

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CITIZENS ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE**

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May 31, 1966

Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California

ORGANIZATION PLANNING IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Gentlemen:

In establishing the Los Angeles County Citizens Economy and Efficiency Committee, your Board specifically requested we investigate the organization and management of County government. This we have done, and we believe organization planning merits your immediate consideration due to the potential savings in manpower, money, and machines possible through more effective coordination.

As the function of County government expands and becomes more complex in its operations to meet the increasing and frequently changing needs of an explosively growing population, the essentiality of the utilization of the most effective management techniques available in daily operations cannot be questioned. Certainly, basic to all facets of modern management technology is a fully developed capability for organization planning-- designed to achieve logical grouping of activities, delineate authority and responsibility, and establish working relationships that will enable both the organization and its members to realize their mutual objectives. It

is especially important that the proper steps be taken to provide this capability to County management assuring them the fullest measure of control in developing effective organization structures to meet the present requirements of government efficiently and economically. It will also provide the vehicle for planning the progressive development of an organization to meet the future needs of the citizens of this county.

The organization structure of Los Angeles County government greatly exceeds in size, scope, and complexity of its functions those of many outstanding companies in business and industry. For the most part, these companies have long recognized the contribution made by a formal organization planning activity to the effective management of their respective enterprises; and they utilize it to achieve efficient coordination of their resources. It is reasonable to assume that formalized organization planning groups are providing a real service to management in these companies, or they would have been eliminated.

Organizational Studies of County Government

As our Committee conducted its review of County organization,. we discovered that several groups, both internal and external, had preceded us in this area. All available reports of studies touching on or primarily concerned with County organization were carefully reviewed to provide the most complete background possible for our own investigation.

Generally, there seemed to be no question among the various study groups as to the need for organizational improvements within County government; however, a wide variance of opinion

was found as to the specific changes to be made. Recommendations ranged from complete, major reorganization of the entire structure to the advantages possible in consolidating or dividing a few subordinate organizational entities. Neither of these extreme positions offers a completely effective solution.

Government is a twenty-four hour, seven days a week business. Unlike the local hardware store, it cannot close and lock the door to take annual inventory or rearrange the merchandise on the shelves. Even so, the "earthquake" approach to reorganization often cancels the sought-for benefits because of its shattering effect on employee morale and motivation and its disruption of present work schedules. On the other hand, repairing or cleaning up a few parts is something less than satisfactory if a complete overhaul is indicated.

Based on its review of past organizational studies and our Committee's own survey and analysis of County organization, we strongly feel the best avenue for real accomplishment is gradual improvement through phase plans. This approach would entail a long range, continuous project comprising planned, progressive steps of reorganization designed to bring the present organization structure into conformity with a previously developed and approved, "ideal" organization structure based on present and future requirements and objectives. To this end, our report is prepared and submitted.

Development of County Government Organization

To gain the proper perspective for analysis of the present organization structure of the County, we reviewed its historical development. As you know, the custody of government for this County has resided in the hands of a five-member Board of Supervisors for the past 114 years. It was placed there by an electorate that by today's standards would be viewed as infinitesimal. Those early Board members faced problems surely that to them seemed almost insurmountable; but they also enjoyed an advantage in the fact that they were creating a new organization. It is extremely doubtful that any of those pioneer members possessed vision to the degree that they could have had any insight into the magnitude of the problems your Board faces today. Also, your Board inherited an already existent organization structure which can only be reorganized to cope with changing conditions, requirements, and needs as they develop.

The expansive growth of County government to meet its changing environment over the last fifty-three years is graphically illustrated in Exhibit I. Since the adoption of the County Charter in 1913, the population of the County has expanded over 11 times; the County budget has soared to 250 times its size in 1913; the activities of County government have multiplied 4 1/2 times; and the number of people employed in County governmental functions has increased over 15 times. Measured by any standard, these figures represent astounding growth in slightly more than

half a century. To attempt to project the growth of this County in the next half century is almost inconceivable.

Despite this burgeoning growth, accountability to the electorate for government has remained vested in a five-member Board of Supervisors. It requires little analysis to determine that the personal burden of management resting on individual members of the Board has grown from one of increasing difficulty to one approaching impossibility unless every assistance available in modern management techniques is employed. Surely³ it can be assumed that the case for organization planning established on a formal basis to assist your Board in fulfilling its responsibilities need not be defended on theoretical grounds. It only remains then to present its applications on practical grounds.

