

Case study showing the impact of impulsive supervisory work on employee relations.

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JAN 23 1940
MR. D. LEVINGER - 0001:

I thought you might be interested in the attached case study entitled "The Girl Who Talked Too Much" which was prepared by one of the personnel counselors from her first hand observations.

The situation described by the counselor is not presented as a general problem requiring Management consideration at this time, but rather as an interesting illustration of how a rather casual observation regarding employee conduct made by a higher ranking supervisor sometimes results in quite serious consequences to the employees and supervisors immediately concerned. It also shows the counselor's detailed knowledge of the situation in which she is working, her attitude of objectivity toward the situation she is observing, and how her function as a personnel counselor is performed. In order to protect the identity of the people involved, we have tried to eliminate or alter as much identifying material as possible without distorting the actual sequence of events. However, in view of the possibility that some supervisors, whether directly involved or not, might feel that the material identifies them, we would appreciate it if you would regard the case as being confidential.

ALL SIGNED BY
JAN 23 1940

G. S. RUTHERFORD - 800

RJD:F
Att.

Copy to:

G. A. Landry - 1000
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October 21, 1939

Mr. William B. Dixon
Hawthorne Plant
Western Electric Co.
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Bill:

I enclose copy of the new corrected case. The mimeographed copies are being corrected to fit your suggestions. No trace by which identification could be made will remain.

I have a copy of the book now and am to review it for Mechanical Engineering (by the editor's request). I hope I can do it justice and speed the cause along. But you certainly have given me a job, thus indirectly; it is a monumental tome full of meat!

See you at Christmas, perhaps.

Yours sincerely,

Conie

CMA:R

THE GIRL WHO TALKED TOO MUCH

Conference XI

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I

(Privately distributed for classroom use only)

Cambridge
1939

THE GIRL WHO TALKED TOO MUCH

The objectives of this write-up are as follows:

1. To describe a situation which, as originally manifested, appeared relatively simple but became far more complex than the line organization itself realized.
2. To show the consequences to employee relations of impulsive supervisory action.
3. To roughly indicate the nature of the personnel man's activity.

The report is organized to emphasize the chronological sequence of events as they actually happened rather than to organize it around the social structure or some other scheme because this approach seems to bring out more clearly the development of a problem from an individual one to a general one. The descriptive material has evolved from the personnel man's own observations and the composite observations of both supervisors and employees in the group. Intermittent notations have been incorporated at points where the personnel man could either show the significance or utility of her observations or demonstrate the effect of her contacts upon the action taken. The latter is very difficult to evaluate but it is felt that the personnel man's ability to promote desirable interaction between people in this situation was the culmination of two years of study in the area under consideration. In other words, the personnel man, on the basis of a knowledge of all the individuals who had worked on this job during the last two years, their skills, attitudes, work habits, efficiency, and norms of acceptable behavior, was in an excellent position to inject perspective into the thinking of the supervisors so that current difficulties would be placed in their proper context. The historical background was particularly useful and probably its full significance could not have been lifted out had the personnel man not been in close touch with personnel and job developments during the entire period of growth.

Many details have been omitted which are related to this particular problem, largely because this is an attempt to briefly describe a group of people momentarily thrown out of equilibrium rather than to exhibit everything known about the group and all of its interpersonal relationships, etc. Roughly, included are those items which the personnel man had to quickly recall to mind in discussing the problem during time intervals too brief to permit a complete analysis of recorded data on the people and processes involved.

I While reading this account it is most important to think of the history of the group leading up to the attitudes and behavior being brought out. Prior to March 1, 1938 when the group switched over to a new payment plan, it had been allowed a great deal of freedom quite in contrast to other groups at the plant. Supervisors and employees alike, especially those engaged in conveyor operations, seemed to have an experimental attitude toward increasing

efficiency which led to many improvements in work techniques, layouts, tools, and cooperative effort. Employees were frequently consulted before changes were introduced and were complimented almost daily for improvement in their efficiency, an improvement which could be graphed as a steady increase throughout. So far as discipline was concerned, one could almost say that it was self imposed, and acceptable behavior included almost any activity which did not interfere with efficiency. Group singing was commonplace and no attempt was made to curtail talking; if anything, this kind of behavior was regarded as a sort of "index of morale." Supervisors summed all the above up in the statement, "We do things in a different way in this organization."

With the introduction of the new payment system and higher output standards, previous records could no longer be judged "satisfactory." Consequently, employees were not accorded the recognition to which they were accustomed. Changes in techniques and shifts in personnel were made on a trial-error basis without consulting employees and frequently without explanation. As will be shown, the higher management began to look at the job and attempt to contribute some ideas which, in their thinking, would help to bring about more rapid progress. One of the first and most obvious things which could be seen by an observer far removed from the work level was employee behavior and the tendency was to classify behavior into work or non-work categories. Talking fell into the latter and rapidly became taboo. While it is possible that it may have been distracting in some instances, the personnel man has seen little evidence of conversations which interfered with the employees' ability to focus attention on the work before them. Instead it seemed to perform an important function in relating people together and in relieving tension created by working at a rapid pace on repetitive operations.

The assembly group A is composed of eight women operators who work on one side (which we call a) of a conveyor and an equal number of operators who work on the other side (called b), both lines performing the same operations, making a total of sixteen operators which includes the first or "lead off" girls, supply operators, the five assembling operators, and one inspector for each line.

For the purpose of convenience and identification, throughout this report the operators will retain the numbers assigned to their first work positions.

March 17

On March 17 a new supervisor, Superintendent A, took over the group. In the same day a new method of assembling was introduced which necessitated taking out one operator from each line. Operators 4b and 4a were removed.

March 20

Plant Superintendent A and ^{the} Assistant to Production Manager were on a tour of the plant and while stopping to look at Group A, observed Operators 2a and 5a talking. Plant Superintendent A called

Department Chief A's and Foreman A's attention to this. Operator 5a was informed of this and she in turn told 2b. The supervisors felt that if one were told, the other would be informed by the operator who had been notified.

March 22

Plant Superintendent A in passing the conveyor of Floor Chief A two days later, commented to Department Head A and Foreman A, "Your Inspector 1a and Operator 5a carry on extensive conversations, don't they?" Foreman A and Department Head A began to take a closer look at the behavior of the operators on the two lines. Inspector 1a was advised by the Inspection Floor Chief to cut down unnecessary talking.

March 23

It was observed by Foreman A and Floor Chief A that Operator 3b talked and "argued" with the other girls, particularly 1b, and it was decided to move her and place 4a in the position of 2b, and place an operator from another conveyor in position 3b. Operator 3b was placed in another group under Floor Chief D. The output of both lines in Group A was considered low, and the move was made to determine whether 3b's talking had affected the output. For the moment her past performance, which had always been rated excellent, was forgotten. The personnel man had frequently observed that 3b seemed able to master any assignment with unusual ease. Even though she ordinarily assisted other operators on the line, she worked at a faster pace than those who provided her with work.

March 24

Foreman A talked with the personnel man and mentioned that to his surprise 1b had asked when 3b was to be returned. He thought that perhaps he had misinterpreted the "arguments" and that they must have been "friendly." Foreman A commented that 3b was one of the most efficient operators that they had. He also stated that 3b was not informed as to why she was changed, as the supervisors were not sure as to whether her talking did affect the output of the group.

March 25

The personnel man contacted operator 3b, who felt that the job on which she had been placed was too easy and that time passed too slow. She had already made the acquaintance of all the operators

Footnote:

The supervisory hierarchy is as follows:
A floor chief reports to a foreman a foreman to a department head, and a department head to a plant superintendent, who reports to the production manager. Inspection is a separate division with its own hierarchy. The personnel man belongs to another organization still.

around her. She did not seem to know why she was moved, except that it was necessary to take one operator from the line.

Personnel man directed 3b's attention to the job on which she was now working inquiring if there was anything else about her job that she could do. 3b indicated that she could make an extra operation whenever she had an opportunity and if the girl next to her could not complete her operations, she could assist her.

On the conveyor from which operator 3b had been removed, the girls had been wondering as to why she had been taken off. Among those who commented to the personnel man were 4a and 2a who said, "We can't understand why operator 3b was taken off. She's the most efficient of any of us," and, "They took 3b off, and she's the one girl around here who gets through the first and always has extra time. We don't know why she was taken off."

The above observation was of interest to the personnel man because it showed something of the group sentiment and attitude toward 3b. It also gave the personnel man an insight into the group feelings about this move so that should the supervisors discuss this with the personnel man, the personnel man would be better able, knowing how the operators looked upon the change, to direct attention to important facts.

April 10

On April 10, 5a was absent due to illness and 3b was placed back on the line but in position 2b. It was necessary for her to adapt herself to assembling operations different from those to which she had been accustomed on 3b. She found that it was necessary for her to stand most of the day in order to do her job. Toward the end of the afternoon, when Floor Chief A came over to the conveyor, she was still having difficulty in "keeping up." She observed him watching her and became irritated when he said, "Why 3b, I didn't think you ever had trouble keeping up!" She then entered into an argument with him. (The personnel man was present at this time.)

