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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ASPECTS OF STABILIZING EMPLOYMENT

The Business Advisory Council of the Department of Commerce has undertaken the preparation of a series of pamphlets on different aspects of stabilization of employment. Under the title of "Toward Steadier Jobs," the seven pamphlets are as follows: (1) Introduction, (2) Preparing the Management Organization, (3) Analyzing the Stabilization Task, (4) Forecasting Sales and Planning Production, (5) Purchasing for Stability, (6) Handling of Personnel, and (7) Relations Within the Industry and the Community.

Industrial Relations Counselors was asked by the committee in charge of the project to prepare Pamphlet No. 6. Our portion of the study has been completed and submitted to the committee, and has been tentatively approved. It and the other pamphlets will be published shortly by the Department of Commerce. Walter White, assistant to the chairman of the Business Advisory Council, has kindly permitted us to distribute the study as an Industrial Relations Memo in advance of publication, on condition that distribution be restricted to our contributor companies, and be held strictly confidential. The text of the IRC study follows.

(Additional copies of this memorandum
are available to contributor companies on request.)

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ASPECTS OF STABILIZING EMPLOYMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this set of pamphlets is to help employers to avoid or reduce laying employees off or putting them on short time. Preceding pamphlets have shown how to attempt to do this by making production more regular. This sixth pamphlet tells how managements, by using some simple procedures and techniques of personnel management, can make employment more regular, even if they cannot get completely steady production. The difficulty of measuring exactly the stability of a business was discussed in Pamphlet No. 1, where it was pointed out that "stable" or "steady" employment may really mean different things in different types of businesses. A record of employment that might be very steady for a machine tool factory would seem very unstable for a bakery. To avoid misunderstanding it is necessary, therefore, to discuss briefly the general idea of steady work.

Stability does not mean stagnation. To provide steady work does not mean that a business must always employ an absolutely constant number of workers for a definite number of hours per week. Few businesses, no matter how well managed, can in fact do so. Some concerns are growing. But even if their total volume of employment is increasing, employment may be called unstable if turnover is excessive. Yet an expanding business may sometimes increase output without increasing employment to the same degree, as a result of increased output per man hour. On the other hand, some businesses are declining—temporarily or even permanently. But employment in those establishments may be called stable if resignations, retirements and deaths reduce the work force at or near the rate of decrease in demand. In May, 1948, for example, three out of every 100 employees in American manufacturing quit, retired or died, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Output in that month could have been decreased 3 per cent without any resulting layoff.

From another point of view steady work does not necessarily mean uninterrupted employment on one type of job nor in one company. An employee of a Maine camp may guide fishermen in the summer and harvest ice from the lake or cut timber in the winter. A bricklayer may get steady employment working for several contractors during the year. Such dovetailing of jobs, through intercompany or community co-operation, is considered in Pamphlet No. 7. The discussion here treats with steady employment only from the point of view of the single firm. For the purposes of this pamphlet, a firm is considered as providing steady work if it can avoid layoffs or excessive short-time employment because of lack of work. Many firms can do this—in varying degrees—by a planned program of transfer of workers from job to job within the plant and by the use of a reasonably flexible work week.

As has been emphasized in the preceding pamphlets, there can be no standard prescription for regularization of employment. Each firm has its unique problems depending on its size, products, manufacturing methods, market, diversity of jobs, caliber of personnel and many other factors. Still, every employer should be able to find and apply some combination of

the elements of the basic personnel program discussed here with the goal of affording in his own plant the greatest degree of constant employment for every employee who wishes to work and who observes the established terms of employment. The substance of this pamphlet, out of which each employer must compound his own prescription for a stabilization plan, can be summarized briefly as follows:

1. Tool up for planned employment, by establishing
 - a. Prospective work schedules
 - b. Job descriptions
 - c. Adequate personnel records, especially
 - (1) Qualification records for each employee
 - (2) Lists of individuals qualified for specified jobs
2. Revamp employment and transfer procedures, to
 - a. Co-ordinate employment and transfers in such a way that hiring, firings and layoffs are minimized
 - b. Hire for versatility, looking for
 - (1) Varied abilities
 - (2) Willingness to transfer to other work as required
 - c. Review and try to surmount any barriers to planned employment that seniority agreements or practices may create
3. Train for versatility, and in particular
 - a. Determine training needs in advance
 - b. Use appropriate training methods
4. Avoid or delay layoffs and temporary hirings, and to that end
 - a. Adjust the work week to production levels
 - b. Encourage vacations and leaves of absence in slack periods
 - c. Establish groups from which emergency needs for personnel may be filled
5. Develop a wage structure and wage administration methods that will facilitate employee acceptance of the necessary transfers
6. Enlist supervisors' support of the plan
 - a. Explain to them the purpose and methods of the plan
 - b. Free them of routines so they are able to carry the heavier burden entailed in such a plan
7. Seek the co-operation of employees and unions, taking steps to
 - a. Eliminate possible causes of strife
 - b. Work toward increased individual productivity
 - c. Establish guiding policies for handling all employee relations matters.

II. RECORDS

To plan a program for making available the steadiest possible work for the largest number of employees, a management must be equipped with the following three types of information:

1. Work schedules, showing the number of employees needed in the different kinds of jobs in the plant, for given future periods,
2. Job descriptions, setting forth the requirements and duties of the various jobs involved,
3. Adequate personnel records.

A. DETERMINE PROBABLE WORK SCHEDULES

In planning steady production, a management must prepare a production schedule. As has been discussed in the third pamphlet in this series, such a schedule is in terms of dozens or tons or units or yards. For use in planning for steady employment, such a forecast of production needs to be translated into numbers and kinds of specific jobs.

A work schedule indicates only what kinds of jobs will be required, when they will be required, and for how long. It does not show where needed workers are to come from, or who they are. It will tell little about the individual requirements of different jobs. Study of the schedule will, however, show the kinds of transfers that are needed, the degree of versatility and types of secondary skills to be developed by planned training, and the number of openings that should be filled on a long-term basis, by new hirings. It will also show the periods at which maintenance and overhaul schedules can best be dovetailed with production work. A future work schedule makes for steadier jobs because it can be used, among other things, to point out the inadvisability of hiring for short-term employment, when such requirements can be met by transfer from other work, and to reveal the need for training to meet future schedules and the time available for such training.