Present County Government Organization Structure

The present organization structure of Los Angeles County government is depicted in Exhibit II. It purports to show the present organizational arrangement of the entities created to meet the prescribed governmental obligations of the County to the citizenry. The charting is incomplete in that it reflects only the top management level and those other organizational elements responsible directly to the Board of Supervisors.

The organization study and analysis conducted by our Committee together with our report concentrated on isolating the major areas where organizational improvements appeared

possible and proposing a workable plan for achieving those improvements. We are aware of the legal implications inherent in some organizational areas and have reviewed the applicable documents wherever possible. Should it develop that certain laws need to be amended, deleted, or passed to support an approved, reorganization proposal promising more efficient and economical County government, our Committee feels certain that the appropriate steps could and would be taken to accomplish the improvements.

Indicated Areas for Organizational Improvements

From our study and analysis of County organization, we have isolated these major areas which we feel could be productive of better coordination of resources, more effective management, and improved efficiency and economy of operations through the application of the techniques of organization planning and the subsequent implementation of progressive phases of approved reorganization.

A. Span of Control

One of the most striking aspects of the organization structure of County government, as illustrated in Exhibit II, is its span of control. The basic principle applicable to span of control states: "There is a limit to the number of activities that can be effectively supervised by a single executive or governing body." By our count, there are over 120 activities being supervised by your Board today, including over 50 line departments and over 70 staff or advisory groups.

Such a staggering burden of responsibility is reminiscent of the popular spiritual, "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

Theoretically, based on the number of units in County organization, the whole Board--assuming it had no other obligations--could average one week's time per year per department;. or an individual Board member, if the departments were assigned in equal number to each Supervisor, could devote an average of five weeks per year to each department. This, of course, ignores the more than seventy advisory groups, many of which are required to report to the Board on a periodic basis.

Usually, a span of control of the size found in the County organization structure will reveal that all too often the problems needing discussion and resolution never reach the "decision and action" level of the organization until they have developed into full blown crises. Also, the presence of too broad a span of control is usually indicative of failure to observe and follow other basic principles of organization planning.

Our Committee feels that proper steps should be taken to reduce the awesome span of control imposed on the members of your Board by the present organization structure of County government. Every effort should be made to decrease it progressively to a level which can be effectively directed, coordinated, and controlled thus permitting management decision and action in the resolution of problems on a planned, regular basis rather than one of crisis.

B. Grouping of Activities-- Consolidation and Separation

A factor contributing to a more manageable span of control is the practice of logically grouping activities within the organization structure. The basic organizational principle applicable to grouping of activities states: "Functions should be assigned to organizational units on the basis of homogeneity of objectives to achieve the most efficient and economical operations."

Our study and analysis of County organization indicated there is need for improvement in the application of this principle. A marked imbalance of organizational elements exists in the present organization structure. As shown in Exhibit II, 56 departments were found to be reporting directly to the Board of Supervisors. Analysis of those departments individually revealed that on the basis of manpower assigned, just two departments, Charities and Sheriff, balance all the others as illustrated in Exhibit III.

A further breakdown by budgeted personnel produced the table shown in Exhibit IV. The present County organization structure contains one department with over 10,000 employees; three departments with 2,000 to 10,000 employees; six with 1,001 to 1,999; eight having between 501 and 1,000; twenty-one with 100 to 500; and seventeen County departments having less than 100 employees budgeted. Expressed in percentage terms³ 30.4% of the total County departments contain less than 100 employees.

These statistics lead to further investigation of the various departments to determine the nature of their activities and to explore the possibilities of consolidation and separation or division. This investigation, due to the limitations of time and staff, was conducted by studying and analyzing existing documentation rather than using the preferable technique of personally interviewing the appropriate members of management. Our findings were sufficient to indicate the possibilities of consolidation of some of the smaller units and of division of some of the larger units on a predetermined, time phased plan.