Floor Chief A reported the above to Foreman A, who later told the personnel man that it had made him very angry to hear that 3b would talk to Floor Chief A as she had done.

Putting operator 3b's remarks in their context, the personnel man talked with Foreman A bringing out that operator 3b had been off the line for a week, that when placed back into the line, she was in a new position where the operations were different, that she had to stand up, an indication to the girls with whom she worked that she was having difficulty, a situation new to 3b since she knew that she was recognized by all the other girls as being one of the most efficient, that it was near the end of the day - 4:30 - when she glanced up and saw her Floor Chief looking at her. The personnel man felt that Foreman A had changed his attitude toward 3b following this discussion.

April 13

Inspectors Ia and Ib exchanged jobs with inspectors from Floor Chief B's conveyor. The change was made by supervisors who believed there had been excess talking. Neither the operators nor the inspectors were given a reason for the change but on the basis of the admonition given Inspector Ia on March 22, they felt that it was because of talking. The operators and inspectors did not seem to fully understand what was meant by excess talking.

The personnel man noted this as again it was expressing the group's attitude. Should the supervisors discuss "talking" with the personnel man, the personnel man would be in a position to direct their thinking toward the employees' feelings about it.

April 17

Foreman B replaced A who was assigned to another section. Foremen A and C worked in an advisory capacity to B while he learned the details of the job.

April 21

Foreman C contacted the personnel man and said that Department Chief A had observed 3b talking two days before and wanted to move her immediately. Nothing had been said to 3b.

The personnel man in talking with Foreman C suggested that they look at the daily output figures for the past week. The personnel man had previously looked at them and had noted that the line on which 3b was working had shown a slight increase over Ia's line. The personnel man used this opportunity to discuss with Foreman C "talking" now as compared with "talking" a year ago. Foreman C felt that he would not do anything in regard to moving 3b and would continue to observe her behavior before making any decision to move her. He did not know just how her talking was affecting the total output of the group, but did observe that the output of Line b on which she worked was slightly higher than that of Line a.

Summary March 17 to April 24

In order to clarify the events which had taken place up to this time, a brief summary follows:

While walking through the department on March 20, the Plant Superintendent in charge and the Assistant to Production Manager observed Operators 2a and 5a conversing on the job. The Plant Superintendent called this to the attention of the Department Head and foreman who was in charge of these operators at that time and pointed out that the operators should be advised to cease talking. Foreman A notified 5a and left her with the responsibility for notifying 2a.

Two days later the Plant Superintendent noted that 5a and Inspector Ia were talking and as a result all supervisors from

Department Head down began to consciously classify this activity as undesirable. On the following day Foreman A and Floor Chief A observed that 3b was arguing a great deal with other employees and without looking at her work record, the output of the line on which she was working, or the nature of the arguments other than manifest behavior, moved her to Group D without offering any reason for the change.

On the next day the foreman commented that he must have misinterpreted the "arguments" as evidence of personal antagonism between 3b and other operators, especially 1b, because 1b had inquired about when 3b would be returned to her old position. He added that 3b was one of his most efficient operators, a fact which had been established shortly after she was hired.

On March 25, the personnel man talked with 3b on the job. She was quite dissatisfied because the new job was too simple and although she had made rapid progress in developing a place for herself in the social group, time passed very slowly. With the personnel man's help she decided that she could carry out an extra operation and thus keep more completely occupied. In the meantime, the personnel man observed that Group A were confused as to why the person whom they rated as the most efficient on the line had been moved.

The move just described did serve to temporarily relieve the attention given to talking but when 3b was returned to the group on April 10 to fill a vacancy created by the absence of 5a, she encountered a new problem. She was placed in position 2b and had so much difficulty keeping up with the line that the Floor Chief A began to watch her closely toward the end of the day. He criticized her inability "to keep up," an argument ensued, and when Foreman A was informed of it, he became very angry at her attitude. A talk with the personnel man modified his feeling through helping him to recognize the circumstances leading to and surrounding the event.

On April 13, attention of supervisors again became focussed on talking - just why is not known. Inspectors 1a and 1b were transferred to another group for talking too much and the personnel man began to hear questions raised as to the meaning of "excess talking."

A week later Foreman C, now in charge of production control for the department and formerly in charge of Group A, advised the personnel man that Department Head A had again seen 3b talking and wanted to move her out of the group. Inasmuch as Foreman C now works closely with Department Head A on any personnel changes, the personnel man encouraged him to wonder why operators talk on the job and specifically the extent to which talking had been reflected in output records. The latter showed that the Line b had been turning out more units per day than Line a.

April 24 (A.M.)

4a returned after her illness, but 3b was kept on the line and 4a was placed elsewhere.

(2:30 P.M.)

Department Head A, while talking to Floor Chief A, noticed 3b

talking to the girls around her. On leaving Floor Chief A, he went directly over to 3b and reprimanded her before the other girls on the two lines for her talking.

(3:05 P.M.)

Floor Chief A, who in the meantime had found it necessary to see another supervisor, not knowing that Department Head A had talked to operator 3b, went over to talk to her a half hour later and said, "I noticed that while you were talking a while ago, Department Head A observed you. I just wanted to warn you. It's O.K. for you to talk, but for heaven's sake, don't do it when the old man is around." Operator 3b started to cry.

(3:10 P.M.)

Floor Chief A contacted Operator 1a to see if she knew why operator 3b had so suddenly started to cry. Operator 1a said she didn't think that a supervisor should bawl out a girl in front of the others. Floor Chief A did not know what she meant as he had not interpreted his own remarks to operator 3b as being a bawling out. Operator 1a explained to him that Department Head A was the supervisor to whom she was referring.

(4:00 P.M.)

Department Head A heard that operator 1a said this and stated to Foreman C and Floor Chief A that no operator should tell him what to do. (Operator 1a has been in disfavor with Department Head A for the past few months because he feels that she was restricting in output.)

(4:30 P.M.)

Department Head A stopped by the conveyor and observed 3b talking. He became very much disturbed and requested that she be moved immediately to a job that would demand her full attention. He seemed to feel that she had disregarded his request that she stop talking, and that she was making a point of talking in front of him. An operator was needed to fill an opening on another job, and as a punishment, it was decided to place 3b there although this job seemed to be recognized as a man's job.

Up to this point the personnel man had participated in only those instances where note has been made. Foreman A stopped the personnel man to explain why 3b was transferred. He reviewed the events already described by stating that Plant Superintendent A and Assistant to Production Manager had stopped by the conveyor one day and had noted the "talking" on the line. The Plant Superintendent A was interested because he had heard that the output was lower there than on other lines and called Foreman A's and Department Head A's attention to this. Ever since, he and Department Head A had been observing more closely and Department Head A had seen 3b talking steadily for twenty minutes and had bawled her out most "severely." Only two hours later Department Head A, on passing the conveyor where 3b was working, had noticed

that she was talking, and he thought that she had looked directly at him, making him feel that she was deliberately disobeying his orders. He had become very angry and indicated that he would like to fire her but instead had ordered her to be placed on the job where she was now working.

Foreman A said that he could not understand why 3b had conducted herself in this manner, particularly after having been bawled out the way she was, adding that Department Head A had done everything but swear in talking with operator 3b. Foreman A stated that operator 3b had done a very good job while working under Floor Chief D and that Floor Chief D, on needing a very efficient operator, had asked that operator 3b be given to him, as he considered her to be better than any other operator that he had. Foreman A stated further that operator 3b was regarded as being very efficient by all of the supervisors for whom she had worked. He had felt, however, that she did not cooperate to the fullest extent with the girls with whom she worked, that she did her own job very well but did not seem to help those around her whenever they needed any assistance. He added that due to Department Head A's feeling about her, she would never go back on a conveyor again.

The personnel man had not as yet talked to Operator 3b but did raise questions in light of past observations. "How positive could one be that operator 3b had talked in defiance to Department Head A's wishes?" "Just how were the supervisors looking at 'talking?'" "How do the operators look at 'talking?'" "How have the supervisors looked upon 'talking' in the past?" The personnel man was inquiring in this area so that Foreman A might look at it more closely. At the beginning of the discussion, Foreman A seemed to be in accordance with Department Head A's feeling but toward the end, his feeling seemed to be modified.

April 26 (A.M.)

Foreman C and Foreman B had 3b come to Foreman C's desk where they explained to 3b the reason for her transfer. Foreman C also told 3b that Department Head A had wanted to fire her. Foreman B had just been transferred to this section and asked Foreman C, a former supervisor in the section, to talk to 3b.

April 26 (3:15 P.M.)

