

ever, as to whether it would have changed very much the attitude of the majority of the workers toward the long day; for, as a matter of fact—and we come now to the main reason for the continuance in the steel industry of the 12-hour day—the steel industry has for many years recruited its workers from a class of men to whom this combination of long sluggish hours, with rather high weekly earnings, has had a peculiar charm; and that is the class of newly arrived foreign-born workers.

The typical steel worker,¹ whose psychology has acquiesced in and in many ways encouraged the continuance of the 12-hour day in the steel industry, is an unmarried man without a real home in this country whose one idea is to earn just as much money as possible and then go back to Europe. Or he may be married, but working to bring over his family. Men of this special type would sometimes be willing to work four extra hours for almost nothing. Outside is alien America; inside is the one environment to which they have become in a measure accustomed. Outside are the squalid streets and often wretched dwellings, and nothing special to do except to dissipate the money that one is trying to save; inside are one's fellow workmen and companions.

In some of the plants lounging rooms are provided (usually a shanty, but a place where the men can congregate); and in some there are classes in English during the men's leisure time. One smokes, talks, reads if he is able to or cares to. On the night shift everybody sleeps a part of the time, from the boss down—though it is not officially supposed to be this way—and there is a good deal of sleeping in the daytime. Sometimes the day shift is only 11 hours long, the

rates than these were paid in some localities (mainly in eastern Pennsylvania), well on towards half of the steel workers in the country appear to have been paid at precisely the 40 and 69 cent rates. This means that the lowest-paid 12-hour man (except in plants which have been below standard) has received \$6.44 a day, \$193.20 for a 30-day month, and \$2,318.40 for a 360-day year. This may not be more than a man ought to earn, but it is certainly more than unskilled labor is paid in most industries. It seems evident, therefore, that the steel worker is actually paid high wages for his long hours. Since this paper was presented (December 3) slack work and falling prices have brought wage reductions in various sections of the steel industry, so that rates as low as 30 cents an hour are reported in at least one instance. (More commonly, however, the new rate is 35 cents or 40 cents.) The time-and-a-half rate for overtime has also been abandoned in places. Up to the present moment no general reduction has, however, been reported for the industry's largest employer.

¹In presenting the partially compensating features of the 12-hour day in this paragraph and those which immediately follow, I do not wish to be understood as representing that the steel worker would actually choose the shop in preference to being at entire liberty outside. Here and there an

men feeling that if they are going to work at 6 P. M. anyway, they might as well go at 5, thus making a night shift of 13 hours but a day shift of only 11.

In fact there has grown up among these foreigners, and among the Americans as well, a special mode of existence in which the shop rather than the home, or other outside institution, has become to a large extent the center of living. Just as sailors have learned to spend their lives at sea, miners to spend much of theirs under ground, and traveling salesmen and engineers to spend much of theirs away from home, so the steel worker spends his life in the shop. And while to those of us in other callings this might seem like the last thing that we should want to do, to the steel worker himself this special mode of life is sometimes not without its attractions; and—especially after he graduates into an office—it may become a sort of glorious thing.

This, of course, is the idealistic side of the picture. Not all of the steel workers are of one mind as to the desirability of this manner of life. Nor is it all so rosy or satisfactory. But this picture is a true one to a very considerable extent, and keeping in mind always this great flood of foreigners whom love of money (or some other ambitious motive) has torn away from their old cultural attachments in Europe and brought across the sea, it helps to explain the often repeated statements of steel men that they would be