A manager or superintendent can develop a work schedule from a production schedule, roughly and arbitrarily, on the basis of his own knowledge of how many employees are needed to meet a given level of production. He can, on the other hand, break down the production schedule into its component orders, compute for each order the man hours required on each operation, and then add up for each operation the total man hours required for all the orders involved. In some types of industries, such as textile mills, the work schedule is determined almost automatically by the amount of equipment to be operated during the period. In other kinds of industry—retailing, for example—total expected volume may well be the important factor.

A projected work schedule should meet the following objectives:

1. Cover all jobs and departments among which transfers can reasonably be made. In some companies, for the purpose of stabilization, there may be two or more concurrent work schedules, each covering groups of jobs within which employee mobility is possible, but among which there is very little likelihood of movement from a job in one group to a job in another. In some companies, for example, where men and women do not perform reasonably similar jobs, the women's jobs might be shown together on one work schedule, regardless of department.
2. Specify the number of employees needed in each work period ahead, on the basis of either definite or estimated production requirements.
3. List all jobs by level of pay or skill.
4. Allow for vacations, leaves of absence and disability absences.
5. Indicate probable losses of personnel by resignations, discharges, deaths, etc.

Like any budget, such a schedule should be constantly watched and promptly revised as new orders are received. In many organizations, a sound approach would be to have at least a monthly review, with definite plans for the first three months, by weeks and by months, expected plans for the second quarter, probable levels for the third, and tentative proposals for the fourth period ahead.

B. UTILIZE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

To aid in the most effective movement of employees from job to job, so that there are no layoffs, it is desirable to know precisely what each job requires. A concise factual statement of the duties, responsibilities, requirements and conditions of a job is usually called a job description. If it includes statements of the abilities and characteristics sought in candidates for the job, it is often termed a job specification. Although sometimes developed in connection with a job evaluation program, job descriptions or specifications can be valuable otherwise, as aids in selecting new employees and in planning transfers.

To be of greatest use, a job description or specification should emphasize the requirements of the job, not the individual abilities of the man or the procedures of the tasks which make up his job.¹ An interviewer

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A job description should cover these points:

- a. The standard title by which the job is known, as well as the alternative or traditional terms used,
- b. The department or departments where the job exists,
- c. A brief statement of the general function of the job,
- d. More specific statements of the duties which occur regularly, periodically or occasionally,
- e. Working conditions peculiar to the job,

(Continued)

can use job descriptions to help in matching the requirements of the jobs with the qualifications of the individual applicants for employment. Such a record also is the basis for developing a transfer plan, under which those employees who are best qualified to be trained for specific future openings are selected, and for planning a training program and schedule which will allow the transfer of each employee with a minimum of unproductive time.

Job descriptions for any purpose must be kept up to date. The best practice is to require, at least annually, review of all job descriptions with the immediate supervisors concerned. In this way the information used in working out employment, transfer and training problems is kept reasonably accurate and up to date.

C. KEEP ADEQUATE PERSONNEL RECORDS

In addition to schedules of probable future job situations, and accurate job descriptions, it is necessary to have available information about each employee, if steady employment is to be given by means of transfer from job to job. Personnel records, to be useful in stabilizing employment, should be as much guides for future action as histories of what has happened.

1. Qualification Records for Each Employee

A decline in the volume of a particular kind of work will require that the number of employees assigned to it be reduced, but stabilized employment means that as many as possible of such excess employees should be transferred, rather than laid off. Who shall be transferred, and to what other jobs? Individual records are needed.² When this kind of record is maintained, it is relatively easy to ascertain, from among a group of employees that must be reduced in number, which of them can be transferred successfully to other available work, thus minimizing the likelihood of lay-off for any of the group.

1 (Continued)

- f. Special requirements of physical or mental ability,
- g. Titles of other jobs which provide experience that is of value on the given job, from which transfers or promotions should be considered,
- h. Titles of other jobs for which experience on this job may be valuable, to which transfers or promotions could be made without difficulty,
- i. Title and name of supervisor,
- j. Date on which the job description was prepared, so that it may be reviewed and brought up to date as required.

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If they are complete, such individual records should yield for each employee the following information:

- a. Physical limitations, if significant,
- b. Skills and proficiencies and deficiencies (indicated by such aptitude and ability tests as may be used),
- c. Interests, preferences and ambitions,
- d. Education and training, both formal and informal, with special reference to job skills, including those developed or used in military service,
- e. Specific jobs held with previous employers and appraisal thereof,
- f. Details of previous job assignments within the company, with evaluations of performance by the supervisors concerned,
- g. Safety, attendance and medical records.

2. Lists of Individuals Qualified for Specific Jobs

Another type of record can be used to help locate the best qualified employees who are available, when there is or will be need for additional workers on a particular type of job. For each type of job that exists in the plant, a list of the individuals who may adequately perform that job can be easily prepared from the individual records discussed above. Each list should include (1) those who are now currently assigned to the respective jobs, (2) those who have experience in a given job either because of previous assignment or by reason of related work for another employer, (3) those qualified in part by study and training, and (4) those who are merely interested in that particular activity. Such a list might well indicate the ranking of the individuals in terms of their probable effective performance, as determined from production records and supervisory reports and opinions. Seniority dates also should be noted.

These records should be maintained on a current basis, and all such lists should be kept together in a central spot, preferably in the personnel department, to assure consideration of all available individuals. Some companies have found it practical to keep the two types of records together. The pertinent information can be made available quickly on each card either by combinations of color codes or by using a mechanical punch card system or one of the simpler semiautomatic sorting systems.

3. Causes of Turnover

While the whole purpose of this pamphlet is to suggest means of minimizing layoffs, it must not be forgotten that a program of offering steady jobs falls short of its purpose if terminations other than layoffs cause constant disruption of the work force. If excessive numbers of employees are being discharged for cause from the steady jobs management attempts to provide, or are resigning from them, the management's efforts to provide steadier jobs are being undermined. To the extent that it is possible, management should take the necessary steps to correct excessive turnover.