The personnel man approached 3b's new position. She called to the personnel man and said, "I don't suppose you expected to see me here. I'm being punished. This is really a man's job. My arm and my fingers ache so. Have scratched my arms too. These boys with whom I am working are sure razzing me. Department Head A became very impatient with me. Told me I was distracting the other girls. I hadn't looked at it that way. I can see what he meant. He had the wrong impression, I think. Thinks what he said went in one ear and out the other. It didn't really. The girls on the line wanted to know to what I owed my success. (Having an opportunity to talk with

a department or division chief was usually considered a compliment but in this instance it was known to be the reverse.) I told them I guessed it was the gift of gab. After a while I couldn't stand it any more and I cried. At first I tried to laugh so they wouldn't see I felt so bad. I've promised Foreman B that I will never talk. I'm under his care now and can't let him down. Could we talk tomorrow? I want to talk to Department Head A but don't know just what to say."

(3:45 P.M.)

A supervisor from another department contacted the personnel man, asking if he knew 3b. She wondered how it had happened that a girl had been placed on a job which she considered to be man's work.

Here it should be noted that in transferring 3b to another location, other employees became involved in quite a different way. She was placed on a job heretofore rated as a man's job for "punishment" and as a consequence some of the women started to wonder if they would be transferred to these more difficult jobs and men became apprehensive over whether or not they would be replaced by women. In other words, they could only interpret the change in the light of what they observed, that is, the organization seemed to be replacing men with women. Evidently the fact that 3b had been moved to this particular job was so apparent that people in other departments immediately noticed it.

April 26 (4:00 P.M.)

Personnel man contacted Foreman B to make arrangements for taking 3b off the job for a talk. (3b at this time was reporting directly to Foreman B) Foreman B pointed out that if he had been in this group longer he would not have moved 3b. He felt that she had not had a "square deal" and added that she was young (21 years old) and had never before been told about her excess talking. He said he did not feel that he could talk to Department Head A about this, however. He believed that Department Head A had acted too quickly and had not given her enough time to show what she could do. He began the conversation saying that 3b should not go to see Department Head A as the latter was leaving everything up to his supervisors. Toward the end he stated that he felt if 3b wanted to see Department Head A she should see him, that Foreman C had said she should not but he could not see that it would harm her in any way and might help her. He seemed to feel that the job she was on was too heavy for a girl. He added that he hoped she could be taken off the job the following morning and placed on a conveyor and that each of his floor chiefs (5) had requested her for their conveyors.

In mentioning this to the personnel man, Foreman B suddenly stopped and said, "I've been saying many things to you that are confidential - could I say these same things to anyone else from your organization who might take your place? Do all the individuals in your organization regard confidential material the same way you do?" The personnel man used this opportunity to discuss the way personnel men function in a department. Foreman B mentioned to the personnel man that Foreman A had commented to him when he was transferred to this

section that he should contact the personnel man as he had had several contacts with the personnel man and had come away from them feeling that he had gained a great deal of help.

April 26 (4:45 P.M.)

Floor Chief A told 3b that it might be well for her to contact Department Head A as she had left the wrong impression with him.

April 27 (8:30 A.M.)

(Interview with 3b) 3b felt that she must talk to Department Head A and let him know that what he had said had not gone "in one ear and out the other" - that she had not realized how she was distracting the other operators as she had always been able to do her own work. She said that Floor Chief A had told her the preceding evening as she left the plant that it would be well for her to talk to Department Head A and get things straightened out.

3b had always appeared to the personnel man, to the supervisors and girls with whom she worked, to be a carefree, happy-go-lucky individual, but in talking with her, 3b mentioned that she was not living at home, that her father was very strict, beat her mother and made living at home for her unpleasant so that she had decided to leave. Her boy friend, whom she plans to marry in September, is employed but is at home due to a disability incurred while working. He has worked only a short time during the past year and 3b had met all payments on a car owned by him. She gives her mother \$5.00 a week and occasionally buys her two younger brothers clothing. She pays \$8.00 for her board and room. At present she is making \$22.00 a week. She seemed to express a desire to go back home and also was wondering if she really loved her boy friend. She did stress the fact that her job was very important to her. She further stated that the girls with whom she works think that she is an only child. She explained this saying that when working in another department, someone had started that story and that everyone knew her father worked for the company and all had assumed that she had a very easy life. After the story became widespread, she had decided to say nothing further about it. She was very much disturbed because of the "jam" in which she was involved and was determined to talk to Department Head A. After Department Head A talked to her the first time on April 24th, she had not talked to anyone until almost time to leave when she asked the girl next to her about the job. The girls across from her had told her that Department Head A was watching her, and she felt he may have become angry over this so that she also wanted to explain this incident. She appeared to be worried for fear Department Head A would be angry when she talked to him and said that she understood that he had wanted to fire her.

"I usually think about what I'm going to talk about ahead of time, but I didn't in regard to this interview. I asked the girls with whom I have worked and the girls that I know who have been out for an interview just what they talked about and they said it didn't make any difference, that I could talk about anything. They said I could talk about my boy friend, or about clothes, job, or about

anything I wanted to, so I didn't think about what I would say this time. I didn't realize, though, that I'd be talking all about my family."

During the interview, the personnel man helped 3b restate her problem. 3b also repeated four times to the personnel man, what she was planning to say to Department Head A.

April 27 (11:15 A.M.)

Personnel man observed 3b talked with Department Head A at his desk. The personnel man also noted that both 3b and Department Head A were smiling.

(11:15 A.M.)

Foreman B stopped the personnel man and said, "I told Department Head A this morning that I thought we had acted a little too hastily with 3b and that I think we should give her another chance. He seemed to be in perfect accord with that and said that if I felt that she realized what her talking meant and that if I felt that she had learned her lesson, that she could be taken off the job and placed on the conveyor in Group B immediately. I think I got my point across to him all right."

April 28

The personnel man contacted 3b, who remarked that she had looked around for the personnel man after she left Department Head A's desk as she wanted to let the personnel man know that everything had turned out all right. "It was just one, two, three. He did think that I had deliberately gone ahead talking after he had told me not to, so it's a good thing I stopped to see him. I think everything is fixed up all right now, and he told me he'd forget all about it. He said he really tries to be a good supervisor, and I told him yes, that I thought he was a good supervisor, and about that time I thought I'd leave because it seemed to be a good place to stop. So everything worked out all right. The job I'm on now is a very easy one and perhaps I can pick it up so quickly that I can help the girl next to me. I'm now only supposed to put in two screws but if I can put in a third one too, that would help her, and since the job is so easy, I thought I ought to be able to get my speed up so that I can do that all right. I'm not talking to any of the girls around me, though."

May 1

The personnel man went into the department to contact an Inspection supervisor and three of the inspectors. The following contacts in which reference made to 3b occurred as the personnel man was walking from one end of the aisle to the other:

Floor Chief A said: "Everything is running along very nicely now - not having any difficulty at all. The output is up to 100 more than Department Head A ever anticipated. I'm really on top of the world. I haven't had any difficulty at all except for what

happened the other day with 3b. I felt pretty sorry for her. I knew that she was at first blaming me for what happened. I saw Department Head A looking at her, but didn't dream that he would go over and speak to her immediately. I had to contact another supervisor and by the time I got back Department Head A had already been over to see her, and I guess he really bawled her out. I didn't know anything about it and really got my foot into it. I went over just to warn her, and the next thing I knew she was crying. I went around to see 1a and she said that she didn't think any supervisor ought to bawl a girl out on a conveyor as had been done. I told her I didn't think I had bawled her out. She said, "No, you didn't, but Department Head A did." It seems as if the old man heard about that. She's really a good kid, and I would like to have her working for me any time. She knows how to get right in there and do the job.

As the personnel man left Floor Chief A, he continued to look for the supervisor in Inspection. Floor Chief C passed him and the personnel man spoke to him, while still looking around for the inspector. Floor Chief C almost immediately, after a slight pause when neither the personnel man nor floor chief said anything, said, "You know, it was just too bad that I was never able to have 3b work for me. I think that she's one of the best operators around here. I feel that had she worked for me that this never would have occurred. When she came back from talking with Department Head A the other day, I gave her a few little words of advice. I told her that if she would try to do her own job and would be very careful so that she would never talk when anyone saw her, that after about a week or so that people would stop looking at her; that is, the supervisors such as Department Head A, and that she could settle down then and wouldn't have to be so concerned about not saying a word. I felt really sorry for her. As we were talking she said, 'You know, no one ever said anything to me about that, and I didn't realize what was going on' and it was then that I started thinking, not out loud but to myself, here's a girl who had never been told. I feel that a supervisor should keep a look-out for his girls and should inform them as to just what their behavior should be. I think that a supervisor, that is a Floor Chief, can handle that very nicely without causing any trouble. I really felt sorry for that kid. I used to notice her talking when she was working for Floor Chief A. I felt then that she should have been told. She hardly knew what it was all about.