individual whose hours have been cut down has been known to spend his extra time about the shop; but I should suspect that the number of such individuals has always been extremely small. There would, however, appear to have been a substantial number of men who put relatively small stress on hours and very great stress on pay. Considerable groups of these would balk at a reduction in hours which meant even a few cents reduction in earnings, and very many, indeed, would object to a reduction in hours which deprived them pro rata of their earnings. The eagerness for the earnings which come with long hours has been strongest among the lower paid, partly because this group contains a larger portion of immigrants and partly because the lower paid group has more difficulty in attaining a desired standard of living. The situation has, however, been complicated by the fact that the turn positions which have the long hours are often higher and more desirable than the 10-hour positions and also by the payment of overtime rates for all work over 8 hours. In the latter part of this paper evidence will be referred to which goes to show that with the growing Americanization of the foreigner, the rise in earnings during the war, and the greater thought being given nowadays to the matter of hours, sentiment among all classes has been turning against a 12-hour work day. I do not mean to contradict the findings of careful students of labor conditions who from studies made among the workers found that years ago many steel workers objected strongly to the 12-hour day; for naturally there would be many such. But circumstances, force of habit, and the contrary wishes of other workers seem to have prevented any movement toward shorter hours from gaining substantial headway.

to abolish the 12-hour day but the men are against it.¹

It is possible, though not certain, that the steel industry would have made greater progress towards getting away from the 12-hour day in spite of the situation just described, had it not been for special circumstances in which the industry has found itself for the last few years, the chief of which has been a shortage of labor. During the war, and then again during a period of many months beginning not so very long after the armistice, it was so difficult to get men as to constitute an important factor in keeping steel manufacturers who might otherwise have gone on three shifts from doing so. To some, the shortage of labor may seem altogether an excuse. We know that when a great demand comes on industry, for instance the war itself, it is somehow met. The labor is found somewhere. Ship building and the steel industry itself were greatly expanded during the war, in spite of a scarcity of labor. So it might be thought that had the law or some equally potent force required it, the three-shift system could have been introduced. Probably so. But that the sudden introduction of the three-shift system would have put the steel industry to a considerable hardship is evidenced by the fact that the shortage of labor even without going on three shifts was such as to make necessary unusual measures. Thus in the last year or two there has been a constant stream of Negro and in some places Mexican labor moving into the steel industry. It may be that in the end such a movement will not be a bad thing, but everyone acquainted with the movement of Negro labor to the north during the last year or two knows that for the time being it has raised a serious social and a serious industrial problem. In view of this situation as well as the effect which a more pronounced shortage of labor would have on wage rates, it is not surprising that the bigger steel manufacturers should have hung back from going to the three-shift system under the conditions of the last few years. Probably the shorter day would in the end widen the group of labor to which the steel industry could appeal and in time be its own solution to the problem of labor shortage; but this would not prevent a difficult situation from arising at the outset. Besides the shortage of labor, the shortage of houses

in steel towns has presented another very serious obstacle.

It seems probable that the very largeness of the steel companies may have been another impediment in the way of bringing about any innovation as regards hours. Great bodies move slowly, whereas in an industry allowing more scope for individuality, someone is more likely to venture on an experiment.

A more important factor than the size of the companies, however, would seem to be the fact that the steel industry, more largely, perhaps, than any other industry in the country, has been free from the influence of any sort of labor organization. Individually men in all walks of life are tempted to give up their leisure in order to earn a little more money and raise themselves and their families a little higher in the social scale. But when men are organized in unions (or even shop committees) they come to feel that if they all agree to work a standard day of reasonable length all will be as well off relative to one another as before, and the larger measure of leisure will more than counterbalance the reduction in weekly earnings, if such there be. The unions are not always able to keep their individual members from striving for overtime and greater earnings at the expense of hours, but the union movement has unquestionably exercised a good deal of pressure towards the shorter day.

Now the steel industry has for the most part escaped the unions. There is only one bona fide union in the steel industry, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, and except in a very few plants this union had up to the time of the strike confined itself almost altogether to puddling furnaces and sheet mills. A few isolated blast furnaces were organized some years ago and in 1911 put under the jurisdiction of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers with headquarters in Denver, but the number of organized furnaces remained exceedingly small. Last year a large proportion of the steel workers were for the first time in many years suddenly brought together into a union movement; but after a serious strike, the movement almost completely broke up.

That the long acquiescence of the steel workers in the 12-hour day bears some relationship to this lack of unionism would seem to be indicated by the fact that until recently almost all of the tendencies towards shorter hours in the steel industry have been in those very few branches, or in those almost in-

¹But see again Note 1, p. 6.