numbers or stars to make the various orders of priority. A letter system, for example, might include:

A  MUST be done today
B  SHOULD be done today
C  MIGHT be done today

Probably you will not reach the bottom of your A and B lists, but do not let that bother you. If you have worked according to your sense of priorities you will have done the important jobs, and that is what managing your time at work is about.

Planning your day should not be done in a few minutes on the back of an envelope. Budget a reasonable time for your daily planning. Some people like to do it at the beginning of the day's work. Others prefer to plan their day the night before. This has the advantage that you can sleep on it. Sometimes after a night's rest other points for your list will occur to you or you may alter your priorities. Your subconscious mind will often suggest these alterations like a computer doing its work for you.

Check through your planned day to see if there are any gaps, any pieces of marginal time, that can be filled or put to good use. As Friedrich Nietzsche said, “When one has much to put into them, a day has a hundred pockets.” You are more likely to fill the spare pockets if you identify them in advance and allocate some tasks — such as writing a letter or making a telephone call — to them.

One word of caution: if you find yourself transferring an item on your list from one day to another, it may be a sign that you are procrastinating. Scrutinize it carefully to ensure that this is not the case.

Remember also to remain flexible. Someone — such as a family member or important customer — may put in a claim on your time and they may deserve a higher priority than the next item on your list.

What matters most now? That is the question you should be asking yourself constantly throughout the day. The answers must be related to constantly changing circumstances and the needs of the minute, yet they must not be mutually self-defeating in the longer-term. It is essentially a series of value judgements, requiring from you a rare measure of mental discri-

"VALUABLE ADVICE"

Charles M. Schwab, who transformed Bethlehem Steel Company into the largest independent steel producer in the world, once issued a challenge over the dinner table to a management consultant named Ivy Lee: “Show me a way to get more things done with my time and I'll pay you any fee within reason.” Lee handed him a pad of blank paper. “Each evening write down the things you have to do tomorrow,” he said, “and number them in order of importance. First thing in the morning start working on item one and continue with it until you have finished. Then start on item two . . . then the same with three . . . then four. Don’t be worried if you haven’t finished them all. If you can’t do it by this method you can’t do it by any other. Use this system every day.”

Shortly afterwards Schwab sent Lee a cheque for $25,000. He said later that it was the most profitable lesson he had ever learnt in his business career.

This practice of spending the last few minutes of each working day preparing your list for the next morning has much to commend it. Successful managers have mentioned this more frequently than anything else as an aid to effective time management. If postponed until the morning, list preparation is often done in a hurried or perfunctory way as other activities begin to press on your time. The urgent items then tend to dominate, completely eclipsing the important items that should be in places number one, two or three.

If you find that your daily planning is not working very well, ask yourself first “Am I at least achieving my highest priorities?” If the answer is “No” or “Doubtful — some of the time only,” you should work through the following checklist of questions:

- Are you trying to accomplish too much in a day?