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Box 13

REPORT OF MESSRS. LOVEKIN AND ROETHLISBERGER
COVERING THE INTERVIEWING OF SUPERVISORS
IN THE OPERATING BRANCH

100

November, 1931

DON'T DISCLOSE IDENTITIES

From the beginning of these studies, the identities of the persons under study have been kept confidential. We look to you to carry on this trust. Please guard the privacy of the persons involved by substituting fictitious names, or code symbols for real names.

November 19, 1931.

MR. [REDACTED] - 6081

MR. [REDACTED] - 6070

Return to 6005

I think you will be interested in reading the report of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] covering the interviewing of some four hundred supervisors in the Operating Branch.

There is no significance to the fact that only Operating Branch supervisors were interviewed. It came about through a questionnaire that [REDACTED] sent to all supervisors in his Branch last spring. The returns from this questionnaire indicated among other things a desire for such an interview.

For the present at least the report should be considered confidential, and it is proposed to have some discussion of it at one of our Monday conferences in the near future.

[REDACTED]

Memorandum to:
Works' Superintendents

Copy to:
[REDACTED]

INDEX

1. [REDACTED]'s Report.
2. [REDACTED]'s Report.



Report on Interviews of 145 Operating Branch Supervisors

Summer, 1931

By [REDACTED]

Index

	<u>Page</u>
I. <u>The Situation</u>	1
II. <u>What Was Said</u>	4
(a) General Table	5
(b) Subdivisions of General Topics	
1. Advancement	8
2. Business Depression	10
3. Steady Work and Lay-off Policy	12
4. Payment	13
5. Travel and Different Jobs	15
6. Supervision	15
7. Supervisors' Conferences	17
8. Family Affairs	18
9. Cooperation in Work	19
10. Interviewing	20
11. Thrift plans (excluding pensions)	21
12. Women in Industry	22
13. Interest in Work	23
14. Pensions	24
15. Welfare Work	25
III. <u>Inferences and Interpretations</u>	26
1. Racial Background	27
2. Types of Social Adjustment	28
3. Success of Adjustment	31
4. Attitude Toward Interview	33
5. Attitude Toward Conferences	37
6. Mental Characteristics	40
7. Business Ability	41
8. Chances for Progress	42
9. Note on Supervisory Training	43
10. Note on Further Research Interviewing of Supervisors	45

I. The Situation

During the summer of 1931, the writer undertook to interview one-half of those supervisors of the Operating Branch who had responded to their superintendent's questionnaire and had requested an appointment. This group totalled about 75% of all the supervisors in the branch; of these, one-half were interviewed by [REDACTED]. The writer saw 145 out of his quota of 256 men. This group included 20 foremen, 16 assistant foremen, 44 section chiefs, and 65 group chiefs. This report is based on these 145 cases; the remaining men will be seen during the fall.

The problem of how to present material of this sort is a puzzling one. Condensation kills the freshness and spirit of the original quotations, and interpretation raises the question of the interviewer's own point of view. In the mass of employee interview material filed away in Dept. 6088 a reader has a certain check upon any conclusions that are reached, in that he can take his questions to the original data. In this group, however, all first-hand material has been kept by the writer. In fairness to those men who freely discussed a great variety of problems involving both personal and company matters, with the understanding that the interview was confidential, it is necessary to exclude from this report not only sample interviews but even quotations and excerpts that might vividly illustrate certain points.

The writer kept a record of each interview; in some cases

2.

this would run to seven or eight typewritten pages. No attempt was made to keep an absolutely verbatim report, and no notes were taken during the interviews; consequently, even the first-hand material is subject to the varying emphasis of the interviewer's interpretation and memory. However, these original notes are all about what was said and never about what the interviewer thought about a man. He scrupulously reserved his opinion for notes at the end of each case.

The same procedure will be followed in this report. Summary tables will present what was said and the reader can draw his own conclusions from them. But since no original material can be given, interpretive statements will follow each table and also make up a later section.

A few introductory comments may give the reader a better idea of the situation that confronted these men. They had all heard of "interviewing" during the last year or so, because their own employees had been interviewed and because the topic had been discussed at supervisors' conferences. However, with a few exceptions, they had never been formally interviewed themselves, and they did not know quite what to expect. Their superintendent had intimated that he hoped all would apply for an appointment; consequently, many came out of a sense of duty. A common remark was of this type, "I haven't got anything in particular on my mind, but since the Company has undertaken this plan I want to

3.

cooperate, and I thought I'd at least come down and meet you." It then was up to the interviewer to get the conversation started. Not infrequently a man would remark at the start, "I really haven't anything to talk about," and then at the end of an hour and a half would exclaim, "Good Lord, I've got to be getting back. I didn't realize it was so late."

However, there were many who not only said they had nothing to talk about but lived up to their statement, and maintained a passive attitude toward the interview, waiting to be asked questions. This attitude did not necessarily arise from antagonism or suspicion. Many men obviously live in a world of action rather than ideas. Mere number of words or the ease of their flow are hardly the criteria of a successful supervisor. It may be asking quite a lot of a shop man to tell him, "Go down to the employment department, sit in a room alone with a perfect stranger, and talk to him about anything you want to for an hour or so."

It is obvious that in many cases the interviewer will have to contribute quite a substantial number of leads in order to get the conversation started and keep it going. It is also obvious that his own personality cannot help but influence the content of these opening remarks or questions, and that any classification of "what was said" must be colored thereby. The best one can do is to realize these facts and strive to keep the conversation going along line of interests that the man indicates himself. This

4.

does not mean being a colorless "yes man" but it does mean that the interviewer never imposes his point of view onto the content of the interview. In order to draw a man out he may even get into an argument with him, but what appears under an analysis of content must be the subjects' productions, and not the interviewer's. One must remember that some people are suggestible and will allow themselves to be led so easily that what they say is really what the interviewer has caused them to say. Another group act in just the opposite manner and their statements are apt to color the interview with the reverse of the interviewer's point of view - in either case it is easy to fill the case history with interviewer instead of subject.

II. What Was Said

The topics of conversation were naturally varied. Comments ranged from speculations as to the nature of the Deity to discussion of the weaknesses of the Chicago Cubs. To keep an analysis from being unduly complex one must omit many minor categories, which may be of real importance in judging a particular situation.

The following topics seemed to be the principal ones discussed. A more detailed description of these topics will be found in subsequent tables.

5.

Table 1.

General Topics of Discussion

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Approximate Percentage of all Supervisors Discussing This Topic</u>	<u>Noticeable Variations in Fre- quency of Discussion between Ranks</u>
1. Advancement, personal	60	Highest among Assistant Foremen. Lowest among Foremen. Section and Group Chiefs about the same.
2. Business Depression	60	Much higher among Group Chiefs. High among Section Chiefs. Lower among Foremen and Assistant Foremen. (Time element may enter. Higher ranks seen at beginning of summer.)
3. Steady work and lay off policy of Company.	55	Mentioned more frequently the lower the rank.
4. Payment	55	Same.
5. Travel (change in location or job.)	40	No significant differences.
6. Supervision	40	No significant differences.
7. Conferences	35	More frequent mention the higher the rank.
8. Family	30	No significant differences.
9. Cooperation in work	25	No significant differences.
10. Interviewing employees	25	No significant differences.
11. Thrift plans (excluding pensions)	20	Much more frequent mention among foremen.
12. Women in industry	15	No significant differences.
13. Interest in work	15	No significant differences.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Approximate Percentage of all Supervisors Discussing This Topic</u>	<u>Noticeable Variations in Fre- quency of Discussion between Ranks</u>
14. Pensions	10	Much more frequent mention among foremen. Seldom mentioned in lower ranks.
15. Welfare work by Company	10	No significant differences.

Can the reader get from these tables an idea of what is uppermost in most supervisors' minds? In a general way this is possible, provided that he remembers the conditions under which the data were obtained and the different types of bias that are, therefore, inevitable:-

(a) The percentages are probably too low. They were obtained by reading through each interview and making a mark for each topic discussed. Naturally on some interviews which were not fully enough reported, a topic would not appear. This factor should not affect the relative rank.

(b) The men usually assumed that the interviewer was primarily interested in getting their reactions to the Company. Consequently their life in relation to it may be given an undue emphasis.

(c) The general amount of confidence that any man would have in the interviewer and in the interview situation may influence the content of discussion. It must be remembered that all these tables are summaries of the content of a first meeting. The ground had been carefully prepared and few men were any more suspicious or

secretive of their ultimate preoccupations than their natural tendencies dictated. Anyone will realize, however, that there are such resistances.

(d) There is always the question of facility of expression, and of capacity to say what one means. This does not depend entirely on mere words. Consider the different tones of voice and facial expressions that may accompany the statement. "Oh, sure, I'm satisfied with the way I've advanced in the Company." This may express either enthusiastic affirmation or unhappy resignation. It is at this point that elaborate analysis of what was said breaks down and leaves the reader at the mercy of the interviewer's judgment. It accounts for the paragraph of interpretation after each table.

A more detailed analysis of the topics in Table 1 is given in the following tables. The percentages show what proportion of the men discussing the general topic referred to a particular sub-topic. For example, Table 2 shows that about fifty per cent of the men discussing advancement expressed satisfaction. This does not mean that forty per cent of all supervisors expressed satisfaction with advancement.

On account of the nature of the original data these percentages can only be approximate and no attempt has been made to estimate to less than $\pm 5\%$. Sometimes sub-topics were cast into mutually exclusive categories whose sum, therefore, reaches 100%; in other cases the tables imply that one man might have mentioned more than one topic, as was naturally the case.

Table 2
Advancement
(About 60% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group discussing Sub-Topic</u>
1. <u>Satisfied</u> - unclassified comments.	50%
2. <u>Dissatisfied</u> - (a) Unfair discrimination exists in making promotions.	10%
(b) Unfair discrimination exists and is directed at <u>me</u> in particular.	5%
(c) Wishes he were back on bench.	Less than 5%
(d) Unclassified.	30%
3. "Selling oneself" necessary to get ahead.	10%
4. Demoted - good morale	10%
5. Demoted - bad morale	Less than 5%

The first three sub-topics were found in all ranks. Numbers 4 and 5 were found only among group chiefs and section chiefs.

Note: As has already been pointed out, a number of men said they were satisfied when they really meant they were resigned. Others said they were not satisfied not because they did not think that they were progressing, but because the idea of "satisfaction" meant to them stagnation and lack of ambition. Lack of education was often cited as a reason for not having progressed. A number of outstanding men, however, had had little formal education, but had been able to advance without it, getting what they needed as they went. If they mentioned it at all, they were apt to remark that complaints

about lack of education were merely alibis; that men would always find their own level. Many of those who were resigned because they lacked educations had projected their ambitions onto their children, and I was frequently asked what sort of schooling a young man should take in order to "be a success."

Those who specifically stated that personal "salesmanship" was needed to get anywhere adopted various methods to back up their opinion. Some said they conformed to the idea and told me of various methods they used to draw attention to themselves. In general, these consisted in keeping close watch on whatever they thought management was emphasizing at the moment, and in trying to be outstanding in promoting the policy, whether it consisted in putting over a thrift campaign or signing up for a course in psychology at the Hawthorne Club.

Another group of men repudiated salesmanship as being hypocritical. Persons of this type were usually rather sour and disappointed, unable to get along with people. In general, it was not the highest type of supervisor who mentioned personal salesmanship specifically, either favorably or unfavorably, although there were a few exceptions. However, the general idea was implicit in the statements of a good many men.

Charges about discrimination were apt to be coupled with comments about racial groups. As a general rule they were made by men of Anglo-Saxon backgrounds against Mid-Europeans.

Those who stated that they wished to be demoted almost always complained that the better operatives were getting more money than they were. More important than this reason, I think that these men disliked the responsibilities of supervision and had an instinctive feeling that they belonged on the bench.

As a general comment, the interviewer got the impression that men eyed one another jealously to see whether the principle of seniority was violated. This, however, had not prevented a few outstanding younger men from being in positions above the average for their years. The others accepted this usually with good grace, provided that the men in question gave them the impression of real ability and combined tact with his other good qualities.

It struck the writer, however, that the men generally thought that promotion was slow, and that one was lucky to "get a break." Impatience among the younger and more able group and section chiefs was tempered by the opinion that no one could expect any promotion during times as hard as these.

Table 3
Business Depression
(About 60% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic</u>
1. Debts, mortgage obligations, etc. are pressing.	35%
2. Affected by bank failures	10%
3. Men had to reduce standard of living	30%
4. Unclassified comment	75%

Sub-topics 1 and 3 were found mostly among section and group chiefs. The percentage of sub-topic 2 increased directly with rank.

Note: "Unclassified comment" often started off with a question, "Say, how long is it going to be before we get any work? I never saw slack times as long as these."

Many men whose incomes have been reduced have not been able to effect a corresponding reduction in their own "fixed charges." This applies particularly to interest and amortization charges on real estate mortgages, so that many are paying too high a proportion of their income for shelter. Savings have been depleted in an attempt to keep up their standard of living and a common expression was of worry about what would happen if their earning capacity did not soon revive.

The interviewer was impressed with the general docility and rather fatalistic attitude toward economic changes. Lack of work was viewed in the attitude with which a farmer might view a lack of rain. No blame was ever attached to the Company for not having work to do, nor were any doubts expressed about the present economic system.

Table 4
Steady Work and Lay-off Policy of Company
(About 55% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic</u>
1. Company fair in laying off	20%
2. Company unjust and unfair	
(a) "Old Timers" unduly favored	10%
(b) Unclassified comments about unfairness	10%
3. Feels personally insecure	25%
4. Restriction of output exists	10%
5. Unclassified comments on lay offs in general	45%

Comments on sub-topics 2a and 3 come only from section and group chiefs. Other sub-topics were found in all ranks, except that comment 4 came chiefly from foremen. Table 1 shows that the great majority of men discussing the general topic were in the lower ranks.

Note: "Unclassified comment" often referred to the difficulty of picking men for lay off, particularly at this late stage in a depression when all the "lemons" had long since been let go, and only good men remained. Many men, while praising the Company's policy of holding long service employees, bewailed the loss of many bright youngsters who would be difficult to replace. In many minds there is evidently a vivid recollection of rush seasons when great difficulty was encountered in getting and holding enough skilled men.

If only 23% of this group mentioned specifically that they were afraid of their own jobs, the interviewer got the impression that a much higher percentage implied this feeling, by their general comments, particularly in the lower ranks.

Table 5
Payment
(About 55% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic</u>
1. Earnings have been reduced - satisfied	20%
2. Earnings have been reduced - dissatisfied	25%
3. Rates are out of date or unfair	10%
4. High rated men are being put on low rated jobs, thus dragging down gang's earnings	15%
5. Operators get more than supervisors	15%
6. Wishes he could be changed from present form of payment to:	
(a) straight hourly rate	5%
(b) sharing in gang earnings	5%
7. Unclassified comments on wages and rates	<u>35%</u>
8. Approximate percentage with favorable attitudes	25%
9. Approximate percentage with unfavorable attitudes	<u>75%</u>
	<u>100%</u>

The percentage of favorable comments was higher in the higher ranks. The percentage of unfavorable comments was higher in the lower ranks, and the lower ranks were more preoccupied with the general topic. Sub-topics 4 and 5 had a much higher

incidence in certain departments; in fact, in one or two departments where many young men had been laid off to make room for old timers there was a practically unanimous complaint of type 4.

