

INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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the indirect results have been far-reaching. During the two decades between the world wars, this idea had "time and space to work and spread"; so that the British army, navy, and air force, the civil service, and considerable sections of industry have come to place in the hands of specialists, trained in well-tested psychological procedures, the selection of their personnel and its assignment to the tasks that have to be done. Mountains of research have erupted in a tremendous variety of material. The fullness thereof is an embarrassment; so much so, that even a professor of psychology may throw up his hands with the exclamation: "Of the making of tests there is no end!"



Application to Industry

In England, Dr. Myers's staff organised as the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, has collated what seemed the best of the methods for industrial application. Parallel and more official work has been done by the Industrial Health Research Board, under the general auspices of the Medical Research Council. Since the problem of a given industry or plant are largely specific, a careful study of environing conditions is an essential preliminary. Experience has taught the necessity of obtaining the co-operation of the staff, from general manager to office girl. Gone are the Taylor Methods of earlier days. As engineers, Frederick Taylor, Gantt, the Gilbreths, and others, tried to "buy" a few workers by tempting wagers to do precisely what they were told. Their movements were stop-watched and filmed, the components abstracted, modified, and refitted with a new pattern. Then pressure was applied to all and sundry to perform the work in the synthetic "one best way." With what results, a little story may tell. For a long while a time-study man, armed with a stop-watch, stood by an assembler who averaged 21 7/8 minutes, on each piece. Finally he said, "Now, you can do this job in 17 1-10 minutes, or beat it" (the time). The workman stormed off to the boss and demanded his "time." "Why," said the foreman, "what's the matter?" "Well," barked the assembler, "you know that time-study fellow? He's just told me I can turn out a piece in 17 minutes or get to hell out of here!"

Workers at First Suspicious

Such misunderstandings were apt to be frequent. For the workers were in constant fear lest they be speeded up beyond endurance, their rates cut, or some abridgment of their privileges foisted upon them. Not without reason. In America we saw machine-tenders and price-rate workers going like demons. Their pace would kill the leisurely New Zealander in a jiffy. The system, with some modifications, would appear to have been taken over in Russia. There, the fear of dismissal has been qualified by a variety of other incentives; team spirit,

general approval, patriotic fervour, Marxian dogma—or threat of starvation.

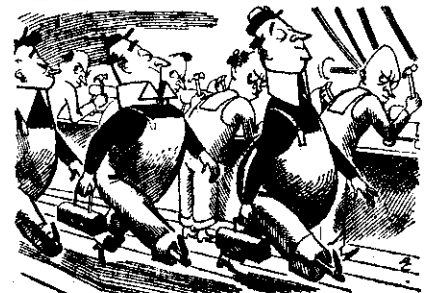
This question of incentives has, in England, been gone into rather carefully, less from the ideological angle than the psychological. One room may have radio; one side be sunnier or better ventilated; one section of the staff may come later, leave earlier, or wear white collars; work may be too monotonous or its periods too long; bosses may play favourites; lighting may be too dull, or too glaring, and so on. The job of the industrial psychologist is to get on to easy terms with both management and workers; encourage them to "get it off their chest"—whatever "it" may be—in confidence, of course; eliminate sources of friction and discontent; help folk grasp their use-

ful place in the scheme of things, so that their energies flow out without let or hindrance, and enable them to express in their work the best in their make-up.

In such ways, the spirit of many an organisation has been transformed. Output goes up. Along with it, up go individual rewards and management profits. The rate of increase has shown wide variations with the circumstances of plant or industry; but in England some such percentage as 20 may express the typical increment. Nothing of this refers to the extraordinary spurts and reactions of war. It suggests what we might do under ordinary conditions in New Zealand.

No Sentiment, No Slave-Driving

In all of this, there is neither sentiment, nor paternalism, nor slave-driving. It is simply a business-like understanding to co-operate for the common good—to "share the gravy" all around. Those who may wish to engage suitable specialist staff, can find it through the Division of Industrial Psychology, or Victoria or Canterbury University Colleges. But a man not over-burdened himself misses most of the fun if he does the job by proxy. A good text book, like Viteles's *Industrial Psychology* would suggest many commonsense ways of making a start. Once a staff perceive that management has given up the attitude of resistance to their demands—with grudging acquiescence under pressure—in favour of initiative toward co-operative enterprise, then the spirit of that staff changes from covert hostility to open enthusiasm: a transformation "devoutly to be wished."



"One section of the staff may leave earlier, or wear white collars . . ."



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