

'neutral member' and all . . . members are experts in railroad agreement matters have led both officials and employees to have confidence not only in the fairness of decisions reached but as to the technical ability of the members of the boards to pass intelligently upon all controversies submitted for decision."

A third serious defect in the Transportation Act is the lack of any skilled and experienced government body whose job it is to promote mediation and conciliation of railroad labor disputes. Probably the most successful features of any railroad labor law ever enacted in this country were the mediation provisions of the Erdman and Newlands Acts, which were in constant use for over twenty years.

The record of such commissioners as Judge Knapp and Dr. Neill in inducing obdurate leaders on both sides to retire from extreme positions, and their success in breaking the tightest deadlocks, is the proudest record of achievement in industrial peace we have. During the past four years the railway labor situation has suffered from the lack of the services of just such skilled labor adjusters as were provided by this previous legislation—

men who were not only impartial, but of a stature to command respect, and well versed in the intricacies of the railroad industry and with the science of labor adjustments. The type of men picked for a place on the Railroad Labor Board, as representatives of the "public," is a good illustration (barring the case of Mr. Hanger) of the sort of appointees who would *not* be fitted as mediators. The task of such mediators, who should be named by the President, with the consent of the Senate, and enjoy the prestige of a high government standing, should be to gather up the threads where repeated unsuccessful conferences have left them.

Legislation which, first, emphasizes agreements between the parties, reached through conferences between genuine representatives of each side; second, provides for the erection of adjustment boards of the sort described; third, reenacts the mediation provisions of the Newlands Act, will be assured the earnest support of the more than 2,000,000 railroad workers, of the more liberal and intelligent of the executives, and, because it gives the greatest assurance of railroad peace, of the general public.

DAVID E. LILIENTHAL.

## "Selling the Company"

THE plant paper or employees' magazine is one of the numerous cures for unrest which American industry has tried within the last decade. Established, sometimes in connection with, sometimes independently of welfare or "industrial relations" programs, these magazines now represent a capital investment of, roughly, \$4,000,000, and constitute an article of some bulk in the journalistic diet of the working class. They are published "for," "in the interests of," "for the information and inspiration of," occasionally "for and by"—note the word "by"—the employees of a corporation. Editorship is vested in divers officials—sales manager, advertising chief, personnel manager, factory superintendent, and, rarely, in an editorial board. The money is put up by the management, the cost varying from a few cents per employee yearly to a total of \$50,000 per annum. The paper is circularized free of charge to all employees, and is sometimes mailed to their home addresses. Families and friends may be put on the mailing list by request. Some firms even retain their laid off employees as readers. In a large corporation the circulation includes the personnel of the sales force and the stockholders.

The magazines are usually meant to promote industrial efficiency. Editors are rarely more explicit, and since all manner of activities from detective service to shortening of hours are regularly urged, definition sheds little light on the

character of the magazines. Some editors conduct publicity campaigns to eliminate the wastes of heavy accident rates, of sickness and tardiness; they put their ingenuity at the disposal of the company doctors, nurses and safety engineers. Others open their columns to suggestion competitions, thus stimulating the employees to think and contrive while on the job; towards this end they print technical and descriptive articles, explaining a series of manufacturing processes, or the ultimate destination and uses of the product.

Still other editors pursue a different object: they plainly tell the employee that he is fortunate to work for a good and great company and they demand in return his loyalty and enthusiasm cash down. Moreover, his loyalty is explicitly and concretely directed: he is expected to speak well of the company, to buy its products and sell them to his entourage; to uphold his employer's political actions and beliefs—besides putting strong effort and obedient will into the routine of his job for the required number of hours per week. Certain perspicacious writers have discovered that the employee's home environment, his habits and conduct outside the factory influence productive efficiency to an alarming extent. They therefore urge him to cultivate regular habits, long hours of sleep, moderation in amusements. Even the elimination of gossiping, slander and family quarrels is supposed to help efficiency, presumably because it establishes the habit of minding one's own

business, thus making the worker immune to agitation.

