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THE EDITORS' BOOK SHELF

Pierre S. du Pont and the Making of the Modern Corporation,

by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. and Stephen Salsbury.

Harper & Row, 1971, 722 pages, \$17.50.

The value of this thoroughly documented book lies in the light it casts on the methods of operation and decision making of a premier builder of the modern corporation, Pierre S. du Pont (1870-1953). Much of it concerns his role in the family explosives and chemical company, and the authors offer considerably more financial detail on the Du Pont Powder Company than most of us want to know.

The special interest to Haskins & Sells people here is in the chapters on the early history of General Motors, in which Pierre played a key part as board chairman, finance committee chairman and president. To GM, then a recently organized company born of many mergers, he brought the organizational skill and system that he had developed at the Du Pont Company, and put it on the road to greatness.

The problems of financing and managing corporations in the seventies are, of course, vastly different from those of 1915, when Pierre S. du Pont became GM chairman, and of the years 1920-1923 when he was GM president. But in the story of his involvement with the management of GM, as well as with Du Pont, it is clearly shown that many situations facing managers of all kinds today are much like those that faced Pierre back in the first decades of the century—well before the business schools and management literature had dissected them for study. Pierre S. du Pont,

the pioneer executive, learned his lessons the hard way, pragmatically and with his share of mistakes.

His training at MIT had been in chemistry; he learned how to be a business executive on the job.

By looking over his shoulder in these pages we see a most unusual person at work, one with a gift for big organization leadership.

To quote the authors:

“Pierre’s most significant role at General Motors was, as it had been at Du Pont, to act as a catalytic agent. He was able, again by his reason and quiet sensible ways, to fashion a strong management team from disparate elements: men from Du Pont who knew the ways of modern management but little about the making and selling of automobiles; divisional and staff executives who understood their industry well but were skeptical about outside control and outside advice; and, finally, representatives of the bankers and J. P. Morgan and Company who had always been less than enthusiastic about their investment in the automobile business . . .

“Above all, he was willing to listen to and to work with other executives.”

Third Pollution: The National Problem of Solid Waste Disposal,

by William E. Small.

Praeger, 1971, 173 pages, \$6.95.

Most Americans recognize that water and air pollution are matters of national concern. Fewer of us are yet fully aware of the menace of the third pollution, which is closely linked to the first two—that of the trash and junk that our increasing population is spreading around our limited living space. We are now dumping more than five pounds per person daily, and it costs us an estimated \$5 billion a year to get rid of the stuff.

The author of this impartial, well documented book served as a

professional staff member with the U.S. Senate Committee on Public Works that studied pollution problems and proposals for government programs to meet them. Relying heavily on hearing testimony and documents from authoritative sources, he comes up with a wealth of hard facts. They should impress the socially concerned citizen, as home owner, voter, businessman, professional or holder of public office.

We are in danger of being buried under (or contaminated by) the mounting heaps of trash, garbage and junk accumulating around the places where we live and work—unless we take a broad scale “systems approach” to controlling solid wastes. Much of it (plastics, glass, metals) will neither burn nor decompose. Many cities have run out of accessible places where they can dump or bury debris in the old ways. Nor are they permitted to dump near waterways or burn in the open as freely as before.

Thought, planning and action are needed at all levels, the author maintains. For example, we must think in terms of disassembling junked cars and household appliances, then recycling the materials. This should be done both to reduce the junk piles and to reduce the waste of our natural resources. Industry should investigate practical ways to recover and reuse materials, and government should help with organization, policy setting, tax incentives and public education. Families should be prepared to play their part by separating household trash into reusable metals, paper, glass and garbage.

Although the situation is serious, it is not hopeless, Mr. Small writes. The public is beginning to care and new laws promoting sound waste management are being adopted—though too slowly. New technology is in sight for waste collection, sanitary incineration and reuse of debris. But we all must be reeducated to the pressing need for a national solid waste management program. The responsibility lies with everyone, the author concludes, because “we are the polluters and the polluted.” □