

## Carl G. Barth on Scientific Management

Testimony Before the Special Committee of the House of Representatives  
January 31 and February 1, 1912.

**I**N THE June-August, 1926, issue of the BULLETIN the Taylor Society reprinted in full the testimony of Frederick W. Taylor before the special Committee of the House of Representatives in 1912. This made available to our readers a rare and important document of scientific management. Some of our readers who had been concerned with the hearings of the committee suggested that the testimony of Carl G. Barth ranks with that of Taylor in importance, and expressed the hope that some day we could publish it. We are pleased to be able to satisfy this desire.

Asked if he desired to make any comment on the testimony in the light of subsequent experience, Mr. Barth wrote us recently:

"I have reread my testimony of 1912 and find that I have but little to say about it, and I shall leave it to you to extract the few lines that may appeal to you as worth while publishing in connection with the republishing of the testimony in the BULLETIN."

"I realize that I evidently felt highly indignant over the whole investigation, which I considered an unwarranted interference with and reflection on the excellent and beneficial work I am still perfectly willing to admit that I was engaged in at that time, and into which I enthusiastically threw all the energy that was in me."

"I realize that, in my efforts to convince the members of the committee that I was qualified by training and experience to express opinions deserving of their respect and consideration, I must have felt very much on the defensive, and that I was thereby led to make many of my statements in a manner that savored of conceit."

"But I see nothing in my testimony that looks different to me today from what it did then, while if the investigation had taken place two or three years later

Reprint of public document *Hearings Before Special Committee of the House of Representatives to Investigate the Taylor and Other Systems of Shop Management Under Authority of H. R. 90*, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1912, Vol. III, pp. 1538-1583. The members of the Committee were Hon. William B. Wilson, Pennsylvania, Chairman; Hon. William C. Redfield, New York; Hon. John Q. Tilson, Connecticut.

I could have cited far more glaring examples of systematic loafing by workmen than I did in my testimony, all however, chargeable to poor management rather than to a desire to loaf for its own sake.

"I realize that, at least the chairman of the committee was not able to fully believe that, whatever difficulties I had encountered on the part of workmen, they had been so insignificant compared with difficulties with foremen and high-ups, that they had left no impression on me as a thing to be reckoned with. All my later experiences did not alter this impression, though I must admit that it might have been different had I ever been engaged to reorganize a union shop. All my work has happened to be in open shops, though often with a fair percentage of union men among the workers."

"While my own testimony took only a few hours, I spent a whole week listening to the testimony of other witnesses, many of them union leaders, and it certainly was an unpleasant revelation to learn the bitterness which most of the latter in their ignorance of the true nature and objective of our efforts and activities, felt toward Taylor and his disciples."

"All the more gratifying is it, therefore, that so many of them have since seen the light and have come to realize that only through ever-increasing efficient production can the industrial workers of America hope to maintain their higher standard of living against the inevitable strong competition of other industrial nations." [EDITOR]

### Testimony of Carl G. Barth

January 31, 1912

The Chairman: Mr. Barth, please state for the record your name and address and your occupation or business.

Mr. Barth: My name is Carl G. Barth; residence, 1937 North Thirty-third Street, Philadelphia, Pa. I call myself a consulting engineer for lack of a more significant term to express my activity.

The Chairman: Mr. Barth, please state for the information of the committee such facts relative to

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scientific management as you may deem of value to the committee.

Mr. Barth: In the first place, let me say that I personally do not use the term scientific management a great deal. I introduce, or help to develop, in machine shops preferably, what I call a Taylor system of shop management.

The Chairman: Then, Mr. Barth, we would like to have you state for the information of the committee what you consider to be the essential features of the Taylor system of shop management and its effect upon production and upon the workmen.

Mr. Barth: I will state that by reading a paragraph from my most recent report on my work at the Watertown Arsenal. This I was asked to make in connection with the strike that led to the more hasty sitting of this committee. I say here:

"The main object of the Taylor System, as I am working for it"—I do not care what the other fellow is working for—"is to so eliminate waste of time, materials, and human energy, and so to utilize the machinery of a plant that a greatly increased production will result in lower cost of production to the owners and, on the other hand, in increased wages to the employees."

That is almost Mr. Taylor's way of putting it, only slightly modified in words of my own.

"And right here I can not refrain from 'letting out of the bag' that I am personally only directly interested in the latter part of this—namely, the increased wages of the employees—and in the former merely because, without bringing this about, the latter can not be brought about. Though I will not deny that I am also intensely interested in the introduction of this system, merely as an outlet for my natural energy and love of work for its own sake."

I want to emphasize that. I do not propose to spend one second of my time to increase the profits of any manufacturer for his own sake. My efforts have been, for the 12 years I have been in this system, to do what little I can do to further the interests of the working classes of society and help to bring them more nearly to the material level I have personally enjoyed for several years past, a level which is higher than I believe myself entitled to; and if there is anything I do that anybody else can point out as not tending that way, I want to give it up at once.

I am satisfied to stay on that level and not to try to get higher because of my personal conception of what success in this life consists in. Most people look upon success and successful men as men who live on a high plane of society and men who make lots of money. I do not care to make any more money than necessary to feed myself and my family and lay by a little, which I must, because you will not pension me, no matter how hard I work. And so I have to lay by for a possible cold day. I might thus get a stroke of paralysis, for instance, almost any time, for I have been burning the candle at both ends, according to the say-so of my physician, and it will not burn forever. I would not work this way if it were not that I believe that I am working in the general direction of human progress and helping along my fellow man. I have been doing that since before I came to this country as a young man 31 years ago.

Mr. Redfield: What have you been doing those 31 years?

Mr. Barth: Working like the devil.

Mr. Redfield: At what?

Mr. Barth: All sorts of things.

Mr. Redfield: Tell us what.

Mr. Barth: You would like to have my life history?

Mr. Redfield: Without going into much detail, we should like to have, Mr. Barth—perhaps I might remind you of the fact that this record is to be read, and people who read it want to know what your experience has been, so that they may judge of the proper value to place upon your statements. Tell us what your experience has been in factories as a workman, or employer, or employee, in any way, which will show how thoroughly you understand this matter about which we are asking you.

Mr. Barth: I received in my native country, Norway, what you in this country consider a high-school education before I entered a small technical school run under the auspices of the navy department, when I was only 15½ years old. I was the youngest pupil ever admitted. It was only a short and purely theoretical course of a year and a half. I graduated with higher honors than anybody ever had done before in that school. It was a course that was absolutely stripped of the numerous fool things with which we spoil technical education in this country. I thank the Lord that I got my education in the old country and not here, and I am