

Personnel administration (1955)

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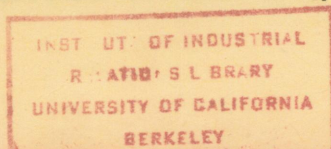
Number 3

Cases in Branch Plant Personnel Administration

Robert H. Cojeen

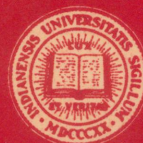
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**CASES IN BRANCH PLANT
PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION**

by

Robert H. Cojeen

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FOREWORD

The decentralization of industry by means of geographically separated branch plants has created a host of new problems in the area of personnel administration. Many of these problems are requiring additional research and policy formulation because existing techniques and concepts do not apply. The branch personnel supervisor has to have a local interest and viewpoint, yet he must also consider problems from a company-wide viewpoint. Though he has some local authority to make decisions, quite often his authority is limited by detailed home-office controls. To help interpret these new problems, the Department of Management, School of Business, Indiana University, has undertaken a series of studies of decentralized personnel administration. Two projects are now under way. This booklet reports cases from one of them.

Just how does this complicated, decentralized personnel organization work? How is communication effected? Does the branch personnel supervisor consider that his boss is the branch manager or the home-office personnel specialist? The two cases in this booklet supplement the meager existing case information on branch personnel administration and show how it operates in two different companies. In the Quiston Corporation there are three personnel levels - home office, divisional, and branch. In the Rackney Corporation there are

only two basic personnel levels - the home office and the branch. The facts are real, but the company names are disguised.

These cases provide instructors and personnel specialists with an opportunity to analyze branch plant personnel problems in real-life situations and to determine proper policies and courses of action for the different parties involved. In this way descriptive text material is supplemented by case problem analysis.

Mr. Robert H. Cojeen prepared these cases as part of a dissertation project at the School of Business, Indiana University. He is currently Associate Professor, College of Commerce, University of Kentucky.

Special appreciation goes to the business executives whose cooperation made these cases feasible.

Keith Davis
Professor of Management

Bloomington, Indiana
January, 1955

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I

Case 1 - Quiston Corporation - Branch H	6
The Personnel Function	6
Employment	11
Training and Education	13
Employee Communication	15
Health and Medical Care and Safety	18
Wage and Salary Administration	19
Employer-Employee Relations	20
Employee Benefits and Services	21
Personnel Records and Research	24
Budget and Costs	25
Discussion Questions	26

PART II

Case 2 - Rackney Corporation - Branch J	27
Employment	32
Employee Communication	34
Training and Education	39
Health and Medical Care and Safety	42
Wage and Salary Administration	44
Employer-Employee Relations	45
Employee Benefits and Services	49
Personnel Records and Research	51
Budget and Costs	52
Discussion Questions	54
Figure I - Partial Organization Chart - Quiston Corporation	7
Figure II - Partial Organization Chart - Rackney Corporation . . .	28

PART I
QUISTON CORPORATION
BRANCH H

The Quiston Corporation operates in small plants in small towns; a community with a population between 15,000 and 25,000 is considered desirable. The majority of its branch plants employs between 250 and 1,000 employees. These plants, which manufacture consumer's goods in the electrical field, are grouped into seven product divisions. Branch H was erected in a southern state early in the 1950's to manufacture light bulbs. It has almost two hundred employees with a peak capacity of about five hundred. The work force is approximately fifty per cent women.

The city, which has a population of 9,000, aided H by extending its limits to include the plant so that gas and water lines could be made available. Also, the municipal officials helped to find housing for plant supervisors. In return, the officials expressed a hope that townspeople would be hired. Some of the supervisors feel that the local housing facilities are too costly, and three of them have been considering the construction of homes in a larger neighboring city about twenty miles away.

The Personnel Function

The organization chart shows three levels in the personnel

function. The director of industrial relations is a general staff man reporting to the president; a personnel manager reports to the division general manager; and a supervisor of personnel is on the staff of the branch.

Assistants to the director of industrial relations include a manager of organization development, a personnel administration manager, a labor relations manager, and a medical director. The manager of organization development is charged with professional placement, salary administration, organization planning, training and management development, and editing company-wide publications. The manager of personnel administration is responsible for determining policies of personnel department operations. The manager of labor relations is a specialist in his own field as is the medical director

Executive Level. Company-wide policy is set at the executive office level, and it is incorporated in a manual of Standard Practice and Policy. Copies of this manual may be found in the offices of the following members of branch management: plant manager, personnel supervisor, chief accountant, and supervisor of industrial engineering. The policies in the manual are applied according to the situation and not word for word. At the weekly meetings of the branch staff, questions dealing with interpretation of policy are discussed, and the plant manager is the final judge. This method may result in a

different interpretation from plant to plant. Any personnel policy suggestions at the plant level go through the division personnel office to the director of industrial relations for final approval.

An information booklet published by the executive office sets forth the general policies which affect employees and is distributed by the branch. This booklet covers such topics as seniority, union membership, pay, insurance, cafeterias, vacations, and pensions. In order that the workers shall understand the purpose of the book, the following statement is made on the first page.

This is an information booklet only and any questions arising under specific contracts, agreements, or company policy or practice will be governed by the terms of the applicable contract, agreement, policy, or practice. The company reserves the right at any time to discontinue or change such policies or practices.

Divisional Level. Although the branch plant considers the divisional office to be its home office, very little personnel policy is set there. A functional outline describes the division personnel manager's job as follows:

Plan, direct functionally, and coordinate all personnel and industrial relations activities of the division to establish and maintain sound personnel relations directed toward securing maximum long-range productivity from all employees.

On the division level the personnel staff is normally small, including only the personnel manager and his secretary with the addition of a training coordinator in the larger divisions.

The job description of the personnel manager's position states that he will audit disciplinary procedures, employee turnover, and nonunion plant labor relations; however, it does not provide for a general audit of the branch personnel function. If the personnel manager wants the personnel supervisor in a plant to work on a specific project, he sends a letter on the matter to the plant manager with a copy to be forwarded to the personnel supervisor.

Plant Level. The head of the personnel department formally is called the "supervisor of personnel" at the plant level. The job description of this position states that he is to

advise and assist all levels of supervision in the selection, placement, and training of suitable personnel, and in establishing and maintaining sound personnel relations directed towards securing maximum long-range productivity from all employees.

If the plant personnel supervisor wishes to contact the director of industrial relations, he usually does so through the division personnel manager. In an emergency the personnel supervisor has the right to report directly to the director of industrial relations. However, in such a case he must keep the division manager informed of the discussions that take place.

