

## Mary Parker Follett - The Prophet of Management

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**Abstract:** The article is devoted to one of the most significant administrative thinkers - Mary Parker Follett. In the article there are considered the main ideas that she formulated in her papers. It is shown how she developed the principles of integration and how any conflict of interests should be resolved. M. Follett's pioneer idea - participation of workers in management is considered.

**Key words:** Group organization • Spiritual unification • Group thinking • Collective will • Individualism • True democracy • Social work • Concept of human interaction • Intra group conflict • Compromise • Integration • Power and force concept • Leadership • "cumulative" responsibility

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### INTRODUCTION

M. Follett was born in 1868 (Queens, the State of Massachusetts). She inherited a fortune from her grandmother and father. She studied at the Tayer Academy and went on her study at Harvard (Anneks, later renamed into the Redklif college), then at the Newham college (Cambridge, England). She came back to Queens without having finished her study because of her mother's illness. Mary took her bachelor's degree much later after she had already had her paper "The Speaker of the House of Representatives" [1] published. The first book brought glory to her as to the political philosopher and scientist, having made her the noticeable participant of Boston intellectual life. In "Speaker..." M. Follett traces communication between the American Congress and the British House of Representatives, tracing back the institutional development of parliamentarism in the USA from sources of colonial America. The book is considered today to be a classical sample of editions on institutional history [2].

Later M. Follett grew interested in problems of choosing profession, educating the adults and incipient social psychology. Ms. M. Follett lived in the age of "scientific management" but in the sense of philosophy and intellect she took a step into the age of "social human". Having been involved in both worlds, Mary became a link between them, having generalized Taylor's concepts and having anticipated many conclusions drawn

by scientists after the experiment in Hotorn. According to Warren Bennis: "Just about everything written today about leadership and organizations comes from Mary Parker Follett's writings and lectures"[3]. Many people started to call Mary Follett "a prophet of management". However, during M. Follett's lifetime only three books and two journal articles were published. In 8 years after the scientist's death (she died in 1933) the British expert in the field of management L.Urvik edited and published the collection of lectures "Dynamic administration: The Collected papers of Mary Parker Follett". In another 8 years, in 1949, her collected articles "Freedom and Coordination" were published.

Main part. In order to understand Mary Follett's administrative and psychological schemes, it is necessary to know her philosophical preferences. Sharing Fichte's conceptions, M. Follett disputes the main political ideas of the end of the XIX century in her paper "The New State"[4] challenges the main political ideas of the end of the XIX century. The main message of the paper is that the true personal essence can be shown only through the group organization. The personality potential remains only the potential if it is not realized in the group. The person can receive the true freedom only through the group.

The group principle was formulated to resist the ideas that people think, feel and work separately and independently. From the Follett's point of view, the groups of people live as a single unit, but not as separate

egos. Individuals are generated by the public interactions. Using such expressions as "a spiritual unification", "group thinking" and "collective will", M. Follett was looking for a new society based on the group principle, instead of individualism. The main objective of the scientist was not destruction of the personality but the proof that a person can find the "true ego" only in the group. Following the group principle, M. Follett drew a conclusion that "the true ego of the person is his ego in the group" and that "a person doesn't have his rights separately from the society, irrespective of the society or against the society" [4, p.62]. Disproving the statement that the government's task is to protect the personality rights, she proclaimed another concept of democracy: democracy is a great force which is developed by people, everyone is involved in democracy, supplementing himself from the outside with the subjects that he or she lacks [4, pp.5-8].

As to M. Follett, democracy is the development of public consciousness, but not individualism. She considered that there is no place for the government theory about the individual rights in the modern political theory. The new true democracy, according to Follett, was urged to conduct "an ego vertical" from the very neighbor's community through the state and national groups to the single international group will [5]. It is easy to notice that similar messages are the basic notions of creation of League of the Nations.

M. Follett believed that people can create a new "public consciousness" and peacefully live together in "the World State". At the same time Follett avoided problems of the intra group conflicts. She didn't trust the democratic procedure of elections, fairly considering that vote reflects crowd psychology, instead of opinion of the sum of persons.

M. Follett devoted 10 years of her life to the social work in Boston. It is amusing that one of the social ideas realized by M. Follett (schools have to be open after the lessons and this will promote intellectual development and carry out a recreational function) is implemented in Russia 90 years later.

Due to her social work M. Follett developed a number of statements concerning group democracy principles and social communications formation. The concept of integration which relied on interaction process between individuals from different social strata in small groups became the heart of the theory. M. Follett ruthlessly criticized formal social and institutional hierarchies which suppressed the identity development.

1918 M. Follett writes the second book "The New State: group organization the solution of popular governance" [6]. In this book she opens the concept of human interaction in issues of the political, national and international organization. The book brought the worldwide reputation to her.

It was followed by the paper "Creative Experience" (1920) [7] in which the scientist began to research the psychological bases of the consent and conditions by which it can be reached. From that point and up to her death M. Follett focused her attention on management theories. Standing up for the integrated approach to the analysis of management processes, she criticized the Taylor's "classical" management theory for a mechanicalism.

