

Conference of the International Industrial Relations Association
Schloss Elmau, Oberbayern, Germany
June 26 to July 3, 1929

AT THE Conference of the International Industrial Relations Association (I.R.I.) held at Schloss Elmau, Oberbayern, Germany, from June 26 to July 3 and attended by sixty-three representatives from fifteen different countries, the subject of discussion was the methods of promoting satisfactory human relations in industry which is rationalized or scientifically managed. A report issued by the Association states: "Every section of industrial thought and experience was included—production, managers, research workers, employers and employees. These were brought together by their keen interest in the world-wide need for raising the standard of life by increased production and wider distribution of goods and services. "Scientific management was described in the widest possible sense, based on the best practice in Europe and the United States, as that management which would best co-ordinate all activities in the workshops and in an industry to the end of producing goods and services with the least waste of human effort and material resources. The evils which experience showed have followed from various systems of intensifying labor and increasing speed were shown to be due to misunderstood and misapplied methods of management, which are not truly scientific. It was pointed out that the economic crisis in which all industrial countries are more or less involved can only be met by a fuller application of science to industrial problems."

The officers and members of the Executive Committee of the Association which has its headquarters at The Hague, Holland, are: President C. H. van der Leeuw, Partner Messrs. de Erven de Wed. J. van Nelle, Rotterdam; Vice-Presidents: Miss Mary van Kleck, Russell Sage Foundation, New York; Erich Lubbe, Vorsitzender des Gesamtbetriebsrates der Siemens-Schuckert A.-G. Berlin; Miss M. L. Fledderus, The Hague; Treasurer, Dr. Meyer zu Schwabedissen, Direktor in Fa. Bertelsmann & Niemann, Bielefeld, Germany; Members of the Executive Committee: Dr. A. Correggiari, Consultant on Industrial Relations, Fabbrica Italiana Magneti Marelli, Milano; Hugo von Haan, International Management Institute, Geneva; Dr. George H.

Miles, National Institute of Industrial Psychology, London; Spencer Miller, Jr., Workers' Education Bureau of America, New York, and Dr. Frieda Wunderlich, Bureau für Sozialpolitik, Berlin.

Industrial and Scientific Exposition
Liege, Belgium, 1930

In 1930 Belgium will celebrate the centenary of its independence by important industrial exhibitions.

The Industrial and Scientific Exposition will be held at Liege and the sponsoring committee has had the happy idea of setting aside a special place for the problems of scientific management, personnel management, planning and the selection and direction of workers. Demonstrations of the progress which has been made in methods of research, psychological testing, scientific organization of work, personnel management and planning will be made possible by the collaboration of manufacturers and private laboratories.

Information concerning the exposition may be had by addressing Mr. Lucien Wellens, Secretary of Class 94, D. 11, rue de Seraing, Liege, Belgium.

Back Numbers Wanted

The following numbers of the Bulletin, which are out of print, are in demand for completing sets for libraries, etc. We shall be glad to pay fifty cents each for any or all of these numbers:

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- Volume VII, No. 4
- Volume XI, No. 1
- Volume XII, Nos. 4, 6

Reviews

Labor Management. By J. D. Hackett, D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1929, pages 681.

Mr. Hackett's contribution is a summarization and integration of material which is in the main familiar to one who has been in touch with the literature in the general field of personnel administration or industrial relations

appearing in the business periodicals and personnel books of the past decade.

The volume is handy for reference because its scope is broad; it includes much significant data, and it is endowed with practical common sense throughout.

HERMAN FELDMAN¹

Human Relations in Railroadroading. By Hayes Robbins, General Publishing Company, New York, 1927, pages xvi, 143.

"Human Relations in Railroadroading" is the second book to appear within recent years, devoted specifically to the personnel problem of the railway industry. Thus far this particular industry seems to be the only one whose human relations have been subject to special study and treatment in books, which fact further testifies to the peculiar significance of the human element in this industry.

