HIRING AND FIRING

There is no man in these United States that has been obliged recently to face more unpleasant truths about his methods than the average employer of labor. The amazing thing is the sportsmanlike way in which he is beginning to accept the facts and the professional way in which he deals with them. Take this matter of his labor force - the men and women he hires and the time he is able to keep them at work. Ask him and he will tell you - "why certainly we hold our people. There's Billy Jones, he was an errand boy for my father fifty years ago and he's never worked any where else. There's Mary - she came in here thirty years ago when she was ten and she's worked every year since. We wouldn't feel the factory was going if Mary wasn't here."

Tell him you are willing to wager from what you have observed that he hires at least eight hundred a year to keep up his force of one thousand people, and he will call you a misinformed mischief-maker. Challenge him to examine his own employment records and he will come back crest-fallen and tell you he wouldn't have believed it. Persuade him to put an expert investigator on his own problem he will be confronted with a state of affairs which will make him, if he is really intelligent, see ruin and disaster dancing like stars before his eyes.
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A few years ago an Ohio firm discovering that it was annually hiring more men than its average force numbered, set out to find if there were others in similar businesses having their experience. Forty letters were sent out - twenty received answers; and these answers showed that these twenty firms to keep up a force of 44,000 men were actually hiring 69,000 a year.

A Michigan employer of some 12,000 men was told by an investigator that he had set lose in his plant to find out what, if anything, was wrong that he was hiring 60,000 a year. He did not believe it. His partners did not believe it. The general superintendent hotly denied it; but their own figures proved it beyond dispute.

Only a few months ago that ultra conservative body, the National Association of Manufacturers listened to a paper from one of its own members that must have been a severe shock to its self-complacency.

This paper was the result of unusually careful investigation. It showed that in a group of twelve factories, perhaps slightly above the average in conditions, it had been necessary to hire 42,571 men to keep up a force which at the beginning of the period considered was 37,274 and which had increased by but 6,597. That is 6½ times as many men were hired as the increase above demanded.

Of course a need of more men is not the only legitimate reason for hiring. Groups of human beings are steadily
worn down by natural causes as rocks are worn away by wind and weather. Death, long continued illness, temperament, the ups and downs of business cut into them them. A constant repairing must go on; that is new men must be continually hired to fill places that natural causes empty. 20% is the degree of disintegration which experts estimate to be unavoidable under the best possible labor conditions. Yet in the cases above the losses were nearer 80%.

It has not needed argument to convince intelligent employers of the terrific waste in such labor turn-overs as these. The money loss that is easily calculable is itself serious. Hiring a man and fitting him into a labor force is an expensive operation. It is not merely the money that the operation of hiring and instructing costs. There is an increase wear and tear of tools and machines. There is a reduced output and there is spoiled work and materials. Those things vary no doubt in every trade and every factory. From thirty dollars to two hundred dollars is given by those who have tried to estimate the cost in their particular businesses. Suppose, as the Ohio manufacturer quoted above did, that it cost forty dollars a man. The twenty shops that hired 69,000 men to keep up a force of 44,000 spent $2,760,000 simply in hiring new men - this was $1,760,000 more than it would have cost them if they had been employing modern and scientific methods.

But who shall say what the employer of shifting labor loses through lack of co-operation and that spirit which makes a factory a joy and a pride. Without this spirit the place is filled with irritation, suspicion and discontent. The loss that comes of all those possibilities which cannot be estimated but which only
some when men work steadily together in that friendly co-operation
and competition which is the natural way of working in groups.

The employer loses, but the man loses more. Constant
change makes "getting ahead" impossible. It cuts his yearly earnings
so that he cannot keep his family. More families are broken up in
our industrial centers through irregular work than from any other
cause. Under the continual influence of change he loses his desire
for a settled place and he has less and less chance of keeping one
because whatever skill he possessed at the start rapidly deteriorates.
He loses and his trade loses. Moreover the industrial world as a
whole suffers, for this shifting of labor is one of the main causes of
our chronic unemployed problem.