There is still another journalistic route to supposed industrial efficiency: the editor may shrink from either teaching or preaching to his audience and may choose simply to amuse them. During the war factory operatives were often assembled during the noon hour in the restaurant or courtyard for a "community sing." Singing was found to be a cheap and elementary form of enjoyment. Output charts are supposed to have indicated noticeable improvement under the stimulus of music. To spend \$10,000 a year in producing a funny paper for the factory is a similar though more elaborate form of stimulation. The technique is simple enough: comics, jokes, personal and social notes, especially those of a mildly teasing nature, cartoons, are the ingredients. Nearly every employees' magazine utilizes such material, with this difference, however, that, while some make it their bait or trimming, others offer practically nothing more substantial.

Each of the types of layout described possesses its own peculiar stylistic vehicle. The magazines which aim to inspire adopt a cordial, sentimental and evangelical vocabulary; those which specialize in humor often cultivate slang and shop jargon and even avoid a grammatical expression if there is an ungrammatical idiom at hand. A few editors have made a stand for literary form, but these are ridiculed as purists and denounced as undemocratic by the majority. The "efficiency" magazines speak the language of the professional salesman: breezy, resourceful, intimate, full of punch, and man-to-man common sense. Reading these magazines is to me like fingering a gold brick—but that is perhaps a personal idiosyncrasy.

To one who is interested in the magazines from the standpoint of the relations between labor and management, those which are purely humorous and gossipy are of slight importance. Perhaps they grease the wheels, but they cannot conjure obstacles off the tracks or repair dislocations in the machinery. The part which the magazines essay to play in character-building similarly lacks significance. If the editorial policy goes to such lengths as the *Magnolia Oil News*' indorsement of a campaign for compulsory thrift under the slogan, "Save or Be Fired," we can safely count the publication among the sources of irritation in industry.

The subjects which really touch the relations of capital and labor and which are therefore of primary interest to labor are wages, hours, methods of collective bargaining, working conditions (including regularity of employment), and the status of employer and employee. It hardly seems possible that a journal published "for" or "in the interests of the employees" can neglect these vital subjects and still remain true to its subtitle! Yet it requires extended search to discover among

the employee magazines even an occasional account of the doings of a joint committee under a representation plan, or a discussion, even from the managerial point of view, of the company's wage policy. Alterations in factory arrangement, carried out in the interests of the employee's comfort or of increased production, are sometimes given publicity. The actual jobs do not come under fire. In my experience I have come across a single reference to hours and that was the *General Chemical Bulletin*, congratulating itself upon the chemical industry's fifty-four-hour week compared to an average forty-nine-hour week in other industries, as a sign of superior conditions of employment.

These impressions are confirmed by a Report of the National Personnel Association, published in 1922, which states:

During the recent wage disturbances throughout the country a survey made of 300 employee publications showed that only one threw open its columns to a frank discussion of the subject.

In another case there was a brief editorial referring to the subject, and in the third instance there was a cartoon showing capital and labor playing cards.

The other 297 had no reference to wages.

Employment, hours, wages, the welfare of workers in other companies, industries or countries seem not to have the slightest news value for these magazines. A few editors are heartily in favor of teaching the employee the "fundamental economic laws of the business world" but genuine discussion of the subject has not yet obtained a foothold in their pages. Probably with the spread of classes in "employee economics" which certain large firms are beginning to conduct, we may look for larger attention to such subjects. For the most part the editors are too busy advertising their own companies—selling them to the employees—to care much for generalizations which bring competitors to the front.

Judged by the opinions which industrial editors air freely in the trade papers, the magazine which deals with the most numerous phases of the workers' life is counted the most efficient; the magazine which publishes the social gossip of a plant, plentifully illustrated with snapshot photographs: (the ideal magazine, we are told by one editor, aims to publish 2,000 names per annum, so that practically every employee may see his name in print at least once a twelve-month); the magazine which is cut to fit the employee's overcoat pocket, in order that it will be assured a circulation in the home where the wife will clip the recipes and fashion notes, and the children, inspired by the pages intended for their consumption, will look forward to the day when they too will enter the company's employment office. These are the devices which aim at the kind of success the editors covet. Once the attention of the employee

and his family has been thus arrested, the editor may proceed to the more serious business of suggesting a mode of life and building a character for the employee: he should own a home in the vicinity of the factory, an automobile, perhaps some stock in the corporation, plant a garden, start a savings account. He should strive for promotion, but, failing that, should feel a glow of satisfaction in plodding faithfully away at the same job for a quarter of a century. Certain editors seem to perceive the incongruity of bestowing equal praise and publicity on the man who gets promoted and the man who does not; but since both types of individuals are profitable to the firm, the discrepancy will probably continue.