The author of "Human Relations in Railroadroading" seems to approach his subject more subjectively than do most writers of similar treatises. He draws his illustrations from experiences within the last four years "on a single transportation system, because, and only because, of the writer's close acquaintance with the circumstances." Frankly, it is to be regretted that Mr. Robbins, whose style of writing is engaging and who is not unsympathetic to the human element in industry, did not take cognizance of the other developments in human relations to be found on so many of the railroads of the country. Unfortunately, the railroad with which Mr. Robbins has had most to do is apparently not one which has profited by the many reforms in human relations which Mr. Robbins expounds, to judge, among other things, from a special report recently made by the Public Service Commission of New Hampshire to the State Legislature. The fact that this is so testifies to the one outstanding weakness underlying the program advocated by Mr. Robbins for improving human relations on our railroads. Apparently, the chosen representatives of the railroad's employees and their unions in no instance were made a party to the reforms which the management tried to inaugurate. In an industry whose employees are so well organized, where the unions are so powerful a factor in the lives of the men, attempted improvements in the human relations which ignore these unions will sooner or later get into difficulties. This management went out of business and with it virtually all that Mr. Robbins tells us about so entertainingly.

Many of the betterments which he describes are desirable. No one can dispute the value of education either to the worker or his foreman, and means for mobilizing suggestions are likewise possible of benefit to both employee and management. But to the great majority of railroad men the idea of buying a worker's ideas at prices ranging from \$2.50 to \$40.00 per set is repugnant. In the first place, railroad employees as well as realistically minded railroad officers know full well that suggestions cannot be intelligently

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valuated, everything considered. In the second place, if the incentive for making suggestions is nothing better than a petty individual financial reward, it will have but a very narrow appeal.

What Mr. Robbins has to say about "employees" or "company magazines" emphasizes their limitations as devices for influencing human relations on our railroads. Stabilization of employment in the railway industry, in the last analysis, is the heart of the railway morale problem, yet Mr. Robbins has comparatively little to say on this subject as compared with "insurance and pensions."

In speaking of the responsibility of management in respect to the "personnel function," i.e., handling of labor matters, Mr. Robbins rightly cautions against the division of responsibility as between a "personnel officer" or "personnel department" and those charged with the actual responsibility of supervision. If a personnel agency is set up on a railroad it is better if it functions along advisory lines to the chief executive rather than that it attempt to handle or dominate labor relations. For after all, the chief executive cannot delegate or escape his eventual responsibility in these matters.

In conclusion Mr. Robbins mentions the desirability of a "service for reference and exchange" of information and experience concerning railroad personnel matters. He points to the activities of the American Railway Association along technical lines as an example of what might be done along personnel lines. The last words of the book, however, are devoted to "Panaceas and Possibilities." Here Mr. Robbins takes stock of the various general labor relations prevailing in the industry today, especially in the light of the Railway Labor Act. In addition to making the point that "morale suffers less from the occasional big jolt than from sand in the bearings of every-day operation," Mr. Robbins also states that the real problem on our railroads centers about wages. And here, he goes on to say, "the immediate interests of managements and men stand opposed." Of recent years, however, the irreconcilability of the interests of men and managements, when it comes to wages, has somewhat modified in the face of the realization that purchasing power and producing power are correlated through the wage income of the mass of the country's workers. The practical problem is when best to adjust wages and by how much. Mr. Robbins' final suggestion to meet this problem is perhaps the best contribution his book makes to human relations in railroadroading. He believes that "the next objective in industrial relations is something quite beyond rules and schedules and meeting grievance committees: nothing less than the all-round participation of informed and intelligent men with a share and a sense of responsibility to the enterprise in which their own welfare is staked and, through it, to the public it serves."

It is significant that the standard organizations of railroad labor, especially those of the maintenance trades, are definitely committed to the very attitude advocated by Mr. Robbins.

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