May 2

The personnel man was interviewing an inspector who had been seeing inspectors changed from one job to another as the number of inspectors gradually dwindled due to the decreasing number of defects that were being found. During the interview, the inspector seemed to be very much disturbed about just what was going to happen to her and in talking about this made the following statement: "You know, one thing that all of us inspectors are worried about is that they may put us over on that job (job on which 3b was placed April 25.) A lot of the boys were kidding us and telling us 'Sure, didn't we see that girl over there the other day?' We're really bigger

than she is, and we know how tough it would be. Why they had one great big girl over there trying to help out and she had a terrible time! Then to think they'd put a frail, little thing like they had on there the other day. Why what do they mean by that? Do you suppose they're really going to start putting girls over there on that job? And if they put girls over there, and there are four too many of us, it sure looks like we may be the ones to go over on that job. There's sure going to be plenty of squawking if they try anything like that."

May 2

Foreman C wondered how Department Head A had heard about la's remark on April 24th that a supervisor should not bawl out a girl in front of others. He felt that Department Chief A no longer held any grudge against 3b and that there had been a misunderstanding. Foreman C said that Department Head A did not want anyone to talk to an operator in a disturbed state of mind and that he did not want to talk with anyone either. Foreman C was unaware of the fact that 3b had talked with Department Head A at his desk on April 27.

May 3

Personnel man observed that there did not seem to be as much talking among employees in Group A as had been formerly manifested. la said, "They tell us to feel at home on the job but yet they get plenty mad if we talk."

May 4

Foreman A mentioned to the personnel man that Floor Chief A was the one who had told Department Head A about la's comment regarding 3b's "bawling out" on April 24, ~~1944~~.

The personnel man was interested in this because on May 1 Group Chief A had implied that he did not know how the department head heard about la's comment.

Department Head A had asked if any resentment had been shown when he reprimanded 3b. Foreman A said that Floor Chief A should have said "No" but that he did not seem to think quick enough and had said "Yes," whereupon Department Head A had demanded "Who?" On being told it was la, he requested that she be sent over to his desk immediately. Foreman A asked him to defer this action temporarily and pointed out to him that la was a leader in the group and a cool, level headed operator and that any resentment she showed would be expressive of the group feeling. He pointed out that since a strong loyalty between employees existed in this group to bawl out any one operator was interpreted by all others as if they too had been reprimanded. "I also explained to him" Foreman A said to the personnel man, "what you and I have talked about, that that line is so sensitive, that any change, no matter how slight, might easily affect it at this time and that nothing should be done to change anything in that situation unless absolutely

necessary. So as far as I know Department Head A never called Ia to his desk."

The personnel man and Foreman A had at various times prior to March 17 discussed the effect of change on individual operators and groups of operators.

Foreman A in talking about the line under Floor Chief A mentioned that it seemed to be functioning in an efficient manner and that there now appeared to be less talking. He felt that all the girls should have realized that they were not to talk as two of them had previously been warned, including Inspector Ia. "As supervisors," continued Foreman A, "we seldom point out to the operators that they may be talking too much. We run into difficulty when Plant Superintendent A sees operators talking and then asks us if we have notified them that they talk too much. We ran into the same situation during layoff period. We had never told an operator that she was 'just average' because we believed that as long as operators were doing a 'good' job there was no need to tell them that they were not exceptional. As a result many operators were very much unprepared when notified of their layoff. That made it difficult for us. Now we have the same situation with 'talking' in relationship to our supervisors. Plant Superintendent A can really put us on the spot when we have to tell him we have not warned the operators. I have been wondering how to reprimand the operators so that it won't affect their morale. All of the supervisors are thinking about this now."

The personnel man questioned Foreman A about Plant Superintendent A's sentiments in regard to "talking" in the past. Had he expressed any comments at any other time relating to this subject? Foreman A recalled, before the change in payment plan, that Plant Superintendent A encouraged the operators to talk and to feel relaxed. He added that considerable laxness prevailed at that time but the output did not seem to be affected. Foreman A wondered if perhaps they were not putting too much emphasis on "talking" now and if in talking to Plant Superintendent A some of these facts could not be mentioned.

The objectives of this write-up are as follows:

1. To describe a situation which, as originally manifested, appeared relatively simple but became far more complex than the line organization itself realized.
2. To show the consequences to employee relations of impulsive supervisory action.
3. To point out one of the consequences of a major change; namely, the changes from day work to group piece work, and from five to four level supervision.
4. To demonstrate the counselor's inability to plan the distribution of his time because of unforeseen demands or developments.
5. To roughly indicate the nature of the counselor's activity.

The report is organized to emphasize the chronological sequence of events as they actually happened rather than to organize it around the social structure or some other scheme because this approach seems to bring out more clearly the development of a problem from an individual one to a general one. The descriptive material - double spaced - has evolved from the counselor's own observations and the composite observations of both supervisors and employees in the group. Intermittent single spaced notations have been incorporated at points where the counselor could either show the significance or utility of her observations or demonstrate the effect of her contacts upon the action taken. The latter is very difficult to evaluate but it is felt that the counselor's ability to promote desirable interaction between people in this situation was the culmination of two years of study in the area under consideration. In other words, the counselor, on the basis of her knowledge of all the individuals who

had worked on this job during the last two years, their skills, attitudes, work habits, efficiency, and norms of acceptable behavior, was in an excellent position to inject perspective into the thinking of the supervisors so that current difficulties would be placed in their proper context. The historical background was particularly useful and probably its full significance could not have been lifted out had the counselor not been in close touch with personnel and job developments during the entire period of growth.

Many details have been omitted which are related to this particular problem, largely because this is an attempt to briefly describe a group of people momentarily thrown out of equilibrium rather than to exhibit everything known about the group and all of its interpersonal relationships, etc. Roughly, included are those items which the counselor had to quickly recall to mind in discussing the problem during time intervals too brief to permit a complete analysis of recorded data on the people and processes involved.

While reading this account it is most important to think of the history of the group leading up to the attitudes and behavior being brought out. Prior to March 1, 1939 when the group switched over to piece work, it had been allowed a great deal of freedom quite in contrast to other groups at Hawthorne. Supervisors and employees alike, especially those engaged in conveyor operations, seemed to have an experimental attitude toward increasing efficiency which led to many improvements in work techniques, layouts, tools, and cooperative effort. Employees were frequently consulted before changes were introduced and were complimented almost daily for improvement in

their efficiency, an improvement which could be graphed as a steady increase throughout. So far as discipline was concerned, one could almost say that it was self imposed, and acceptable behavior included almost any activity which did not interfere with efficiency. Group singing was commonplace and no attempt was made to curtail talking; if anything, this kind of behavior was regarded as a sort of "index of morale." Supervisors summed all the above up in the statement, "We do things in a different way in this organization."

With the introduction of piece work and higher output standards, previous records could no longer be judged "satisfactory." Consequently, employees were not accorded the recognition to which they were accustomed. Changes in techniques and shifts in personnel were made on a trial-error basis without consulting employees and frequently without explanation. As will be shown, higher Management began to look at the job and attempt to contribute some ideas which, in their thinking, would help to bring about more rapid progress. One of the first and most obvious things which could be seen by an observer far removed from the work level was employee behavior and the tendency was to classify behavior into work or non-work categories. Talking fell into the latter and rapidly became taboo. While it is possible that it may have been distracting in some instances, the counselor has seen little evidence of conversations which interfered with the employees' ability to focus attention on the work before them. Instead it seemed to perform an important function in relating people together and in relieving tension created by working at a rapid pace on repetitive operations.

In order to orientate the reader, Chart I shows the positions of the employees involved in the problem and also the changes made in one operator's job location from March 23, 1939 to April 27, 1939.

The group designated A is composed of eight women operators who work on one side of a conveyor and an equal number of operators who work on the other side, both lines performing the same operations, making a total of sixteen operators which includes the first or "lead off" girls, supply operators, the five assembling operators, and one inspector for each line.

For the purpose of convenience and identification, throughout this report the operators will retain the numbers assigned to the work positions on the first chart. Chart II shows the positions where employees were finally placed.

March 17, 1939

On March 17 a new supervisor, Group Chief A, took over the group. On the same day a new method of assembling was introduced which necessitated taking out one operator from each line. Operators 4B and 4A were removed.

March 20, 1939

Division Chief A and Assistant to Works Manager A were on a tour of the plant and while stepping to look at Group A, observed Operators 2A and 5A talking. Division Chief A called Department Chief A's and Section Chief A's attention to this. Operator 5A was informed of this and she in turn told 2A. The supervisors felt that if one were told, the other would be informed by the operator who had been notified.

March 22, 1939

Division Chief A in passing the conveyor of Group Chief A two days later, commented to Department Chief A and Section Chief A, "Your Inspector 1A and Operator 5A carry on extensive conversations, don't they?" Section Chief A and Department Chief A began to take a closer look at the behavior of the operators on the two lines. Inspector 1A was advised by the Inspection Group Chief to cut down unnecessary talking.