For example, the County has in its present organization departments of the Agricultural Commissioner, the County Veterinarian, and the Farm Advisor reporting directly to your Board. Each of these departments contains less than 100 employees. Each department has among its activities a responsibility for record keeping, report making, and providing public information. Each serves, in essence, the same segment of the county population. It appears, on the basis of information available to us, that there is a relatedness of objectives. Consolidation of these separate organizational entities into one department would likely produce economies through the centralization of common clerical and administrative activities. It would enhance management effectiveness by reducing the span of control of your Board, shortening lines of communications, and permitting the delegation of authority and responsibility downward as close to the scene of the action as possible. This potential

consolidation of present County departments is illustrated in Exhibit V.

Another example of potential consolidation is in the area of county or community services. By grouping the present departments of the County Service Officer, Military and Veterans Affairs, Senior Citizens Affairs, Community Services, and the Human Relations Commission, you would create a department still numbering only about 115 employees and would reduce the span of control of your Board by four through the elimination of departmental status for these very small, special interest, service groups. Here also, you could expect cost reduction through the centralization of basic clerical and administrative tasks common to all these activities. This potential consolidation is illustrated in Exhibit VI.

In contrast to consolidation but still with the goal of achieving organizational balance, consideration should be given to division into more than one department when it is found that certain activities have exceeded the scope of their original objectives and expanded in size to a state approaching unmanageability. The present Department of Charities is felt by our Committee, and other interested groups, to be a case in point in this respect.

An analysis of the functional statements set forth in the County's "Guide to Departmental Organization and Functions, July, 1965," suggests there is insufficient homogeneity among the various activities of the divisions and bureaus of this

department to compel its continuance as a single entity. When one finds almost 40% of the total manpower of the County placed in one out of fifty-six departments, he is prone to doubt the basic soundness of the overall organization structure as well as the make-up of that one department.

To say that all the activities of the present Department of Charities serve the same segment of the population--the indigent citizen--is not sufficient reason of itself to form an organizational grouping. On this basis, certain activities within the departments of the Sheriff, Public Defender, and Probation should be combined with Charities. In view of its present size and complexity of operations, to add more would be unthinkable. As previously reported to your Board, a reevaluation of the basic objectives of each activity within the present Department of Charities is already underway. Upon its completion, a recommendation can be made as to the division and regrouping of the various organizational units to produce the structure best suited to realization of similar objectives and the fullest and most effective utilization of people and facilities. A possible approach to this division and regrouping is illustrated in Exhibit VII.

Previously, we have been concerned with the advantages of grouping existing departmental units or their division to achieve more manageable units, reduce the overall span of control, and produce the most efficient and economical operations. A different approach to logical grouping of activities is that

accomplished by the centralization of internal services. The general rule followed by progressive companies is that those internal services that can best be performed centrally, still retaining the level of service required for efficiency in the various using departments, should be centralized for economy, greater effectiveness through specialization of personnel and equipment, and better management control.

Our Committee found that your Board has already taken firm steps toward improvement in this respect as reflected by the present Communications, Building Services, and Mechanical Departments. This course of action should be continued and extended.

In regard to the possible centralization of duplicative or overlapping internal services or activities, the time available to our Committee permitted only a spot check of the various County departments. On the basis of this brief survey, we feel that a review of these internal, departmental activities is merited to determine which are duplicative or overlapping and which provide an opportunity for cost reduction through centralization.

C. Advisory Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Normally, advisory groups do not receive the same scrutiny as line operations in an analytical study for development of the most effective and economical organization structure. This is not to negate the potential contributions that can be made through the committee system if the same care in planning is given to it as that given to line operations. All too often,

this is not done. Consequently, committees are formed; languish for lack of objectives and direction; and ultimately wither away unnoticed, having made no real contribution and representing a sheer waste of time and money in the total operations.

Our Committee surveyed the general area of advisory groups to be found in County government. Again, we were awed by the large number of these advisory groups existent in the organization structure. - Some previous studies made by the Chief Administrative Officer's staff were reviewed for background in this general area. An analysis was made of the functions of these groups and the cost factors involved. As indicated in Exhibit II, there are some 70 advisory groups, as contrasted to operating boards or commissions, present today in County government. Their combined membership exceeds 830. Each of these groups is responsible to your Board even though its advisory contributions may be directed to specific department heads.

