude Jaeger there is a special obligation.

P. S.

Los Angeles
November, 1947

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