In an earlier pamphlet, it was proposed that turnover be analyzed periodically in accordance with the methods established by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which are widely used in industry. It was pointed out that such statistical analyses are most useful for comparison with the experience of similar companies. Such statistics, however, should be supplemented by explanations of why the terminations occur, perhaps broken down by departments. Thus a widespread and increasing tendency of employees to quit to accept other employment may be interpreted under certain conditions as warranting review of general wage levels, but it also may indicate any one of a number of other factors.

It is, of course, difficult to determine in any individual termination—particularly a quit—precisely what led up to the employee's leaving, and generally there are two or more reasons. The best way to get the whole story is to arrange as a matter of routine for an informal exit interview

for every employee whose service is to be terminated, regardless of reason. The interview should be handled by someone other than his direct superior, to encourage frankness and ease on the part of the employee. The interview should be directed at getting reactions to the entire work situation, and at having the employee leave "with a good taste in his mouth," as well as at the specific reasons for the quit, if it is that type of termination. When summarized impersonally, the comments made in such interviews can be of appreciable value in checking on the success of the whole employee relations program and in indicating where action by management is needed to minimize discharges and quits, so that the jobs offered are in fact steady.

III. EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSFERS

The three types of factual information discussed above—work schedules, job descriptions, and personnel records—serve to define and partially to solve the problem of providing steady jobs. Opportunities for transfers are indicated by the work schedule, and the individuals most suitable for transfers are suggested by proper analysis of the records and of the job descriptions. Certain practical obstacles may, however, prevent full freedom in making transfers. The first of these is the administrative problem of arranging the individual transfers themselves. The second is the unwillingness or inability of the employees to take other types of jobs. The third and most serious obstacle to unlimited use of the transfer procedure is the type of restriction caused by seniority practices or union jurisdictional lines.

A. FACILITATE INDIVIDUAL TRANSFERS

The first obstacle in trying to transfer employees so that everyone is on a job, in accordance with the work schedule, is the problem of co-ordinating the separate movements involved. The purpose should be to fill as many as possible of the openings by transfer, rather than by hiring, particularly for jobs of short duration, and to avoid layoff periods between one assignment and another. The procedures which many companies follow require centralized clearance, through one man or one office, of all calls for additional help, of all notices that excess workers are available for transfer, and of all screening of applicants for employment. It is then often possible, through co-ordination of the processes involved, to avoid hirings or to delay them until personnel needs outbalance the supply of excess personnel and permanent additions to the work force are genuinely needed.

Advance information of specific job openings, keyed to the expected work schedules, allows the employment office to appraise carefully all the employees who may become available, as well as all the qualified applicants, those on the waiting list as well as those in the waiting room. Many companies require the use of requisition forms, to assure that both the supervisor and employment office have a precise understanding about the details of the job to be filled, to provide the necessary authorizations for the hiring, and to serve as a definite record of current job openings.

B. INCREASE FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORK FORCE BY CAREFUL SELECTION

A program of providing steady jobs by making transfers will be effective to the extent that current employees are transferable. The training of current employees so that as many as possible can adequately perform two or more jobs, as required, is discussed later in this pamphlet. The discussion here relates to providing a higher degree of flexibility in the work force of the future by doing the best possible job in hiring new employees.

1. Willingness and Ability Should Be Equally Considered

Developing a group of employees who to the greatest practicable degree can be moved from one job to another, so that individuals are seldom or never laid off, means that a sufficient proportion of those hired in the future should be both willing and able to do different kinds of work. Willingness to do different jobs is as important as the ability to do them.

In some companies the practice of wide transfers, and of filling all possible higher jobs by promotion from within, makes versatility and flexibility characteristics of vital importance in the applicant.

Versatility means being both willing and able. Workers in many semiskilled occupations consider themselves craftsmen as much as do workers in many highly skilled trades. While it is important to hire those who are, or can become, well trained for the particular job opening, immobility—unwillingness to move into any other kind of job—should be viewed with disfavor in the selection of candidates for employment. There are, of course, highly skilled craft jobs in practically every organization, which can be filled only by employees who are qualified to perform that and only that type of work. Instrument repair man is a striking example of a specialized trade from which opportunity to make transfers is improbable. A management would be well advised, however, to keep a reasonable ratio between the number of "immobile" employees on jobs of this sort and the total number in the work force, since the success of a program of steady jobs is increased by the degree to which maximum transferability is achieved.

A degree of willingness to move from assignment to assignment within a company can and should be encouraged in the hiring process. Frankness as to the purpose of the company's policy on transferring employees from job to job will overcome much of the fear and uncertainty which gives rise to resistance to such moves. Without explanation, a transfer is often interpreted by an employee as a demotion, the first step toward discharge, punishment for some imagined past deficiency, or discrimination.

2. Versatility Should Be Sought in Individuals

Versatility is more likely to exist among unskilled and semiskilled workers than among those who have served apprenticeships in one or another trade. In a typical industrial community, it is not uncommon to find many applicants for employment whose experience records include work as unrelated as might be found in a packing house, a brick works, a shoe factory and a grocery store. A background of this sort may suggest adaptability to many of the different jobs within one particular plant.

An applicant whose record shows that over the years he has moved from one company to another and to a third, always doing the same type of work, will probably be proficient in that kind of job but be unable to readily adapt himself to other jobs. Coal miners, for example, are said to restrict themselves to coal mining and to be adaptable to or interested in few, if any, other types of work.

Some companies use various ability, aptitude or interest tests in their selection procedures, and their results can help to indicate the likelihood of versatility on the part of the applicant. Ability and willingness to do different kinds of work cannot be positively proved exclusively by typical procedures for testing. The standards by which individual test results are judged should be related to the requirements of the plant as a whole, or to the group of jobs among which seasonal or emergency movement of the individual is expected, rather than to the requirements of the specific opening for which the candidate is being considered.

C. OVERCOME THE SENIORITY HURDLE

Many an employer who could devise an otherwise effective program for developing a flexible and, accordingly, stable work force may find himself stymied by the stringent application of seniority. The barrier may arise out of established practice or from the terms of his agreements with one or more unions.

In planning for regularization of employment special attention must be paid, therefore, to seniority practices or regulations, for seniority can interfere with stabilization in two ways. First, if it controls or restricts transfers, it may prevent management from making the sudden changes of employees from job to job that may sometimes be necessary to avoid layoffs from one department or job while new employees are being hired for other departments or jobs. Second, if transfers or promotions are based on length of service rather than on ability, this practice may tend gradually to undermine the general efficiency and profits of the business. None but profitable businesses can offer steady work.