To serve effectively, these groups must receive their direction from your Board; and their activities must be reviewed periodically by your Board to ascertain the worth of their contribution and the advisability of their continuance. This direction and review demands time; and, as we have previously discussed, time is a commodity which the members of your Board have in short supply. Although many of the members of these groups serve without compensation, we found that, within the present regulations, the members of advisory groups who do receive compensation for meetings they attend could account for an annual expenditure of well over \$200,000. In addition to

compensation, there are other cost factors involved, such as use of County facilities and utilities, reimbursed travel expenses, staff assistance provided by County employees, and use of supplies and equipment, which cannot be readily determined.

For these reasons, our Committee feels that the general organizational area of advisory groups should be subjected to the same tests with the same objectives proposed for line operations. Each advisory group should be analyzed to determine the merits of its contribution and the possibilities of consolidation or elimination wherever indicated. The results of this analysis and the subsequent action taken in respect to extraneous advisory groups will help reduce the extended span of control of your Board and improve the overall organizational structure of the County.

D. Delegation of Authority and Responsibility

Often, in analyzing the organization of various companies or institutions, one finds that behind an impressive facade of well designed, artistically charted, organization structure there actually exists a state of confusion. This paradoxical situation usually results when management fails to include in its organization planning a well defined statement of delegation of authority and responsibility and the organizational relationships created by this delegation. The basic principle, generally applicable today, states: "Authority to take or initiate action should be delegated as close to the scene of the action as possible." The benefits of proper delegation of authority in terms of quicker

and better decisions, manager development, reduction in levels of organization, and freedom of management to concentrate on broader responsibilities, are widely recognized. The only real question arises over the degree of delegation appropriate in a specific organization structure.

Our Committee spent considerable time and effort searching out and tracing the flow of authority as far as possible through the County organization structure. Based on what we could find, we feel that the delegation of authority and responsibility and the related definition of organizational relationships within the present organization structure present an opportunity for improvement. The deficiencies we observed were more in the nature of gaps or cloudy areas rather than complete lack of delegation. For example, the authority and responsibilities of your Board is well defined in existing documentation; the same is not the case in regard to subordinate positions. With full accountability to the electorate vested in your Board, it is, of course, prudent to give the most careful consideration to any delegation of authority. It must be recognized, however, that as the size of County government grows and the complexity of its operations increases, more and more delegation of authority must be made to permit timely and effective response to the needs and problems that arise as closely as possible to the level of the organization structure where they arise.

Responses by County department heads to a questionnaire prepared and circulated by our Committee and subsequent discussions held with County officers indicated confusion exists

in this area of delegation of authority and responsibility. Some felt the Chief Administrative Officer has full administrative responsibility and control; others protested that your Board participates too directly in the administration of departmental operations. It is quite understandable how there could be confusion on this particular point. The respective wording in the County Charter and the Administrative Code appear to be in conflict, with the former document stating that department heads are responsible to your Board and the Code stating that the Chief Administrative Officer has administrative supervision and control of the affairs of the County placed in his charge by the Board. This appears to be a delegation of authority, but it is not well defined or generally understood. When there is a void in the definition of delegation, implied authority usually arises to fill the void. It is our observation that there is considerably more exercise of implied authority in County government than clear-cut definition of the relationship of the Board, the individual Supervisor, the Supervisor's deputy, the Chief Administrative Officer, and the department head.

The present management structure of County government is portrayed graphically in Exhibit VIII. It emphasizes the importance of providing for delegation of authority and responsibility and for formal definition of the organizational relationships within the management structure. With the presence of all the intervening agencies between your Board

and the actual operating level of the structure, the bureau and division heads, it is essential that the parameters of authority be determined, defined, and published for the benefit of all concerned parties. This, then, leaves no void for the exercise of implied authority.

Additionally, productive efforts in this direction free your Board of more and more of the details of daily administration and strengthen your capacity for overall planning, determining objectives, and establishing general policies. Thus, the decisions made by your Board, which take the form of objectives and policies, become the limitations on delegated authority. Authority simply means the freedom to act or make decisions within, or in conformity with, overall County government objectives and policies. Our Committee feels that every effort exerted to revise the present regulations and expand them so as to provide a clearer definition of your delegation of authority and responsibility throughout the County management structure will produce benefits in increased effectiveness of management and economy of operation.