March 23, 1939

It was observed by Section Chief A and Group Chief A that Operator 3B talked and "argued" with the other girls, particularly 1B, and it was decided to move her and place 4A in the position of 2B and place an operator from another conveyor in position 3B. Operator 3B was placed in another group under Group Chief D. The output of both lines in Group A was considered low, and the move was made to determine whether 3B's talking had affected the output. For the moment her past performance, which had always been rated excellent, was forgotten. The counselor had frequently observed that 3B seemed able to master any assignment with unusual ease. Even though she ordinarily assisted other operators on the line, she worked at a faster pace than those who provided her with work.

March 24, 1939

Section Chief A talked with the counselor and mentioned that to his surprise 1B had asked when 3B was to be returned. He thought that perhaps he had misinterpreted the "arguments" and that they must have been "friendly." Section Chief A commented that 3B

was one of the most efficient operators that they had. He also stated that 3B was not informed as to why she was changed, as the supervisors were not sure as to whether her talking did affect the output of the group.

March 25, 1939

The counselor contacted operator 3B, who felt that the job on which she had been placed was too easy and that time passed too slow. She had already made the acquaintance of all the operators around her. She did not seem to know why she was moved, except that it was necessary to take one operator from the line.

Counselor directed 3B's attention to the job on which she was now working inquiring if there was anything else about her job that she could do. 3B indicated that she could make an extra wire connection whenever she had an opportunity and if the girl next to her could not complete her operations, she could assist her.

On the conveyor from which operator 3B had been removed, the girls had been wondering as to why she had been taken off. Among those who commented to the counselor were 4A and 2A who said, "We can't understand why operator 3B was taken off. She's the most efficient of any of us," and, "They took 3B off, and she's the one girl around here who gets through the first and always has extra time. We don't know why she was taken off."

The above observation was of interest to the counselor because it showed something of the group sentiment and attitude toward 3B. It also gave the counselor an insight into the group feelings about this move so that should the supervisors discuss this with the counselor, the counselor would be better able, knowing how the operators looked upon the change, to direct attention to important facts.

April 10, 1939

On April 10, 5A was absent due to illness and 3B was placed back on the line but in position 2B. It was necessary for her to

adapt herself to assembling operations different from those to which she had been accustomed on 3B. She found that it was necessary for her to stand most of the day in order to do her job. Toward the end of the afternoon, when Group Chief A came over to the conveyor, she was still having difficulty in "keeping up." She observed him watching her and became irritated when he said, "Why 3B, I didn't think you ever had trouble keeping up!" She then entered into an argument with him. (The counselor was present at this time.)

Group Chief A reported the above to Section Chief A, who later told the interviewer that it had made him very angry to hear that 3B would talk to Group Chief A as she had done.

Putting operator 3B's remarks in their context, the counselor talked with Section Chief A bringing out that operator 3B had been off the line for a week, that when placed back into the line, she was in a new position where the operations were different, that she had to stand up, an indication to the girls with whom she worked that she was having difficulty, a situation new to 3B since she knew that she was recognized by all the other girls as being one of the most efficient, that it was near the end of the day - 4:30 - when she glanced up and saw her Group Chief looking at her. The counselor felt that Section Chief A had changed his attitude toward 3B following this discussion.

April 13, 1939

Inspectors IA and IB exchanged jobs with inspectors from Group Chief B's conveyor. The change was made by supervisors who believed there had been excess talking. Neither the operators nor the inspectors were given a reason for the change but on the basis of the admonition given Inspector IA on March 22, 1939, they felt that it was because of talking. The operators and inspectors did not seem to fully understand what was meant by excess talking.

The counselor noted this as again it was expressing the group's attitude. Should the supervisors discuss "talking" with the counselor, the counselor would be in a position to direct their thinking toward the employees' feelings about it.

April 17, 1939

Section Chief B replaced A who was assigned to another section. Section Chief A and C worked in an advisory capacity to B while he learned the details of the job.

April 21, 1939

Section Chief C contacted the counselor and said that Department Chief A had observed 3B talking two days before and wanted to move her immediately. Nothing had been said to 3B.

The counselor in talking with Section Chief C suggested that they look at the daily output figures for the past week. The counselor had previously looked at them and had noted that the line on which 3B was working had shown a slight increase over 1A's line. The counselor used this opportunity to discuss with Section Chief C "talking" now as compared with "talking" a year ago. Section Chief C felt that he would not do anything in regard to moving 3B and would continue to observe her behavior before making any decision to move her. He did not know just how her talking was affecting the total output of the group, but did observe that the output of Line B on which she worked was slightly higher than that of Line A.

Summary March 17, 1939 to April 24, 1939

In order to clarify the events which had taken place up to this time, a brief summary follows.

While walking through the department on March 20, 1939, the Division Chief in charge and the Assist to Works Manager observed Operators 2A and 5A conversing on the job. The Division Chief called this to the attention of the Department Chief and Section Chief who was in charge of these operators at that time and pointed out that the operators should be advised to cease talking. Section Chief A notified 5A and left her with the responsibility for notifying 2A.

Two days later the Division Chief noted that 5A and Inspector 1A were talking and as a result all supervisors from Department Chief down began to consciously classify this activity as undesirable.

On the following day Section Chief A and Group Chief A observed that 3B was arguing a great deal with other employees and without looking at her work record, the output of the line on which she was working, or the nature of the arguments other than manifest behavior, moved her to Group D without offering any reason for the change.

On the next day the Section Chief commented that he must have misinterpreted the "arguments" as evidence of personal antagonism between 3B and other operators, especially 1B, because 1B had inquired about when 3B would be returned to her old position. He added that 3B was one of his most efficient operators, a fact which had been established shortly after she was hired.

On March 25, the counselor talked with 3B on the job. She was quite dissatisfied because the new job was too simple and although she had made rapid progress in developing a place for herself in the social group, time passed very slowly. With the counselor's help she decided that she could carry out an extra operation and thus keep more completely occupied. In the meantime, the counselor observed that Group A were confused as to why the person whom they rated as the most efficient on the line had been moved.

The move just described did serve to temporarily relieve the attention given to talking but when 3B was returned to the group on April 10 to fill a vacancy created by the absence of 5A, she encountered a new problem. She was placed in position 2B and had so much difficulty keeping up with the line that the Group Chief A began to watch her closely toward the end of the day. He criticized

her inability "to keep up," an argument ensued, and when Section Chief A was informed of it, he became very angry at her attitude. A talk with the counselor modified his feeling through helping him to recognize the circumstances leading to and surrounding the event.

On April 13, attention of supervisors again became focused on talking - just why is not known. Inspectors IA and IB were transferred to another group for talking too much and the counselor began to hear questions raised as to the meaning of "excess talking."

A week later Section Chief C, now in charge of production control for the department and formerly in charge of Section A, advised the counselor that Department Chief A had again seen SB talking and wanted to move her out of the group. Inasmuch as Section Chief C works closely with Department Chief A on any personnel changes, the counselor encouraged him to wonder why operators talk on the job and specifically the extent to which talking had been reflected in output records. The latter showed that the Line B had been turning out more units per day than Line A.

April 24, 1939 (A.M.)

4A returned after her illness, but SB was kept on the line and 4A was placed elsewhere.

(2:30 P.M.)

Department Chief A, while talking to Group Chief A, noticed SB talking to the girls around her. On leaving Group Chief A, he went directly over to SB and reprimanded her before the other girls on the two lines for her talking.

(3:05 P.M.)

Group Chief A, who in the meantime had found it necessary to see another supervisor, not knowing that Department Chief A had talked to operator 3B, went over to talk to her a half hour later and said, "I noticed that while you were talking a while ago, Department Chief A observed you. I just wanted to warn you. It's O.K. for you to talk, but for heaven's sake, don't do it when the old man is around." Operator 3B started to cry.

(3:10 P.M.)

Group Chief A contacted Operator 1A to see if she knew why operator 3B had so suddenly started to cry. Operator 1A said she didn't think that a supervisor should bawl a girl out in front of the others. Group Chief A did not know what she meant as he had not interpreted his own remarks to operator 3B as being a bawling out. Operator 1A explained to him that Department Chief A was the supervisor to whom she was referring.

(4:00 P.M.)

Department Chief A heard that operator 1A said this and stated to Section Chief C and Group Chief A that no operator should tell him what to do. (Operator 1A has been in disfavor with Department Chief A for the past few months because he feels that she was restricting in output.)

(4:30 P.M.)

Department Chief A stopped by the conveyor and observed 3B talking. He became very much disturbed and requested that she be moved immediately to a job that would demand her full attention.

He seemed to feel that she had disregarded his request that she stop talking, and that she was making a point of talking in front of him. An operator was needed to fill an opening on another job, and as a punishment, it was decided to place 3B there although this job seemed to be recognized as a man's job.