Other sub-topics which appeared in the "unclassified" group included -

- (a) Parts are not coming through so that assemblers have to wait for work; this is not their fault and there is no provision for it in the rates.
- (b) Payment on inventory days should be based on average earnings rather than on an hourly rate basis.

Note: Short hours and disorganization of work have resulted in lower and fluctuating earnings for many supervisors, both on and off the gangs. Moreover, there seems to be a rather general feeling that although wages have not been actually cut, the same result has been achieved by keeping only the long service, high rated men, and thus reducing the gang percentage. When this feeling found specific voice it was in a comment such as "even if we got raises they wouldn't mean anything. It's taking money out of one pocket and putting it in the other."

General dissatisfaction is apt to find its expression in complaints of discrimination between one gang and another in a single department, or between office and shop workers.

Table 6
Travel
(About 40% of all men discussed this topic)

	Percentage of this Group discussing Sub-Topic
1. Specifically stated they had no desire to travel or move	15%
2. Desire, but inability to travel or move	less than 5%
3. Army experience	35%
4. Unclassified comments about having travelled or moved from one job to another	60%

Note: These sub-topics were classified mainly to show mental curiosity or initiative, or the lack of it. Many men told stories of their youth, how they went from one job to another, and how they finally settled at the Western Electric Company. "You can't tell me this isn't a good place to work. I've worked other places, and I know."

The fact that a man is drafted into the army and therefore has tales to tell of varied scenes and new jobs probably has nothing to do with his curiosity or initiative. Accordingly, this group of comments was separated from the others.

Table 7
Supervision
(About 40% of all men discussed this topic)

	Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic
1. "Has improved since I have been with company."	45%
2. Has "gone soft."	5%
3. Supervisors are overburdened, particularly with paper work	10%
4. "There was one man who had it in for me."	20%
5. "There was one man who was like a father to me."	15%
6. One man or small clique a sore spot in an otherwise good department	15%
7. Unclassified comments	35%

Under this general topic were put all comments about supervision as referring to the personal relation between superiors and subordinates. Sub-topic 1 was frequently mentioned along with comments about conferences. (Table 8) and most of these sub-topics are perhaps related to the general topic of "Cooperation."

(Table 10) Comments in that group, however, are limited to those who specifically mentioned the idea of cooperation in getting out their work.

Note: A larger proportion of men in the lower ranks mentioned sub-topic 1. The improvement usually meant that superiors were not as hard-boiled as they used to be in "the old days." The incidence of sub-topic 2 and 3 was higher in the higher ranks, particularly among foremen. Comments in sub-topic 4 were found in all ranks, the highest percentages among assistant foremen and section chiefs. A rather typical expression was, "I'm going along all right now, but there was one guy that had it in for me once. Now that I've gotten away from him things are O.K." Not infrequently this sort of comment continued, "It's a funny thing, you know, you might say he was the fellow that got me started in the first place."

Sub-comment 5 also had its highest incidence among assistant foremen and section chiefs. Unlike comment 4, however, no foremen brought it up. It comprised statements of affection and particular loyalty to one superior, either now or at some previous time over the man.

Table 8
Supervisors' Conferences
(About 85% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this</u> <u>Group discussing</u> <u>Sub-Topic</u>
1. <u>Likes</u> - gets ideas out of discussion	20%
2. <u>Likes</u> - becomes acquainted with supervisors from other departments	15%
3. <u>Likes</u> - unclassified and generally noncommittal statements of approval	50%
4. <u>Dislikes</u> - conferences are dull and material monotonous	10%
5. <u>Dislikes</u> - "They have no effect on anyone anyway. These guys talk one way in the conference and act just the opposite on the floor."	10%
6. <u>Dislikes</u> - no conclusions are ever reached	5%
7. <u>Dislikes</u> - unclassified comments of disapproval	5%
Approximate % of this group expressing:	
Approval of conferences	73%
Disapproval of conferences	25%

It may be that the percentage of all supervisors who mentioned the conferences is somewhat too high, because this was an easy topic for the interviewer to use to open a conversation, or to get it going again after a dead stop. This may also account for the rather high percentage of rather noncommittal statements of approval. (Sub-topic three)

The percentage of unfavorable comments about conferences, particularly sub-topics 4 and 5, was higher among foremen than in the lower ranks.

Note: Further interpretive comment will be found in a later section.

Table 9
Family Affairs
(About 30% of all men discussed this topic)

	Percentage of this Group discussing Sub-Topic
Comment indicating a happy family life, affection or approval of wife, pride in children, etc.	50%
Trouble at home - sickness or recent death in family	25%
Trouble at home - personal sickness of supervisor	20%
Trouble at home - money matters causing friction at home	15%
Trouble at home - unhappy family life from other causes	10%
Unclassified - usually noncommittal as to feeling	10%

There was no significant difference between ranks in the comments included in this table.

Note: A man is naturally apt to think of a subject like this much more often than he talks about it, particularly in a first interview. It is in such topics that table 1 may not indicate accurately the relative importance of people's thoughts as distinct from their words.

Although some men were reticent as regards their private lives and a very few specifically refused to say anything about them, evidently assuming at the start of the interview that they were in for a quizzing.

the interviewer was in general surprised with the freedom and lack of reticence with which men voluntarily broached and discussed the topic. Among some of the things that impressed him were:

- a. The number of sickly wives whose troubles sounded as if they might be chiefly of neurotic origin.
- b. The high cost of hospital and medical care relative to their income for those families who were not willing to be charity cases.
- c. That whenever a man had had personal dealings with the Company hospital and doctors he was loud in their praise.
- d. That men of foreign background but born in this country generally had fewer children than those of foreign birth.

Table 10
Cooperation in Work
(About 25% of all men discussed this topic)

	Percentage of this Group discussing Sub-Topic
1. Cooperation with equals - gets it	60%
2. Cooperation with equals - fails to get it	40%
3. Cooperation with superiors - gets it	50%
4. Cooperation with superiors - fails to get it	50%

In this general heading were included all comments that had to do with cooperation in work, as distinguished from comments on personal relations between supervisors, although these are naturally rather closely related.

Foremen as a group ran counter to the general trend of comments 1 and 2. More of them said they failed to get cooperation with their colleagues of equal rank. This type of comment usually arose out of interdepartmental friction, as for example between a piece part and an assembly department.

Comments 3 and 4 came chiefly from the lower ranks. Unfavorable comment usually referred to superiors dealing directly with workers without notifying or consulting group and section chiefs.

Table 11
Interviewing Employees
(About 25% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group discussing Sub-topic</u>
1. Favorable, but qualified with doubts about validity or importance of what employee said	30%
2. Favorable - unclassified	70%
3. Unfavorable - "nothing is ever done about specific complaints."	5%
4. Unfavorable - unclassified	15%
Approximate % of group with--	
Favorable attitude	85%
Unfavorable attitude	15%

Comments in sub-topic 2 usually mentioned the fact that it was "good for a man to have a place to get things off his chest." Not infrequently such a favorable comment would be qualified by a statement, "but you know a lot of that stuff that they got in the interviews must have come from the chronic kickers. Some of these guys will kick no matter how much you do for them. I don't see that what they say means much." Unfavorable comments were of various types, such as that interviews undermined the supervisor's authority, that they were bad for morale because they made people think about how many complaints they had, that they were a waste of money and a horrible example of useless overhead, and that the whole idea was "just a lot of boloney."

There seemed to be no great differences in the percentages between ranks, except in sub-topic 3, which came solely from group chiefs.

Note: Further interpretive comment on this topic is included in a later section.

Table 12
Thrift Plans (Excluding Pensions)
(About 20% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group discussing Sub-Topic</u>
1. A. T. & T. stock - favorable comment about plan	55%
2. Building and loan - favorable comment about plan	25%
3. Sick benefits, ready money, etc. - favorable	20%
4. Unfavorable comments - unclassified	15%

The only market difference between ranks was in the higher percentage of foremen who mentioned the thrift plans in general.

(Table II) Within the sub-topics there was no significant difference.

Note: Unfavorable comments were rather varied, but most centered around (a) the decline in A. T. & T. stock, and (b) the passing of the Western Electric Company dividend, which was misunderstood as meaning that there would be no more dividends on A. T. & T. In the very few cases where this second comment was made the interviewer took it upon himself to point out the difference between Western Electric Company and American Telephone stock, and that probably the fears were ungrounded. This was the only occasion when he made any statement about company affairs or policies.

Because of the usual discussions in textbooks on corporation finance as to the benefits of employee stock ownership, the interviewer was watching to see whether stockholders expressed any unusual amount of interest or concern over the profits of the Company. He was struck by the fact that such ideas never came out voluntarily, although they may perhaps be inferred. When a man was questioned specifically on this point he always would affirm that because he was a stockholder he took a greater interest in seeing that work was done efficiently, but

the interviewer felt that this was said because it was the obvious thing to say in reply to the question. Favorable comments were almost entirely about how the plan helped men save by taking the money out of their pay before they got a chance to spend it, about how A. T. & T. was safe in contrast with other investments, and how the discount from the market price was, in effect, "easy money."

Table 13
Women in Industry
(About 15% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic</u>
1. Prefers to supervise women	25%
2. Does not like to have to supervise women	25%
3. "Married women oughtn't to be working in times like these."	45%
4. Immorality exists. Girls get or keep good jobs because of improper relations with supervisors.	15%
5. Unclassified comments	15%

Several of the departments interviewed employed women operatives, others had both men and women. The percentage of comments for the general topic was naturally somewhat higher in these departments. There seemed to be no significant difference as between ranks.

Note: With respect to sub-topic 4, there was a certain amount of comment about the demotion of one supervisor who had, according to gossip, been actually convicted of immoral relations with women operatives. It was only when this was amplified into charges that such practices were common, or that certain individuals were guilty, that the comment was counted. The actual number of men making such comments was small, and, the topic is perhaps interesting more in what it revealed in the thinking of these particular men than in its objective

truth.

The interviewer was rather amused that comments about married women working never allowed any doubt that that every single girl needed her job much more than any married woman. If pressed into further discussion a man would usually admit that each case had to be decided on its merits and that some single girls were merely working for pin money, whereas some married women needed every cent they could get. But the general idea seemed to be that if a single girl lost her job she would be thrown "onto the street," and that if a married woman worked she was maintaining too high a standard of living. Back of all this probably lies an instinctive masculine protest against a wife's "independence," and a feeling that she ought to be contented with what the husband alone can earn. There was usually more "steam" behind this topic than appeared on the surface.

Table 14
Interest in work
(About 15% of all men discussed this topic)

	<u>Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic</u>
<u>Favorable</u> - work is interesting	65%
<u>Unfavorable</u> - work is monotonous and dull	35%

Note: Whether the low rank of this general topic in Table 1 is significant or not is open to question. Does it show that men are not con-
cerned in whether their work is interesting or not, or simply that their attention was not focussed on this type of question?

It was a common thing among men of long service to say, "It doesn't seem as if I'd been here that long. I don't know where the time has gone." A number of others mentioned the fact that they felt lost without their work to do, even in the second week of a two weeks' vacation. It seemed to be a rather commonly accepted opinion that a man was "done for" once he retired on a pension.

These facts on first sight might be interpreted that men inferred that their work was interesting, even though they did not mention it specifically. On the other hand the reader may reach just the opposite conclusion. A man may wonder where long years have vanished, simply because they were filled with nothingness. His days seem long, but the years seem short. The treadmill becomes so much a part of him that he misses it when he steps off for a two weeks' vacation, and drops in his tracks if he is put off it, permanently. The writer does not feel qualified to argue for either interpretation, but he got the impression that many men had a rather grim attitude toward work in general.

Table 15
Pensions

(About 10% of all men discussed this topic)

	Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic
Favorable	75%
Unfavorable	25%

Unfavorable comments were not directed at the principle of pensions, but were more with respect to the amount paid or the time necessary to get one. The first type came from men in the lower ranks who felt that old timers who had served just as long and faithfully as

others whose ability had taken them farther were to be retired on penurious amounts. They thought that a pension should be a reward for faithfulness and years of service rather than ability, and should be more nearly equal for all. One man suggested a sliding scale of percentages, the higher percentages in the lower wage groups.

Naturally, the older men were more concerned with the general topic of pensions, as is shown by Table 1.

Table 16
Welfare work, Personnel Department, Etc.
(About 10% of all men discussed this topic.)

	<u>Percentage of this Group Discussing Sub-Topic</u>
Favorable comments	50%
Unfavorable comments	50%

The percentage of favorable comments was higher in the higher ranks. Unfavorable comments appeared in all ranks except foremen and were mostly in the nature of charges that the personnel department was "in cahoots" with the foremen and that it would always side with him and against the men. This tendency existed, it was sometimes charged, by the fact that Personnel Department workers did not regard their job as a permanent one. Since they never knew when they might be shifted back under some foreman they endeavored to keep in the good graces of all of them.

Some men complained about the fact that the Personnel Departments were separate in each branch, and that it was almost impossible to get a transfer into another branch since each Personnel Department looked out for its own people.

III Inferences and Interpretations

In addition to reading through the interviews to determine what was said, the writer in each case formed a certain general opinion about the men. These general ideas naturally were forming as the actual work of interviewing progressed; an attempt has been made to crystallize them in the following tables. The number of men seen was not so great but that the writer could recall each face and each particular meeting. In only three or four cases was the individual so colorless as to leave no impression except what had been written about him at the time. This tabulation attempts to take into account the many intangible factors in manner, bearing, and attitude, and the indirect meanings that are always present in any conversation. The reader can be given no objective data to check with this, and his agreement or disagreement will have to be based on intuition and his own common sense and experience. The writer makes no claim to omniscience; there are obviously many other categories that might have been used. An opinion was formed on every man; consequently, the figures represent percentages of the total number of men. As to whether this gives a fair picture of all Western Electric Company supervisors, the reader should remember two facts.

- (a) that these men were from the operating branch only.

Other interpretations might arise from studying other branches.

- (b) that the total group was made up in the proportion of
20 foremen, 16 assistant foremen, 44 section chiefs,
and 65 group chiefs.

Table 17

RACIAL BACKGROUND

	Personnel		Assistant Foremen		Section Chiefs		Group Chiefs		All	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
American	10	50	8	50	14	31	15	25	47	52
Canadian (including French Canadian)	2	10							2	2
English			2	15	1	2	1	1	4	3
Irish	3	15			3	7	1	1	7	5
Scotch							2	3	2	1
Dutch							1	1	1	1
Norwegian							2	3	2	1
Swedish	1	5			4	9	1	1	6	4
Danish	1	5							1	1
German	3	15	4	25	7	16	13	20	27	18
Polish			2	13	7	16	10	25	20	17
Bohemian					6	14	10	15	13	11
Italian					2	5	3	5	5	4
	20	100	16	100	44	100	65	100	105	100

This particular table, (17) is not a matter of opinion, because each man, if he did not mention it, was asked about this topic. The foreign born came to 15% of the total, others classed as "foreign" above had been born in this country of foreign-born parents, or of their children. After two American-born generations, men were counted as "American"; actually, the great majority of this group had Anglo-Saxon background.