E. Procedure for Organization in County Government

Current thinking stresses the value of visualizing organization as a system. Anything that consists of parts connected together can be called a system. It is the factor of connectiveness, the dynamic interactions of the whole organism, that makes a system. Since connectiveness exists among all units of an organization and between the organization

and its environment, taken all together those elements constitute a system. Emphasis on the whole organism is the essence of industrial dynamics. The systems approach forces attention on an organization as a whole, not as a series of unrelated parts.

In contrast to the systems approach, the present procedure for organization in County government appears to be a "bits and pieces" approach. Between 1961 and 1963, five new organizational elements were added to the County organization structure- - the Art Museum, County Service Officer, Senior Citizens Affairs, Human Relations Commission, and Disaster and Civil Defense Commission. Each had fewer than fifty employees at the time they were established; nevertheless, each was placed in the organization structure reporting directly to your Board. The prevailing practice, as reflected by the Administrative Code and the present organization structure, seems to interpret "under the supervision (or direction) of the Board" as requiring a direct reporting relationship organizationally. We do not agree with this interpretation. Every activity and every employee is under the supervision or direction of the Board of Supervisors. However, this does not preclude the establishment of subordinate levels of supervision with delegated authority to direct the operations of several activities.

When the creation of new County activities is contemplated, their objectives and purpose should be compared to those of

already existing functions. Whenever sufficient homogeneity exists, consideration should be given to making the new activity a part of the already established function. This adheres to the basic principle of grouping related activities and functions; meets the requirements imposed by applicable legal documents; and controls an overexpanding span of control, fragmentation of similar activities, excessive management, and duplication of common administrative tasks. We feel that had the proper organizational principles been applied, surely some of those five, newly created, organizational units would not have been given departmental status.

Our Committee found no central agency for organizational analysis and control of reorganization within the specific County departments. Although it appeared that most departments change very little from year to year, there were some departments that had doubled or tripled in manpower over a very short span of time. Investigation would probably reveal justification for the increases, but we feel that a responsible, central organization planning activity may have been able to recommend methods of reorganization that would have met the requirements with a lesser increase in manpower.

We commend the "systems approach" to organizational development. During our study, we observed efforts being made to effect consolidations in some areas and the feasibility of divisions in other areas being considered. These are

steps in the right direction, but we must point out the fact that these represent only small beginnings to what we feel to be an enormous project. To move the present County organization structure through a planned sequence of improvement phases toward an "ideal" structure is not something a few people can accomplish in their spare time from other assignments.

Proposed Plan to Effect Improvements in County Organization

Due to the factor of constant change in organization structuring the nature of the task of organization planning is continuous. It does not lend itself to performance by short-term, special, task teams or outside consultants. This is due primarily to the learning process involved in any organizational study. To perform effectively in organization planning, one must be aware of all the contributory factors. These include long range planning, objectives, general policies, financial resources, and the presence and location among the personnel of the Philistines, the Empire Builders, the Pyramid Climbers, and the Knife Wielders. It can become exorbitantly expensive to pay consultant's fees while this "getting on board" process is taking place. Also, short-term assignments in organization planning usually produce short term benefits.

Therefore, our Committee is quick to admit that due to the short-term nature of its study of County organization, our recommendations to your Board must take the form of a proposed

plan of action to accomplish the organizational improvements we have discussed in our report rather than "instant solutions" to the problems. In every case, it should be noted that what we have reported is preliminary in nature and will require continuance and follow-up effort by a qualified, internal group for ultimate accomplishment.

We propose that your Board create a full time, formalized Organization Planning function to be staff to your Board and advisory to all members of management in County government charged with the responsibility for organization of their respective activities. We recommend that the placement of this function be in the Chief Administrative Office on a direct reporting relationship. This organizational placement will allow the function the independence it must have to be effective and also will encourage the close coordination with the Budget, Management Services and Personnel Divisions essential to productive effort. This placement provides ready accessibility to all responsible members of management seeking its counsel and assistance on organizational matters. This recommended organizational placement is illustrated in Exhibit IX.