During the period 1926 to 1928 she gave in England lectures on industry reorganization and in 1929 she moved to Europe to study the European industry in more detail. In her essays "Constructive Conflict", "The Psychology of Conciliation and Arbitration" and "Business as an Interactive Unity" she continued to develop the integration principles.

M. Follett's theories were ahead of her time in many respects and were repeated by "the doctrine of the human relations" (in particular, the thought that for a successful management it is necessary to investigate behavior of workers and other psychological aspects of personnel relationship).

In her paper "Creative Experience" M. Follett develops the idea that by means of communication, discussions and joint activity people can avoid emergence of the hidden ideas in each of them and live openly for achievement of common goals. Considering that each psychological situation has its special character, differs from the absolute nature of its components, i. e. the whole is more, than simply a sum of the separate parts, M. Follett claimed that by means of group certain people can reach fuller embodiment of their own creative opportunities [7, p.163]. The purpose of group efforts consisted in being present the uniting whole which surpassed its separate parts. In her work she tried to answer the questions about the intra group conflict. M. Follett postulated that any conflict of interests can be resolved in four ways:

- Voluntary consent of one of the parties;
- Struggle and victory of one party over another;
- Compromise;
- Integration.

The first and second ways are absolutely unacceptable because they imply force or superiority use. Compromise is the senseless phenomenon because it changes both the heart of the problem and "both parties can have no truth" [7, p. 156-158]. Integration is the search for a decision satisfying to both parties without a compromise and domination [8]. This is a typical for M. Follett's style illustration of the integration concept: "As an example, let's take the simplest situation. It happened in the Harvard library. A small hall. Someone wanted to open a window; I wanted that the window was closed. We opened the window in the next hall where nobody sat. It was not a compromise because none of desires was suppressed; both of us got what we wanted. I didn't want that each window was closed. I just didn't want that the wind blew in my direction. The second person didn't want that this very window was open; he just wanted more fresh air indoors. Integration consists in expanding possibility of a solution by the means of alternatives" [9].

Though M. Follett stood up for the idea of integration, she didn't deny that there were also some obstacles. According to the researcher, integration as the behaviour principle will be useless until people rethink the concept of power and force [7]. Identification of the chief and workman creates problems for acceptance of a community of interests. M. Follett suggested solving a problem observing "the situation law": "One person shouldn't give orders to another, but both of them have to agree to execute orders depending on a situation. If these orders are only a part of the situation, the problem, that someone has to give the order and someone has to execute it, won't arise" [10].

In "The message to the Taylor Society" M. Follett defined it as follows: "If the power occurs from function, so in this very case it has little in common with the hierarchy of positions. The head of department, the expert their own power, but the courier has more power in the delivery sphere, than the president of the company. The power should belong to knowledge and experience. In this case personal disagreements can be avoided" [10].

According to M. Follett, the basis of human relations should be the feeling "with whom you work" instead of "under whose direction you work". According to it, managers shouldn't exercise their power over the worker, but also workers shouldn't use their power (by means of labor unions) over the managers.

According to M. Follett, in any form of a human residence both in the interpersonal relations and in permission of the international disputes there shouldn't be a desire to dominate. The situation law should be used.

The integration basis was (M. Follett called it "response") the process based on possibility of each party to affect another through the open interaction, generating the spirit of cooperation. In the 1920s Follett actively supported representations of workers. The representation of workers shouldn't turn into the fight for someone's incomes, but has to become a step to the integration.

Thus, M. Follett puts forward her idea of participation of workers in management. In the main, she claims the following: just as there is no accurate dividing line between planning and execution, also the distinction between those who manage and those who are managed is vague. M. Follett was convinced that workers inevitably took part in management when they made their own decisions how to execute the orders. That is why the progressive management has to develop among the workers the feeling of not only individual, but also, the most important, "cumulative" responsibility (the concept entered by M. Follett).

M. Follett enters the concept of "cumulative responsibility" as a result of diffusion of functions in an organization system. From her point of view, mutual coordination of work of various people and divisions should be provided by the means of "cross functioning", group responsibility and "cumulative responsibility". The separate functions isolated from each other don't exist. All functions are interconnected. There are the special roles which are carried out by any of them. Actually it is already the system analysis.

M. Follett considered that the final power is the illusion based on the wrong understanding of force. Also the final responsibility is the illusion. Responsibility should be present at any workplace. The person is responsible for the work done only for himself, but not for someone. At the division level the responsibility for the work done lies on the shoulders of all who took part in it. The head of the organization also shares the overall responsibility.

The power should belong to a situation, not to a person or a position. Thus, responsibility is part of functions which are carried out by the worker. M. Follett was the first who made the managers think of it.

According to M. Follett's formula, power is the ability to achieve certain objectives, to be their reason and to generate changes. Authority is the possessing the power, the right to create and to carry out the power. Hence, she opposes the principle of "power delegation".