As the branch plants vary greatly in size, the number of employees in personnel work on the plant level also varies. A typical plant personnel organization includes:

Supervisor of Personnel
Secretary-Stenographer
Personnel Assistant
Employment Interviewer and Counselor
Clerks (2)
Safety Inspector
Industrial Nurses
Cafeteria Steward
Cafeteria Employees

In view of the fact that Branch H is new and is operating at approximately forty per cent of capacity, it does not have the complete personnel department of a typical plant. Reporting to the personnel supervisor are a secretary, two senior clerks, two nurses, and two switchboard operators. One of the senior clerks is the employment clerk whose duties are to interview female applicants, keep the personnel files, and see that new workers are added to the payroll. The second senior clerk keeps the attendance record and does the paper work in connection with employee benefits such as life insurance, hospital insurance, and savings and retirement.

Employment

Branch management sets up the plant's production schedule, and department heads requisition the necessary workers. Although the home office approves the hiring of salaried employees, it does this to check on the number rather than on the qualifications of the individuals involved. Most key salaried employees were transferred to Branch H; however, a few local people were hired before the plant began operations

and were sent to a similar plant for training. It is hoped that future supervisory employees can be promoted from within the plant. Also, skilled and semiskilled workers will be trained in the plant.

Hiring Procedure. The practice and policy manual prepared at the executive office sets the following steps in the hiring procedure:

1. Application
2. Aptitude tests
3. Verification of social security number
4. Physical examination
5. Checking of references [H uses a national retail credit investigation]
6. Induction by the branch personnel office

This induction includes getting all records in order, entering the new worker's name on the seniority list, and explaining the insurance program.

Although the local manager of the state employment service would prefer to have Branch H use the public agency's facilities to obtain both male and female employees, only women for the production line are hired with its assistance. Because H has not expanded as rapidly as was anticipated, the employment service has a long waiting list of qualified women. Some applicants are not referred to Branch H because they do not meet the requirements set forth by the

personnel department. However, when they apply at the branch independently, they may be employed. The agency manager feels that this practice (even though very limited) detracts from the usefulness of his office.

College Recruitment. The executive office does the college recruiting and supervises professional placement. If a college senior or a staff specialist applies for a position at Branch H, he can be hired subject to home-office approval. If there is no opening, the personnel supervisor routes the application to the personnel department at the top level. From there such applications are sent to personnel supervisors throughout the country.

Training and Education

Branch H management prefers to hire inexperienced production workers and to train them on the job. The training is administered by the branch and given by the foremen. Most of the foremen were transferred from other branches of the company. However, a few were hired in the locality and sent to the other plants for training before H opened. The supervisor of personnel keeps a record of incidents which show weak spots in training. The personnel supervisor and the industrial engineer analyze this record to determine the training needs of the production employee.

When H began operations women were hired in groups of fifteen for training purposes with the goal of having three to four

hundred trained employees in a year. Since operations at H are the same as those in another branch, the division personnel office supplied motion pictures of experienced operators doing the specific jobs at the older plant. These films are used for training of new employees and are shown to the present operators whenever the personnel supervisor believes this will be beneficial.

The branch manager with the aid of the personnel supervisor conducts supervisory training which is given at weekly staff meetings. At present the personnel supervisor is negotiating with the Extension Department of the State University for classes to be offered to supervisory personnel. The plant manager will have to approve the courses content-wise; then the home office must approve them cost-wise.

The personnel supervisor prepares a monthly industrial relations letter, which includes a training report, and sends it to the division personnel manager. Occasionally, the division office suggests some supervisory training based on an analysis of this report.

The chairman of the board of the parent company considers decentralization to be a method of training. According to an article in a leading professional management journal, branch plants offer executive training that is necessary for men who are being groomed for high managerial positions. For example, a

promotion was given to each member of the supervisory staff when transferred to H. Thus the branch fits into the executive development program of the company by providing a place where managerial material can be tested and seasoned.

Employee Communication

The information booklet, distributed by the executive office to all employees, states:

As a member of the organization you have a natural interest in the things that affect you and your job: such subjects as our plans for the future, how business is going, matters of company policy, scientific developments, new products, taxes, and general business conditions.

To inform the employee on these subjects, downward written communication from the executive office consists of the information booklet, a bimonthly magazine, and the annual operating report. The branch plants have bulletin boards, and a number of plants have employee handbooks and local plant papers. The information booklet has been mistakenly designated as "an employee handbook."

A handbook is in the hands of the printer and will state the personnel policies affecting the employees at H. The director of industrial relations made the original outline which was filled in by the personnel supervisor. Finally, the approval of the plant manager was required before the handbook went to press. Branch H does not have an employee newspaper. However, sometimes bulletins are given to workers at the

factory exit. To date the branch has not sent any information to the employees' homes.

Written communication upward is by way of the suggestion system or by branch "gripe sheets." The suggestion system is company-wide, but it is administered by a committee composed of the plant manager, the industrial engineer, and the foreman of the employee involved. All decisions made by the committee are final. The plant manager suggested the idea of using plant gripe sheets. When it was felt that many dissatisfactions existed in the plant, an employee meeting was held and blank sheets of paper were distributed. Each employee was requested to submit an unsigned list of his grievances. All complaints were found to be minor, and branch management took steps to eliminate their causes. At a later employees' meeting the slips were distributed again, and no troubles were reported. Although the personnel supervisor feels that the gripes have been answered as well as possible for the present, he plans to repeat this method at least once more.

Oral communication downward is accomplished by a public address system, through contact with branch supervision, and by employee meetings. The public address system is used for paging, providing recorded music, and making announcements. Branch management encourages the employees to ask questions, and the supervisor is required to answer every question if this is possible. Employee meetings are called to

discuss general complaints and to impress on the employee that his questions will reach the plant manager. Two examples follow on the use of mass meetings of employees.

1. It was cold in the plant, and the employees circulated a petition asking for more heat. The plant manager was displeased because he felt that the workers should have talked with their supervisors instead of submitting a petition. Hence, at the meeting the manager deplored the use of such a device, and he stated what was being done about the heating problem.
2. A notice was posted that the plant would shut down at noon before Christmas to give the employees an opportunity to do their last minute shopping. Immediately a rumor spread that this was to be a half-day off with pay. The plant manager called a meeting at which he mentioned all the paid holidays, and he stated that the day before Christmas was not one of them.