It should be emphasized that the nature of the Organization Planning function must be that of staff so that it will not alter the primary responsibility for organization which is vested in your Board and County department heads. The Organization Planning function relieves management of the time consuming studies and analyses and provides them with a finished piece of

staff work from which they can make decisions and determine the proper course of action. Additionally, Organization Planning assists line management in the implementation of approved organizational changes.

The duties of the Organization Planning function, as our Committee sees them, would include the following:

1. Determination of Objectives...a long range study of the various functions of County government to ascertain their priority with a view to ultimate elimination of those activities not deemed mandatory or essential to the basic objectives of Los Angeles County and the requirements imposed by federal and state laws. As a part of the determination of objectives, the County would enunciate the policies it will adhere to in pursuit of its objectives and the organizational principles it plans to follow in organizing its effort for the fulfillment of its objectives.

2. Analysis of the Existing Organization...inventory of existing personnel, functions, and relationships to determine who does what. What are the current assignments of authority and responsibility? What reporting and work relationships now exist? Where are the areas for organizational improvement, and what is required to achieve the desired improvement?

3. Preparation of the Long-term, "Ideal" Structure...a wholly impersonal, organization plan designed to approximate the structure best suited to meet the County's long range objectives. It is "ideal" in that it represents a goal and is

not to be construed as the "perfect" organization structure.

4. Determination of the Method of Change...a workable method of moving from the existing organization structure toward the "ideal" structure. The length of time involved will depend on the scope of the reorganization called for by established objectives and the adequacy of present personnel and facilities.

5. Preparation of Phase Plans...short-term, intermediate, organizational changes viewed as feasible steps toward the ideal. They provide for changes or regrouping of activities, changes in authority and responsibility, and changes in organizational relationships in an orderly way. They are designed to eliminate or correct existing deficiencies, provide for additional elements and personnel, and allow for accommodations to new and possibly expanded authority and responsibility called for by newly created positions.

6. Implementation...after approval of accountable management, putting the phase plans into effect. This part of the process is in the hands of line management rather than the staff Organization Planning function. Organization Planning assists the accountable line management in the implementation of approved changes.

Our Committee feels confident that this kind of Organization Planning capability established in the present County government will provide the vehicle for accomplishing the organizational

improvements noted in our report and others we may have overlooked in our brief study. An internal, full time, Organization Planning activity would:

- a. Continue the work underway in consolidation of smaller units into logical groupings,
- b. Give full attention to the present efforts to achieve a practical separation of Social Welfare functions from the present Department of Charities,
- c. Renew the evaluation of advisory boards, commissions, and committees with the objective of reducing their number and enhancing their contribution,
- d. Review and analyze proposed organization changes within the various departments and offices of the County government to ascertain whether increased efficiency, economy, and effectiveness will result, and would
- e. Devote full time to the development of objectives for County government and the synchronized "ideal" organization structure to fulfill those objectives.

It is our sincere belief that this kind of capability does not exist presently in the County organization on a formalized, comprehensive basis. We strongly recommend that it be established.

Unfortunately, in the area of organization planning, the reductions in cost cannot be measured or estimated readily; the improvements in effectiveness and efficiency achieved through organization planning are readily visible. It should be pointed out, however, that a capable, experienced director of Organization Planning on a full time basis would cost the County no more than the services of a qualified management consultant for a very limited period. One full year's effort and accomplishments of an internal director would likely equate to less than

100 days of advise and counsel per year by an outside consultant. It requires little head scratching to determine the proper course of action on this basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, we recommend for the approval of your Board:

1. That an Organization Planning function be established in the Chief Administrative Office.
2. That the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to employ an experienced organization specialist to direct and form the nucleus of the Organization Planning function.
3. That your Board direct the Chief Administrative Officer, in conjunction with the director of Organization Planning to be employed, to formulate and publish to all accountable members of management the basic principles of organization to be followed throughout County government and the procedures for review and approval of proposed organizational changes to be adhered to prior to any implementation.
4. That the present efforts underway in the consolidation of certain smaller County offices into larger groupings, the centralization of basic services common to all County offices and departments, and the study and analysis of organizational problems previously

brought to the attention of your Board continue uninterrupted until such time as the proper transfer of responsibility can be made to the newly established Organization Planning function.

Very truly yours,

LOS ANGELES COUNTY CITIZENS
ECONOMY & EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

A. C. Rubel
Chairman

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