1. What Seniority Is and Does

A seniority policy or practice means that employees are ranked and given preference or priority according to length of service. The preference may apply only to layoffs and rehiring after layoff, or to transfers and promotions as well. It may apply, less significantly, to shift assignments, to the distribution of overtime work and to vacation schedules. The length of service considered may be that in the company, the plant, the department, the occupation or even on a particular machine. Intricate combinations of these different bases of computing and applying length of service have been devised in an almost infinite variety.

Seniority may be the sole basis for decision in some cases. It governs in others—often chiefly in theory—only if the ability of the employees concerned is approximately equal. In other cases, it is even more specifically only a secondary consideration.

Unions seek ironclad seniority clauses in their contracts chiefly as a defense against the management practice—the frequency of which unfortunately cannot be denied—of making layoffs, transfers and promotions on unfair, arbitrary or capricious bases or with regard only to the immediate

convenience of management. A seniority clause gives an objective formula for personnel adjustments. It substitutes an automatic process for the caprice of the foreman or boss. It gives security, of a sort, to employees. They know where they stand. But seniority has the general effect of affording security only to the long-service personnel and of concentrating whatever unemployment is unavoidable on the younger short-service workers, regardless of their ability and potential. In negotiating seniority contract clauses there is, consequently, always the problem of compromising the fundamental conflict of interest between the short-service workers, such as the firemen or brakemen, and the long-service workers, such as the engineers or conductors. This is why an outsider so often feels seniority clauses seem unnecessarily complicated.

2. Difference in Security Afforded by Seniority Provisions and by Employment Stabilization

Seniority application and stabilization of employment are different methods to achieve the same goal of security. But stabilization seeks security for the group; seniority, for the relatively senior individuals. Stabilization means sharing the available amount of work even if that means that some individuals will, from time to time do different jobs. Seniority means that selected individuals will hang on to their jobs as long as any work of their sort is required. This conflict between stabilization and seniority will become of practical importance, of course, only when a serious contraction of certain kinds of work is necessary and then only if seniority is applied strictly as the sole criterion for the adjustment of the work force.

An extreme illustration of how seniority interferes with steady work is seen in a Midwest company, part of the operations of which was a battery of machines each requiring an absolute minimum force of four workers. Until the situation was corrected recently after an extended strike, the union's insistence upon seniority resulted in three employees of such a crew being laid off if the fourth man was absent; yet the full complement could be maintained by temporary transfers and all employees would be kept at work.

3. Alternative Courses of Action Open to Employers

Fortunately, it may be possible to reconcile these apparently incompatible policies of seniority and free transferability. Employers should try to limit the strict application of seniority only to layoffs and rehiring—where, on balance, seniority seems the fairest and most practical policy. In promotions and transfers ability should be the primary consideration. Hundreds of agreements provide that in transfers and promotions seniority shall be considered only if there is no significant difference in the ability of the employees involved. A satisfactory clause in the agreement is not, however, the whole answer. The record shows that, even with such a clause, foremen and superintendents often promote strictly in accordance with seniority, thus following the course of least resistance—the course that will avoid union or employee "gripes." A clause that can be used to promote efficiency produces it in practice only if management representatives at every level conscientiously and fully apply it. This condition will not be achieved, of course, unless the company has a definite procedure for appraising employee ability and performance (often called merit rating), as well as a clear-cut

and well administered promotion policy. Such a policy is an indispensable part not only of any sound industrial relations program but also of efficient operation.

The complexity of seniority clauses and of operating conditions makes it impossible to recommend any ideal policy or contract clause that will least interfere with, or will facilitate, employment stabilization by the use of a flexible, freely transferable work force, but the following suggestions are offered for consideration in any review of a seniority policy:

1. Discuss the matter frankly with employees, or if they are organized, with their representatives. Employees may be willing to trade some relaxation of seniority rules for a real assurance of somewhat steadier employment. The suggestion is that management "consult" employees about any stabilization plan on the theory that no such plan can really succeed without employee understanding and co-operation. It does not necessarily imply that management should "bargain collectively" about such matters, since they will probably involve decisions in some areas recognized as subject solely to managerial discretion.

2. From the purely negative point of view, resist the insidious encroachment of strict seniority when the union contract allows consideration of ability. Develop, meanwhile, a positive promotion policy supported by records of employee qualifications and performance.

3. If it is necessary to seek some change in the seniority clause of the agreement or agreements this, of course, must be negotiated. The primary objective should be to make seniority of only secondary importance in promotions (to maintain efficiency) and to make seniority inapplicable in connection with temporary transfers (to develop a flexible work force).

4. If this objective cannot be achieved directly or in one move, seek to get the next best arrangement that will make the seniority rules least restrictive. The character and occupational distribution of the work force in relation to probable changes in work requirements, as shown in the work schedule, will indicate whether plant or departmental seniority will best facilitate regularization. Unless occupations are very broadly defined, seniority on an occupational basis will generally be found too restrictive.

5. Employees and unions so prize seniority rules—for they give employees a kind of property right in their jobs—that they may be reluctant to permit any change in the formal rules. Nevertheless, if relations are otherwise satisfactory, they may concede certain changes in application or practice that accomplish the same result. How far a management can proceed in this manner depends partly on its negotiating skill but largely on the extent to which employees believe in the sincerity of the management's intention to make personnel changes on a fair and equitable basis.

Since some unions realize that seniority may raise as many problems as it solves, management may find that the door to negotiations about this matter is not closed. A special research committee of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers (AFL) made the following comments in its official report:

If employees are to be promoted when their time comes on the seniority roster, and not before, is there danger of destroying initiative? Is there any incentive for an employee to learn the higher job, if he knows he will get it anyway? In the postwar period, when we shall have to compete with tough, foreign competition, will our companies be able to survive and will our jobs be secure if our production is low? Does strict seniority tend to lower level of skill and efficiency to that of poorest man rather than raise standards of workmanship?...

These are real questions. They did not come from the employers, but from our members all over the country....