The home office communicates with the branch on personnel matters by telephone, teletype, and mail. This communication is by letter mostly, with the message going directly to the personnel supervisor. However, if the communication concerns a question of policy, a copy of the letter is sent to the plant manager. Letters to and from the home office usually take two days each way. The personnel super-

visor also communicates by letter with the personnel supervisors of other branches on unique problems.

The personnel supervisor did not visit the home office during the last year. Instead, the division personnel manager, the safety director, and the medical director visited the branch. Top management from the executive office may visit the branch plant about once a year. In the event of such a visit, a breakfast is held for all department heads at which problems are discussed. A plant tour follows the breakfast. Branch H is new and has never had such a visit, but there is to be one soon at the time of the dedication of the plant. The personnel supervisor is concerned that it may be too ostentatious.

Health and Medical Care and Safety

The information booklet from the executive office sets forth a policy of having a plant dispensary, which is to be supervised by a registered nurse or a first aid attendant. In addition each plant is to have a part-time doctor. The personnel supervisor invited doctors in the community to an interview which was conducted by the medical director from the executive office. The final decision was made jointly by the medical director and the personnel supervisor. The plant doctor is paid a nominal retainer and a fee for any service performed. He gives written orders to the nurse concerning the first aid room, and he inspects the plant twice a week for sanitation and safety purposes.

Administration of the health and safety program of H is the duty of the personnel supervisor. He selected two registered nurses - one for each shift. When the plant is operating nearer to capacity, he will also have a safety director. But at present he handles this function himself. The monthly industrial relations letter sent to the division personnel manager includes a report showing the frequency of accidents and the lost time resulting. These monthly statistics are consolidated by the home office into a comparative report which is sent to the branch. The personnel supervisor at H has been making great efforts to avoid the first lost-time accident.

Wage and Salary Administration

The information booklet from the executive office states

your pay is determined by the job you are on and by the ability with which you work. There is no mystery about pay. If you have any questions, ask your supervisor. He will see that you get the information.

Branch H's wage plan was established by job evaluation conducted by the industrial engineering department of the branch and a community wage survey taken by the supervisor of personnel. The base wage information gathered by the branch is introduced into an incentive plan which was set up by the divisional office. Base pay for the plan was set by determining the average community wage and adding six cents. Before rates are put into effect at the branch, they must be

approved by the division industrial engineer and the plant manager. Although the payroll is prepared at the branch, the divisional office writes the checks.

Employer-Employee Relations

At the present time approximately one-third of the company's branches are unionized. A greater number of the plants were organized in the past, but recent elections have resulted in decertification of some of the unions involved. For example, the CIO multi-plant agreement which now covers four plants previously covered six. The only statement on unions in the information booklet from the executive office is, "At those locations where employees are represented by a union for collective bargaining purposes, a copy of the union contract is available to each employee." Although some of the other branches are organized, the plant manager and the personnel supervisor of Branch H hope that their employees will not choose to be represented by a union. However, plant supervisory personnel have been ordered by the plant manager not to make antiunion remarks to the workers. To the personnel supervisor's knowledge the order has been carried out. There have been no strikes, no pickets, and no articles in the local newspaper about union activity in spite of the fact that five unions have tried to organize the plant. Three of these have given up, but two are still campaigning. They have requested a recognition election administered by the NLRB.

Should a union win recognition, a committee composed of the division personnel manager, the plant manager, the personnel supervisor, and an industrial relations attorney from the executive office would negotiate and sign the contract. Because of this the supervisor of personnel sends union handbills and other such information to the division personnel manager. The union's main selling point is the wage differential that exists between H and a northern plant.

In the matter of seniority, the management of H applies the same principle followed in a strongly unionized plant. Seniority is plant-wide, and it is modified by ability to do the job. This practice governs in case of layoff, recall, and promotion.

There is no written grievance procedure, but the informal steps used are:

1. The employee and his immediate supervisor
2. The employee and the unit foreman
3. The employee, the foreman, and the personnel supervisor
(as a mediator)
4. The employee and the plant manager

There is no appeal from step four, but every effort is made to settle the grievance before it reaches this step.

Employee Benefits and Services

The plant manager and the personnel supervisor, with the approval of the home office industrial relations director, decided

that the following benefits should be offered the employees at H.

Vacations. In accordance with the vacation schedule drawn up at the division office, H will shut down for the last two weeks in July. Eligibility rules for vacation with pay are company-wide.

Insurance. The branch could choose one of two group insurance plans prepared by the medical director. Most branches have Plan A, but the plant manager and the personnel supervisor decided that the Plan B program offered better benefits. This plan provides group life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, non-occupational disability insurance, hospital and surgical benefits, and medical expenses. The employee is insured at no cost to himself, and his dependents can be insured for hospitalization and surgical insurance at a standard nominal fee regardless of the size of the family. The premium for the dependents' insurance is expected to be cut soon with the company increasing its subsidy. The employee can waive the insurance program if he desires, but the company will have to pay a premium for him anyway.

Employee Retirement Plan. This is a company-wide voluntary savings and retirement plan, and over ninety-eight per cent of eligible employees are taking advantage of its benefits. Each pay day three per cent of the employee's gross pay is deposited to his account. At the end of the year six per cent of the profit of the corporation before taxes is added to the fund. Company rules

provide for paying a pension out of this fund or for paying a lump sum to the employee if he leaves before becoming eligible for retirement.

Paid Holidays. There are eight paid holidays. No branches have more; some have less. The branch manager and the personnel supervisor pick seven of the holidays, permitting the employees to select the eighth by majority vote.

Call-in Pay. At H and a few other plants the employee receives four hours pay if he is called to work and no work is available. This provision must be approved by the director of industrial relations.

Death in the Immediate Family. Branch H is one of two branches which provide for three days off with pay in the event of a death in the immediate family. The expense is charged to the employee service fund which is administered by the personnel supervisor.

Jury Duty. It is company-wide policy to pay the employee the difference between his juror's stipend and his average wage.

Employee Purchases. A company-wide plan allows the employees to buy the company's products at a discount. Such purchases are made through the plant personnel department.

Recreation. H and most of the other branches have a recreation society which is financed with the funds from the automatic vending machines. The personnel supervisor is responsible for its activities.

Personnel Records and Research

The branch personnel department keeps two files on each employee, an envelope file and a Kardex file. Personnel supervisors at several of the branches desired an audit in order that the personnel procedures and forms might be made more uniform. They felt that standardization would make it easier to transfer employees and to communicate between plants on personnel problems. A proposal was made that a management consultant be hired by the division office to do this audit. The suggestion was rejected at the division level; however, the personnel supervisor at H believes there is a possibility that an audit will be conducted later by the regular internal auditing team.

