

Preface

The origins of this book lie in the middle of the last century.

Our father, Dr. I. Vance Hopper, was a senior lecturer at the Royal Technical College in Glasgow, an institution formed in 1796 as Anderson's College under the last will and testament of John Anderson, Professor of Natural Philosophy (or Physics) in the University of Glasgow. Anderson was one of the outstanding figures of the great Scottish Enlightenment. He wanted the new college to direct its efforts to what he called 'Useful Learning' – the application of scientific theory to the solution of practical problems. It was to be a 'polytechnic' or school of all the technologies. The great Ecole Polytechnique had been founded in Paris only two years before; Anderson's was to be the first of its kind outside France.

Dad was proud to be an industrial chemist. Chairman of the Scottish branch of the Society of Chemical Industry, he was also one of the authors of *Systematic Organic Chemistry* (1937), which educated more than one generation of students and is still occasionally consulted. The names of its three authors caused some amusement when the book first appeared, since each referred to some form of motion: Cumming, Hopper and Wheeler. It was Dr. W.M. Cumming who set me off on the path that led, ultimately, to the writing of this book.

Cumming was of the opinion that the best-managed manufacturing company in Britain at that time was Thomas Hedley, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Procter & Gamble. He suggested I should work for them. After serving an engineering apprenticeship at two British companies, I joined Hedley's and was at once struck by the sophistication and efficacy of its managerial culture. I would later discover that what had impressed me there was typical of US manufacturing as a whole; American industrial companies of that period were, quite simply, better managed than others. I resolved to learn a great deal more about different national approaches. It was a project that would take me to Ireland just when the 'Celtic Miracle' was getting underway; to a continental Europe resurgent after World War II; to the United States then at the height of its economic and political power; and a Japan well on the way to possessing the second largest economy in the world. My observations were recorded in journal and newspaper articles, some of which are listed at the end of the bibliography and feature in the website, www.puritangift.com Later I would be able to observe the decline in

the quality of American management which occurred in the last third of the twentieth century.

Some years ago I resolved to summarize my thoughts in a book but was unable to complete it owing to ill-health. Fortunately, my brother William was able to come to my assistance. The greater part of this publication has been written by him. In undertaking this task, he has also widened its scope. My principal interest has always been the management of the factory and its history. A linguist by training and an investment banker by profession, William extended the range of the subject-matter to include all aspects of business, government and even, to some extent, the structure of society itself. This book is now a history of American managerial culture in the broadest sense from 1630 to the present day: its rise, triumph, decline and partial recovery. Although it has been written in non-technical language for the general reader, we hope that it will also appeal to those who have a special interest in the subject.

In the course of this lengthy project, many people have helped us along the way. They include that remarkable man, the late Dr. Peter Drucker, whom I met through William when they worked together at W.R. Grace & Co. in New York in the late 1950s. When Drucker saw an early draft of this book, he wrote, 'I am tremendously interested in what you write and impressed by it. I look forward to your book on the subject. Don't forget to tell your publisher to send me an order form.' Sadly, *The Puritan Gift* has been published just too late for that.

It was Drucker who introduced us to Frank Polkinghorn, Charles Protzman and Homer Sarasohn, the 'Three Wise Men from the West' featured in Chapter 10 who had taught then contemporary American managerial practices to the Japanese in the late 1940s and in 1950. Through them, my wife, Claire, and I met their former pupil, Bunzaemon Inoue. Under the US occupation of Japan (1945–1952), Inoue had been a factory manager at Sumitomo Electric, in which capacity he co-chaired the two seminars on management which the Americans presented to the communications equipment industry in Tokyo and Osaka in 1949 and 1950. On page 92, he can be seen alongside his mentors in a photograph taken at the graduation ceremony following the second of these events. In 1962, and under the direction of Inoue as its director of technical and production, Sumitomo Electric would win the first Deming Prize for Quality in Manufacturing in which 'participative' practices featured as a major element. Starting in 1979, he wrote me some sixty letters describing how Japanese manufacturing evolved between 1930, the year he joined Sumitomo Electric, and 1986, the year of his last letter. This correspondence constitutes a unique source of historical information.

We also remember fondly that great, generous character, the late Dr. W. Edwards Deming, after whom Sumitomo Electric's Prize was named. Deming would fight a legendary battle with the philistines of American top management in the 1980s, during what we have called the Years that the Locust Ate. When he saw the early draft of this book referred to above, he wrote to say, 'This is just what I have been looking for'; without his generous moral and financial support, it would not have gone to press.

Encouragement also came at a critical time from another independent-minded thinker, Dr. Myron Tribus, former Undersecretary of Commerce for Science and Technology under President Nixon and later the Director of the Center for Advanced Engineering Studies at MIT – a man who now calls himself 'a recovering academic'. On reading that same early draft, he wrote: 'I felt like a small boy who went out to shoot squirrels and came back with an elephant'.

We were pleased to find our admiration for the organization of mid-twentieth-century American companies echoed in the work of Alfred D. Chandler, the distinguished Harvard Historian of Business. Having been kind enough to read our essay 'Capital Expenditure and the so-called Experts' (see pages 203 to 208), he wrote to say that 'this is a fascinating, if depressing story of a significant piece of political folly . . . it is most important that this piece be published'. It appears here for the first time.

As readers will discover (see page 114) my presence in 1964 and 1965 at the Harvard Business School did not meet with the approval of its entire Faculty. I am grateful to Professor Glenn Varney of Ohio State University at Bowling Green and George Odiorne, Dean of the Division of Industrial Relations at the University of Michigan, for throwing a lifeline to me from the great manufacturing Midwest when I needed it. George invited me to be the opening speaker in his winter series of lectures for industry in 1967. Glenn arranged for me to give lecture tours across America and Britain later in that decade. I learned a great deal in this way.

Lastly, may I say how grateful I am to my brother for turning *The Puritan Gift: Triumph, Collapse and Revival of an American Dream* into a reality. He does not shirk controversy. If we achieve nothing else, we will have recorded how important parts of American society functioned at the mid-twentieth century. I wish you all many hours of enjoyable reading.

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