Up to this point the counselor had participated in only those instances where note has been made. Section Chief A stopped the counselor to explain why 3B was transferred. He reviewed the events already described by stating that Division Chief A and Assistant to Works Manager A had stopped by the conveyor one day and had noted the "talking" on the line. Division Chief A was interested because he had heard that the output was lower there than on other lines and called Section Chief A's and Department Chief A's attention to this. Ever since, he and Department Chief A had been observing more closely and Department Chief A had seen 3B talking steadily for twenty minutes and had bawled her out most "severely." Only two hours later Department Chief A, on passing the conveyor where 3B was working, had noticed that she was talking, and he thought that she had looked directly at him, making him feel that she was deliberately disobeying his orders. He had become very angry and indicated that he would like to fire her but instead had ordered her to be placed on the job where she was now working.

Section Chief A said that he could not understand why 3B had conducted herself in this manner, particularly after having been bawled out the way she was, adding that Department Chief A had done everything but swear in talking with operator 3B. Section Chief A

stated that operator 3B had done a very good job while working under Group Chief D and that Group Chief D, on needing a very efficient operator, had asked that operator 3B be given to him, as he considered her to be better than any other operator that he had. Section Chief A stated further that operator 3B was regarded as being very efficient by all of the supervisors for whom she had worked. He had felt, however, that she did not cooperate to the fullest extent with the girls with whom she worked, that she did her own job very well but did not seem to help those around her whenever they needed any assistance. He added that due to Department Chief A's feeling about her, she would never go back on a conveyor again.

The counselor had not as yet talked to Operator 3B but did raise questions in light of past observations. "How positive could one be that operator 3B had talked in defiance to Department Chief A's wishes?" "Just how were the supervisors looking at 'talking?'" "How do the operators look at 'talking?'" "How have the supervisors looked upon 'talking' in the past?" The counselor was inquiring in this area so that Section Chief A might look at it more closely. At the beginning of the discussion, Section Chief A seemed to be in accordance with Department Chief A's feeling but toward the end, his feeling seemed to be modified.

April 26, 1939 (A.M.)

Section Chief C and Section Chief B had 3B come to Section Chief C's desk where they explained to 3B the reason for her transfer. Section Chief C also told 3B that Department Chief A had wanted to fire her. Section Chief B had just been transferred to this section and asked Section Chief C, a former supervisor in the section, to talk to 3B.

April 26, 1939 (3:15 P.M.)

The counselor approached 3B's new position. She called to the counselor and said, "I don't suppose you expected to see me here."

I'm being punished. This is really a man's job. My arm and my fingers ache so. Have scratched my arms too. These boys with whom I am working are sure razzing me. Department Chief A became very impatient with me. Told me I was distracting the other girls. I hadn't looked at it that way. I can see what he meant. He has wrong impression, I think. Thinks what he said went in one ear and out the other. It didn't really. The girls on the line wanted to know to what I owed my success. (Having an opportunity to talk with a department or division chief was usually considered a compliment but in this instance it was known to be the reverse.) I told them I guessed it was the gift of gab. After a while I couldn't stand it any more and I cried. At first I tried to laugh so they wouldn't see I felt so bad. I've promised Section Chief B that I will never talk. I'm under his care now and can't let him down. Could we talk tomorrow? I want to talk to Department Chief A but don't know just what to say."

(3:45 P.M.)

A Personnel Placement woman contacted the counselor, asking if she knew 3B. She wondered how it had happened that a girl had been placed on a job which she considered to be man's work.

Here it should be noted that in transferring 3B to another location, other employees became involved in quite a different way. She was placed on a job heretofore rated as a man's job for "punishment" and as a consequence some of the women started to wonder if they would be transferred to these more difficult jobs and men became apprehensive over whether or not they would be replaced by

women. In other words, they could only interpret the change in the light of what they observed, that is, the organization seemed to be replacing men with women. Evidently the fact that 3B had been moved to this particular job was so apparent that the Placement Interviewer immediately noticed it.

April 26, 1939 (4:00 P.M.)

Counselor contacted Section Chief B to make arrangements for taking 3B off the job for an interview. (3B at this time was reporting directly to Section Chief B) Section Chief B pointed out that if he had been in this section longer he would not have moved 3B. He felt that she had not had a "square deal" and added that she was young (21 years old) and had never before been told about her excess talking. He said he did not feel that he could talk to Department Chief A about this, however. He believed that Department Chief A had acted too quickly and had not given her enough time to show what she could do. He began the conversation saying that 3B should not go to see Department Chief A as the latter was leaving everything up to his supervisors. Toward the end he stated that he felt if 3B wanted to see Department Chief A she should see him, that Section Chief C had said she should not but he could not see that it would harm her in any way and might help her. He seemed to feel that the job she was on was too heavy for a girl. He added that he hoped she could be taken off the job the following morning and placed on a conveyor and that each of his group chiefs (5) had requested her for their conveyers.

In mentioning this to the counselor Section Chief B suddenly stopped and said, "I've been saying many things to you that are confidential - could I say these same things to anyone else from

your organization who might take your place? Do all the individuals in your organization regard confidential material the same way you do?" The counselor used this opportunity to discuss "personnel counseling" and the way counselors function in a territory. Section Chief B mentioned to the interviewer that Section Chief A had commented to him when he was transferred to this section that he should contact the counselor as he (Section Chief A) had had several contacts with the counselor and had come away from them feeling that he had gained a great deal of help.

April 26, 1939 (4:45 P.M.)

Group Chief A told SB that it might be well for her to contact Department Chief A as she had left the wrong impression with him.

April 27, 1939 (8:30 A.M.)

(Interview with SB) SB felt that she must talk to Department Chief A and let him know that what he had said had not gone "in one ear and out the other" - that she had not realized how she was distracting the other operators as she had always been able to do her own work. She said that Group Chief A had told her the preceding evening as she left the plant that it would be well for her to talk to Department Chief A and get things straightened out.

SB had always appeared to the counselor, to the supervisors and girls with whom she worked, to be a carefree, happy-go-lucky individual, but in talking with her, SB mentioned that she was not living at home, that her father was very strict, beat her mother and made living at home for her unpleasant so that she had decided to leave. Her boy friend, whom she plans to marry in September, is employed but is at home due to a disability incurred while working. He has worked only a short time during the past year and SB had not all payments on a 1937 Plymouth owned by him. She gives her mother

\$5.00 a week and occasionally buys her two younger brothers clothing. She pays \$5.00 for her board and room. At present she is making \$22.00 a week. She seemed to express a desire to go back home and also was wondering if she really loved her boy friend. She did stress the fact that her job was very important to her. She further stated that the girls with whom she works think that she is an only child. She explained this saying that when working in another department, someone had started that story and that everyone knew her father worked for Western Electric and all had assumed that she had a very easy life. After the story became widespread, she had decided to say nothing further about it. She was very much disturbed because of the "jam" in which she was involved and was determined to talk to Department Chief A. After Department Chief A talked to her the first time on April 24th, she had not talked to anyone until almost time to leave when she asked the girl next to her about the job. The girls across from her had told her that Department Chief A was watching her, and she felt he may have become angry over this so that she also wanted to explain this incident. She appeared to be worried for fear Department Chief A would be angry when she talked to him and said that she understood that he had wanted to fire her.

"I usually think about what I'm going to talk about ahead of time, but I didn't in regard to this interview. I asked the girls with whom I have worked and the girls that I know who have been out for an interview just what they talked about and they said it didn't make any difference, that I could talk about anything. They said I could talk about my boy friend, or about clothes, job,

or about anything I wanted to, so I didn't think about what I would say this time. I didn't realize, though, that I'd be talking all about my family."

During the interview, the counselor helped 3B restate her problem. 3B also repeated four times to the counselor, what she was planning to say to Department Chief A. The interview strengthened the relationship which existed between the counselor and 3B and through it, problems and facts were discussed which had never been touched upon before.

April 27, 1939 (11:15 A.M.)

Counselor observed 3B talked with Department Chief A at his desk. The counselor also noted that both 3B and Department Chief A were smiling.

(11:15 A.M.)

Section Chief B stopped the interviewer and said, "I told Department Chief A this morning that I thought we had acted a little too hastily with 3B and that I think we should give her another chance. He seemed to be in perfect accord with that and said that if I felt that she realized what her talking meant and that if I felt that she had learned her lesson, that she could be taken off the job and placed on the conveyor in Group B immediately. I think I got my point across to him all right."

Section Chief B's action here, seemed to be the result of looking at more facts in the situation which had been mentioned in the contact with the counselor the preceding day.