TABLE 18

<u>TYPE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT</u>	<u>Approximate % of all Men Interviewed</u>
Socialized	55
"Double Life"	5
Individualist	25
Unclassified	15

The distinctions deal primarily with the way a man reacts to his social environment. Some people seem to get their sense of values from an internal source; they are often spoken of as being "independent". Used in this sense our modern slang even assumes that this word means stubborn and hard to deal with. Other people conform more closely to the social pattern, in fact it never occurs to them not to conform. They seem to get their set of values from without rather than within. These distinctions have nothing to do with a man's manner or his "front". Either type may be "hard boiled" or the reverse, bluff and hearty or timid and retiring.

The interviewer's general impression of Western Electric Company supervisors is that they are rather highly socialized people; that the social system as represented by the company hierarchy and company policies means a great deal to them. This attitude is more than a logical interest in the company's success, in so far as its success means their brand and

butter. It is an inherent set of values which are derived from a certain social environment, and accepted more or less unquestionably. Even in complaint a man will say, "this thing that happened is because this one man (or group of men) doesn't live up to company policies. The company is right - this man didn't live up to its ideal." The "company" and the "big bosses" always "mean well" and "do the right thing as far as they can"; troubles arise because of human weakness in their agents.

This acceptance of the environment seems to be most noticeable in the American-born of Mid-European background. Evidently, they accept completely the social values of the new culture, and some of them seem to have so few ideas of their own that one wonders whether they are really individuals at all. Sometimes an individualist will be a "yes man" because he thinks it good policy, but some of these men are yes men because it never occurred to them to be anything else. In their extreme form they are very difficult to interview. Social communion to them evidently means mutual action of some sort. People "get together" but this means that they must do something together. How two people could sit for an hour and exchange ideas is beyond their comprehension. Consequently, when faced with the interview situation they wait to be asked definite questions. If these are not forthcoming, they sit passively and even verge on falling asleep, or, if they are more sensitive persons, they get extremely uncomfortable and even go into a state verging on panic. Once put at their ease they are apt to talk about what they did, sometimes about what they felt, almost never about what they thought.

On the other hand, there were plenty of individualists to be found in this group of men. Some of them went so far in this direction as to lead actual double lives - this heading has nothing to do with their domestic situation, but refers to their own work and interests. These men felt that they never wanted to be completely dependent on any one group or social system; they had to assert their independence by having some sort of business or other vital interest of their own, in addition to working for the company. Although this was usually masked under the excuse of financial necessity, I do not believe that this was always the primary cause.

Extreme individualists are also apt to be difficult to interview. They may resent what they regard as an attempt to pry into their own affairs. Unlike a completely socialized person who may not see that there is anything to talk about, they will have plenty of things to say, but won't want to say them. Once started they have to be pushed out of the office to allow the next man to come in.

There seemed to be some difference between ranks. Foremen were about evenly divided between socialized and individualistic types, but the lower ranks, particularly the section chiefs, seemed to have a higher percentage of the socialized type. There are two possible explanations and I believe both have a bearing. One, that it is possible that the individualist, if he becomes interested in his advancement, is more apt to get himself in line for promotion in some original way; the other, that the old time American or at least Anglo-Saxon worker is more apt to be individualistic than the Central European. Most of the older men are of this racial background (Table 17), and merely by

the process of seniority might have worked themselves into the higher ranks.

This quality is not necessarily directly correlated with success as a supervisor. Men of all grades of capacity appeared in both types; nor is one to assume that everyone falls clearly into one type or the other. Most people will be a mixed type and this may account for the sort of divided attitude, which shows in many interviews, toward "the company" as a social unit. Most people both like and dislike to conform.

TABLE 19

Success of Adjustment

	<u>Percentage of Men Interviewed</u>
1. Well adjusted	81%
2. Maladjustment - placement	5
3. Maladjustment - neurotic	13
4. Maladjustment - Psychotic	<u>1</u>

Whatever one's type of reaction to the world, one may either fail or succeed. The above table uses "adjustment" in a purely pragmatic sense, a man is "well adjusted" if he is getting on satisfactorily, psychologically speaking, with himself and the world, "maladjusted" if he is failing. This has nothing to do with material success or degree of intelligence, nor does it infer that a well adjusted man is making the utmost of his potentialities.

In the three types of maladjustment, I have tried to distinguish in a general way the causes. The man who is obviously the "square peg in a round hole" has been put in the placement group. This does not mean that all the well-adjusted men are ideally placed to make the most of their abilities, but if they are not, at least their position is not causing them

serious distress. I consider as "neurotic" men who are in distress because of their own attitudes, and that these attitudes are the result of their life history. In some cases they might be helped, but it would have to be by individual attention and on the men's own initiative. Many of them would be the last to admit that there was anything wrong with them; the trouble, as they see it, is in the world or in other people. The last and very small group consists of men who have peculiar or unfortunate attitudes arising from injury or mental disease which would require the attention of a psychiatrist rather than a psychologist. They are getting along all right as long as no special strain is put on them; if it were, they would probably break down completely and land in a mental hospital.

There is undoubtedly a relation between a man's outside life and his contentment in his work which showed up in these interviews. By outside life I mean not only his family relationships, but the entire social reality to which he relates himself. For example, it struck me that men who had a definite trade were apt to be more satisfied and contented individuals than those who did not. Perhaps this arises from a feeling of security - they have lines of loyalty that do not depend on the company alone. They have served apprenticeships and have been accepted into certain other social groups that involve their work, quite distinct from the company. Most of these men now repudiate trade unions as being run by gangsters, and their loyalty is to the company. But their feelings have a certain maturity and sanity about them that seemed to be lacking in some other men, who had no particular trade, had never

worked anywhere but at the Western Electric Company, and who had lived all their lives in the Chicago area. Some of this type, without being definitely neurotic, seem to me to make unreasonable and rather infantile demands of the company. It is to them, father, mother, society, and state, all rolled into one, and they seem to have no other social experience against which to check their demands. If the company failed them, their world would come to an end.

TABLE 20

<u>Attitude toward Interview:</u>	<u>Approximate % of Men Interviewed</u>
1. "Got a load off their chests"	Between 5 and 10%
2. Enthusiastic cooperation (excluding 1)	25
3. Neutral	45
4. Came out of a sense of duty only	15
5. Antagonistic, changing to #2	About 5
6. Antagonistic, all through	About 5

The man's attitude toward the interview is probably related to the type and success of their general adjustment; consequently, the above table has been introduced at this point. The six different groups divide the range between those who welcomed the interview as a chance to blow off accumulated steam and those who were antagonistic toward it. Of course, the group whose members made no appointment at all may have included many of the latter type, as well as those who were merely indifferent.

A comment not infrequently heard went something like this, "I don't see why they wanted to interview supervisors. I think the plan is a good one for the workers because they have no one to go to with complaints. But a supervisor has always got his foreman to go to if he has any kick." The general opinion seemed to be that the worker could not get the satisfaction out of his group or section chief that the latter could get out

of his foreman, and that no other adequate recourse was open to him. They would not go to the personnel department for fear of antagonizing the supervisor.

It was evident that in some cases the supervisors felt that they were in the same position as these workers, and therefore welcomed the chance to be interviewed.

Neurotic individuals would tend to fall in group 1 or group 6 of Table 20. Not all those who fell in group 1 could be considered neurotic, however.

About the only difference between ranks that may be significant in Tables 19 and 20 is with respect to the Assistant Foremen. It seems as if in this rank there was a somewhat higher incidence of worry and neurotic troubles, and a greater proportion of men who were glad of the chance to unburden themselves in the interview. The small number of assistant foremen seen (16) may be too small a sample on which to make a generalization.

On the other hand going back to Table 1 it will be noticed that a higher percentage of the assistant foremen are preoccupied with advancement than the other ranks. Is it not possible that the assistant foreman may find himself in a difficult position with respect to his lines of authority and his personal relations in his department? The foreman is the recognized head of the department; he is spoken of as "the old man" by the section chiefs and group chiefs whose relations toward one another are more those of brothers in a family. The assistant foreman, however, is neither quite the head nor quite the

subordinate. Moreover, to carry out the family analogy a little further, his close relation to the foreman may be of the father-favorite son type, with the natural internal conflict that this implies. He will feel affection and loyalty to the foreman and yet will want to get him out of the way in order to step into his shoes. There will be many irrational factors in this relationship much deeper than the stated difficulties in the logical set-up. Again referring back to the content of the interviews, in Table 7 there were more Assistant Foremen who made comments of types 4 and 5. ("There was (or is) one man who has it in for me". "There was, (or is) one man who was like a father to me") than any other rank.

I believe that there is also a feeling of rank that is somewhat analogous to the difference between commissioned and non-commissioned officer in the Army and Navy. Group and section chiefs think of their position as that of a "noncom", but an assistant foremanship is regarded as the first step in the real executive ranks. Consequently, men who take this step have left the ranks of the subordinates and yet are still on trial by their superiors, who may not have quite accepted them. Some such factors may well have a part in causing an increase in irrational preoccupation in this group.

"Enthusiastic cooperation" I defined as an attitude of wholeheartedly welcoming the chance to be interviewed, without this implying that the men had a particular grievance or preoccupation. This group did not always include men who talked freely and easily. Many rather inarticulate persons seemed genuinely glad to come down. In a few

cases I was helped toward forming an opinion of a man's attitude by slips and mannerisms which might seem irrelevant. For example, when a man arrives 10 minutes late, refuses to let me shut the door to my office, and refuses to smoke a proffered cigarette, only to pull out his own package (of the same brand) 5 minutes later, I may easily feel he is not genuinely glad to be there, and will depart as soon as his idea of politeness and policy allows him, even though he is effusive in his praise of interviewing. On the other hand, some others, even though their manners may not always be so affable, arrive ahead of time and stay for very long interviews.

In the third group of Table 20 I placed those who had no strong attitude one way or another. If asked an opinion, they would almost always express an approval of interviewing. In the fourth group are those who said or implied that they wouldn't have come had the program not been a company policy. They would deny that they were antagonistic or suspicious, but couldn't see the point of interviewing them when they felt they had nothing to say. The last type included men who stated or plainly inferred that they were suspicious of the motives behind the interviewing plan, or that they thought the whole idea was a lot of bunk. Some of them, when I admitted ignorance of their particular job in the shop, could see no use in talking to me, and decided that I was an incompetent theorist who lacked "practical experience".

Some of these antagonistic people changed their opinion in the course of the interview. They evidently had expected it to be a sort of examination, concluded with a lecture from me on "how to be a supervisor".

On the other hand, some younger men (all of them of Polish or Bohemian background) stated at the end that I had disappointed them because I gave them no advice. They intimated that I was a funny kind of a "professor." Professors were supposed to give lectures, and they had come ready to take notes.

A few men surprised me by explaining to me just how I got there and what I was supposed to do. Their idea was that the Company had already tried to interview supervisors by having conferences, but that it was found that "mass interviewing" of this type was unsuccessful. Men would not talk freely because of the presence of others; consequently, they had decided on individual conferences, and I had been selected as the conference leader.

It might be well at this point to try to interpret the general attitude of supervisors toward interviewing and conferences. Interviewing is regarded in two main ways, as a method of fact finding, and as a plan which allows workmen to "get things off their chest." The second idea receives more approval than the first, but few men seem to see that the two ideas do not necessarily go together. If an employee unburdens himself in his interview and the statements he makes are irrational or exaggerated, he is assumed to be a chronic kicker and the interview to have been a waste of time. "It's good for a man to get things off his chest, but if these things are not true, the fellow must be too much of a nut to make him worth bothering about."

A very few supervisors have seized upon the unfortunate idea of interviewing people as a new way of worming information out of men which they would not give if asked directly.

For example, by a feigned interest in a man's

family life the supervisor tries to discover whether his wife is working or not, feeling that such information will be useful to him in picking people to lay off. Interviewing to them means indirect questioning in order to catch people.

In general, however, the supervisors are content to leave interviewing to men especially assigned to the job. There seemed to be little feeling that such a program was conflicting with their authority, although a few old timers said this.

In their attitude toward conferences men showed wide differences of opinion, but the main impression left seems to be "One should be soft-boiled instead of hard-boiled, one should lead instead of drive." These ideas are approved or repudiated, according to the type of men. It does not seem to be true that the conferences have stimulated mental curiosity as to why people act or feel in certain ways, and what the significance of this might be. The average supervisor is not interested in raising questions, but in disposing of them. "They told me that a man hated his foreman because his grandfather kicked him when he was three years old, or some such idea. Well, even if it was true, what of it? I've got to do something with these birds."

Many men said they got new ideas as to how to handle problem cases out of listening to the discussion. Others said that the chief benefit of the conferences was in meeting supervisors from other departments. A group that included some of the most intelligent men said that the meetings were dull and the material monotonously similar. As can be seen from Table 8, about 75% of the comments expressed approval,

and if the tales about the old time hard-boiled bosses can be believed, the conferences must have had an excellent effect on general morale. Although many men have adopted merely a new set of maxims instead of a new method of thinking, this way will be the first step toward stimulating intellectual curiosity and getting a real understanding of other points of view. The new set of maxims alone must be considered an achievement, for many people will always govern their actions by maxims instead of thought.

It may be interesting to the higher executives to know that whenever a man mentioned the branch conferences at which the superintendent spoke, it was always with approval. They evidently valued the chance to see the whole branch together and to hear their superintendent. Just as the foreman's job has a certain symbolic value as head of a group, so the superintendent's job takes on certain attributes that may not be so striking in the idea of general foreman or assistant superintendent. The superintendency again focuses the idea of head of a group, this time on a much more grandiose scale.

As this point I am going to add some further speculative tabulations about these men's business ability, habits of thought, and their chance for advancement. I say speculative, because I should not have the temerity to suggest that I know everything about a stranger's mental processes and could judge accurately of his capabilities from an hour's conversation, when I had never seen him in action and had only a sketchy idea of the technical side of his job. Also, an inarticulate person who had absolutely correct intuitions and who acted successfully

on them might appear at a disadvantage in an interview. However, I tried not to make mere inability to express experience an important criterion. It does seem to me that an interview can show up a man's ability to think, to generalize, and to abstract, even if his verbal expression is feeble and his formal logic non-existent. Thinking and abstracting in this sense, may be intuitive as well as logical. These capacities I tried to measure in the following table.

<u>Table 21</u> <u>Mental Characteristics</u>	<u>Approximate % of</u> <u>Men Interviewed</u>
1. Capacity to think as well as act	35%
2. Capacity for action only	40
3. Unclassified	25

The percentage in group 1 increased directly with rank. The percentage of group 2 was higher in the lower ranks.

