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Manuscript: Discussion on Miss Ida M. Tarbell's paper The Effects of Safety on the Community

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Discussion on
Miss Ida M. Tarbell's paper
The Effects of Safety on the Community
Third Annual Safety Congress
National Council for Industrial Safety
Chicago, October 13, 1914.
J. B. Douglas, Philadelphia.

XXX There are several comments, however, in which I hope to interest you.

Miss Tarbell has ^{suggested} said; "The march of ^{progress} civilization is ^{to a certain extent} measured by the way men look at disease and treat it." Among other things, ^{it is} is it not also measured by the attention given to the prevention of accidents? The effort made generally nowadays to make both industrial and community life safer, is constant and continuous, and the results are improving daily.

Industrial accident prevention reaches far out into the life of the community. Those who are making it their daily work, in the rush of things seldom realize that the results mean more than freedom from injury to the employe, and uninterrupted service and the avoidance of expense to the employer. Safety work goes further: Its good effect is felt throughout the community, - it helps to free the home from misery, suffering and worry, all of which enter along with accident disability and disturb its peace. Accident disability goes even further. It affects the business of the small merchants with whom the family deals, by lessening the purchases and causing payments to be slow and often long delayed. The effect is also felt by public institutions in the way of increased expenses, causing calls on the State for additional support. It is therefore evident that the community itself

should do all within its power to boost the safety movement.

We will hear at this convention of the splendid results of industrial accident prevention work. Community life is enjoying results equally gratifying through other forms of acci-

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dent prevention work, - for instance, the Safe and Sane Fourth movement, now national in scope; the better regulation of traffic on the public highways of our cities, small and large; and the entrance of safety work into the schools, which is being followed in Philadelphia at least, by education on Safety in the Home.

From a statement accredited to the Journal of the American Medical Association, I learn that the 84 principal cities of the United States have experienced a remarkable decrease in "Fourth of July accidents" during the last five years. A decrease of 58% is shown in the number of those killed, and a decrease of 53% in the number of those injured. In our five largest cities, according to the same authority, there have been during the last five years decreases of 35% in the number killed and 44% in the number injured in Fourth of July accidents.

Accident prevention has taken a permanent place in the march of civilization. Indeed the prevention of disease, the prevention of fire and the prevention of accidents are in the vanguard of progress. The more we hear of each, the more are we amazed that they were not years ago the centers of success-

ful effort that they are today.

Fatalism with regard to accidents among workmen is fast on the decline. Accident prevention is its nemesis. We now find workmen not expecting the time to come when they will be hurt. They are encouraged by the records of men who have served through long periods of time without accident. In the employ of our company today are at least three men who have served over 40 years without being injured or causing injury

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to others while at work. These records combat fatalism and superstition. Similar cases are doubtless to be found among employes of other companies represented at this meeting.

Although the feeling that accidents are unavoidable continues and will continue to exist, as we all know, safety work has become a permeating influence with many who demonstrate their interest in their fellow-men by promoting safety for all. They are daily proving that avoidable accidents are in the majority. This surely has much to do with the brotherhood of man.

Each accident occurring nowadays means an investigation, and a fixing of responsibility, - as well as a self-examination on the part of the man in charge. This and the close accounting due in no small measure to workmen's compensation laws, are fast helping all to reach the minimum of accident frequency.

Attention, - sustained attention, commonly known as concentration, of course plays a most important part in safety work, and inattention and thoughtlessness are main points to

be attacked and eliminated. If through our safety rallies and campaigns we continue or sustain the interest aroused, we will have made great strides in the cause. We will have impressed the value of care upon the men and inculcated in them the "prevention spirit", - the most important step in the work.

In this connection it may prove of interest to tell you that a recent analysis I have had made of a thousand industrial accident cases to gain some idea of their relation, if any, to the time of day, showed the peaks to be around ten o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon, within three

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hours from starting and of resuming work. If the workmen had sustained their interest, I think it may be fairly said that increases in accidents of 50% between 8 and 10 a. m.; and of 30% between 2 and 4 p. m., both of which the analysis showed, would not have occurred.

As Miss Tarbell has said, the safety idea affects the mental habits of men, and in several desirable ways:- They are more on the alert, they see more and they suggest more. The exercise of these powers increases their general efficiency, particularly when they are encouraged through seeing their suggestions carried out with the resultant saving. During the first six months of 1914 The United Gas Improvement Company's experience showed 16% less accidents than during the same period of 1913; and on the same basis of comparison the

costs were 16% less. This is without taking into consideration increases in men employed and in "make".

It is a fact that we cannot have safety without co-operation. Co-operation is the keynote of success in preventing accidents and, as Miss Tarbell has suggested, the results are poor, regardless of money spent for devices, for supervision, for constant and intelligent efforts to improve machines and processes, unless the employer has the co-operation of the men in the ranks. In fact, co-operation is essential from the top down. It is the first object to be sought in any safety movement.

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Surely we can see no greater single "gain for civilization than a universal opinion" (followed by intelligent action) "that men are too valuable to kill" or injure, and that every effort should be made to lessen the annual accident toll. The greater the following in the cause of safety, the greater and the more general will be the appreciation of life and limb, and the nearer will be the goal of Universal Safety.

When the real value of life and limb is universally appreciated, militarism and war and slaughter will be absent, and prevention will be the order of the day.

Jas. B. Douglas
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