One local union said its biggest complaint against the International Union is that the International Union has failed to solve the seniority problem. This criticism can apply to your Committee also, for we are frank to admit we don't know the answer.³

4. Examples of Liberalizing Seniority Restrictions

Three out of many possible illustrations are cited below to show the possibility of renegotiating seniority clauses or of applying them in such a way as to be least restrictive.

1. In 1947, the management and union of a prominent textile mill, where occupational seniority had been extremely rigid, worked out a contract revision which now allows greater freedom of transfer. Each occupational seniority list is now divided into two parts, a "normal force" and a "peak force." The normal force consists of the longer service employees up to a number equaling 65 per cent of the average force in that occupation in the five years prior to 1941. In one occupation this may include only employees with ten or more years' service. In another occupation it may include employees with as short service as one year and two months. The remainder in each occupational group is called the "peak force." If employment in any occupation has to be reduced, peak force employees are laid off first inversely according to seniority. When they have all been laid off, the normal force shares the work, without layoff, down to one shift a week, but a normal force worker may then (without loss of his normal force seniority in his own occupation) transfer to any department and displace or bump a peak force employee. By so doing he also acquires the right to claim normal force seniority in this second job or department.

2. In anticipation of postwar reconversion layoffs, a western instrument-manufacturing company succeeded, despite a very rigid seniority clause, in working out an informal arrangement with the union by which men aged fifty-five or over with dependents could be retained regardless of their seniority.

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International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, Labor Unrest and Dissatisfaction, Albany, N. Y., 1944, pp. 48, 50.

3. During postwar reconversion a metal products company, operating under a flexible seniority agreement, sold employees on a program of force reduction based on a planned combination of seniority and efficiency. Employees were classified into four groups: (1) long-service efficient, (2) short-service efficient, (3) long-service less efficient, and (4) short-service less efficient. Employees were then ranked by a combined index of service and ability in each class. A policy was agreed to of laying off employees according to their rank, starting in class four. Of course, the management could sell this policy only because it had incontrovertible records of employee performance.

Many other variants are possible. One of the most common is to exempt a specified percentage of key employees from the application of seniority. This provision can sometimes be secured in a "trade" for super-seniority for union stewards. The foregoing solutions are not recommended for general adoption, although they were mutually satisfactory adjustments in specific situations. They have been cited simply to show that it is possible for some sincere and ingenious managements to renegotiate their seniority clauses or arrange for their less restrictive application, according to the problems of the particular company.

Somewhat similar but more rigid restrictions on transferability may appear in the boundaries between the jurisdiction different unions claim over specified types of work. Such restrictions must be tackled in the same general method as those growing out of seniority—and with more ingenuity—for in such cases the negotiations involve more than one union.

IV. TRAINING

A. DETERMINE TRAINING NEEDS IN ADVANCE

Analysis of projected work schedules will indicate that some transfers will be required to provide steady work. Review of the records of the employees scheduled for such transfers will probably show specific instances where individuals or groups will need training before they can be expected to reach efficient production levels quickly on jobs to which they will be transferred. While the actual training itself may involve only a few days or hours, the determination of training requirements, the planning and development of the appropriate training program and the selection and preparation of instructors or trainers is a long-term affair. Accordingly, specific training requirements should be analyzed as far in advance as possible, as to the amount and type of training, the number to be trained and the subject matter to be covered.

B. USE APPROPRIATE TRAINING METHODS

Generally, training needs can be divided into two main categories—the intensive and thorough training of individuals to become highly skilled in a craft or trade, and the mass training of groups of employees to perform simpler semiskilled jobs which demand more knack than skill. In terms of increasing the flexibility and versatility of a group of employees the second is more important than the first, in most industrial and commercial enterprises. Almost every company has jobs of a specialized or craft nature, however, and attention should be given to the gradual development of individuals who can adequately perform an increasing proportion of the duties of the higher skilled occupations. Formal apprenticeships provide this type of training, but more informal programs, perhaps involving correspondence school work, can be almost equally successful, if properly planned and administered.

For the mass type of training, a wide variety of techniques and methods have been developed, which is to be expected, since most training requirements are of this sort. A recent estimate indicates that the training time for three out of every five industrial jobs is less than six weeks. Listed below are some of the accepted techniques, used separately or in combination in the training of employee groups:

1. On-the-job training, the commonest type of training in which a helper learns by working with a qualified employee. Sometimes this type of informal training is made more formal by such means as using specially selected employees to act as trainers, laying out a specific program or sequence of training to be followed by the trainer, and establishing standard methods or techniques to be imparted to the new employee. Usually the supervisor checks on the performance and progress of the new employee, either by asking the trainer for his opinion, or by direct inspection of the new employee's work, or by use of a performance test of some sort. Often the supervisor himself is the trainer.

2. Vestibule training, which is brief intensive training on the type of machine to be used, but not on direct production work, and usually closely supervised. Very frequently foremen object to vestibule training, because they do not have a direct part in the training of employees.

3. Training classes, which consume only part of the time of the employee over a period of several days or weeks, embracing often both theory and practice, often conducted by one or more training specialists, or by supervisors.

4. Demonstrations, either actual or by motion picture or other visual presentation. A wide variety of training films is available on a purchase or rental basis.

In the light of the requirements of each situation, the training techniques to be used should be selected to allow for transfers with a minimum loss of individual efficiency.

In general, training on regular company time has more advantages than training on employee time, but the circumstances peculiar to each company should be analyzed in determining policy on this matter. Under the wage and hour law (Interpretative Bulletin No. 13), time spent by an employee in a training session is not considered as time worked, if attendance is wholly voluntary, if the meeting is not directly related to his work, if "the course is intended to train the employee to a new, different or additional skill" and if certain other conditions are met. These requirements raise certain problems, especially since voluntary attendance means a lack of management control.

V. FLEXIBLE WORK WEEK

A. ADJUST HOURS OF WORK

Layoffs because of lack of work can be minimized, obviously, by adjusting the hours of work of individuals. Without layoffs or additional hirings, the man hours available on a normal forty-hour schedule can be adjusted by 20 per cent by going to a work week of forty-eight or thirty-two hours. Problems and questions arise, however, as to the point of diminishing returns, both in extending and reducing the work week, and as to the payment of overtime rates.