Men in group 1 ought to be able to generalize on their experience. They ought to think in terms of relations instead of absolute categories. If faced with a new situation, they could act intelligently without having to be given minute directions. The better men of this group ought to be able to graduate into higher supervisory jobs where their lives will not deal directly with things, but with ideas, concepts, and personalities. Men in group 2 I considered lacking in these qualities. This does not mean that they were bad supervisors, particularly in the group and section chief levels. But certainly beginning with the foreman's job, a man ought to be able to develop some thinking capacity. Those foremen who seemed to lack it were preoccupied with the tenuous nature of their job, with the mass of reports, records, and statistics which were an ir-

ritation to them and which they considered an imposition. They could not see how such things could be of any use - they wanted to be able to see and touch the machines and talk directly to the men. Their subordinate supervisors were apt to complain that they went over their heads direct to the men for every little thing; that group and section chiefs had no real authority. If such men were promoted higher than a foremanship, I should think they would get into serious difficulties.

I also attempted to estimate how many men had a business man's point of view in connection with the operation of their departments.

Table 22
Business Ability

	<u>Approximate % of</u> <u>Men Interviewed</u>
1. Interest in costs	40%
2. No interest in costs	30
3. Unclassified	30

The percentage in group 1 increased directly with rank and in group 2 was much higher in the lower ranks.

Men in group 1 had at least an interest in, if not an accurate knowledge about the cost of production in their department. Some group and section chiefs of this type complained that they never saw the budgets and that they never knew how their department stood. Men in group 2 seemed to have no interest in anything except doing the production end of their job. Budgets and quality standards to them were merely requirements of management. They really had the viewpoint of an unenlightened worker instead of an executive. When they criticized their pay, they always wanted the rates raised, without any speculation about the labor cost per unit.

Interest in this type of thing could, it seems to me, be

stimulated more than it is. One or two conferences explaining the details of a budget plan or a K order system would not be enough. Could not the organization and accounting set-up allow a group or department to know how it stands with respect to profit making from one period to another? I got the impression that a fair number of men had more interest and curiosity in this subject than the company gave them chance to satisfy, and that it ought to be cultivated.

There may be some correlation between these last two tables. A man with no capacity whatever for abstraction could not understand a concept such as a cost per unit. At any rate, I tried to combine these impressions, along with the others, into a final estimation of how far a man might progress.

Table 23
Chances for Progress

Approximate % of
Men Interviewed

1. Unlimited future	10%
2. Two steps above present grade	10
3. One step above present grade	30
4. In place now, could hardly go higher	40
5. Already promoted beyond his capacities	10

The percentage in group 1 increased directly with rank. The percentage in group 4 seemed to be higher among foremen and section chiefs. If I have seemed to be unduly hard on them it is because I think that the steps just ahead of them are much greater than from a group chief to a section chief, or from an assistant foremanship to a foremanship. Each promotion demands not only increasing knowledge but a change in point of view, and an increasing ability to generalize and abstract. At these two steps the changes required are perhaps greater.

On the other hand, it seems to me that marked capacity is getting ahead, from the fact that the higher the rank the greater the proportion of outstanding men. (group 1)

I have implied in the last few pages that there were considerable differences in mental ability and in potential development, as distinct from degree of formal education. It seems to me that this has an important effect on the supervisory conferences. In any large group there must always be a number of men who cannot absorb any further training, and yet may perform satisfactorily the jobs they now know. Perhaps the only kind of educational work they need is of a very simple sort. On the other hand, really outstanding men may be bored if they are expected to work in a training course with this other type.

The success of a conference that includes both types will depend on its material and the skill of the leader in presenting it, so that each man gets some illumination according to his own degree of intelligence. Probably the discussion of case material is best adapted to this purpose.

As a further comment, it seems to me that the whole area of executive training needs coordination. So many men told me that they had been on "training courses" of various sorts that I could never get them all quite straight, or determine their purpose. The "operating results" and at least one other type of course seemed designed to give men technical knowledge in many departments. The personnel department was regarded as a training course, and so was interviewing and conference leading. There seemed to be various other ways in which men thought they were be-

ing "trained", through assisting some executive or in being shifted around to new duties. In addition to all this, the Hawthorne Club carries on extensive educational work. All these activities seemed to be quite independent and unrelated to each other and to the supervisory conferences. I gathered that all except the general conferences were for outstanding men, but some of the "graduates", who of course were loudest in complaint about not having been promoted after all their training, could hardly fall in this category. Indeed, some supervisors intimated that men were sent to the personnel and interviewing departments for training because they were problem cases and could thus easily and tactfully be disposed of. I think that a rather fundamental question of policy is involved here--to what extent personnel and research departments should be manned by men who will later, supposedly, go back into the regular line.

I saw a few men who had been interviewers at some previous time. They were not all of equal calibre, but in each case seemed to have benefited by the training.

These comments are made not as criticisms, of course, but as suggestions which point toward the idea that someone of sufficiently high executive rank might profitably make it an important part of his job, or even his entire job to coordinate and integrate these educational activities, to decide just what type of man the company is trying to reach with each type of training, to pick a group of outstanding men more carefully, advance them as fast as their capacities allow, and follow them more closely once they had started. There would perhaps be

fewer charges of discrimination and favoritism, and a lessened emphasis on "selling oneself", if men knew that some high executive was personally interested in them in an unbiased way, and that their only chance of promotion was not entirely dependent on their immediate foreman. I do not know to what extent this latter condition is true, but most men certainly seem to think that their immediate superiors control their destinies.

I think that it is a particularly important point that men should be promoted as fast as their capacities allow. An outstanding man who is picked, trained, and then allowed to stagnate too long on one job will lose those very qualities for which he was chosen. I saw a few men who had thus "gone sour" and who had really made themselves ineligible for further promotion. Their attitude was apt to be something like this "I used to be all steamed up over my work. They told me I was an outstanding man, put me through a training course and then promoted me to this job I'm on now. But it doesn't seem to have gotten me anywhere. Whenever I try to get a move they say they need me here. I don't believe it pays to be too good on your job; you'll get frozen to it for life."

Of course the average speed of promotion is set by the size of the company, speed of expansion, number and age of superiors, and similar factors. But this need not make it necessary that all individuals advance in close conformity with the average.

In conclusion, it seems to me that some of the chief questions raised by this material might well be investigated further. They in-

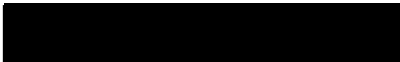
volve the personal relations surrounding the supervisor's job. How does one develop a capacity to do abstract and generalized thinking about personal situations? How is this related to mental environment and to education? How can company training courses better develop it? In a word, how can you get people to see other people's points of view? It is evident that I am inferring two rather severe indictments; first, that a number of supervisors do not think at all about personnel problems; second, that if they do, it is not done objectively or with any understanding of their own attitudes. I do not mean by this to point out the Western Electric Company or the operating branch as a horrible example; the same statements could be made about almost any group.

If this type of interviewing has raised the questions, a rather different type will have to be used to check the end perhaps to answer them, if there is any answer. Instead of spreading out the inquiry over a large group, it would be interesting to take a few men and go deeper. Some types one might include would be:

- (a) the hard-boiled driver
- (b) the leader
- (c) the old-time craftsman
- (d) the man who was projecting some sort of father attachment into the relation to his superiors
- (e) the man who depended on the company as his only social reality
- (f) the man with a strongly developed feminine side

These men would not necessarily be neurotic or problem cases. They would have to be won over to the idea and come voluntarily to a succession of interviews. I think that a number of the men upon whose interviews this report is based could be so persuaded.

A Report Based on Interviewing 256 Supervisors
in the Operating Branch
of the
Western Electric Company.


November 1, 1931.

Index.

	Page
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Object of Investigation	1
1.2 Method of Investigation	1
1.3 Method of Analysis	3
1.4 Terminology	5
2. The Supervisor's Attitude toward Authority	6
2.1 Attitude toward Immediate Superiors	6
2.11 "Yes" - "No" Attitudes	6
2.12 Realistic Conception of Authority	7
2.13 Similarity to Certain Attitudes of Youth. . .	8
2.14 Obedience vs. Rebellion as a Symptom of Ineffective Collaboration	8
2.2 Attitude toward Foreman	10
2.21 Three Major Forms of Criticism	10
2.22 Every Criticism Has a Personal and Objective Reference	11
2.23 A Demand to be Treated as an Adult	12
2.24 A Provisional Interpretation of This Demand .	12
2.3 Attitude toward 'Big Bosses'	13
2.4 Attitude toward Company and its Policies	14
2.41 Shorter Hours	14
2.42 Method of Payment	16
2.43 Advancement	17
2.44 Lay-Offs	19

	Page
2.45 Demotions	20
2.46 Old Timers	21
2.47 Interviewing Program	21
2.48 Supervisors' Conferences	22
2.49 Pension Plan, Thrift Plan, Stock Participation Plan	22
2.5 Summary	22
2.51 Preoccupation about Fairness	22
2.52 Demand for a Just Parent	23
2.53 Its Analysis	23
2.54 Possible Implications	25
3. The Supervisor's Conception of His Job	26
3.1 Recognition of Personnel Duties Involved in Supervision	26
3.2 Attitude toward Operators	27
3.21 A Leader and Not a Driver	27
3.22 Maxims of a Leader	28
3.23 Provide No Conclusion as to His Performance	29
3.24 Maxims Not Experimentally Verified	29
3.25 The Supervisor's New Role	30
3.26 A Tendency to Lose Himself in the Role and Forget the Audience	31
3.27 "Old Timers," "Chronic Kickers" and "Woman"	31
3.28 Individual Situations Not Considered	32
3.3 Summary	33
3.31 Stereotyped Attitudes	33
3.32 Implications for Supervisors' Training	34

	Page
4. The Supervisor's Understanding of Himself in Relation to the Company	35
4.1 Advancement	35
4.2 Realistic Attitude toward Advancement	37
4.3 Satisfaction as an Equilibrium Between Demands and Opportunities	37
4.4 Causes of Dissatisfaction	37
4.5 Personal Limitations	39
4.51 Education	39
4.52 Personality	40
4.6 Interest in Work	41
4.7 Distortion of Demands	42
4.8 Summary	43
4.81 Two Forms of Justifying a Dissatisfaction . . .	43
4.82 Excessive Demands as Symptomatic of an " impoverished Social Reality	44
5. Conclusion	45
5.1 Two Possible Exaggerations	45
5.2 The Problem Restated	46

1. Introduction.

1.1 Object of the Investigation.

The object of this report is to summarize the results obtained from interviewing 256 supervisors in the Operating Branch of the Western Electric Company. This total includes supervisors from 29 departments and is comprised of 6 assistant superintendents, 5 general foremen, 27 foremen, 28 assistant foremen, 80 section chiefs and 110 group chiefs. For the purposes of this report I shall omit the first two ranks. By 'supervisor' I shall mean any one from group chief to foreman. In my opinion this constitutes a fairly homogeneous group about which generalizations with regard to common attitudes and tendencies of thinking can be made.

The object of the investigation was to determine the meanings - whether explicitly expressed or implicitly assumed - which the supervisor assigned to his working environment. It was an attempt to find out and to interpret his opinions and judgments, satisfactions and dissatisfactions, hopes and fears with regard to the Company, his superiors, his work, and himself.

1.2 Method of Investigation.

The method employed was the indirect type of interviewing similar to the kind employed by the Company in interviewing its employees. The supervisor, that is to say, was allowed to talk about anything he chose. If he wished to talk about things outside the plant, he was privileged to do so. Nevertheless, as in many cases it was difficult to

make the supervisor talk and as I wished him to express himself freely in certain areas, I generally had a list of questions in the back of my mind which I used chiefly for the purpose of getting him to express himself more readily.

The questions were of the following order: Have you been with the Company for a long time? Do you think the supervision has improved in this time? To what do you attribute your progress in the Company? In your opinion what qualities constitute a good supervisor? What do you consider your major problems as a supervisor to be? How do you get along with your operators and your bosses?

If I had to press for this information by asking such direct questions I did not take the answers given very seriously. My interest was more in the way they arrived at the answers rather than in the answers themselves. In most cases the questions emerged from the interview situation itself and in such cases it was unnecessary to ask any of the above questions. In a good number of cases it was only necessary to ask a few, but then there were a few supervisors who absolutely refused to talk. As their answers were generally in the form of 'yes' or 'no' or absolute silence, many of these interviews were spent by both parties in staring vacantly in space and devouring cigarettes.

Each supervisor was interviewed only once. The interview lasted in most cases from one hour to an hour and a half. The shortest interview was about fifteen minutes in length; the longest took approximately two hours and a half.

1.3 Method of Analysis.

As I have already written a report on the method I use in analyzing interviews, a copy of which, I believe, is in the files of the Company, I shall only summarize my point of view very briefly. For those unacquainted with this type of analysis, it will look as if I put all the blame on the supervisor's shoulders for their dissatisfactions and criticisms. This, however, is not my purpose. Any criticism or dissatisfaction has both a personal reference and an objective reference. As, in most cases, the supervisor talked about some person whom I was not likely to meet, or whom, if I did interview, I was not likely to recognize, or about routines, practices, or conditions in the shop with which I was unacquainted, it would have been absurd for me to try to evaluate whether the supervisor was speaking truthfully or not. I made no attempt to find out whether the person he called a bully was really a bully or if the washrooms in such and such a department, which he characterized as filthy, were really in such a condition. In short, in every statement made by the supervisor I was looking for what that statement would reveal about the supervisor rather than about the object of which he was talking. This admittedly is only part of the picture, nevertheless it is the only part of the picture in which I feel qualified to make judgments. Many supervisors felt that the interviewer should be fully acquainted with shop practices and routines in order to be a good interviewer. This criticism is to completely misunderstand this kind of interviewing. In this kind of interviewing the interviewer

is only an authority on the attitude of the individual toward the object. He does not need to be, on top of this, an authority on the object spoken about.

It may seem, therefore, as if many of my statements are too critical of the supervisors and as if I have not looked sufficiently at the working conditions in the Company out of which the complaints may have arisen. To all this I plead guilty. An error will be made by the reader, however, only if he interprets what I say to include a wider area than that to which I have definitely limited myself. My interest is in the attitudes of the supervisors, in the kind of thinking in which they indulge and in the conceptions which they have about the Company. I am not interested in the truth or falsity of their statements or conceptions and the correctness or incorrectness of their attitudes. The one important thing I do try to determine is that they really believe what they say and that they are not just making idle conversation for my amusement. Once I have assured myself of this and once I have described as accurately as I can the kind of meaning assigned or the attitude taken, I then attempt to look to the individual himself for one possible explanation. Admittedly this is only one kind of explanation and does not exclude others. In fact it is perfectly compatible with others. A person may have an overly suspicious attitude and yet, in certain instances, be perfectly correct in thinking that other people are talking about him. Nevertheless I still shy off from the too simple explanation that the latter condition is solely the cause of his suspicion. It is advisable

to take a look at the suspicious individual as well as the object of his suspicion. I shall not belabor this point any further. Without making it somewhat clear, however, I did think that there might be, for the reader, a grave possibility for misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

1.4 Terminology.

There is just one further point with regard to terminology. I have used a good deal two words which need to be defined in order that they be not misunderstood. I sometimes use the word "infantile", which one might take in a derogatory sense. In this report "infantile" is used in a descriptive sense and not as a word of opprobrium. Whenever I use this word "infantile" to modify such functions as thinking or attitude, I merely mean a lower or more primitive stage of development as one is likely to find among children. Had I had a better descriptive terminology at my disposal, everything I said could have been stated without resorting to such a word or analogies about children. But this would have necessitated a more technical jargon than I wished to employ.

