

**BUSINESS
METHODS
AND THE WAR**

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Business Methods and the War by Lawrence R. Dicksee

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LAWRENCE R. DICKSEE

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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BUSINESS METHODS
AND
THE WAR

BY

LAWRENCE R. DICKSEE, M.COM., F.C.A.

Professor of Accounting and Business Organisation
in the University of London

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Cambridge:
at the University Press

1915

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TO
J. L. AND R. L.
TO WHOM I AM INDEBTED
FOR SOME OF THE IDEAS
EMBODIED IN THIS WORK.

PREFACE

IN the early part of the present year I delivered four lectures on "Business Methods and the War" at the London School of Economics and Political Science. These lectures are now reproduced in book form. They must not be regarded as an attempt to deal exhaustively with the subject, but rather in the light of a few suggestions as to how business men might, with great advantage to themselves, take to heart such lessons as the war may have to teach them. After all, war is a business, and business—like life—is one long battle. Accordingly, there should be something for the business man to learn from a study of present conditions. That the British business man has still much to learn, I have endeavoured to suggest as gently as I can: that he is not unteachable is my profound belief, as well as my confident hope.

LAWRENCE R. DICKSEE.

LONDON,

13th February 1915.

LECTURE I

I have been asked by the Director to deliver a short course of lectures this term, dealing with the War from the point of view of my own special subject, Accountancy and Business Methods, and I have willingly agreed to do so, because I feel that we should all do what lies in our power, to strengthen the position of the country, by taking to heart all the lessons that the present War may have to teach us, although I need perhaps hardly point out to you that it is, as yet, too soon to attempt anything of really permanent value in this connection. On the other hand, I do not think it is necessary that we should wait until the War is over before attempting to consider the problem in some of its aspects. Accordingly, my aim in this present course of lectures will be, not to cover all the ground laid open to us, or to attempt to draw any final conclusions from the material that I am about to place before you, but rather to suggest to you certain lines upon which I think further enquiry may be found useful, as tending to promote business efficiency upon lines which up to the present have perhaps been insufficiently considered by business men.

It is—or rather, until quite recently, was—the fashion for business men to assume that soldiers know nothing about business, and accordingly that they had nothing to learn by a study of military methods of handling business. Even if it were true that soldiers, as a class, are unbusinesslike, it would not necessarily follow that there is nothing to be gained by studying their methods; but, as a matter of fact, I have long since formed the opinion that while the soldiers' business methods are in many respects different from those of the civilian, they are not on that account alone by any means necessarily inferior. The success that has attended the "Army

Class" conducted in this School during the past seven years shows, no doubt, that military men can improve their efficiency by a study of civilian methods, and the wonderful success with which "Transport" and "Supply" have been managed during the present War shows this to be the case. It occurs to me, however, that quite possibly civilians might, with equal advantage, make some study of the soldier's methods of handling business, and, accordingly, in this short course of lectures which I have undertaken, I propose to start by making some comparison of military and civilian methods of business organisation, with a view to seeing whether this new point of view may not suggest some ideas that are well worth following up in the interests of business efficiency.

At the outset it is, perhaps, convenient that we should be quite clear as to what we understand by the term "Business Organisation." As a matter of fact the two words "business" and "organisation" mean very much the same thing. The word "business" suggests the idea of well directed activity, and is, I believe, derived from the ceaseless hum always observable near a hive of bees. The word "organisation" means some arrangement, or scheme, designed with the object of getting work done, the root-meaning of the word being "Work." The term is also one that has been utilized freely by biologists, and other scientists, to explain the various schemes of life that they have observed. There are, we are told, elementary (or simple) organisms, to all appearances homogeneous—that is to say absolutely alike: each part capable in turn of performing any functions that the whole may be capable of. Such forms are apparently never very highly developed, but they serve at least as an interesting illustration of the possibilities and limitations of versatility. In the higher organisms, on the other hand, in any body that is "organised" at all (in the naturalist's sense of the term) one finds a differentiation between the several parts, to each of which are allocated distinct and definite functions; and it is this idea that is seized upon when the term "organisation" is employed in connection with every-day business affairs. Thus "organisation" may, for our present purposes, be