1. Maximum Work Week

The hiring and eventual laying off of workers for jobs which are temporary in nature can to a degree be avoided by working the existing force on a schedule longer than normal. For most types of industrial employment, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and general competitive practice have brought about a normal work week of five days of eight hours each. In general, industrial employers in the United States appear to feel that it is inefficient to schedule employees to work more than forty-eight or fifty-four hours a week for extended periods. Consequently, most marked increases in production requirements result in the hiring of new employees, for whom steady work is not assured, rather than in marked extension of the scheduled work week.

Scientific analysis in American industry of the optimum schedule of work has been limited, and such studies as have been made do not justify broad generalizations. An excellent study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics offers, among others, these conclusions: (1) the effectiveness of a schedule depends on both the pattern of daily hours and the pattern of days per week, (2) increased hours and particularly increased days of work result in increased absenteeism and increased accidents, and (3) longer total hours yield higher output, but at a regressive rate.

Since the optimum work week in one situation is not necessarily the best for another company or in the same company at a different time, a management should carefully review its circumstances and experience before scheduling indefinite periods of extended work weeks. Among the questions which should be considered are the following:

1. What is the effect of premium rates on unit costs?
2. What additional payments for extended work weeks should be made to supervisors and other employees exempt from legal or contractual overtime pay provisions?

3. To what extent must the element of direct physical or mental fatigue be recognized and to what extent may rest periods reduce that element?

4. What opportunities will be made available to employees for recreation and for personal business which cannot all be handled in off hours on working days?

5. What types of problems may employees encounter in getting transportation to and from work, on an extended schedule?

Only if the answers to such questions as these indicate the acceptability, from the standpoint of costs and of employee relations, of planning extended work weeks indefinitely, should a management adopt that means of stabilizing employment.

2. Problems of Overtime Premiums Required by Law

One effective restriction on extending the work week so that temporary hirings are minimized is the legal requirements for payment of penalty rates for overtime. In most companies all employees who do not qualify as being employed in an executive, administrative, professional or local retailing capacity or in the capacity of outside salesman have to be paid one and one-half times their regular rates for all work in excess of forty hours per week, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. This premium, or penalty, encourages the employment of temporary help during peak periods, and so contributes to layoffs when production levels are lowered.

Such additional hirings and unstable employment are likewise encouraged by the somewhat more stringent provisions of the Public Contracts Act of 1935 which apply to employees working on most government contracts.

Relatively few employers, however, have taken advantage of certain exemptions which the Fair Labor Standards Act allows. An employer may in part relieve himself of the normal requirements of that law if he has signed a particular type of agreement with a union certified by the National Labor Relations Board as collective bargaining agent. If under such an agreement each employee is guaranteed not more than 2,080 hours of work a year, or if the agreement provides not more than 1,000 hours of work during any period of twenty-six consecutive weeks, then the employer need pay the overtime rate only for work in excess of twelve hours per day or fifty-six hours per week. The small number of employers who have availed themselves of either of these courses of action indicates that neither provision of the law fulfils its objective of offering strong incentive for guaranteeing or stabilizing employment.

3. Problems of Overtime Premiums Required by Union Contract

Special premiums for work on Saturday or Sunday have become increasingly prevalent in union contracts, and such provisions also may act as an effective barrier to widespread scheduling of even temporary six- and seven-day work weeks. Double time pay, unnecessary pay at time and a half

and overtime on overtime may, in certain circumstances, price increased production out of the market. The manufacturer, accordingly, establishes schedules which do not require such penalty and hires additional help who must be laid off when the peak season passes. Although frequent or consecutive seven-day schedules should be avoided as a matter of good industrial relations practice, the objective of stabilized jobs may be better served by an occasional seven-day week for individual employees, with no overtime rate in excess of time and a half, than by the temporary employment of new workers through the peak period.

In the light of the advantages, for management and employees alike, resulting from steadier jobs for all concerned, both union and management should agree to make certain necessary concessions. Every effort should be made to remove unreasonable penalties for temporary long-week schedules, or at least to set limits within which such penalties do not apply. Thus a contract might provide that a given number of week ends in the year which an employee works might be exempted from such excessive premiums as are otherwise required.

4. Minimum Work Week

When production requirements are reduced, either employees must be laid off or the individual hours of work reduced. Within limits, the latter course is more desirable, because it maintains steady employment for a greater number of employees, even though individual earnings are reduced, and because it holds a greater proportion of the work force, in anticipation of increased production requirements.

Although it is only sixteen years since work schedules of as little as two days each week were common, many union agreements today effectively restrict work-sharing. Many agreements specify that after all short-service employees (typically, those with less than two years' service) have been laid off, work will be shared only to the point where all the remaining employees have four days of work each week, with layoffs by seniority thereafter, as required. Some contracts provide only that work shall be shared as equally as possible; others establish complex schemes, such as alternate weeks of work and layoff. Union contracts appear to offer no discernible pattern of agreement as to what organized labor considers the practical minimum work week.

A distinction must be made between limited and temporary periods of short time, resulting perhaps from tooling up for a new product or shortage of parts, and periods of indefinitely curtailed schedule caused by poor planning or lack of business. In the first situation two or three weeks, or more, of as little as twenty-four hours of work a week may be tolerated, but in the latter case the management must determine the practicable minimum work week, within the limits of contractual obligations.

The shortest practicable work week, among other characteristics, should provide earnings levels sufficiently high to: assure a subsistence income; exceed substantially the payments available from unemployment compensation or other public sources; and discourage employees from quitting to accept jobs with other employers. In most situations a schedule of three days or less per week would not meet these requirements.

B. REVIEW VACATION AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE PRACTICES

1. Vacations

It is often practicable to avoid layoffs by scheduling vacations for the slack period. Even in those companies which provide paid vacations of two or three weeks for very long-service employees, however, vacations offer only very limited leeway in continuing pay checks when there is no work.

Steadier jobs are assured for all concerned if vacations are spread throughout the year, and if employees are encouraged to take their vacations at other than the busy season. Some department stores, for example, require that of a two weeks' vacation one week must be taken in a slack period. Since many employees prefer to take their vacations without interruption, substantially more than half of the vacation absences occurs in the dull months.