I also employ the word "demand" in a rather general sense. Whenever I say "so and so is making such and such demands of his environment or of his superior, etc.," I do not mean to arouse the picture of a supervisor shouting at the top of his lungs and thumping both hands on my desk telling me his demands. By demand I mean a more

general conception including both explicitly stated motives and desires as well as less well defined and articulated hopes, expectations, inner needs and strivings.

This report is divided in three sections; (a) the supervisor's attitude toward authority, (b) the supervisor's conception of his job and (c) the supervisor's conception of himself in relation to the Company.

2. The Supervisor's Attitude toward Authority.

The supervisor's attitude toward authority, expressed both directly and indirectly, seemed to me one of the outstanding preoccupations I caught. In the first section of this report I shall be concerned with analyzing this attitude. I shall view it as expressed from four different points of view; (2.1) toward immediate superiors; (2.2) toward the foreman; (2.3) toward the 'big bosses;' (2.4) toward the Company and its policies.

2.1 Attitude toward Immediate Superiors.

2.1.1 'Yes'-'No' Attitudes.

A topic frequently brought up for discussion by supervisors was with regard to the kind of attitude one should take toward his superior. On this question three different points of view were expressed.

2.111 There were some supervisors who claimed that a 'yes' attitude was the one to take. For example, it was necessary to have in mind what the boss wished before expressing their own opinion. Their job was to agree with what the boss said and to do what they were told without question. Some supervisors told me this quite explicitly; others implied it in what they said.

2.112 There were some supervisors to whom being a 'yes' man was objectionable. Nevertheless this was the attitude, they claimed, the boss demanded of them and which therefore led to the best results. This supervisor might disagree with the judgements and instructions of his boss but thought it unwise to express openly this disagreement. He did what the boss said, but with certain private reservations. If things went wrong it was the boss's funeral and not his own.

2.113 Then there were some supervisors who strenuously objected to 'yesing' their superiors. Such supervisors expressed themselves something as follows: "those birds (the 'yes' men) get along all right around here but I'll be damned if I kow-tow to my boss. I tell him what I think regardless of whether he likes it and wants it or not. I suppose that makes me unpopular but at least I am not a hypocrite."

2.12 Realistic Conception of Authority.

On examining these attitudes carefully, several things appeared rather significant.

2.121 All the supervisors who brought up this problem spoke as if the need to agree with the boss and to do without question what they were told was an attitude forced upon them by their superiors. If they hoped to get along in the Company, this was what was expected of them.

2.122 No supervisor, on the other hand, explicitly stated that the 'Yes' attitude was the one he demanded of his subordinates, although in some cases it was implied indirectly in what he said.

2.123 The two supervisors I interviewed who resented most the attitude of subservience to their superiors were the most paternalistic with regard to their subordinates.

2.124 No supervisor seemed to see the personal or subjective side of this problem, that is that authority is never completely superimposed from the outside, that there is a need or demand for authority in the individual which, in a sense, the individual projects on the environment.

2.13 Similarity to Certain Attitudes of Youth.

It was such observations which made me raise the following question. Was it possible that the supervisors were perpetuating in an adult situation emotional attitudes similar to those of children in the family circle? Whether to obey the parental wishes or not is one of the chief problems of youth. We all have seen the model youth who is completely obedient to the wishes of his parents. We recognize the adolescent who plays a public life of obedience and a private life of rebellion and we have seen the child who strenuously objects and openly rebels against his parents. Is it possible that the supervisor, who is still involved in the question of whether he should completely agree or completely disagree with his superior, is still retarded by this infantile conflict?

2.14 Obedience versus Rebellion as a Symptom of Ineffective Collaboration.

One of the chief characteristics of the adolescent's attitude toward his parents is his attempt to choose between the false alternative of obedience and rebellion. Regardless of the nature of the specific situation, any expression on the part of the parent is by many children either dutifully accepted or bitterly rejected. Sometimes the dualism takes the form of an outer submission but an inner repudiation. At other times it means obedience in certain areas and disobedience in others. But in all cases it involves a choice of either one of two alternative

responses to a variety of family situations. Putting the problem in this fashion is likely to involve a conflict for the individual. He can neither submit without feeling that he is being deprived of his adult prerogative nor rebel without feelings of disloyalty to his parents.

In the normal process of maturing, obedience and rebellion cease to exist as fixed, stereotyped attitudes. In any relation where two or more individuals are attempting to collaborate, whether it be the relation between husband and wife, parent and child or foreman and group chief, levels and areas of authority for convenience and efficiency are bound to be established. Any member of such a collaborative group may find it proper on certain occasions to submit to the wishes of others. The father, for example, might find it proper on the occasion of his child's birthday party to submit to the wishes of his child to play certain games which he would not likely play in the office. And still on other occasions and in other situations, any member may feel free to express disagreement, entailing partial modification and compromise. Disloyalty to oneself or disloyalty to the person in authority is not involved in either case. In fact any real act of collaboration involves a certain amount of submission and a certain amount of self-expression. Either attitudes of complete obedience or complete rebellion must mean a cessation to collaboration. In any collaborative enterprise, complete obedience or rebellion lose their significance. They become irrelevant preoccupations. Wherever we do find such preoccupations, whether it be

in family situations or industrial situations, we are likely to find, as its corollary, ineffective collaboration.

It was with such ideas that I turned my attention to the relations existing among the members of the supervisory hierarchy.

2.8 Attitude toward Foreman.

In general, personal criticisms made by first line supervisors were directed against the foreman or assistant foreman. The group chief did not seem to regard the section chief as his boss. The foreman, or the 'old man,' as he was frequently called, is for most of them the boss. Although a group chief might criticize a section chief, in most cases it was not directed against him as his superior. Between them there was a spirit of rivalry. If one of them got ahead it was because he was 'in strong' with the boss, that is, the foreman. The foreman was then apt to be accused by the dissatisfied party of favoritism. In those cases where a group chief would criticize his section chief as a superior, the accusations made were similar to those made against the foreman, so I shall consider them under the latter heading.

2.81 Three Major Forms of Criticism.

The criticisms made of the foreman can be put into three groups.

2.811 There was the foreman who was accused of being a slave-driver or a bully. This was generally applied to the foreman who bawled them out without a hearing and in many cases before their operators - a man who was arbitrary in his instructions and premature in his reprimands.

2.212 There was the foreman accused of being ignorant, unprogressive, or uncooperative. This was generally applied to the 'old-timer' who was set in his ways and who refused to change, a foreman whose attitude was "what was good enough twenty years ago is good enough now."

2.213 Then there was the foreman accused of being a watchman, unfair and secretive. This was generally applied to a man who played politics, who had his favorites, who was apt to distrust his subordinates and was always on the look out for an infraction of the rules, a man who was meticulous in his demands and who did not pass on to his subordinates information sent to his department by his superiors or other organizations, a man who was apt to turn over written material lying on his desk when interviewing his subordinates.

2.22 Every Criticism has a Personal and an Objective Reference.

It is well not to take such criticisms too much at their face value. Of course, it is quite possible that the foremen were as "bad" as, in some cases, they were painted. But it is also always equally possible that an accusation on the part of the subordinate of non-cooperation on the part of a superior, may be a method adopted by the former of justifying his own failure or unwillingness to cooperate. Likewise an accusation of 'being bullied' may also arise from undue preoccupation on this subject, on the part of the accuser. Which is the case, however, can not be settled by theoretical speculation. Only a concrete study of the empirical situation in each case can decide.

With the question of whether these accusations were correct or not, I was therefore not concerned. In any case it is obvious that such judgments made of the foreman, whether true or false, do not make for very effective collaboration. As in this section I am concerned with the subordinate's relation to his superior and not the reverse, I shall

only look in the above made criticisms for what they tell us about the critic than about the person being criticized. The assumption I make, as I have explained in the introduction, is that any criticism reveals something about the dissatisfied subject as well as the object of his dissatisfaction.

2.23 A Demand to be Treated as an Adult.

What interested me in the above criticisms was their similarity to fairly common parental attitudes against which youth is most likely to rebel. It seemed to me also clear that present in all the criticisms was the explicit demand on the part of the subordinates to be treated as responsible adults rather than as merely obedient children. From the foremen they were demanding respect, a man willing to allow them to exercise their own initiative and judgment, a leader and not a driver, a man just and fair who will judge things on their merits, unbiased, unprejudiced, open and above board. Of course these may be excessive demands to project on any individual and there was no doubt that some foremen fell far short of the demands which were being made of them.

2.24 A Provisional Interpretation of This Demand.

This insistence on being treated as adults struck me as being rather significant. What is the cause of this high degree of sensitivity on the part of subordinates of being treated as children? Could it be possible that still more submerged was the desire to be treated as children, which they were desperately trying to disguise? This kind of self-deception, usually not conscious to the individual, is fairly

common. In order to conceal certain inner motives one has to pretend in his outer role to motives quite the opposite. Here we have the obedience-rebellion conflict making its appearance in a new form. The fear on the part of supervisors of being reduced to sheer obedience makes them rebellious. But this very fear is likely to arise from a "suppressed wish" for that very state. A common phantasy is the comforting thought of complete submission to some object or entity which, in turn, would play the role of father, protector and guardian angel. Naturally such a phantasy is childish and likely to be concealed or disguised. Nevertheless I believe it operates in the thinking of a number of supervisors. In relation to the foreman it manifests itself in a disguised form. But in relation to the Company it comes quite openly to the surface.

2.3 Attitude toward "Big Bosses."

The term 'big boss' was generally applied by a supervisor to an individual at least four or five ranks higher than he was. For a group chief it might be anyone from a general foreman up. In most cases it was men with whom he had little personal contact. He knew he existed and had an office somewhere in the plant from which rather important orders or instructions issued. Few personal criticisms were expressed about the 'big bosses.' The attitude of a first line supervisor to a 'big boss' was generally one of curiosity. As one might expect, about such men were fabricated a number of myths, little substantiated in fact. Several group chiefs, for example, in order to prove their point that a college education was almost a necessary quali-

fication for advancement into the higher realms, cited the case of the assistant superintendents. For his subordinates a 'big boss' had a symbolic significance. To them he symbolized successful achievement, although a few expressed grave doubts as to the alleged merits of certain 'big bosses' by means of which the success had been achieved.

2.4 Attitude toward the Company and its Policies.

Let us now turn to the criticisms directed against the policies of the Company. Shorter hours, payment, lay-off, advancement and demotion were the chief topics discussed. In some cases subjects I shall discuss under this heading may not be Company policies, but as long as the supervisors conceive them as such, I shall include them in this section.

2.41 Shorter Hours.

In the beginning of the summer, before the 5-day week for the whole Company had been put into operation, there was considerable grumbling about the cut in the number of working days per week. At that time most operators were on a 5-day or 40-hour week, although some operators were only working $4\frac{1}{2}$ days or less. All group chiefs and section chiefs working in a regular shop department also were on a 5-day, 40-hour week. Section chiefs not working in a regular shop department but in the operation branch were on a $4\frac{1}{2}$ day week. Everyone from assistant foreman up was on a $5\frac{1}{2}$ day week, that is, full time.

There was very little criticism made against shorter hours as such. All criticisms were directed against the unfair way in which the "cut" was being applied, that is, the unfair discriminations which were being made as between ranks, or between departments, or between branches. Supervisors in non-shop departments of the operating branch were disturbed because section chiefs in office departments or other branches only took a half day out while they had to take a full day out. Group chiefs and section chiefs could not understand why they were asked to take a 20% cut when they, of all supervisors, could least afford it. Other supervisors wished to know "where the hell does the Company get this two class system anyhow." Group chiefs interestingly, if not logically, argued against the two class system on the grounds that they were put on the same level as the operators. Several supervisors felt that their social prestige had been injured. Friends and neighbors to whom they had proudly boasted of being supervisors at the Western Electric Company would no longer believe them and taunted them by saying, "Oh, I thought you were a supervisor, but I see your hours were cut like the help."

There is no question that these preoccupations emerged from stresses and strains of an unusual order. The need for retrenchment and curtailment of expenses on the part of the Company was making for an undue amount of anxiety and uneasiness on the part of the employees. Granting, however, that social solidarities were being disrupted, egos were being deflated, and feelings of insecurity were being released, nevertheless the interesting thing is the way in which these feelings of

of insecurity were being expressed. No supervisor took offense because the Company had to curtail expenses by a cut in working hours. There was no question that a good number of supervisors were being financially hard hit by the cut. Homes had been bought on which first and sometimes second mortgages still had to be paid up. Taxes, street assessments and other improvements had to be met. Sons and daughters could no longer be sent to school. A good number of them had had to reduce their standard of living. Many of them had dependent parents or married sons and daughters toward whose support they had to contribute. Nevertheless most of them accepted this load with a certain amount of resignation. Only in a few cases were any accusations made against the capitalistic economy or present political government which allowed such a condition to arise. In no case was the Company held responsible for the situation. The one demand which seemed to underly all the criticisms made against the Company's policy was the unfair way it applied in one case as compared to another and that they, as members of a particular department, branch or rank, were being discriminated against.

2.42 Method of Payment.

If we look at the criticism made against the Company with regard to method of payment we find practically the same general situation. In most cases there was no criticism against the wages as such. There were a few supervisors who thought that certain rates on certain jobs in certain departments were too low, but such criticisms were by far in the minority. Most criticisms with regard to the method of payment were generally discussed under the following heads.

1.421 Group chiefs and section chiefs in straight piece work departments who earned less than many of the operators in their departments were eager to point this out as unfair and unjust. Here they were asked to take a position of greater responsibility and yet were not being paid as much as the operators they were supervising.

1.422 Assistant foremen of gang piece work departments, who in some cases were earning less money than many of their subordinates also expressed the same grievance.

1.423 There were group chiefs and section chiefs in gang piece work departments who were distressed because the gang percentage had been reduced by the influx of "old timers," that is, men with higher hourly rates.

1.424 Supervisors of groups and sections where a cost reduction case had been installed, thereby resulting in a lowering of gang percentage, had a great deal to say on the subject.

2.43 Advancement.

At present I shall only consider the topic of advancement to the extent that it shows the supervisors' attitude toward authority. Later in the report I shall bring this subject up again from another point of view.

Among a fairly large group of supervisors there was an opinion with regard to advancement which reflected rather interestingly the supervisors' attitude toward authority. Many supervisors were dissatisfied with the progress that they had made in the Company. Among them there were some who expressed themselves in the following way. This supervisor thought he had done everything that had been expected of him. He had always obeyed all the rules and in every way had attempted to do everything which had been asked of him. He had always been faithful to Company

policy and had tried to conduct himself accordingly. Yet in his department and in neighboring departments, he could point to men who were selfish, egotistical, unfair, etc., who had been advanced over his head. This supervisor was perplexed with the injustice of things. Qualities and attributes of which the Company disapproved were being rewarded and he, on the other hand, who had done everything according to Company policy, was left at a standstill.