April 28, 1939

The counselor contacted 3B, who remarked that she had looked around for the counselor after she left Department Chief A's desk as she wanted to let the counselor know that everything had turned out all right. "It was just one, two, three. He did think

that I had deliberately gone ahead talking after he had told me not to, so it's a good thing I stopped to see him. I think everything is fixed up all right now, and he told me he'd forget all about it. He said he really tries to be a good supervisor, and I told him yes, that I thought he was a good supervisor, and about that time I thought I'd leave because it seemed to be a good place to stop. So everything worked out all right. The job I'm on now is a very easy one and perhaps I can pick it up so quickly that I can help the girl next to me. I'm now only supposed to put in two screws but if I can put in a third one too, that would help her, and since the job is so easy, I thought I ought to be able to get my speed up so that I can do that all right. I'm not talking to any of the girls around me, though."

The counselor questioned 3B when she remarked that her job was an "easy one" and asked if there were any additional operations on her job. 3B commented about the girl who operated the automatic screw driver and watched her a few minutes determining what her operations were. She observed at that time that if she put in the third screw, she might assist that operator.

May 1, 1939

The counselor went into the department to contact an Inspection supervisor and three of the inspectors. The following contacts in which reference made to 3B occurred as the counselor was walking from one end of the aisle to the other:

Group Chief A said: "Everything is running along very nicely now - not having any difficulty at all. The output is up 100 more than Department Chief A ever anticipated. I'm really on top of the world. I haven't had any difficulty at all except for what happened the other day with 3B. I felt pretty sorry for her."

I knew that she was at first blaming me for what happened. I saw Department Chief A looking at her, but didn't dream that he would go over and speak to her immediately. I had to contact another supervisor and by the time I got back Department Chief A had already been over to see her, and I guess he really bawled her out. I didn't know anything about it and really got my foot into it. I went over just to warn her, and the next thing I knew she was crying. I went around to see LA and she said that she didn't think any supervisor ought to bawl a girl out on a conveyor as had been done. I told her I didn't think I had bawled her out. She said, "No, you didn't, but Department Chief A did." It seems as if the old man heard about that. She's really a good kid, and I would like to have her working for me any time. She knows how to get right in there and do the job.

As the counselor left Group Chief A, she continued to look for the supervisor in Inspection. Group Chief C passed her and the counselor spoke to him, while still looking around for the inspector. Group Chief C almost immediately, after a slight pause when neither the counselor nor group chief said anything, said, "You know, it was just too bad that I was never able to have SB work for me. I think that she's one of the best operators around here. I feel that had she worked for me that this never would have occurred. When she came back from talking with Department Chief A the other day, I gave her a few little words of advice. I told her that if she would try to do her own job and would be very careful so that she would never talk when anyone saw her, that after about a week or so that people would stop looking at her; that is, the supervisors such as Department Chief A, and that she could settle down then and wouldn't have to be so

concerned about not saying a word. I felt really sorry for her. As we were talking she said, 'You know, no one ever said anything to me about that, and I didn't realize what was going on' and it was then that I started thinking, not out loud but to myself, here's a girl who had never been told. I feel that a supervisor should keep a lookout for his girls and should inform them as to just what their behavior should be. I think that a supervisor, that is a group chief, can handle that very nicely without causing any trouble. I really felt sorry for that kid. I used to notice her talking when she was working for Group Chief A. I felt then that she should have been told. She hardly knew what it was all about. Look over at her now - the little girl next to her is certainly a chatterbox. She seems to be going at the rate of 240, yet 3B doesn't dare say a word. Right across from her is Group Chief B, so you can see that she's practically between the devil and the deep blue sea. I think that Group Chief B should do something about that. He's right there and can see the girl talking with her. He ought to go over and talk to that girl and tell her that she's talking a little bit too much. He should by no means tell her that the girl next to her is on probation now and can't speak a word, but he could indicate to her that she shouldn't talk so much and that in turn would help 3B. There isn't a better operator around here than 3B, and anyone of us would be glad to get her.

The counselor talked with Group Chief C about "talking" and just what it meant to the operator, to other operators, to supervisors, to the job, and how it always been looked upon in the same manner as it is today.

May 2, 1939

The counselor was interviewing an inspector who had been seeing inspectors changed from one job to another as the number of inspectors gradually dwindled due to the decreasing number of defects that were being found. During the interview, the inspector seemed to be very much disturbed about just what was going to happen to her and in talking about this made the following statement: "You know, one thing that all of us inspectors are worried about is that they may put us over on that job (job on which 3B was placed April 25, 1939). A lot of the boys were kidding us and telling us 'Sure, didn't we see that girl over there the other day?' We're really bigger than she is, and we know how tough it would be. Why they had one great big girl over there trying to help out and she had a terrible time! Then to think they'd put a frail, little thing like they had on there the other day. Why what do they mean by that? Do you suppose they're really going to start putting girls over there on that job? And if they put girls over there, and there are four too many of us, it sure looks like we may be the ones to go over on that job. There's sure going to be plenty of squawking if they try anything like that."

May 2, 1939

Section Chief C wondered how Department Chief A had heard about 1A's remark on April 24th that a supervisor should not bawl out a girl in front of others. He felt that Department Chief A no longer held any grudge against 3B and that there had been a misunderstanding. Section Chief C said that Department Chief A did not want anyone to talk to an operator in a disturbed state of mind and that he did not want to talk with anyone either. Section Chief C was un-

aware of the fact that 3B had talked with Department Chief A at his desk on April 27.

May 3, 1939

Counselor observed that there did not seem to be as much talking among employees in Group A as had been formerly manifested. 1A said, "They tell us to feel at home on the job but yet they get plenty mad if we talk."

May 4, 1939

Section Chief A mentioned to the counselor that Group Chief A was the one who had told Department Chief A about 1A's comment regarding 3B's "bawling out" on April 24, 1939.

The counselor was interested in this because on May 1 Group Chief A had implied that he did not know how the department chief heard about 1A's comment.

Department Chief A had asked if any resentment had been shown when he reprimanded 3B. Section Chief A said that Group Chief A should have said "No" but that he did not seem to think quick enough and had said "Yes," whereupon Department Chief A had demanded "Who?" On being told it was 1A, he requested that she be sent over to his desk immediately. Section Chief A asked him to defer this action temporarily and pointed out to him that 1A was a leader in the group and a cool, level headed operator and that any resentment she showed would be expressive of the group feeling. He pointed out that since a strong loyalty between employees existed in this group to bawl out any one operator was interpreted by all others as if they too had been reprimanded. "I also explained to him" Section Chief A said to the counselor, "what you and I have talked about, that that line is so sensitive, that any change, no matter how slight, might

easily affect it at this time and that nothing should be done to change anything in that situation unless absolutely necessary. So as far as I know Department Chief A never called 1A to his desk."

The counselor and Section Chief A had at various times prior to March 17, 1939 discussed the effect of change on individual operators and groups of operators.

Section Chief A in talking about the line under Group Chief A mentioned that it seemed to be functioning in an efficient manner and that there now appeared to be less talking. He felt that all the girls should have realized that they were not to talk as two of them had previously been warned, including Inspector 1A. "As supervisors," continued Section Chief A, "we seldom point out to the operators that they may be talking too much. We run into difficulty when Division Chief A sees operators talking and then asks us if we have notified them that they talk too much. We ran into the same situation during layoff period. We had never told an operator that she was 'just average' because we believed that as long as operators were doing a 'good' job there was no need to tell them that they were not exceptional. As a result many operators were very much unprepared when notified of their layoff. That made it difficult for us. Now we have the same situation with 'talking' in relationship to our supervisors. Division Chief A can really put us on the spot when we have to tell him we have not warned the operators. I have been wondering how to reprimand the operators so that it won't affect their morale. All of the supervisors are thinking about this now."

The counselor questioned Section Chief A about Division Chief A's sentiments in regard to "talking" in the past. Had he expressed any comments at any other time relating to this subject?

Section Chief A recalled a report to which he had contributed that Division Chief A had sent to New York. In it a long part had been devoted to personnel relationships stating that the supervisors encouraged the operators to talk and to feel relaxed. He added that it was pointed out in the same paper, that considerable laxness prevailed, but at the same time, the output did not seem to be affected. Section Chief A wondered if perhaps they were not putting too much emphasis on "talking" now and if in talking to Division Chief A some of these facts could not be mentioned.

May 8, 1939

Department Chief A in talking with the counselor said that operator 3B had perhaps been misguided, that he was not vindictive in any way and wanted to give her another chance. He added that she had been placed on another job where she was proving to be very efficient.