2. Leaves of Absence

Employers who draw their work force from rural areas often are confronted with the tendency of employees to take time off for planting and for harvesting. When those times coincide with periods of peak production, there is, of course, a conflict. In an enterprise in which the level of production is related more to a planned inventory position than to the current level of sales, as suggested in an earlier pamphlet in this series, such periodic absences might well be encouraged, if they are sought by the individual employees. They may result in more sustained employment through the balance of the year.

C. ESTABLISH EMERGENCY AND STAND-BY LABOR POOLS

The larger the company, the more successful can be the establishment of labor pools, emergency forces and other groups available to help out at almost any point where additional man hours are needed. Even in the smallest companies, however, the utility man, the spare girl, and the floor boy, each serves somewhat the same purpose.

These groups are composed in some companies primarily of new employees who have yet to develop specialized skills, and in others, of superannuated employees whose health, age, performance or other characteristics have disqualified them for their former jobs. In some companies employees momentarily displaced from their normal jobs are temporarily assigned to the labor pool. When a call comes for temporary additional help in a department, assignments are made according to the seniority rights involved and the abilities available in the group. At other times the group is kept busy on work that has to be done but need not be scheduled.

Although the normal retirement age set up under a formal pension plan should be applied universally, except in periods of great stress, such as a major depression or a period of intensive war production, some employers

have successfully used over-age former employees as a sort of labor pool, to be drawn on when a temporary peak demand occurs.

There are certain situations, particularly if the work is of the sort that women can do, in which involuntary layoffs can be reduced although production fluctuates by using a stand-by force to meet peak loads. This force consists of individuals, generally married women, who are available on call but only for part-time and temporary work. They do not want or cannot accept regular or full-time work. Telephone companies and schools often thus use former operators or teachers to fill temporary vacancies. Such arrangements are equivalent to maintaining labor pools, not inside the organization but readily available to meet peak loads.

VI. WAGE ADMINISTRATION

The techniques discussed up to this point in this pamphlet can all contribute rather directly to assuring steadier jobs for members of a group of employees. The effects of sound and systematic wage administration in this direction are less obvious. Nonetheless, the type of fluid, flexible, and versatile work force needed to provide steady jobs gives rise to a variety of wage problems. Unless these problems are anticipated and handled justly, the long-range advantages of having steady work may be overbalanced, from the standpoint of the employees, by short-term and individual annoyances, which may induce employees to effectively oppose the whole program. Observance of the principles of sound wage administration is important to assure employee acceptance and support of a program of providing steady jobs.

A. ESTABLISH A PRACTICE OF PAYING FOR THE JOB

If all employees of a company could always be paid exactly the same hourly rate, the job transfers which result from a plan of employment stabilization would cause few wage problems. In the minds of employers and employees alike, however, different jobs are worth different rates, and every transfer raises a question as to what rate the individual should be paid on the new job. The type of rate structure established and observed by the company provides the answer.

Many companies operate on an informal plan of "personalized" rates, which are paid regardless of the type of work to which the individual is assigned. The best practice is to establish a structure of job rates, and to pay the rate appropriate for the job. This approach has these and other advantages:

1. It offers an objective means of determining and controlling payroll levels,
2. It satisfies the widespread desire for equal pay for similar work,
3. It reduces the likelihood of favoritism in setting rates,
4. It increases the reliability of forecasts of unit labor costs.

B. DEVELOP A SOUND JOB RATE STRUCTURE

The objective in establishing a structure of job rates should be the long-range co-ordination of rates to reflect the worth of the different jobs, while limiting the number of different rates paid so that as many transfers as possible can be made without changing the individual's earnings.

Any wage structure must be on a basis that everyone concerned accepts as fair. Most well thought-out structures of job rates are developed through job evaluation, which is a systematic rather than scientific method of pooling judgment as to the comparative worth of different jobs. Many managements insist that the processes of job evaluation are primarily a management function, subject to negotiation with a union only as to the final wage rates. Other managements report that evaluation of jobs jointly by management and union representatives has made the process easier and the result more immediately acceptable. Some but by no means all union leaders, however, oppose job evaluation, whether done on a joint or a unilateral basis.

By job evaluation, the different occupations are ranked in order of their worth. The ranking can be divided into any number of grades or groups, each of which is assigned a rate or a rate range. A sufficient number of grades should be established to provide proper rate differentials between related jobs which differ appreciably in their requirements. The fewer grades there are, the easier it is to administer a job evaluation plan and to make individual transfers. During World War II, the company managing one shell loading plant completed a job evaluation plan and came out with only three different levels of hourly rates. This made for maximum flexibility in moving individuals from assignment to assignment. Few companies can or should establish so few levels, but the pattern of normal transfers should be considered in classifying jobs together at the same wage levels.

C. MINIMIZE RATE CHANGES RESULTING FROM TRANSFERS

Keeping the number of wage levels in the rate structure to a minimum, but consistent with proper recognition of differentials in job requirements, will avoid many unnecessary fluctuations in the rate and earnings of employees transferred from one job to another. Short-term fluctuations in earnings are also avoided by the general and proper practice of maintaining an employee's rate during limited periods of transfer made solely for management's convenience. Thus it is practically standard practice in oil refineries to maintain the rates of process operators during the periodic shutdown of processing equipment for cleaning purposes and normal recurring repairs. When transfers occur on a seasonal or other long-term basis, however, the rate appropriate to the new job should apply. Many employers, furthermore, pay for a day's work at the rate of the highest paid job performed, while others pay for the whole day at the rate of the job on which the greatest amount of time was spent.

VII. SUPERVISION

The adoption of steadier jobs as a major objective of management brings with it a variety of problems involving supervisors. Attention must be given to obtaining the support of supervisors for this objective, and to training them in techniques to be used in achieving it.

A. ANALYZE THE ATTITUDES OF SUPERVISORS TOWARD STABILIZATION

Steady jobs, as an objective of management and a criterion of good supervision, may appear to some supervisors to nullify the standards by which they have been told in the past they have been judged: getting the work out, keeping the cost down, and avoiding "labor trouble." In the short view, this new idea of the steadiest possible jobs seems to contradict the objective of lower costs and, at the beginning, may give rise to more disputes with employees and their representatives. As mentioned earlier in this pamphlet, supervisors in general have over the years come to consider seniority exclusively in determining force adjustments, and now tend to favor this clear-cut, though artificial, device. Moreover, the job of each supervisor is made more difficult by the more frequent changes and transfers of personnel involved in a program of stabilized employment.