The employer has thus—so he fondly supposes!—at last hit upon a combination of the factors which produce a stable and docile working force and the factors which bring contentment to the employee. Few editors are, however, satisfied to let these attractive models of existence speak for themselves. To be sure, up-to-date editors discountenance outright “company laudation,” but even they rarely leave the employee free to make his own deductions about the virtue of a company which shares profits, aids in home building, or runs a summer vacation camp, or which, even if these solid evidences of good will are lacking, at least dispenses free advice concerning happiness and how to get it. Most editors do not trust the employee’s sense of gratitude. They must put the words, somewhat in the following order, into his mouth:

1. I believe in my employer.
2. I believe in my company’s policies.
3. I believe in myself.
4. I believe in my co-workers.
5. I believe in doing my work well.
6. I believe that I will get out of life just what I put into it.
7. I believe in the products we manufacture.
8. I believe that more people need to use Magnolene.
9. I believe that those who buy Magnolene are favored.

Magnolia Oil News, January, 1923.

From this it is but a step to the creed written by the professional journalist, or essayist, and inserted like a syndicated news item in employee magazines all over the country:

#### A CREED BY HENRY A. EARNSHAW

I believe in myself and in my friends. I believe in my company—in humanity in general and that the good in the world far outweighs the bad. I believe that I shall receive justice and a square deal. I believe that if I do my best, if I study to improve myself and look cheerfully upon life and its tasks, whatever rewards may be justly due me I shall receive.

I believe that business is simply organized service.

I believe that the work I am doing is worth while.

Thus the magazine endeavors to “sell the company” to the worker! This syndicated creed is not the product of any specific welfare program in any particular factory. It does not reflect the relations between a real employer and a real body of employees. Yet it is used as a valid argument for any stimulus to the personal loyalty of an employee in the Continental Mills of Germantown—the factory, in whose paper I happen to have seen the article appear—and in more besides.

An editorial policy, which clings to fact and simple logic, which interests itself in the questions that occur unfailingly to workers whenever they have been allowed to pursue their own trains of thought—an editor, who wants to give out information and not only inspiration, is still something of a curiosity. The information actually imparted invariably consists of what the employer wants to tell, not necessarily of what the worker wants to know. The editor is in fact the mouth-piece of the company and as such simply puts the managerial views and expectations on paper. Even such breadth of view as is characteristic of a liberal employment manager is a rarity.

The employee magazine that enters into a discussion of economic probabilities, social theories, political measures, makes but a sorry showing. It is then that the limitations, or rather the dangers of the publications, become obvious. A paper financially supported by the employer, edited in his office, sometimes under his censorship, is of course subject to all the evils of a subsidized press. The editor in fact has hardly more independence than the advertiser, who would usually be out of a job if he told the whole truth about the company’s products. Like the “ad” composer, the industrial editor has not the shadow of influence or control over the article he is engaged in boosting—namely, the company’s labor policy.

One might suppose that in view of the bias of the magazines some of the more pushing editors would aim at perfecting their publications in the art of propaganda. Why should they attack government regulation, unionism and socialist fallacies only intermittently and half-heartedly when they might be developing a weapon of real power for the employers’ side? The reluctance of editors to go so far is, I think, explicable. In the first place, to do popular, social, political and economic writing requires more effort than the collecting of miscellaneous jokes, anecdotes and moral epigrams. Many magazines owe more to scissors and paste than to the pen. In the second place, an aggressive policy might provoke a fatal “come-back” from labor. In the third place, their present methods are perhaps deadlier to radicalism than a frontal attack.