Conclusions

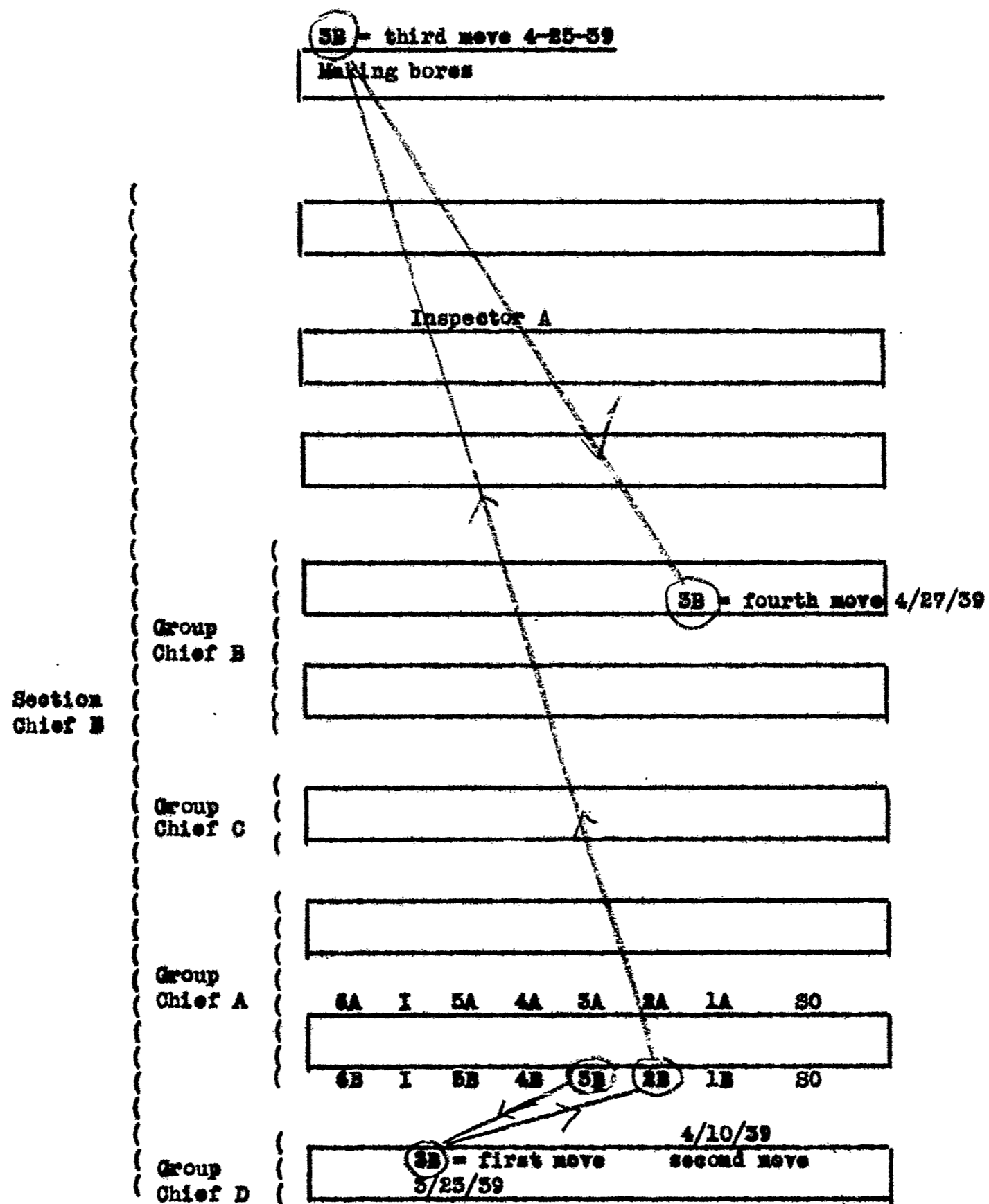
1. The attention of higher Management when in direct contact with the shop tends to focus, under certain conditions, on the manifest activity of employees and from very brief observations value judgments as hastily formed.
 - 1.1 When a major change is introduced or abnormal demands are being made of a situation, this kind of attention seems to occur with increasing frequency.
2. The behavior and thinking of subordinate supervisors may be completely altered, regardless of their real sentiments, through the influence of a high authority. Employee habits, etc., which had formerly been insignificant become important and vice versa.
3. To win the approval of higher level supervisors, orders may be carried out explicitly even though they conflict with known facts and sentiments.
4. Action taken following the above stimuli may lead to impulsive decisions so that both action and response may be highly emotional. Eventually, many more people are thrown out of equilibrium by a specific form of action than was originally intended.
5. In the kind of situation described, the counselor may, if well informed and aware of the history leading up to any problem, contribute a great deal toward -
 - 5.1 Delaying action until sufficient deliberation has been exercised.

- 5.2 ~~Eliminating~~ emotion.
 - 5.3 Placing current situations in context for those involved.
 - 5.4 Promoting interaction between people which is constructive and directed at facts.
 - 5.5 Encouraging lower level supervisors to resist criticism not in accord with their sentiments and experience. This depends, of course, upon their relationship with higher supervisors and whether or not their positions would be strengthened by resisting.
6. The direction in which the counselor may be taken in some problems is almost unpredictable. The time factor is also a difficult one to estimate; in this case the counselor had to make a number of contacts over a seven week period.

PLD:DDD:MB

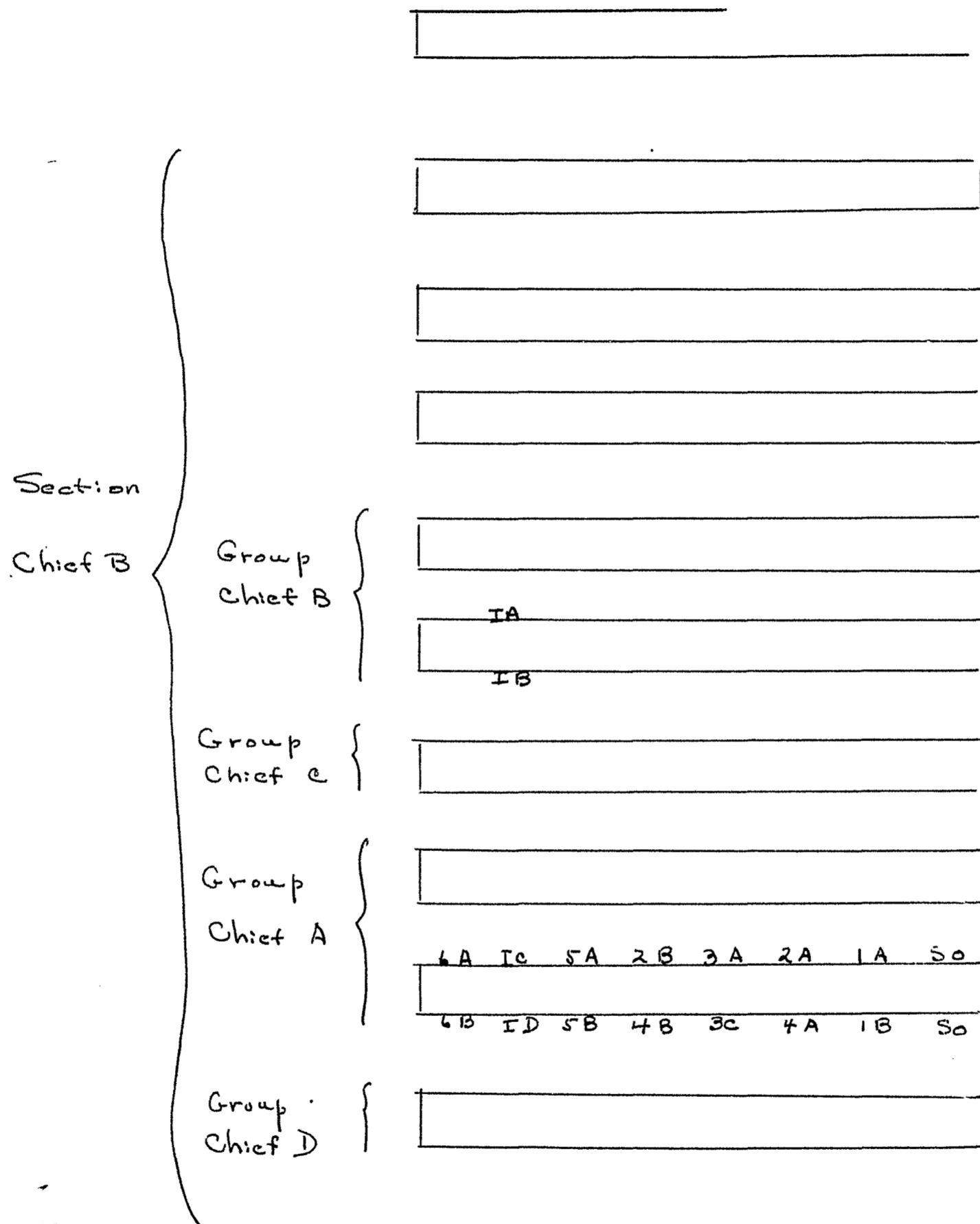
5/23/39

CHAPT I



Section Chief C = Former Sub-Dept. Chief over above section.
 Section Chief A = " Section " " " "

CHART II



Section Chief C: Former Sub. Dept. Chief over above Section
 Section Chief A: Former Section Chief over above Section