

And on the side of the unions there is coming an increased recognition of the importance of developing through the economical use of both material and human energies the production standards written into union agreements, and the employment of engineers by unions to help promote efficiency in the shop.

For both of these developments Frederick W. Taylor was in a measure responsible. He was the prophet of efficiency. More than anyone else he taught the American people the value of economy in production. In an age that has been profoundly influenced by his teachings there can be no question of the extension of that influence to the leaders of organized labor, and as a matter of fact it has gone beyond all possibility of measurement. Even Lenin was so impressed that he advocated the adoption of the Taylor System in the factories of Soviet Russia. On the other hand, Taylor was the prophet of a new sort of responsibility of management. Those managers and engineers who have followed his principles to their logical conclusions have found that management to be successful must meet the needs of the workers, and in the endeavor to do that they have found that labor must be consulted.

Reprint

The Momentum of Taylorism¹

By Stuart Chase²

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Frederick W. Taylor died in 1915, a discouraged man. After the flare of public interest in 1911 and 1912, his work had retreated to its more normal obscurity, while labor was mobilizing for a massed attack on the new and hated methodology. The outlook for making management a genuine science was dismal enough. Had he lived another three years he would have seen the curve of his technique take a dizzying rush upward, and scientific management the talk and the aim—though not always the practice—of war production. And he would have seen the knowledge roll over Europe, until even Moscow listened while Lenin declared in 1918—"We must introduce the study and teaching of the new Taylor System." The impetus gained in the War has never been lost. The technique goes marching on, and that extraordinary man, who discovered that the most efficient life of a cutting tool was twenty minutes, may rest easy in his grave. He is secure among the immortals.

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Mr. Hunt has gathered together a series of papers dealing with the course of the onward march. They are impressive, but in the mass they give the feeling of a front cut deep with salients. Perhaps this is as it should be. But one wishes somehow that Mr. Hunt had taken the learned monographs, digested them in the juices of his own mind, and given us an account more compounded and unified.

To me it seems that two profoundly important developments have come out of Taylor's work from where he left it at his death: the standardization movement with its bearing on industrial waste; and a new and more intelligent approach in dealing with labor. Mr. Hoover contributes a brief review of the former; Part IV is more or less concerned with the latter, carrying contributions by Robert G. Valentine, Meyer Jacobstein, William R. Leiserson, E. A. Filene and others. But I miss the strong relief into which, it seems to me, these two developments should be thrown. Meanwhile the high-powered executive who has a really scientific—rather than the more common romantic—regard for his business may be enormously stified by a series of brain-cracking articles on master budgets, what to do in a buyer's market, the development of cost accounting as an aid to scientific management, and executive control generally.

I wish there was more about standardization. Hating as I do standardization in habits of thought, in dress, in amusement, in literature, I see unlimited opportunities for reducing industrial waste in standardizing intermediary products and processes—screw threads, paper sizes, axes and nails, containers, house paint . . . While, before standardization of quality—shoes that would wear, scissors that would cut, fittings that would last—one stands as it were on the brink of Utopia. Imagine, if you can, a world where the goods that you bought were made to a tested and guaranteed standard, and the national advertiser could blab his head off without effect upon any intelligent purchaser! Perhaps—impious and blasphemous thought!—in such a world there would be no need for the national advertiser at all. Standardization, says Mr. Whitney of the American Engineering Standards Committee—philosopher and artist as well as engineer—standardization intelligently applied provides a technique for a great release of the human spirit. It can get the humdrum work of the world done with a minimum effort and waste, leaving an increasing margin of time for creation, for investigation, or for dreaming in the sun. These aesthetes who roll their eyes to heaven whenever Ford is mentioned have failed—quite signally failed—to appraise their world.

Then there is labor. From the bitterest sort of opposition to Taylor and all his works, organized labor, where it is not indifferent, is experimenting with schemes of one kind and another involving production standards, joint management over certain industrial functions and processes, scientific routing and wage setting. The garment trades, the machinists, many miners and railroad workers have learned that there can be no increase in real wages until industrial waste is checked . . .

Yes, this is a good book, a stimulating book, but with the highest respect to all the learned contributors, I wish Mr. Hunt had written it himself, and so appraised its wider social implications with a more compelling unity.