For these reasons, the management which seeks to assure steadier employment must use every possible means to convince its entire supervisory group of the positive benefits accruing from avoidance of layoffs and short hours because of lack of work. Supervisors must be persuaded that they are right in endeavoring, by planning work and arranging transfers, to keep the maximum number of competent employees on the payroll, and on a suitable job.

Supervisors will co-operate more in a stabilization program if they feel secure in their own jobs, and if they are shown the beneficial effect which the program will have on their own employment and their performance as supervisors. Supervisors' jobs are in general more stable and secure than those of their subordinates. Yet supervisors have the same fear of insecurity that besets the rank and file, although for somewhat different reasons. Supervisors are older, in general, and may have more difficulty in getting suitable employment than is true of their subordinates. Supervisors seldom have the protection of a union and, accordingly, may be more subject to sudden unemployment than are rank-and-file workers. A new manager may come into the plant—and clean house. New processes or methods may make "the front office" dissatisfied with the performance of the old-line foreman. Mergers, consolidations and abandonment of products may eliminate supervisory positions. Few foremen completely control all the factors influencing their costs and production, by which their performance is primarily judged. Many managements can do more to help their foremen at least understand what these factors are. All managements should seek to assure that supervisors accumulate seniority credit against the possibility

of future demotion to rank-and-file jobs. Until and unless supervisors are secure, and feel that they are secure, in their own jobs, supervisory support of a comprehensive employment stabilization program may be superficial rather than sincere.

B. SELL THE PROGRAM TO SUPERVISORS

Training of supervisors to achieve these changes in attitude must go further than mere exhortation. To a limited extent, the economic soundness of the program can be used in justification of the inconveniences involved. To a greater extent, the actual production and employment fluctuations of the company, as analyzed along the lines suggested in an earlier pamphlet, can be used to show what would have happened had the new policy been in effect during the period being reviewed in illustration.

There are other means, however, which are more tangible and which will give evidence of management's sincere support of stabilization, as well as provide the supervisor with a guide related to his own job. One is to establish and periodically revise departmental standards and norms as to turnover and make them an integral part of the periodic reports of production and labor variances which are discussed with the foreman by his superior. The turnover analyses suggested in Section II of this pamphlet may be helpful in this regard.

Several managements use the cost of unemployment benefits to emphasize to their supervisors the expense of turnover. In many states the charges made against an employer's unemployment compensation account for each case of terminated employment can be readily computed and charged to the department where the employee last worked, just as the cost of workmen's compensation benefits or of other benefits can be allocated as indirect departmental payroll expenses.

A third device is to arrive at and announce commitments of limited future individual employment guarantees. In many plants, no more notice of layoffs is given than the minimum established by union contract. Often an employee learns only on Friday that there will be no work for him the next week. To accustom supervisors to plan ahead, there is merit in urging departmental commitments of employment for two or three weeks in advance. Before the war a small New England chemical company gave very tangible substance to the security offered by the seniority list, by indicating on the weekly schedules of work and shift assignments those employees who were guaranteed a full week of work in the second following week. At the current time, when many companies have heavy backlogs of work, a promise made on Friday of two weeks of employment ahead may seem meaningless, and unnecessary, but such commitments will offer supervisors practical training now in the problem of planning steady jobs in less prosperous times ahead. Naturally, supervisors should be given a chance to gain experience in working out such commitments over a period of several months before undertaking to announce them. Such a plan should, of course, be preceded by full discussion with employees and union officials.

C. RELIEVE SUPERVISORS OF UNNECESSARY ROUTINE WORK

Constant changes in the personnel of a department, or in the work to be done, puts a heavier burden on the supervisor. He has new routines to learn, new problems to solve, new employees to train. If a management expects its supervisory employees to handle adequately these additional duties involved in assuring steadier jobs, it should be prepared to relieve its first- and second-line supervisors of some of the many routine duties they now perform, which are not essential to their prime function of supervision and which can be assigned to others.

VIII. THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF MANAGEMENT-EMPLOYEE CO-OPERATION

The discussion, earlier in this pamphlet, of seniority and union jurisdiction in connection with transfers indicated a rather specific area in which management-employee or management-union co-operation is an indispensable condition for successful regularization of employment. This is only a special phase of the more general problem of renegotiating unduly restrictive clauses of all types out of labor agreements and of preventing unnecessarily rigid application of other agreement clauses that on the surface may seem to have had no restrictive intent.

It is unnecessary to stress that steady work is impossible of realization to the extent that industrial disputes lead to work stoppages or slowdowns, as stressed in a previous pamphlet of this series. The experience of the last two years has brought a much wider understanding of how apparently minor stoppages in the plants of suppliers can seriously interfere with production and employment over a wide range of industry. It would be a counsel of perfection to advise management to eliminate strikes as a step toward stabilization, but it may not be entirely out of order to emphasize the obvious. Managements must make special efforts to eliminate any of the causes of industrial strife which lie within their control.

From a rather more positive point of view, management has a major responsibility to install, administer and steadily improve comprehensive and sound industrial relations policies, in order to produce both in employees as individuals and in their unions, a proper appreciation of the problems of the individual business and an understanding of the workings of our business system. Apart from foreign relations, the most pressing of our economic problems lies not in the fields of material shortages or industrial techniques but in the field of human relations. The challenge is to devise and apply employee relations policies that encourage the will to work. Unless worker apathy or even antagonism can be replaced by responsive attitudes and willing and effective co-operation, no business can realize its full potential, and our American standard of living will rise much less rapidly than it should, on the basis of other favorable factors. By the same token, efforts at regularized employment—a major element of a satisfactory standard of living—can be only partially successful.

Steady work and good employee relations interact and reinforce one another. Relations can never be fully satisfactory if employment is fluctuating and temporary. Management efforts toward stabilization cannot be fully effective without employee co-operation and that of their union representatives, if any. In full accord with the trend of this time, therefore, this discussion closes, as must the discussion of almost any current management problem, with reference to the need for sound industrial relations. That this reference is made only briefly and in passing must not be allowed to obscure its important implications.

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