M. Follett suggests an idea of the joint power instead of the dominating power (typical for Taylor's classical theory), stressing that maximum efficiency is provided not by division or delegation of power, but the activity integration of all links of the organization. She considers the power as function that is constantly inherent in management. From this point of view the power delegation contradicts the management concept which, in her opinion, represents "an inalienable form of the power". Therefore distribution of responsibility and submission is possible only by integration of the power sum of all organization divisions in uniform, continuously and harmoniously functioning system.

Within M. Follett's concept there is a form of the interconnected behavior — "the power together with someone" instead of "the power against someone". Power realization (which M. Follett didn't separate from authority) for achievement of a goal has to be carried out in common by all personnel of this organization and to be cooperative, instead of compulsory. The idea "the authorities with someone" can be embodied in a form of the interconnected behavior — process in which each manager can have impact on other managers. Before workers communication channels through which they can communicate with managers open. It, according to Follett, has to be constantly reproduced and integrated way with which it is necessary to follow all organizations.

Within M. Follett's concept there is a following form of the interconnected behavior — "the power with someone" instead of "the power against someone". The power realization (M. Follett didn't separate it from the authority) for achieving a goal should be carried out in common by all personnel of this organization and be cooperative but not compulsory. The idea "the power with someone" can be implemented in a form of the interconnected behavior — this is the process in when each manager can have an impact on other managers. The workers have communication channels open and they can interconnect with other managers. According to Follett, it should be constantly reproduced and integrated way which should be followed by all organizations. The functional unity of any organization results in achieving the purpose much faster, when all employees and groups are better informed about the functions and when their individual and group abilities correspond to carried-out tasks. M. Follett considered that (contrary to widespread ideas of a stream of authority power in hierarchy from the top to the down) actually the power is functional, that is,

it is in close connection with a workplace. The original power has nothing in common with a vertical. The boss doesn't delegate the power (though he may imagine in such a way). The measure and the direction of delegation are built in the organization structure. Chiefs don't delegate their powers as the structure and volume of the power are built in the project of the organization at a stage of organization formation. M. Follett's thoughts sound very modern in today's Russia.

According to M. Follett, we alienate authority as opposed to the power. Only certain persons can be provided authority. Any chief's authority follows the function that it fulfills and changing conditions in which it acts.

M. Follett proved that in the process of organization consolidation there is a peculiar "authority diffusion", that can be explained with need of special knowledge that is spread among workers who are various by their status and preparation. As a result, the previous concepts of "central" authority give place to the concepts of the "functional" or "pluralistic" authority. Experts are not just consultants any more, whose opinion could be neglected. Now their recommendations get much bigger weight without being orders.

Conceding the need of the "central" authority for the organization, Follett considers its existence possible only over the need of technical association in uniform focus of the main functions of the organization. Certainly, this status requires the corresponding knowledge and experience.

She opposes the understanding of the organization expressed in the terms "over" and "under". The only "legal chief" in the organization is the "internally binding experience" of all who fulfil any part of organizational activity.

M. Follett's peculiar approach to the "authority" problem in the organization entailed revision of the "classical", Taylor concept of responsibility. Emphasizing that responsibility, as well as authority, is caused by the functions which are fulfilled by this or that employee, M. Follett considers that a worker has to raise for himself a question not "for whom" he is responsible but "for what". According to her, "the most important thing for the managers is the ability to estimate the whole situation. In the great number of facts, experiences, intimidations and aims the chief should find a link, should see the whole instead of the kaleidoscope picture; he should see interrelations between all the factors of a problem situation" [9].

Investigating a problem of leadership, M. Follett stresses the influence of a situation on relationships between people. She says: "While I do something, the environment changes depending on my behavior and my behavior is the reaction to a new situation which I created, being its component." [2]. The first task of a leader is to define the organization purpose. The leader has to convince workers that the purpose to which they go is not his personal but the general one.

The role of the leader arises only when it is necessary. When the problem is solved, the leader stops to be necessary. The leadership disappears. M. Follett advised to seriously treat a profession of the manager to those who wanted to manage. The manager should understand that performs the role of the creator.

### CONCLUSION

Thanks to researches of human cooperation and cooperation of mankind, Mary Follett gained fame of the political philosopher. Some people find it strange that M. Follett's lectures had huge success among businessmen though she had never operated the big enterprise. It can be explained with the competence of the person who was working in the social sphere for a long time and theoretical hardness, based on personal experience and experience of other people. Follett possessed one more quality — she could treat both people and words amusingly easy. As the illustration of relationship between international leaders

According to Peter F. Druker, after her death in 1933 her ideas weren't acceptable in line with American management system and the thinking organization of the 1930s and the 1940s. She was still considerable in Great Britain. Her various speeches and articles on management were joined by Henry Metcalf and Lionel Urwick and published in England in "Dynamic Administration" (1941) [9]. The number of administrative thinkers and practitioners gradually started to rely upon her works more and more, especially in Japan in the 1960s. M. Babcock wrote that Peter Druker called her "the prophet of management" [11].

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