Reviews

Practical Foremanship, by Glenn Lion Gardiner, McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1925, pp. 11, 183. (658.31243.)

The great world war and its labor problems, as much as any other one factor, focused the spotlight of attention on the foreman and his role in industrial management. Formerly looked upon as an obscure minor executive, he was after the war considered and referred to as the "key man," the representative of management, the connecting link between management and the worker.

The new importance attached to his work and his new status gave rise to extensive analyses of the foreman and his job, and it was found in the light of these changed conditions that his industrial education had been sadly neglected. As a result there appeared, very shortly after, a flood of foremanship courses and literature, ranging from the best to the most mediocre.

Gardiner's "Practical Foremanship" represents the results of a large university's¹ effort in carrying its extension work to industry and serves as a basis for its class discussions. It is written in a readable, non-technical style, and dealing as it does with the fundamentals of good foremanship, is of necessity elementary in its nature.

General manufacturing activities, such as employment, placement, training, planning, safety work, wage payment, inspection, and production, on any one of which volumes have been written, are well covered both as activities and responsibilities of foremen and as responsibilities of special centralized departments. It is regrettable that space did not permit the inclusion of functional foremanship as advocated by Frederick W. Taylor.

The chapters dealing with the keystone of all good foremanship, the art of handling men, and the cultivation of industrial good will are most interesting, presenting as they do homely, well-known truths and rules of action which any foreman would do well to use as a basis for introspection.

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Sharing Management with the Workers. By Ben M. Selekman, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1924, pp. xiv, 133. (658.3151).

This book is a case report of a single experiment in sharing management with the workers. The case is well suited for study. The Wappingers Falls Bleachery, situated in a small "company town," employing 600 operatives, launched forth in 1918, almost without preliminary steps, upon a striking experiment in cooperative management. One representative of the employees and another of the town were added to the board of directors. Full control of plant policies, apparently even to the election of major executives, was delegated to a joint board, one-half chosen

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by the employees. Housing and similar community policies were placed in the hands of an employees' committee. And with this responsibility the right to one-half of the new profits was transferred to the employees to be used partly as an unemployment and sickness insurance reserve, and partly as direct extra remuneration. The apparent fullness of these measures, however, was abridged by reservations. The directors retained unqualified power to annul the entire plan. The action of the employees' committee was made subject to the review of the joint board and to its sole right of appropriation. Net profits were to be computed only after the payment of a 5 per cent dividend. Moreover, the unrestricted right of the foremen to "hire and fire," which was left unchanged by the plan, contrasts with its more democratic provisions.

Such an experiment obviously could not (as what experiment can?) form a safe pattern for facsimile repetition elsewhere. But it provides a case of unusual interest and suggestive value. Unfortunately, the author tells only the story of the first three years of this experiment now over six years old. He thus leaves wholly unanswered the vital question of how these conditions and measures have worked out in the second half of the time the plan has been in operation when greater remoteness from the initial impetus and novelty have rendered its enduring aspects more apparent. The spectre of the half of the story still untold haunts whatever facts are given and saps their vitality. Certainly with only one-half the evidence in, no one has a right to appraise any part of the experiment.

The general outlines of the experiment during the limited period covered by the report, the conditions under which it was made, the steps taken, the results that followed are simply and clearly set forth. But to have such a case report of full value as an aid in forming an opinion as to steps to be taken elsewhere, it is necessary to have more than a clear description of the conditions, the measures and the results: it is necessary to have the extent to which the various forces operated in bringing about these results appraised by the investigator. For this interplay of forces is vital, and the first-hand investigator alone can judge of the relative part played by each. What effect did the abruptness of the change have upon the results? In what way did the size of the plant, its isolation, the personality of the dominant director who almost alone carried the plan into operation, etc., affect the situation? In respect to such questions also, the full story does not seem to have been told.

Today, the wide extent of the effort to improve managerial policies, both in the wisdom and fullness of execution, through arriving at them by the common consent of those in whose hands as executives and operatives their execution rests, renders every accurate investigation and report of the experiments already made a contribution to management. The accuracy of this investigation merits a supplement providing an equally accurate statement of the second half of the experiment and more incisive analysis of the interplay of forces, especially in their relation to the problems of plant management.

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