A variant of this attitude expressed itself in a slightly different way. This supervisor had finally come to the conclusion that justice did not prevail in the Company. He claimed that should he use rather questionable tactics, he too could progress, but of course his conscience would not allow him to do such things. The gist of his remarks was sometimes to the effect that he would rather be honest and only a group chief than to be dishonest and be a foreman. Another very popular form in which this cynicism appeared was in the statement, "It is not what you know, but whom you know."

What interested me in these two attitudes was the unexpressed assumption to the effect that a supervisor should be rewarded merely because of his obedience to the Company. This supervisor assumes that he is doing everything that the Company wants, merely by not doing anything that the Company prohibits. These two statements are not identical. This is the way the child might interpret his reality. He expects to be rewarded merely because he has not been disobedient to the parental wishes.

It is also interesting to note that the second attitude is merely another way of expressing the same thing. In this case the supervisor's infantilism, sometimes called idealism, expresses itself in a form of cynicism. This supervisor still thinks that the Company should conform to his infantile wishes but he rationalizes it by saying that he refuses to play the game because the game in itself is unethical and he is superior to it.

Among the list of qualities which many supervisors put up as those necessary in order to progress in the Company there was one group which manifested the same kind of attitude. For these supervisors being fair, honest, patient, broad-minded, thorough, practical, loyal and thoughtful, were the requisites for success. Now, all these qualities might be looked upon as things which any employer might expect of a supervisor merely to keep his job. A number of supervisors boasted about their honesty as if this were something particularly outstanding and meritorious rather than something which anyone might assume in a supervisor.

2.44 Lay-Offs.

The question of lay-offs was not affecting most of the supervisors I interviewed as most of them had at least six years service. With regard to laying off employees most of them were agreed that as long as ample consideration was being given to length of service it was being done on a fair basis. There was no question that service in the Company

was an important consideration to most supervisors. Only in the case where it looked to the supervisor as if length of service was not being given adequate consideration did he become excited on this question.

In only one instance was this issue about length of service ever questioned and that was with regard to married women. Many supervisors felt very strongly that married women should be discharged before single girls in spite of the fact that the former might have had longer service records. In this case however a moral issue was involved. It was the question of whether or not women should be allowed to work at all and, in particular, married women. There were also questions of fairness and of rivalry. Many supervisors did not like to see their fellow supervisors whose wives were working enjoy a higher standard of living than they were capable of maintaining. In several instances the supervisors who felt most strongly on this question had a single daughter working in the Company.

2.45 Demotions.

During the period that I interviewed there were quite a number of section chiefs demoted to group chiefs and some group chiefs demoted back to the bench. As one might expect the dissatisfaction expressed by the first demotion was not as great as the dissatisfaction expressed by the second demotion. To be put back on the bench or machine was to lose all of ones supervisory capacities. Nevertheless most of them accepted the demotion quite readily. They were satisfied to have their jobs. Those who were dissatisfied never expressed their dissatisfaction against the Company but always against some superior who had demoted them when there were other supervisors in the department who should have been demoted.

Again the question of fairness with regard to the way in which demotions were applied was the chief preoccupation.

2.46 "Old Timers."

Some supervisors thought more consideration should be given by the Company to men with long service records. In each case it is interesting to note this criticism was made by a man who had long service in the Company. The way this criticism was frequently expressed was with reference to vacations. Many of the "old timers" had had to work ten years or more before getting a week's vacation. Now every employee with two years service or more is eligible to a two weeks vacation. According to them the newcomer is getting all the "breaks."

2.47 Interviewing Program.

By far most of the supervisors interviewed were in favor of the interviewing program. In many cases this reflected the supervisors' attitude toward the Company. As long as management was interested in such a program, they felt that it was their business also to be interested. The few who were not in favor of it criticized it on grounds of (a) not being confidential and (b) nothing had been done by the Company about the things of which the employees had complained. What was the use of it anyway? But as an instrument of getting their private grievances, complaints and points of view presented to the Company, so long as this material was kept confidential and not used against them, they were very much in favor of the program.

2.48 Supervisors' Conferences.

As in the case of the interviewing program, the supervisors conferences were also highly considered. The few criticisms directed at them were (a) they were not definite enough, that is they did not tell the supervisors just what they should do, (b) the conference leaders did not know enough, that is they were not sufficiently acquainted with shop practices to instruct them and (c) the views expressed in conference were not kept confidential.

2.49 Pension Plan, Thrift Plans, Stock Participation Plan.

There was no question that the supervisors were highly in favor of the policy of the Company with regard to the pension plan, the stock participation plan and the various thrift plans. Not one supervisor objected to what might have been conceived as a paternalistic attitude on the part of the Company. Most supervisors could not speak highly enough of these plans.

2.5 Summary.

2.51 Preoccupation about Fairness.

On reviewing all these criticisms made by the supervisors of Company policies, the one thing which attracted my attention was the one common theme running throughout, namely, the question of fairness. About shorter hours for example, it was that so and so of such and such a department or branch or rank did not get as great a cut as somebody else of a different department, branch, or rank. With regard to method

of payment it expressed itself in the form that so and so of a certain department did not get paid as much as an operator in that department. It might almost be said that in no case was the policy of the Company ever criticized as such. It was always the question of the fairness in the way the policy was working out from their individual point of view. In many instances the aggrieved individuals were not particularly affected. Nevertheless as long as they thought that someone or other in the Company was benefiting more than they were, they felt they had a just cause for grievance. It was this attitude which attracted my attention. What was the root of this attitude?

2.52 Demand for a Just Parent.

Let me turn again to an analogy, admitting the fact that, in many cases, analogies are likely to be dangerous. For example, in a family of at least two children of about the same age, if Dick and Harry have the same bed-time, earlier than the parents, little dissatisfaction is expressed by either of the two children. But if Dick has to go to bed before Harry, Dick has a great deal to say about the subject. In the same way, if Joe Foreman and Charlie Western both have to take the same cut in hours, the cut is accepted cheerfully, but if Charlie Western has to take a bigger cut than Joe Foreman then Charlie becomes excited.

2.53 Its Analysis.

It looked to me as if this preoccupation about fairness was an indirect way of expressing the demand on the part of the supervisors that the Company show no discrimination among its employees. It is

the analysis of this demand on which I would like to speculate. There is no question that for most of the supervisors the Company represented more than the 'big bosses' who administered its policies. The Company was an entity on which they projected their greatest hopes and fears. It was largely a product of their own wishful thinking. It was what they desperately hoped and wished it to be. Above all, the Company must be fair, it must represent the principle of justice and stability. It cannot be capricious and inconsiderate. Were this the case, their jobs would not be safe. In a sense they felt that the Company was master of their destiny and fate. To be dependent on a capricious, unstable, inconsiderate object was their worst fear. To be dependent on something which took into consideration their own personal point of view was their greatest expectation. This, it seemed to me, was at the root of this insistent demand that the Company see things from their personal point of view and that it dispense things equally and fairly among its employees. Anything which could be interpreted by any single supervisor to mean that the Company was doing something which was not taking into consideration things from his own point of view was viewed with alarm and consternation. In short, if we look at the demands made by the supervisor of the Company and of their superiors in the Company, we see a rather interesting anti-thesis. Toward the foreman the supervisor wants to be treated as an adult. Underlying most of the criticisms made against the foreman was the demand that they be treated as men and not as children. Underlying the demands made of the Company we see the wish for a just parent, to whom they will cheerfully submit on the sole condition that he will treat them as one of his own children.

In my opinion it was in this way that for most supervisors the obedience-rebellion complex is resolved. In no way do I think that this is anything particularly unnatural or abnormal. It does mean this, however, that for many of the supervisors the Western Electric Company has taken over in this present industrial civilization functions which were previously administered by the state and the church.

2.54 Possible Implications.

If my analysis be correct, the question naturally arises as to what significance, if any, it has for management or supervisors. Let it be said in the first place that this investigation was conducted and this report written primarily with the question of diagnosing what the situation is or how I saw it to be, rather than to offer a prescription. Nevertheless, as these two things can not be completely divorced, I shall take this opportunity of venturing a few opinions on the latter question.

The resolution of the false dichotomy between obedience and rebellion goes hand in hand with the realization that authority is not something merely external to the individual to which he must either submit or rebel. There is an inner need for authority present in every individual which he must learn to recognize and understand. Otherwise he is going to be in a muddle of constantly trying to knock down that which in part is his own creation. The group chief, for example, in relation to the foreman, is in the awkward position of asking for someone from whom he can take orders and yet inwardly rebelling to take them when given. The result is bound to lead to indecisive behavior, preoccupations of obedience and rebellion and finally ineffective collaboration.

Now at the Western Electric Company individuals in groups are collaborating with each other and with other groups for common ends and purposes. As I have previously stated, it is natural that in such groups and between such groups, levels and areas of authority are established. In order that collaboration between levels of authority be most effective, the factors which make for greater or less effectivity need to be understood. The obedience-rebellion attitude toward authority is in my opinion one such factor.

It is also quite clear that insight into such a mechanism could not possibly be given to all supervisors. I need not enumerate all the obstacles, both practical and theoretical, to such a plan. Yet I do think that some such insight needs to be in the minds of the higher executives and men engaged in personnel work and research work in that area, so that problems involving the relation of subordinate to superior can be better understood and hence better handled.

2. The Supervisor's Conception of His Job.

In this section I want to examine the supervisor's attitude toward his work, that is, his attitude toward the employees he supervises and the problems which arise in this connection.

3.1 Recognition of Personnel Duties Involved in Supervision.

It was significant to observe the extent to which the supervisors had distinguished between what might be called the mechanical end of their jobs and their personnel duties as supervisor.

In a good number of cases the personnel duties of the supervisor were completely ignored. For this supervisor the job was to keep certain records, to provide the workers with their work, to attend to the machines when they were out of order and to know more than the operators themselves about the job. In some cases two functions were distinguished and shared on an equal basis. This supervisor realized there was a personnel problem connected with his work and gave it part of his time.

Then there were those supervisors who expressed their opinion that the personnel end of their jobs was probably the most important. This opinion was not expressed merely by supervisors of higher rank. Some group chiefs also expressed this opinion. On the whole, however, there was a greater appreciation of the importance of the personnel problem as the supervisor held a position of higher rank. One underlying assumption, however, which most supervisors shared in common was to the effect that a supervisor had to know more than his operators, that is, more about the job which the operator was doing. Very seldom did they mention that the supervisor might have need for a different kind of knowledge than the operator.

3.2 Attitude toward Operators.

3.21 A Leader and Not a Driver.

In most cases a method of humaneness with regard to handling employees was advocated. The consensus of opinion was that the day of the bully and the slave-driver had gone and the day of the gentleman and leader had arrived. This was the general thesis I listened to daily for months, with only a few minor variations. Some supervisors thought that

although this method applied in most cases, there were always a few individuals whom you could not "treat with kid gloves." Otherwise they would walk over you. To such individuals you had to talk straight from the shoulder, occasionally bawling them out and swearing at them. To a 'chronic kicker' you also had to lay down the law, but with the exception of these few variations, the consensus of opinion seemed to be that a new type of leadership had arrived. The supervision of today they claimed was as different from the supervision of former years as day is from night. As one supervisor poetically put it, "Then are the days of yore, we ain't got them days no more."

3.22 Maxims of the Leader.

Of course, I was interested in trying to understand this new type of leadership, but it was rather difficult to get most of the supervisors to articulate this new conception. To the question of how this new type of supervisor handles his help I received a number of diverse opinions. For some of them it meant to go around and "say a cheery word," for others it meant "to treat the employees as you would wish to be treated." And still again it meant such things as the following: "treat them as human beings," "treat them all alike," "show no favoritism," "give them a square deal," "allow them to talk to you," "interview them occasionally," "listen to their grievances," "give them service," "give them a fair hearing," "allow them to express their own ideas," "encourage them" and "keep them satisfied." In many cases it was interesting to note that the supervisors did not see that their solutions begged the question. The further question of how one wishes

to be treated, or how human beings should be treated, or how to give your employees a square deal and how to show toward them no favoritism and just how to give them service or a fair hearing was omitted from the discussion. If I did turn the conversation in this area I came up against a stone wall, that is, a circular definition.

3.23 Provide No Conclusion as to His Performance.

The question which frequently intruded itself in my thinking was, to what extent this was mere verbalism and to what extent the supervisor was behaving according to his maxims? Of course it must be granted that an incapacity on the part of the supervisor to articulate his own method of supervision does not in itself imply that he is not a good supervisor. In many cases I felt very strongly that certain men who had extreme difficulty in articulating their thoughts nevertheless were probably very good supervisors. In short I do not think that, no matter how carefully you scrutinize the material obtained in a single interview from a supervisor, you can draw any sound conclusions as to the way in which the supervisor performs his duties. The only thing it might tell you something about is the attitude of a supervisor toward his own performance.

3.24 Maxims not Experimentally Verified.

If one took at its face value what most supervisors said about their methods of supervision, it would seem that the bullying type of supervisor as a specie had completely vanished from the Company and yet, if we look at the employees' interviews, it would seem as if the bully had not altogether disappeared. This discrepancy I thought had some significance

Even if we grant that the employee was totally unwarranted in projecting the attribute of "bully" on his superior, nevertheless, the fact that the superior was unaware that his behavior, even though motivated by the best of intentions, was not being so interpreted by his employees seemed to me worth while considering. One thing it certainly seemed to indicate was that the supervisor was employing a method that he was not attempting to test or verify.

This was brought out rather clearly in several other instances. In one department where one particular supervisor was being criticized rather severely by his subordinates, this supervisor did not seem to be aware of the dissension. In talking to me he was quite certain he was "getting himself across" to his subordinates. He had developed, he claimed, a technique of "selling himself" of which he was very proud.

3.25 The Supervisor's New Role.

If we examine rather carefully the actual change which had occurred in methods of supervision, I believe that it can be accurately stated as a change in the role which the supervisor plays before his subordinates. In the last decade it was more socially acceptable that a supervisor be "hard-boiled" than it is today. This was the role which he was called upon to play when he became supervisor. He had to be able to talk loud, give his orders in hoarse whispers and swear like a trooper. The present day supervisor has to play an opposite role. He now had to play the part of the friendly benefactor to the worker, vitally

interested in that individual's welfare and well-being. In order to create in the mind of the operator this impression, he has to say different things and employ different devices. A "frown" takes the place of a "bawling out;" a cheery "good morning" takes the place of a "frown" and "interviewing" takes the place of "good morning."

3.26 A Tendency to Lose Himself in the Role and Forget the Audience.

This may sound more critical than I intended. There is no question that this is a step in the right direction. Nevertheless it seemed to me that the emphasis was being put still on the wrong spot. The supervisor's attention was on himself, the words, the rituals, gestures or tricks he adopted, rather than on the object which he was supposed to be supervising. He was trying to create an impression on the operator with the possibility of over-playing his role instead of looking more carefully at the operator he was trying to impress. Even in interviewing employees, the supervisor was likely to interpret it in this manner. By interviewing an operator you created such and such an impression. It was a means of "selling yourself" to him rather than a means of finding out his situation so that you could handle him as an individual more intelligently.

3.27 "Old Timers", "Chronic Kickers" and "Women."