As far as the personnel supervisor knows, the home office does very little personnel research. The branch carries on studies of community wage rates, job evaluation, and incentive pay. Branch plants may subscribe to the personnel services of such groups as the National Association of Manufacturers or the American Management Association. This decision is left to the branch manager and the personnel supervisor.

A monthly labor force report covering absenteeism, labor availability, and labor turnover is made for the personnel manager. He consolidates the data for the division and sends them to the

director of industrial relations. A copy of the consolidated report is sent to the personnel supervisor monthly, and he receives a company-wide report on labor statistics annually.

Budget and Costs

The personnel supervisor constructs the personnel budget at H. The plant manager approves it first, followed by the division controller. Five funds are provided in this budget, and the estimated amounts are based on past experience and planning needs. Since this plant is new, the personnel supervisor based his estimates on the number of employees he expected H to have during the year. Any budget variance shows up immediately in the accounting records at the branch and the division level. The budget figures are not considered inflexible. However, plans that will require the personnel supervisor to exceed his budget must be approved by the plant manager.

Itemized costs of hiring an employee, of training him, of communicating with employees, or of maintaining the personnel records are not available. The personnel supervisor has a cost figure for fringe benefits since this has been a point of contention with one of the unions trying to organize H's employees. Cost figures of other branches are not made available to the management of this branch.

The cost of the staff services of the division and of the home office are prorated to the branches as a percentage of the retail price of the goods finished this period. The percentage, therefore,

fluctuates without changes in the services provided.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE QUISTON CORPORATION - BRANCH H

1. Discuss the community wage policy from the viewpoint of the community, the workers, and the union.
2. Give points from the case supporting top management's belief that decentralization is a method of training executives.
3. Assuming that a personnel audit is conducted, what obstacles hinder the adoption of standard personnel policies and procedures?
4. Discuss the following statement pro and con: "A branch plant does not have a cost advantage over a small independent firm because the former is charged for services provided by the home office."
5. What advantages does a new branch plant have over a new independent firm in training production employees?

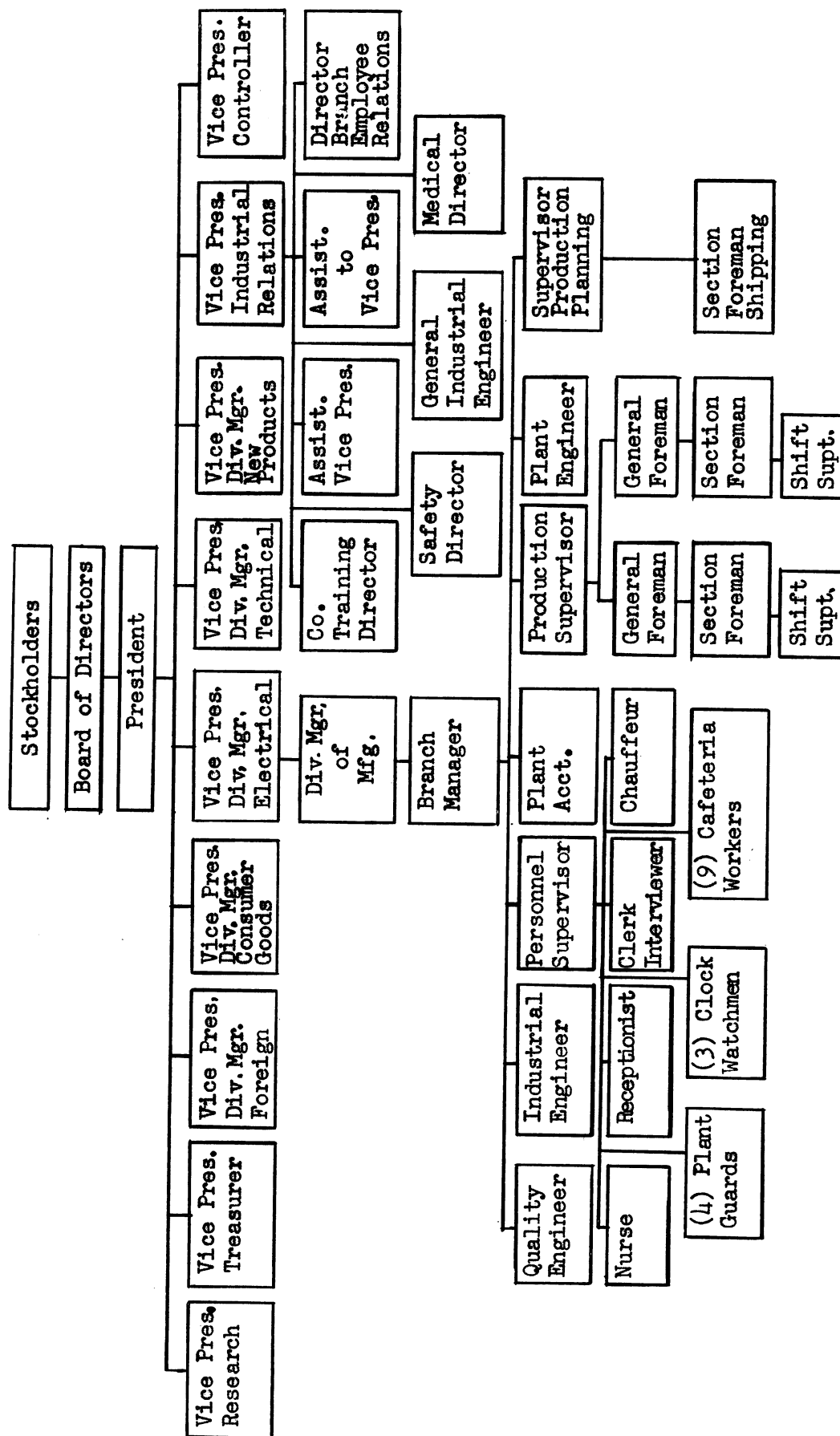
PART II
THE RACKNEY CORPORATION
BRANCH J

The Rackney Corporation manufactures a variety of glass products in ten to fifteen branch plants, of which almost half are located in the same city as the home office. There are also a number of affiliated companies in the United States and in South America. Branch J was constructed in a southern state in the early 1950's to produce two glass products. The company considered opening a separate plant for each product but abandoned the idea because of an anticipated shortage of building materials. Branch J, with a possible work force of 500 and a present work force of 415 on three shifts, is slightly larger than the average sized branch of the parent. Almost fifty per cent of this force are women. The town's population is about 9,000 persons, and 20,000 people live in the country.