A Robot cast in an arbitrary mould does not think or act out of his character. In fact he does not think at all. He accepts, performs, enjoys elementary satisfactions. The subtlest form of propaganda is therefore that which numbs or de-



stroys thought. At this the employee magazine really aims. In the entire range of employee journalism there is no intellectual appeal or stimulus to the employee. Even prejudice and passion are rare, because the aim is to divert rather than to misrepresent. The cheapness of the magazines' literary aims and achievements, the cult of slang, the driveling sentimentality of the "human interest stories," the volume of utterly trivial anecdotes and practical jokes, are all meant to stabilize the working force, because they tend to choke off what-

ever critical and rebellious faculties are faintly stirring in the American worker.

When shall we have a corporation publication, which states facts, opens its columns to workers, and, instead of trying to sell the company to the worker, recognizes the worker as a personality fully entitled to his own point of view and just as fully entitled to express it in the publication that assumes to speak for the "company" of which he is an organic part, and for him?

JEAN ATHERTON FLEXNER

## A Public School Experiment

**A**CCORDING to a widely current doctrine, there is and must always be a division of labor between the public and the private schools. The private school may undertake extended experiments. It is free, within wide limits to teach such subjects as seem promising, by such methods as appear hopeful. The public school, being essentially bureaucratic, may adopt only the subjects and methods that seem to have a virtual certainty of success. The function of the private school, according to this view, is to probe all things. That of the public school is to hold fast that which is good, or if not good, at least generally acceptable.

There is much justice in these observations. Yet it will not do to press too far the distinction between private and public school. The former is not so free nor the latter so bureaucratic as we usually assume. The public schools, in spite of the handicaps of inadequate staff, congested buildings, political interference, do respond to the spirit of educational progress. In New York City, where these handicaps are naturally more serious than in smaller cities we nevertheless find significant educational experiments, partly under direct official supervision and guidance, and partly with the encouragement and approval of the supervisory staff. These experiments range in thoroughness from mere regrading and regrouping of children to radical departures from that most sacred of all school traditions—the course of study.

One of the most remarkable of educational experiments is now being carried through by Miss Elisabeth Irwin, under joint public and private auspices. The Children's Aid Society has donated the top floor of its building at 535 East Sixteenth Street, and will gradually give the whole building as the work expands. Miss Irwin herself is employed by the Public Education Association, but her staff, except the teacher of music, are public school teachers, and the classes are officially a part of Public School 61, and under the supervision of the Department of Education. Dr. George M. Parker of the Psychiatrist Research

Foundation and three associates are also connected with the experiment.

The work started February, 1923, with one hundred children who had attended school for one term. They are now in their second year and their number will be augmented next fall by another group of beginners. It is Miss Irwin's hope to carry these children up to the junior high school, adding new children to fill the lower grades each term. Her classes now are of four types: bright, normal, dull-normal, and neurotic. Mental defectives are excluded, since they are already fairly well provided for in the public schools. Preliminary psychological and psychiatric examinations determine in what class each child enters. He is later shifted from one group to another as his needs require.

Except for the normal class, Miss Irwin has greatly reduced the scope of formal work in the three R's. It is her belief that children at this age—between six and seven—require physical exercise, a chance to develop the larger muscles, sensory training in the free use of appropriate materials, clay, wood, sand, color, weaving, plants and the like. She has got rid of immovable school desks, blackboards, etc. Instead, she has provided little wicker easy chairs, tables suited to small statures, work-benches, a typewriter, low shelves containing playthings, flowers, and even a miniature zoo. Bright yellow walls, gay cretonnes at the windows and a frieze of children's drawings complete the picture.

In the work-rooms, Miss Irwin's children are given an opportunity to gain experience at first hand, freely and naturally. There is no need, she thinks of hurrying along the teaching of symbols. Any normal child will learn to read before he is ten if he is exposed to books by those who value them. There is no use in torturing an imaginative child of six or seven with a dull reading routine. No child, however, is too young to begin the study of literature. "Mother Goose rhymes, folk tales, stories of every day life begin to interest a child during his second year and from then on he will take all he can get. Because he is not taught