That this was the kind of thinking in which most supervisors indulged was also manifested in another fashion. Frequently the problem of the "old timer" or of the "chronic kicker" would come up. Each of these groups had to be handled in quite a different fashion from the ordinary operator. In most cases it was better to handle the "old timer"

by leaving him alone. To the "chronic kicker," however, you had to lay down the law, or occasionally you had to hawl him out.

The problem of handling men in comparison to handling women was also discussed. Most of the supervisors thought that women had to be handled quite differently from men. This statement generally reduced itself to the fact that you could not talk to women in the same fashion in which you could talk to men. You had to approach a woman indirectly and you gave her orders in a more indirect fashion. Moreover you had to be more careful about the language in which you couched your instructions.

3.28 Individual Situations Not Considered.

There is no question that in all this there is a certain amount of truth but the tendency to lump a good number of individuals under one rather vague, general class and to discuss each situation in that group as if it were the same situation for them all seemed to me rather indicative of a stereotyped attitude. The supervisor had a certain set of rules for handling the "old timer", a certain set for handling the "chronic kicker" and a certain set for handling women. The most stubborn tendency I encountered in interviewing a good number of supervisors was this tendency to handle human situations indiscriminately before finding out what the situation actually was. The fact that two "kickers" might be kicking about quite different things never seemed to occur to many of them. The underlying assumption seemed to be that all "chronic kickers" were kicking about the same thing and hence should be treated in the same way. The same general rule could be made about the "old timers" and about women.

3.3 Summary.

In order to make my point I have possibly been guilty of over-exaggeration. There were some supervisors intelligently and sincerely interested in the problems of supervision who were not just trying to create favorable impressions upon nor sell themselves to their subordinates and were really trying to address themselves to the individual human situation.

Moreover, I was very much impressed with the human interest which many supervisors professed, and, in many cases, quite sincerely. I believe for their operators. As in most cases they had once been operators themselves, they were able to see things from the operator's point of view. And in relation to their subordinates, this helped them enormously. In some cases, however, it led them into the dilemma of choosing between whether they should be a Company man or an employees' man, that is, in handling the operators, whether they should look at things from the Company's point of view or from the operator's point of view. This, however, was merely another manifestation of the conflict I described in the first section with regard to their attitude toward authority.

3.31 Stereotyped Attitudes.

Probably the point I wished to make in this section can be stated better in this way. There is always the danger, which we all share, of falling into rather stereotyped attitudes. Such attitudes put us in a static rather than dynamic relation to our environment. In the supervisor's relation to authority I pointed out the rather stereotyped attitudes of complete obedience or rebellion. Likewise, in the supervisor's relation to his subordinates

he may fall into the error of solidifying his attitudes too quickly. The result is bound to be inadequate discriminations. Phrases, maxims, and slogans, as long as they have a concrete denotation, are undoubtedly very helpful. But when they become merely pious expressions of faith, they cease to have much utility for the individual. And used in place of knowledge and understanding, they are but poor substitutes.

3.32 Implications for Supervisors' Training.

Supervisors' training conferences besides giving instructions in shop practices and routines and acquainting the supervisor with Company policies can go a long way in breaking up such stereotyped attitudes. The supervisory training group in the Industrial Research Division is well fitted for such a task, and, as I understand, is working on the problem. They will attempt to communicate to supervisors a more experimental and less ritualistic attitude toward personnel problems. And this will be done by bringing into conference for discussion concrete cases of different kinds of human situations. The leaders will set by example the method they are trying to communicate - namely the method of addressing oneself to the situation as a means of intelligent control instead of employing magic and tricks to control or influence human behavior.

4. The Supervisor's Understanding of Himself in Relation to the Company.

So far we have looked at the supervisor's attitude toward his superiors and toward his subordinates. In this section I want to look more carefully at the supervisor's relation to the Company as a place in which he can realize and fulfill his ambitions. This will concern more his understanding of himself, that is, of his own urges, impulses and drives. In one way this section will be largely speculative, as it was very difficult to get the supervisor to reflect on his own desires, needs and expectations. In most cases they were never explicitly expressed. As we have already seen they usually lay hidden in his vague dissatisfactions with himself and the Company.

4.1 Advancement

The topic of advancement offers the best opening to this section, as it was around this area that most supervisors discussed their discontent with both themselves and the Company. On the question of advancement a host of different attitudes were expressed.

4.11 There were some supervisors who expressed complete satisfaction with the progress that they had made in the Company. This was independent of the rank which the individual had achieved. Some assistant foremen or foremen, for example, were more dissatisfied with their progress than some group chiefs. The attitude of the satisfied supervisor can best be described by the remarks which one group chief made. He said, "During my 15 years of service I have been able to buy 48 shares of stock, pay off my home and raise and educate my children. My position is steady, each year I get two weeks' vacation, and when I get sick or have an accident the Company takes care of me and pays my expenses. Why should I kick?"

4.12 Then there was the supervisor who had active interests outside of the plant. In this case the supervisor was satisfied with his progress in the Company, because he was able to satisfy the demands for prestige and power outside of his working life. Many of these men held only minor supervisory positions in the Company and might easily have gone higher. But they were perfectly satisfied with the position they had.

4.13 Among many of the younger supervisors, still another attitude prevailed. They were a bit disgruntled with their present status because it took so long to progress in the Company. They still had expectations, however, that their day sooner or later would come. They were generally ambitious men, eager to learn and taking every advantage of improving themselves for a better position.

4.14 There was a fairly large group of supervisors who claimed that they were not satisfied with their advancement, but then, of course, nobody was. Most of these men thought it improper to admit being satisfied as such an admission might imply a total loss of ambition. Nevertheless most of these men had resigned themselves to the fact that their progress was limited. Many of them felt that there were better men ahead of them, men with more education than they had had the opportunity of receiving and hence were in a better position to be advanced than they were.

4.15 Then there was the supervisor, previously mentioned, who felt that he had done everything that had been expected of him. He had obeyed all the rules and done everything which had been asked of him. And yet other men had been put over his head.

4.16 A good number of supervisors accounted for their failure to be further advanced on the grounds that they had been victims of prejudice on the part of some supervisor in the Company. Had it not been for this particular man, they would be further ahead by this time, but this particular man had held them down. These criticisms were generally applied against some foreman or general foreman.

4.2 Realistic Attitude toward Advancement.

If we look at the above expressions of dissatisfaction we notice a rather realistic attitude toward advancement. It is pictorially represented as a ladder in which either you did not have the right start to make the initial rung (4.14) or you were pushed down by someone on the rung ahead of you (4.16) or the ladder was not built correctly anyway (4.15). These may be quite true statements and yet it is also quite possible that they offer good ways of rationalizing one's own errors and failures. The very fact that the latter are so completely omitted from the picture makes one suspect this possibility. The possible oversimplification of such situations arises, it seems to me, from conceiving satisfaction or dissatisfaction in absolute instead of relative terms.

4.3 Satisfaction as an Equilibrium between Demands and Opportunities.

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is relative to the demands which the individual is making of the environment and the opportunities which the environment offers for their realization. For some supervisors (such as those described in 4.11, 4.12 and possibly 4.14) advancement is not the chief consideration. Their only expectation is that the Company provide them with an opportunity for making a fair income and of having a steady job. If it accomplishes this, they are satisfied.

4.4 Causes of Dissatisfaction.

Dissatisfaction, expressed in relative terms, may arise from anyone or two of three possible sources.

4.41 Because the demands are immature and hence the social environment can never offer them opportunity for expression.

4.42 Because the demands are vague and ill-defined and hence the individual has difficulty in realizing them.

4.43 Because the social organization does not offer the opportunity for the fulfillment of legitimate demands.

If we look at the above situations in these terms, we see that in case 4.15 the dissatisfaction may arise possibly because the supervisor is making an immature demand of the Company, namely that it come up to his infantile expectations. If this is the situation, he is bound to be frustrated and hence dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction described in 4.14 may arise from the fact that the demands have never been clearly stated or understood by the individuals themselves. This also may be true in situation 4.16. It may be a way of justifying poorly defined demands. In short, I offer these alternative possibilities to show that what the supervisor says can not be taken at its face value. In one case it means one thing; in another case it means something quite different.

In a single interview it is somewhat difficult to assess such situations with any precision. Nevertheless in many cases, I was quite convinced the actual situation was not being expressed very clearly. In the situation described in 4.13, if the individual is demanding that his superior, when considering his possibilities for advancement, take into consideration his capacities and abilities, as well as the number of years in which he served the Company, we have one kind of situation. If, on the

other hand, the young supervisor is demanding that youth, because of its enthusiasm, energy and confidence (sometimes misplaced), has a right to a position that it has not as yet, in fact, achieved, we have quite another. In the first case we have a legitimate demand which the Company might not be giving sufficient opportunity for expression. (It was my impression - maybe incorrect as I have not actual figures - that most of the supervisors were middle-aged. There was a goodly sprinkling of young group chiefs and section chiefs. But beyond this rank, the young man in his thirties was quite a noticeable exception. It also was my impression that this was more true of the Operating Branch than of the other branches.) In the second case, we have a poorly stated demand which on clearer expression manifests its absurdity.

4.5 Personal Limitations.

4.51 Education

Two topics frequently brought up for discussion were personality and education. These were generally brought up in connection with the qualities required of a successful supervisor. These were the areas in which most supervisors felt the greatest personal limitation. Many supervisors felt that too much emphasis was being put on education and college men. Some of them were desperately trying to get the education which they had not the opportunity of receiving in youth. Others were anxious to give to their sons and daughters the education of which they had been deprived. No matter how it was expressed, there was no question of the tremendous value which most of them placed on education. By education

they meant the formal education one receives at schools. Several good men with a vast amount of practical experience, capacity for learning and good records of achievement displayed these feelings of educational inferiority. In other cases the lack of formal education was used as a means of justifying their failure to advance in the Company according to their expectations.

4.52 Personality.

Personality was also another topic for a great amount of pre-occupation. For some of them personality was a sort of magical substance which adhered to certain individuals and which accounted for their success. To many of them, personality was to a supervisor what "it" was to a movie actress, an indefinable and elusive quality which some people possess. Toward this elusive something, or other, two attitudes were displayed. For some of them personality was something you were born with rather than something you can develop. Of those who held this position and who felt they did not possess it, some were resigned while others became bitter. And then there were a number frantically trying to develop personality. These men radiated personality.

It is probably a commonplace to remark that anything is naturally more important to the person who does not possess it. Food is only important to the person who hasn't any. The same is true of formal education and personality. Nevertheless I believe it would be unwise to conclude that the supervisors were stating their limitations correctly. Most of the supervisors I interviewed were men of an older generation when the amount of formal education thought necessary, especially for business, was much

less than it is today. Likewise high pressured salesmanship and the moving pictures had not as yet made "personality" the fetish it has become today. In short, it was only in terms of these two modern cliches that the supervisors were capable of discussing a host of vague and personal frustrations and limitations in achieving what they wanted to be. In these areas they were attempting to express the relation between what they were and what they wanted to be.

To light up preoccupations of the discrepancy between one's ego and one's ego ideal, or in other terms, between one's actual achievement and what one would like to have achieved, is never pleasant nor fruitful to the individual, unless one is prepared to show more definitely and constructively the relation between them. Those who have talked to supervisors on either of these two topics - whether it be in conferences or elsewhere - are probably aware of the pessimistic preoccupations they arouse, and how much of what is said is likely to be misinterpreted and misconstrued.

4.6 Interest in Work.

Very few comments were expressed directly about interest in one's work. A few expressed their enthusiasm with their job but the majority of them said nothing in the affirmative. The greatest number expressed annoyance at certain obstacles which hindered them from finding joy in their work. Besides the friction of personalities already mentioned, these complaints were of the following nature:

- a. Over-crowded lockers.
- b. Insanitary condition of washrooms and drinking fountains.
- c. Too much clerical work demanded of first line supervisors.
- d. Too much "red tape."
- e. Too much emphasis on "housecleaning."
- f. Difficulties in getting operators to use safety devices.
- g. Frictions with other organizations, as for example, the Inspection Branch and Engineer of Manufacture.
- h. First line supervisors not being allowed a towel a week.

4.7 Distortion of Demands.

We have all probably found that minor sources of annoyance become increasingly more irritating on certain occasions than on others. If things are going along well in the office, the petty demands of our children at home are less irritating than when the reverse is true. Likewise, if our domestic situation is somewhat hectic and disrupted, the minor obstacles of the work situation tend to become magnified.

If the demands we make of our environment are vague and ill-defined, this situation is more likely to arise. The annoyances arising from the failure of realizing certain expectations in situation A are transferred to situation B only if A and B are confused and not clearly discriminated. The corollary from this applies equally well to supervisors at the Western Electric Company. It is important that the supervisors clearly differentiate those things they have a right to expect of the Company from those they can not expect the Company to provide. Otherwise they may foist on an object in the Company, vague frustrations and dissatisfactions arising from situations outside of its domain.

Now it is equally obvious that the Company can never offer the opportunity for the complete fulfillment of all of the supervisors' demands. This would mean that the individual is substituting the Company for the wider social reality of which he is a member. It would mean a stunting of growth and self-development comparable to that of a child who tries to find complete satisfaction for all his inner needs within the narrow confines of the family circle.

It seems to me possible that in a rapidly changing society, the expectations of its members are less fixed and stable. Because of this failure of society to provide adequate control of expectation, excessive and distorted demands are likely to be made of the large industrial corporations by its employees.

4.8 Summary.

4.81 Two Forms of Justifying a Dissatisfaction.

In conclusion to this section it may be well to point out again the manner in which I analyze a dissatisfaction. There are two different ways of justifying a dissatisfaction. One way is much more common than the other. The common way is in the following form:

4.811 (a) A (which may be any individual, group of individuals, social institution or thing) has the characteristic X.

(b) X is something socially disapproved of (this is usually implicitly assumed).

(c) A, who has this X character, is therefore to be condemned.

(d) Therefore, I have a right to be dissatisfied with or critical of A.

The uncommon way, interestingly enough, can be put in this manner:

- 4.812 (a) I am making such and such a demand of A.
(b) A fails to come up to my expectation.
(c) Therefore, I don't like A.

I always test a dissatisfaction by translating the former method of justification into the latter. This accomplishes two things. If the demand is legitimate and well defined, the translation is easy and straight-forward and the person making the criticism upon a little reflection accepts it. If, however, the translation is difficult, I look for the possible underlying demands which could be supplied. If the person shys off this way of translating it, I strongly suspect either a vague demand never before explicitly expressed or such a demand, that, if it were expressed, would expose the immaturity or the absurdity of the criticism.

4.82. Excessive Demands as Symptomatic of an Impoverished Social Reality.

In this section I have tried to look more carefully at the total situation from which the supervisors' complaints and dissatisfactions arose. This led me to examine more carefully the demands being made of the Company. The incapacity of the supervisors to articulate them made me suspect that they were for the most part vague and indefinite. I showed how this very vagueness might lead to a possible distortion and to excessive demands being made of the Company. I suggested that this very vagueness might be symptomatic of the kind of social milieu of which they were members. It is likely that in a rapidly changing social world, the expectations of

of its members are not very clearly defined. In a more integrate community, society more or less dictates to the individual the areas and limits of his expectations. In a less stable organization anyone can expect anything. The group chief expects the opportunities of playing golf as well as the works manager. The office boy expects an automobile as well as the superintendent. But although such a society may provide a few with unbounded opportunities for material possession, it also may fail to provide the many with the richer social life found in more stable communities. With this impoverishment of the social life for the individual, it is natural that they would turn to the Company for things they fail to obtain elsewhere.