After a new plant has been erected, the company has sometimes experienced a decrease in demand for the product. Then, as a matter of public relations, the new plant receives some of the production orders scheduled for the older plants. Although this was not the case at J, the employees of two similar branches felt that the new plant was taking work away from them.

At the home office there is a vice president in charge of

FIGURE II
 PARTIAL ORGANIZATION CHART
 THE RACKNEY CORPORATION
 August, 1954



industrial relations. His staff consists of: an assistant vice president, an assistant to the vice president, a director of branch employee relations, a safety director, a training director, a general industrial engineer, and a medical director. The assistant vice president advises the line executives, and he is responsible for the cafeteria, the credit union, and the commissary at the home office. The assistant to the vice president supervises the personnel department at the main plant, arranges for meetings of branch personnel managers, and develops the testing program for the company. As a result of recent expansion, the position of director of branch employee relations was created to give the branch personnel supervisors an adviser and a trouble shooter. The director visits branch plants regularly to coordinate company policy and to handle grievances being appealed above the plant level. The general industrial engineer reports to the vice president of industrial relations on such matters as job evaluation, time and motion study, and incentive pay. The organization chart shows that the industrial engineer at the plant level does not report to the personnel supervisor. Other members of the home office personnel staff - safety director, training director, and medical director - are specialists in their fields.

Changes in company-wide personnel policies are initiated in the office of the vice president in charge of industrial relations, approved by the president, and circulated by a memorandum from the vice

president's office. The parent company has been in the home office location for more than a century, and most of its employees work in the home plants. Consequently, much of the company policy has been adopted with these plants in mind. There are some policies that top management does not intend to apply to the branch plants away from the home location, and others have to be compromised, unofficially, in such branches. For example, there is a company policy forbidding racial discrimination in hiring and in assigning work which J disregards, because the personnel supervisor believes it would not be practical in a southern branch.

The personnel supervisor was reluctant to acknowledge the existence of the company personnel policy manual because it has not been changed in ten years. Every year there have been rumors that the manual would be revised. Since many of the policies contained in the manual are out-of-date, the personnel supervisor considers himself more tightly bound by the payroll procedures and practices set in the controller's office. The vice president of industrial relations can order a departure from payroll procedure when he feels that this is necessary, and his ruling becomes a new payroll procedure.

The personnel staff of Branch J includes:

- Plant Supervisor of Personnel
- Personnel Secretary
- Plant Receptionist
- Plant Nurse
- Four Plant Guards

Three Clock Watchmen
Nine Cafeteria Workers
Company Chauffeur

The personnel supervisor feels that his department is understaffed because there is no training director, although such a position will be added eventually. He was formerly the training director of another plant, and at the present time he handles this function for J along with his other duties.

In addition to her stenographic duties, the personnel secretary keeps the personnel files and handles the group insurance records. Actually she is supposed to interview female job applicants as well, but the personnel supervisor took this task from her saying, "I can talk, but I can't type." The duties of the other persons reporting to the personnel supervisor are explained by their job titles.

Although the personnel supervisor reports to the branch manager, he sometimes goes directly to top staff men for assistance. When the plant manager and the personnel supervisor cannot agree on a problem, the latter might request aid from the director of branch employee relations. The latter will strongly recommend that the plant manager cooperate if it is believed that the program is favored by the vice president in charge of industrial relations.

The personnel supervisor formulates minor policies such as those concerning medical practices and absenteeism. When Branch J began operations, no one wanted to say that the obsolete policy manual

was to be followed. Therefore, the personnel supervisor distributed a summary of company policies to be used as a guide for plant supervisors in dealing with employees.

The home office makes only an indirect check to see whether the branch is following company-wide policy. However, the director of branch employee relations visits often, and he is likely to note departures. Also, mistakes made at the branch might call attention to deviations from policies set at the home office.

Employment

As was previously mentioned, the branch finds it necessary to depart from a company-wide policy of prohibiting racial discrimination in hiring and job assignment. Another company policy which must be disregarded requires that all employees be high school graduates. This is not feasible because of the low level of education in the area.

Although he may find it necessary to justify his actions to the division manager of manufacturing, the branch manager can hire or fire anyone, including the personnel supervisor without obtaining prior approval. The personnel supervisor contacts college graduates in the area for the company. Those needed at J are engaged by the plant manager. Others who seem to show promise are recommended to the home office staff member in charge of college recruiting. A report on this activity is sent to the home office.

A sales forecast at the division office results in production assignments for the branch plants, and from this J can estimate its personnel requirements. The production superintendent or a department head notifies the personnel supervisor how many operators to recall or hire. When the first workers were needed, the personnel supervisor made arrangements for the state employment service to do the preliminary screening of applicants. However, the vice president in charge of industrial relations refused to approve. The personnel supervisor has persuaded the home office that the company can turn down applicants after the preliminary screening, and that it was harmful to public relations to sever the previous connection. At the present time the personnel supervisor is trying to re-establish contact with the employment service.

The standard hiring procedure consists of the following steps:

1. Filing an application
2. An interview by the personnel supervisor
3. A reference check
4. Testing (if indicated)
5. An interview by the immediate supervisor
6. A physical examination

The employment forms are uniform, and they were prepared at the home office. Since testing of all applicants proved to be too expensive, the personnel supervisor decided to test all those applying for

salaried positions and only those applicants for hourly rated jobs who appear to be promotable. The personnel supervisor administers and grades a standard battery of tests which are selected by the assistant to the vice president. The tests are used as a means of learning more about the individual and as a tool to guide the interview. However, a low test score does not mean that the applicant will not be hired. The personnel supervisor believes that a company-wide statistical report on the results of the tests would be beneficial. At present this has not been done.

Employee Communication

Management proceeds on the assumption that the employees are interested in future security and thus wish to know the business prospects of the company and the plant. Written downward communication from the home office consists of: a monthly house organ, a quarterly magazine, letters to employees, and booklets on special topics, such as the insurance program and the suggestion system. News of the home office, the branch plants, and general business conditions are presented in the monthly newspaper. The personnel supervisor, who is the editor of J's news staff, tries to have a story accompanied by pictures in every issue. A mailing tape of employees' names is sent to the public relations department at the home office, and a copy of the newspaper is mailed to each employee's home. The quarterly magazine is distributed

to employees in the same way. Stockholders and customers also receive copies of the magazine, which contains articles on company products and research. Letters from the home office are sent to employees' homes on special occasions.