5. Conclusion.

5.1 Two Possible Exaggerations.

In an attempt to state the underlying attitudes of mind and common assumptions of thought of a large group of individuals, one may be guilty of two errors. On one hand, one may do an injustice to the exceptional individuals of the group. Outstanding differences may become blurred in the attempt to reach a common denominator. Or, on the other hand, one may state such general propositions about the individuals of a particular group that they might equally well apply to the general class of human beings. To avoid the first error I have tried to be careful to modify anything I said as applying to a good number but not necessarily to all supervisors. Of the second error I have been guilty to the extent that the "syncretisms" (obedience-rebellion complex, etc.) to which I reduce

my data have very general application and are not peculiar to Western Electric supervisors. Nevertheless the degree and form in which they manifest themselves vary in different situations. And it is the form they take in an industrial situation that gives them their particular significance.

5.2 The Problem Restated.

As is often true in investigations of this nature, one starts with one set of questions and ends with another. I start with the question; "What are the common problems with which supervisors are confronted?" Although they were never explicitly expressed as such by the supervisors, in effect, the answer amounted to this, "How can we effectively cooperate among ourselves and with the Company? This answer sets the conditions for the new set of questions which I should like to raise.

(a) What factors in a large industrial corporation make for effective collaboration among its members?

(b) To what extent can the individual supervisors be given insight into such factors?

(c) To what extent can management set the proper conditions for effective collaboration and what are these conditions?

July 23, 1931.

A REPORT ON SUPERVISORS IN DEPARTMENT 6366

1. Object of This Report

In this report I shall attempt to apply a total situation approach to a group of supervisors in a certain department. I shall start with the material obtained in a single interview from each supervisor in the department. As I am studying a group rather than an individual, I shall be concerned with the preoccupations more common to the group than with those preoccupations particular to one individual. In some cases, however, even this latter material is illuminating. I shall attempt to explain these preoccupations. To explain them, I shall not give their origin, but rather their meaning. What do these preoccupations mean to the individuals in the department?

1.1 Its Limitations

It might be thought somewhat presumptuous to attempt such an interpretation on the basis of a single interview. In one sense, this is quite true. Were it my intention to give a final conclusion to this study, I would be open to the above criticism, but this is not my purpose. In this paper I am more concerned to see how one might go about to report a human situation in a department rather than to describe it completely or finally. If, then, one only takes my interpretation to be tentative and provisional, no harm will be done.

2. Rules of Interpretation

The interpretation I make will be guided by the following rules:

- 2.1 You can not go to the individuals themselves for this interpretation. They are not logically capable of analyzing their experience. As in the case of most of us, they are only too ready to rationalize and justify their preoccupations. Of course these rationalizations offer a clue to the interpretation that the interviewer makes and hence should be taken into account.

2.2 The question arises, how can the interviewer check the interpretation he makes if he cannot verify it from the people who have been interviewed? My criteria will be that a set of preoccupations is interpreted when it is related to a common schema, such that all the preoccupations fit into an organic whole. By so doing it will show the function that the preoccupation has or the part it fulfills in the whole. (For further explanation of what I mean here, see my paper on Interviewing under Rules of Interpretation.)

3. Preoccupations of the Department

I shall now list the preoccupations in the department which my interpretation should explain:

- 3.1 Preoccupation of futility and the impossibility of being advanced in the department.
- 3.2 The justification of these feelings of futility and of not being advanced by saying the department is stagnant, is in a rut, is a "graveyard," or is an "old people's home," and by blaming a former foreman for this condition or for having held them down.
- 3.3 The demand which a number of group chiefs and section chiefs make of being put on a straight day basis.
- 3.4 The logic by means of which they justify this demand. They say that under gang piece work when it is necessary to hire new help, gang percentage is reduced which means that during a boom period the group chief has to work harder for less money; also in a period of depression when short service men are laid off and only high grade operators are left, the percentage the gang can make is smaller. In both cases first line supervisors have to suffer for something for which they are not responsible.
- 3.5 The concern some individuals have because both their foreman and assistant foreman were campaign managers for losing candidates in Hawthorne Club elections.
- 3.6 The assistant foreman's desire to "sell himself" to his employees.

We might say that these supervisors are justified in having some of these preoccupations, that is, that they reflect the condition within the department. But whether or not this is the case seems to me not to be the only matter for consideration. To stop the investigation at this conclusion would be to obtain only a part of the situation. It might tell you something about the department, but it would not tell you anything about the present supervisors who constitute part of this department, and as long as your research is in human area, this is an important part of your problem. Let us assume, therefore, that these preoccupations reflect both (1) the conditions in the department and (2) something about the individuals whose preoccupations they are. Only unless we get this second part do we have a "total situation."

4. Assumptions About Conditions Within the Department

In order to make my point more clear, I am going to assume for the purposes of this paper that the following statements made by some of the supervisors characterize some of the conditions in the department. I am going to assume that these conditions are true and attempt to show that unless we obtain the material above mentioned, these statements in themselves do not explain the preoccupations.

- 4.1 That the department has an unduly high amount of old service supervisors.
- 4.2 That in the past two decades no group chief has ever become assistant foreman in that department.
- 4.3 That only one supervisor has ever been known to get as far as assistant foreman, and that was after he had been transferred from that department.
- 4.4 That one of their former foremen was a "bully" and would not transfer any of his supervisors out of his department even when they requested it and even when he knew it would have been to their advantage.
- 4.5 That many of the jobs originally in the department have been transferred to Kearny.

5. Provisional Interpretation

The interpretation I am going to present is this: On the part of a good number of supervisors in this department, there is a haunting fear of having failed. "We are failures, and

the Company is not interested in us any longer." This is the "schema" by means of which they interpret the things about them. It is with this apprehension that they assign meanings to the things which happen in their department. It is that which compels them to demand reassurance about themselves. It is this haunting fear which does not allow them to face certain facts. In other words, I am going to show that the above mentioned preoccupations are symptoms of this more underlying fact.

6. Preoccupations No. 3.1 and 3.2

Let me explain what I mean by taking each preoccupation listed above in turn. Let us look at the first preoccupation about the impossibility of being advanced in this department. Now an interesting thing about this statement is that it is double-edged. It might mean that they were ignored or willfully held down by those who had the power to promote them or, in the opinion of the latter, they were not qualified for advancement. In one case they were victims of circumstances, or victims of prejudice or of misjudgment. In another sense they themselves were partially responsible for not being promoted.

6.1. A tendency to attribute to mismanagement or circumstance that which they might have attributed to themselves

Now the thing which interested me was the way in which the supervisors rationalized this condition of stagnation in the department. Why were they so eager to imply that they were victims of prejudice, mismanagement, or circumstances? The former foreman against whom so many had complained had only been the head of the department for eight of the twenty or more years that many of them had served in it. Why were they only willing to look at one side of the picture? Why is it so much easier to say that the department is in a rut and because of that I am in a rut, than to put it the other way round? Why do they identify themselves with the department? Why do they attribute things to the department which they might attribute in part to themselves? What connection is there between the department being a "graveyard" and their own personal failure to be advanced? Certainly this has not been the condition of the department all of the twenty or more years in which they were members of it. This is the condition of the department at present, and it looks as if they might constitute an integral part of this condition.

6.2 A tendency not to face all of the facts

These were the questions which at first caught my attention. As I have previously said, it is just as important in an interview to note what a person does not say or can not say as what he does say. Was there something about this condition of stagnation in the department which was not being mentioned? There were frequent references to the fact that many jobs previously in the department had been transferred to Kearny. Here might be the clue. Might we not assume that in these repeated transfers of jobs within the department to Kearny (1) the better men were sent with the job to Kearny (by better men I mean the more progressive and adaptable), (2) the more progressive and adaptable of those who were not transferred to Kearny were transferred to other departments in the branch (I think we are fair to assume that these men would be easier to transfer.), and (3) the remainder stayed in the department.

This might account for the fact that there seems to be an unduly high percentage of "old timers" in the department, but it is interesting to note that not one of them mentioned this in order to explain why the department was an "old people's home." Why? Might there not be a personal reference in this admission which they, naturally enough, would not like to face?

6.3 A resistance to learning

From all this speculation, therefore, the first question I asked myself was, why was there a marked tendency in this department to attribute to fate or circumstances things which they might attribute to themselves? In short, if we ask ourselves what functions such preoccupations fulfill, we can readily see that they play the role of preventing a supervisor from looking at some unpleasant facts, that is, to what extent he himself is personally responsible. These preoccupations have hindered him from looking at himself and correcting his own attitude, of facing his own errors and correcting them. This is the antithesis of the learning attitude, and this attitude seems to be quite common in the department. Several of the men said to me that they had nothing to learn, and that after being twenty or more years in the department, they knew everything about the job. Most of them were very self-satisfied with the way they handled their jobs.

6.4 A tendency to play safe

Now I am not saying that these men are failures and hence the Company was justified in not promoting them, but I do say that it looks as if they are suffering from the preoccupation of being failures or having failed. And if we look at the thing more carefully, it seems as if they never did have the courage to fail. All their life they have been playing safe. Why should any man stay twenty years in a department if he thought his real worth was not being given proper consideration? Such behavior does not seem to indicate much confidence in himself. There seems to be here a discrepancy between talk and behavior.

7. Preoccupations No. 3.3 and 3.4

The question this raised in my mind I shall phrase something like this: Were these men really so interested in advancement or were they more concerned with the security which such advancement is supposed to bring? Maybe the preoccupation about wages will give us the clue to the answer. Why do the group chiefs and section chiefs wish to be put on a weekly basis? This may be interpreted, on the level of manifest content, to be (1) a demand for more money or (2) a demand for a more steady income, or a combination of both.

There is something to be said for the fact that this is a demand for more money. There is no question that under the present conditions of shortened hours, etc. many of the supervisors are having difficulty in meeting their current expenses. Nevertheless, if their sole objective was to increase earnings, why did they offer this particular solution? There are many other possibilities they could have mentioned which would have produced the desired results. It seemed to me that underlying this demand to be put on a weekly basis there was something more than a demand for more money, for certainly they do not expect that should they be transferred to a straight weekly basis, they would get as much as their maximum earnings had been under gang piece work.

7.1 A desire to divorce earnings from personal performance

Is it, then, a demand for a more steady income? Certainly it has this element in it. They do not wish their weekly income to fluctuate with the earnings of the gang. But is it not also a demand that their earnings be not dependent upon their personal performance?

What is the logic of management with regard to the participation of group chiefs and section chiefs in the earnings of the gang? Is it not to keep them personally interested in the output of the gang? At least this is the way first line supervisors think about it, and they were very eager to point out to me what they considered to be fallacious reasoning on the part of management by saying, "The assistant foremen and foremen who are on a weekly basis are interested in the gang's earnings and output, why should not the same apply to us?"

But is it not also the purpose of management in this scheme of having the first two ranks of supervisors participate in the gang percentage to allow them to benefit from that which might have been in part also because of their abilities as supervisors? Why are they so quick to see what they might lose under the present arrangement and not what they might gain? Why do they attribute the rise or fall of gang percentage merely to the constituents of the gang? Has it nothing to do with good supervision? Don't they think they have anything to do with it? Or are they not willing to take this part of the responsibility? Is this the rub? Does it not look as if the unexpressed demand is that the retention of their job and their own earnings in no way depend on their personal performance or showing?

8. Preoccupation No. 3.5

If the thesis I am making is correct, it would be natural to expect that anything which tends to "light up" a hidden "schema" would be interpreted as having ominous significance. Why was the assistant foreman seemingly so worried because his chief two years ago had been campaign manager for a losing candidate, when he himself had managed a losing candidate this very spring? Why, also, was another supervisor in the department concerned with the fact that both his chiefs had not picked winners to manage? Neither of the two could articulate this preoccupation very clearly. It seemed to hold some ominous significance. It wasn't a particularly good record for the department because their chiefs had not backed winning candidates. It seemed to imply that the department was not popular. But why did they interpret the failure of the candidate to win the election to signify their bosses' unpopularity? Didn't the candidate's unpopularity have something to do

with it? And just what did the bosses' unpopularity have to do with them? But maybe the unpopularity of their bosses has something to do with the security of their jobs. Maybe to them it was a symbol of their own disgrace and of their own failures. Let us explore this "syncretism."

8.1 An infantile apprehension of authority

The progress of a first line supervisor depends on his boss, that is, his foreman. But the foreman's hands are tied unless he is in favor with the "big bosses." If a foreman wins the election, maybe the gods who are ever watchful from above will smile down upon him and his department. They will grant his requests. Some of the hopes and desires of the supervisors may be realized. Their jobs are safe. But should the foreman lose, the all-seeing eye will frown down upon them. That is why the loss of the election meant so much to the group chiefs and section chiefs. The meaning assigned to the losing was something as follows: "Our bosses have lost their 'mana.' They are no longer in favor with the 'big bosses.' Hence we are like men on a doomed ship. We can no longer expect any favors from them. Maybe our secret will be discovered." It was "lighting up" their ever present fear. "The 'big bosses' are not pleased with us. Hence maybe we are failures."

These supervisors have lost all confidence in themselves, that is, that in any sense their progress or security is dependent upon their own capacities and abilities. The attitude in this department is now that advancement or security lies in the whims and caprices of the gods. Anything which can be interpreted to mean that the gods are displeased sends shivers of insecurity through the department. When a man gets to this point, I do not say that he is a failure, but I do say that he is acting as if he were a failure.

9. Preoccupation No. 3.6

What I have said so far in one way should not apply to either the assistant foreman or foreman. Both of these men are practically new to the department, having been there only a short time. But in some syncretistic fashion, have they not also identified themselves with the department? In particular, why is the assistant foreman so desirous of

"selling himself" to his employees? To be popular with them is almost an obsession with him. All this appears to me to be symptomatic of underlying feelings of uneasiness and insecurity and a lack of confidence in himself.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, let me point out the things which seem to me to point to the interpretation I have made:

- 10.1 A tendency to attribute to fate or circumstance that which they might have attributed to themselves.
- 10.2 A tendency not to face all the facts.
- 10.3 A tendency to play safe.
- 10.4 A resistance to learning.
- 10.5 A desire to divorce earnings from personal performance.
- 10.6 An infantile apprehension of authority.
- 10.7 A concern about things over which they have but little control, that is, a concern about what others think about them and the attitude management has toward them, rather than to attempt to control those things over which they really have some control, that is, themselves, their own attitudes and preoccupations.

Let me say, again, that it is not my purpose in this paper to throw all the blame for the condition of the department on the present supervisors. With the question of who is to blame, whether management, supervisor, or employee, I am not concerned. My purpose in this paper was to describe a human situation, and as I only interviewed the supervisors in this department, I was, therefore, limited to the situation which exists among these supervisors. I was, therefore, interested in the way they interpreted the things which happened about them, and I was not interested in whether or not their interpretations were justified.

J.L.R.

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