Branch management also communicates with the employees by written means such as: letters from the plant manager or the supervisor of personnel, bulletin boards, an information rack, an orientation booklet, the local newspaper, and the union contract. Once every three months a form letter explaining business conditions is written by the plant manager and mailed to the employees' homes. The most recent letter contained the following statement.

The main purpose of this letter is to give you as much information as I can about the customer outlook. From time to time as conditions change, I will pass the information along to you.

Letters from the personnel supervisor deal with specific matters, such as the forming of a credit union or a proposed plant picnic. Double sets of bulletin boards are provided throughout the plant. One is for company information and the other for union news. In return for exclusive bulletin boards, the union promises not to post notices elsewhere on company property.

Company pamphlets are not distributed on the information rack. Rather it is used exclusively for booklets purchased from the National Research Bureau, Inc. Information racks were discussed at a personnel

supervisors' meeting held at the home office, and the division manager agreed to experiment with them at J. Every ten days booklets dealing with general information about hobbies, the economy, etc., are placed on the rack. The personnel supervisor can refuse to distribute any particular pamphlet, and unused pamphlets can be returned for credit.

In order that the foremen may be sufficiently informed to answer employees' questions, each foreman receives a packet of the booklets two and a half weeks before they are placed on the rack. The personnel supervisor thought that the booklets would be taken and thrown on the floor without being read, but he admits that he was wrong. That these pamphlets are reaching the homes is attested by the fact that the local schools and churches have called to ask for copies of some of them. Although the value of this service is still being tested, the personnel supervisor has made a favorable interim report on its cost and employee acceptance at a meeting of personnel supervisors.

A booklet prepared for general distribution at the opening of Branch J is given to all new employees because there is no employee handbook. This booklet includes a message of welcome from the plant manager, a history of the company, a list of other branches, the products manufactured, and a layout of the plant. Actually it is a poor substitute for an employee handbook and must be supplemented by an oral orientation.

The local newspaper has cooperated fully with the personnel supervisor in giving information to the community and to employees. Any press releases must be approved by the plant manager, and pictures of operations may not be printed without approval from the home office.

The company pays for printing the local union contract and distributes it with the first pay check after its adoption.

The annual report of the company is not made available to the production employees at J. However, it is mailed to supervisors. In the opinion of the personnel supervisor, this procedure may be a mistake because the union furnishes information about company earnings anyway.

The grievance procedure and the suggestion system are channels of upward written communication. According to the personnel supervisor, employees usually communicate by way of the grievance procedure. He wishes that more communication would take place by some other means. However, he feels that this problem will disappear in time as the employees gain experience in union matters. The operation of the suggestion system will be discussed later.

Although the plant manager encourages the employees to discuss any problems with the personnel supervisor, an attempt is made to have each foreman handle problems in his department. The personnel supervisor spends at least an hour a day in the plant. He stated that if

he had less paper work, he would spend more time there. Also, he attends union meetings, upon invitation, to explain such matters as the insurance program and the company view on the contract.

On special occasions employee meetings may be called to give information or training. At J these meetings are held on company time, but in some branches they are not.

The two-way direct communication between the home office industrial relations section and the personnel supervisor includes the phone, memoranda, meetings, or visits. If he believes that the plant manager should be informed, the personnel supervisor notifies him. But the supervisor finds it more difficult to communicate with the plant manager than to reach the home office personnel staff. The plant manager prefers that any contact with him be handled by memorandum.

At irregular times the assistant to the vice president of industrial relations arranges conferences, which enable personnel supervisors to communicate with each other as well as with the home office personnel staff. The general industrial engineer attends these meetings, and occasionally the plant industrial engineers are invited. The personnel supervisors do not like this because they feel that the general industrial engineer wants to have his men take over the discussion, and they believe that the engineers slight the human side of production. Activities of the meetings will be discussed more fully

under "Personnel Records and Research."

Rumors cause very little trouble at J in the opinion of the personnel supervisor. But occasionally there will be a large number of job applicants because of a rumor that the branch is hiring.

Top management visits the plant perhaps once a year for the anniversary dinner at which eligible employees receive service pins. The expense of the dinner is met by the home office, and funds made available are practically unlimited. Part of these funds is used to clean up the plant. Since top executives do not make it a point to speak to the employees or to production supervisors, the personnel supervisor feels that the visits do not improve employer-employee relations.

Once a month a policy meeting is held at the branch for supervisory employees. Usually this discussion is conducted by a representative of the division office, who is not a member of the personnel department. Occasionally, a representative of the home office conducts the meeting. He may be, but is not necessarily, a personnel staff member.

Training and Education

According to the union contract, openings for skilled jobs must be filled from the present work force if possible. The strict application given this rule limits the hiring to inexperienced workers who are capable of being trained for advancement. However, the branch is not

organized as well in training as the personnel supervisor intends that it shall be.

An effort is made to have some training in progress at all times. A new employee attends an orientation meeting at which movies about the company's products are shown. Then he receives on-the-job training given by his foreman. General training on such subjects as production methods improvement, personnel problems, and business conditions has been by means of conference-discussion meetings at which each department head gets together with his employees and discusses problems of the department, of the company, and of a personal nature. Each shift foreman has meetings with his employees from four to six times a year, and the department heads call employee meetings from two to three times a year. In addition to disseminating information, these meetings have been used to give the employees an opportunity to release pent-up emotions and to air complaints.

Industrial truck drivers, members of the fire brigade, cafeteria workers, and other such groups receive special training.

Supervisory training is provided at both the home office and the branch. At its own expense the home office conducts a one-week training class for prospective supervisors. The fact that an employee is sent to this class does not mean that he will be promoted immediately, but it does mean that he is being considered as a potential supervisor. Every other month the home office sponsors an advanced supervisory

training class to which J sends at least one representative.

On the branch level the production superintendent conducted eight biweekly evening sessions last year for department heads and their supervisors. Problems confronting the production department in methods, accounting, budget, cost, employment, training, and company policies were discussed. The plant accountant and the personnel supervisor conducted the sessions dealing with their respective specialities. Once a year the personnel supervisor holds classes in merit rating for those in charge of salaried personnel.

An annual training report must be submitted to the company training director by the personnel supervisor. This is a letter rather than a standard form, and it helps the division evaluate the training carried on at the branches. A composite report of the training given at all branches is later sent to the personnel supervisor.

At present the company has many young men in responsible positions who need more training and an opportunity to mature. There are two programs for the development of executives. One is a technical training program which gives a year's training covering all the departments of the company on the branch plant and main plant levels. While being rotated the trainee's wages are paid from the training department's budget. During the year the training department, together with the trainee, should decide upon a suitable permanent assignment.

Certain key individuals attend an executive development program

conducted by a prominent business school. Selection to participate is a strong indication that the person is on the way to a top position with the company.

Health and Medical Care and Safety

The home office supervises the medical program in a general way. However, the specific setup at the branch depends on the practice in the area. The personnel supervisor administers the medical program at J, and the plant nurse reports to him. Since the home office (with 9,000 employees) has a nurse for the day shift only, the vice president of industrial relations is of the opinion that this is sufficient for all plants. At the union's insistence one branch has a nurse on each shift. Branch J has just one nurse, although the personnel supervisor would prefer having an attendant in the dispensary during all working hours. It is a duty of the plant supervisors to give first aid on the second and third shifts. The personnel supervisor has selected a plant doctor who spends an hour a day in the dispensary, which is well equipped to handle emergency cases. Signs are prominently placed in the first aid room notifying employees that off-the-job sickness and injuries are to be treated by their family physicians.

A separate medical history file is kept in the dispensary, and any production supervisor has access to the records of people who report

to him, provided the personnel supervisor gives his approval.

Plant safety is the responsibility of the personnel supervisor who can request assistance from the safety director and industrial hygienist on the home office staff. Aid would consist of such information as the best safety devices available and a dust sample of the plant. Safety does not take enough of his time according to the personnel supervisor, because he does not have enough time to give to it.

The personnel supervisor heads a safety committee composed of union and management members. The committee meets once a month to study lessons prepared by the home office. After the third meeting, the committee makes an unannounced inspection of the plant, and a report on safety conditions is submitted to the plant manager. With the exception of the personnel supervisor, membership on the committee is rotated quarterly. Minutes of the meetings of the committee are sent to the home office safety director, and about twice a year an inspector from the home office visits the plant.

The personnel supervisor decides the safety feature that should be stressed at any particular time. There is a constant emphasis on improving the housekeeping, with the union agitating for more men on the cleaning force.

Branch J is the only branch that submits a monthly report to the medical director. Acting on their own initiative the personnel super-

visor and the plant nurse drafted the form for this report, and the medical director has recommended that it be adopted throughout the company. It contains the following information:

1. Total employees
2. Number of employees treated
3. Number of doctor cases
4. Number of lost time cases
5. Number of days lost

From this the accident frequency and severity rates are computed. In addition, a summary of the occupational cases is referred to the doctor, classifying each case as a home or hospital case and each injury as fatal, permanent, temporary, or non-disabling. Also, days lost, medical costs, and the closing date for the case are presented. Copies of this report are given to the production superintendent, the personnel supervisor, the medical director, and the insurance manager who is on the staff of the assistant to the vice president of industrial relations. The plant nurse prepares and signs the report.

Wage and Salary Administration

The company has a wage policy of paying slightly above the community rate. Because of this policy, the employees do not receive as much per hour at J as they receive for similar work in some of the other branches. The union has attacked this policy, and it is attempting to break the area rate differential. In order to ascertain the

community rate, the industrial engineering department of the home office conducted a wage survey.

In some of the older plants, an employee is rated by a merit system, with the foreman's evaluation determining when the employee reaches the top rate for his job. Branch J uses a plan which classifies jobs into groups for which rate ranges are set. The employee is on probation for sixty days. At the end of three months he goes from the starting rate to an intermediate rate. After an additional three months, he receives the top rate. This plan is based on job analysis and job evaluation conducted by the plant industrial engineer and approved by the general industrial engineer.

Once an employee attains the highest rate for his job, he will receive that pay until the range is changed or until he is successful in bidding a higher rated job. The home office, which must authorize range changes, keeps a complete statistical record of branch rates. No wage reports are received at J. However, if the personnel supervisor requested a summary report showing the wage rates paid at other plants, the home office would provide such information.

Employer-Employee Relations

National unions affiliated with the AFL and the CIO showed an interest in organizing the new branch. As the company experienced labor troubles in some of its other plants with one of the national unions, the home office hoped that this particular union would not be

chosen to represent the employees of J. Shortly after the plant began operations and to the mutual satisfaction of the employees and the company, a local affiliated with another national was recognized without an election, after obtaining signatures of a substantial majority of the employees.

The bargaining unit includes production, maintenance, and cafeteria workers. Since the cafeteria jobs are considered to be better than the production jobs, long-service workers have used the system of plant-wide seniority to serve the cafeteria jobs. About six months after the plant opened, the cafeteria began operations with a crew selected on the basis of previous experience in food preparation. Almost immediately the production workers with more seniority began to clamor for the cafeteria positions. The personnel supervisor wishes that he had insisted on keeping a separate seniority list for the cafeteria employees.

Although the union contract is negotiated on a local level, bargaining sessions are conducted after the contract covering the home plants has been signed. The pattern set at the main plants governs the total amount that can be granted at the branch. However, branch contracts may differ because the union locals may accept less money and more fringe benefits or vice versa.

A labor attorney from the home office negotiates with the union local. After the present agreement was reached, the contract was signed by both home office and branch company representatives and union

representatives from the national and the local. Company officials who signed were the vice president in charge of industrial relations, the director of branch employee relations, the plant manager, the plant personnel supervisor, the production superintendent, the process engineer, the plant accountant, the plant industrial engineer, three shift foremen, and five production foremen. Signers representing the national union include the president, the secretary-treasurer, an international representative, and a national representative. Those signing for the local union were the president, the vice president, the secretary-treasurer, the corresponding secretary, the recording secretary, and nine committee men. After adoption the contract was printed at company expense and distributed to the workers. There has never been a strike or an unfair labor charge at J.

According to the union contract the grievance procedure includes the following steps:

1. The employee brings the grievance to the attention of the foreman. If the employee so desires, he may be accompanied by his committeeman.
2. The union's departmental committee meets with the department head and the personnel supervisor.
3. The executive committee of the local confers with the plant manager.
4. A joint committee of six composed of three union members,

including a national representative, and three management members shall name a seventh member within thirty days.

The decision of the majority of the committee is final and binding on both sides.

Although a grievance has never been taken to arbitration, most of them advance to the third step. This is because supervisors are reluctant to make decisions which the plant manager may reverse. If it seems that a grievance is going to reach step four, the personnel supervisor notifies the home office of the details involved and of his opinion on the case. To guide the thinking of branch management, the vice president of industrial relations sends to the personnel supervisor a record of the grievance cases that result in important decisions.

An attempt has been made to build worker loyalty to the branch in the name of the parent, but the personnel supervisor admits failure. Although many of the workers have stated that this is the best plant in which they have worked, they still distrust the bigness of the company. The employees do not feel that the parent is interested in them. Because of this attitude, the new branch plant with an abundant labor market is building a reputation with the company as being a problem plant which causes branch management much concern. It is realized that when the home office assigns production to the branches, other plants where the attitude is better are more likely to receive the orders if they have the capacity.

Employee Benefits and Services

The following benefits and services are available to employees of Branch J.

Vacations. The terms of the vacation plan are negotiated by the home office and the union for the home plants, and they are adopted on a company-wide basis. At J the plant manager determines the date of the two-week shutdown which must fall between June 1 and September 30.

Suggestion System. The home office prepares a booklet setting forth the main features of the suggestion system. On the top level the program is supervised by the industrial relations department. On the plant level it is administered by the industrial engineer who reports directly to the plant manager. The amount of the award is determined at the branch, and it is based on a percentage of the first year's savings. An award list distributed throughout the company may call the suggestion to the attention of another branch. The employee will receive a percentage of the first year's savings from any branch which adopts his suggestion.

Insurance. The insurance program includes group life, sickness and accident disability, hospital expense, surgical, X-ray, and polio insurance. It is negotiated at the branch. The employee pays half of the cost of the basic insurance plan and all of the diagnostic X-ray and polio costs. With the exception of the group life plan, the employee may include coverage for his family if he so desires. The group plan calls for participation by at least seventy-five per cent of the employees;

about ninety-four per cent are covered. A monthly report listing deductions, claims, cancellations, and additions is made to a full-time insurance employee at the home office. Although at present the insurance program is administered by the home office which is reimbursed by the insurance company, a plan is under consideration for Branch J to assume the administration.

Employee Retirement Plan. This is a company-wide, noncontributory plan. When an eligible employee reaches sixty-five, the branch notifies the home office. Retirement checks are sent from the home office to the branch, and they are based on the earnings of his best ten years.

Employee Purchase of Products. All products manufactured by the company for sale to the public may be purchased by employees at cost. This program is handled by the purchasing department, which is subordinate to the plant supervisor of production planning.

Paid Holidays. These are negotiated, and the pattern is set at the home office. However, the plan still must be negotiated locally. There are seven paid holidays, one of which could be the day of the plant picnic if the local contract so specifies.

Employee Recreation. The personnel supervisor heads the employee recreation committee at J. Sports activities and a Christmas party are sponsored by the committee and paid for by the proceeds from the vending machines in the shop and cafeteria. As much of this profit

as possible is reserved for the plant picnic. The union members feel that this money belongs to them since they are the largest group in the plant and thus probably patronize the vending machines most. However, plant management has insisted that these proceeds belong equally to all employees.

Last year the plant picnic was a great success in every way but financially. Although the union supplemented the recreation fund by \$250, the picnic resulted in a loss which was covered by the vending machine profits for the following period.

Personnel Records and Research

The branch keeps both a card and an envelope file on each employee, and these files are not audited in any way. Company-wide record forms are used unless the branch is testing a form which will be made standard if it proves successful. The personnel supervisor believes that the application blank could be much more informative for J, but the home office is in a state where a Fair Employment Practices Act has been adopted. The state in which the branch is located has no such act, so additional information about the applicant could be secured locally.

The personnel supervisor does not know of any research being conducted by personnel men on the top level. Research is carried on by committees composed of branch personnel supervisors and appointed by the vice president in charge of industrial relations. When a

suggestion is made at a home office meeting of personnel supervisors which the vice president considers worthy of further study, he appoints an investigating committee. Usually the individual who initiates the discussion is made chairman, and remaining members are appointed from those who evidenced an interest in the subject. An effort is made to choose men from plants which are in different locations and produce different products. A report of findings is made at a later meeting of personnel supervisors; and if it is not well received, it goes back to the committee for further research.

The branch computes statistics on the accident rates, labor turnover, and absenteeism. The only report submitted to the home office by all branches is that on absenteeism. This is done because the general industrial engineer is attempting to set up a company-wide policy dealing with the problem.

Budget and Costs

The personnel manager prepares a departmental budget which he submits to the plant accountant. Accounts for regular salary, overtime pay, and holiday pay for salaried employees in the department are included therein. Also, there are accounts for indirect labor (guards and watchmen), department supplies, and repairs for business machines. The personnel supervisor makes a separate budget for the cafeteria. The plant manager and the plant accountant study the departmental budgets in order to prepare a branch budget. At this time the plant manager

may call upon the personnel supervisor to defend his figures. The finished branch budget is submitted to the division manager of manufacturing who studies it with the vice president in charge of electric products and the division accountant.

Every month the plant accounting department sends a report to the personnel supervisor showing the actual and budgeted figures for the period and for the year-to-date. Although the plant manager requires an explanation on any variance in cafeteria costs, other variances are not explained unless they are substantial. The plant manager, who receives a copy of the monthly comparison of actual and budgeted costs, is aware of the variances as soon as the personnel supervisor.

It is possible to find the approximate cost of hiring and training an employee. The cost of fringe benefits cannot be ascertained at the branch, but the home office is able to compute it for negotiation purposes. Communication costs are charged to the branch plant and not to the personnel department. Cost figures of the other branches are available to J if the personnel supervisor wants them. He can ask the personnel supervisors of other branches for the information, or he can obtain a report from the home office showing the average costs for the company. The cost of the personnel services provided by the home office is prorated over the divisions and plants. The personnel supervisor does not know the basis used for this allocation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE RACKNEY CORPORATION - BRANCH J

1. How can morale be raised in the old plant whose employees believe that the new plant is depriving them of work that rightfully belongs to them?
2. Discuss the method used by the Rackney Corporation to determine company-wide policy. Discuss other methods of determining company-wide policies for a decentralized organization.
3. There is a direct line of communication between the home office personnel department and the branch personnel supervisor. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this functional relationship?
4. What impact does the bargaining procedure described in the case have on local collective bargaining?
5. Discuss the Rackney Corporation's method of conducting research in the field of personnel.
6. If you were personnel supervisor of Branch J, what would be your plan for building worker loyalty?

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