In the admirable bulletin on unemployment recently
put out by the city of Philadelphia there is a letter published from
a textile worker who says that in his time (about twenty-five years,
I judge) he has worked in forty different places. "I have never been
discharged, always changing with a view to better conditions or be-
cause of slack business." What kind of a worker will forty changes
in twenty-five years make? What kind of a citizen? What kind of a
man? Could there be a more effective way of spoiling the best human
material?

What is behind these shifting wandering labor forces?
Can they be stabilized? It is the employer and those he has called
in to help him who are answering these questions with refreshing candor
and inspiring common sense.

"The truth is", he will tell you, "that we have never
known anything worth calling a fact about the people we hired."
Hiring and Firing

Somebody stood at the door and told the applicant to "go see Jim or John or Bob - foreman of such a room or gang." The man came in and went out largely according to the judgment of the foreman which might be good and might be bad. He went in without a record and came out without one. He might have been a capital accountant and he was put on a machine, where he spoiled work and maddened his superiors. He might be a foreigner unable to speak or read English and he was put in a place of danger and ended by losing his own and possibly other lives. Hiring was a hasty process depending upon the day's needs. Placing was an experiment - not a science - pitching him in and if he "does" let him stay - if not throw him out and try somebody else.

We are changing all that.

They are indeed: This haste and indifference are being replaced by a scrutiny of men, their conditions and experience, their handicaps and their possibilities as thorough as science knows how to make. There is nothing that has been devised to help in sizing up men and women that is not at least experimented with.

It is a man's body that first receives attention. "We are not hunting perfect physical specimens" says the medical supervisor of an Illinois plant which has had wonderful results in stabilizing its force. "What we are trying to do is to ascertain whether the individual man's physical condition is compatible with the work he is going to do." Is this man strong enough to do the work? That is a matter not difficult to decide and its decision prevents many a poor fellow straining himself to injury in too heavy tasks. Has he any tendencies which this particular work will aggregate. I know shops where no man or woman with incipient tuberculosis will be received. They are told frankly of their condition and urged
to seek work in the open. Indeed I have known of one case of an applicant helped to treatment which soon cured him and he was employed.

The modern employment bureaus know enough not to send a girl whose eyes are poor to a machine where the operation requires the strongest and steadiest sight. It does not put a man with a wooden leg to working a treadle which requires the leg muscles of a first base man. It sends the girl to an oculist and often tells her to apply again when her trouble is corrected and not infrequently it finds something the man with a wooden leg can do.

Suppose you want to be a salesman and have fallen arches. It probably never has occurred to you that your feet have anything to do with your selling capacity - yet one of the ablest organizers of sales forces in the country will never accept a man with this particular defect. As he put it "a man with fallen arches does most of his selling by telephone instead of by visiting his clients. He is an order-taker not a salesman."

Hundreds of men and women today are being prevented by these methods from undertaking work in which they must fail because of some physical defect often easily cured, or corrected, of which they never knew and which nobody before was sufficiently interested in them to find out. At the same time the employer does not hire men which in the nature of things he must discharge.

Objections to enforcing strict physical tests before hiring frequently come from labor circles - but not often from the men and women to whom the defect or tendency is pointed out. They
Hiring and Firing

will not hold water. Surely an employer serves both his employees and the community when he refuses to take into a labor body a man with tuberculosis or with any objectionable disease. "We think it would be reprehensible" one big employer of labor told me "if we did not know that a man had only one eye and would therefore put him where he might be in danger of having his good eye knocked out, we should, for his own good and that of his fellow workmen, know that a man is not subject to "fits". We feel that we should know that men who operate our big overhead cranes are in the physical and mental condition properly to handle big loads over other men's heads."

The fitness of a man's body for the task given him is to be unimpeachable. This is well all. But what about the mental fitness? It is another matter. Is there any other way of finding out whether a man is exact, patient and dependable than the old way of setting him at a task and seeing what happens? Are there other ways of spotting an engineer, an executive, an artist than trying the man at trade or art? That is what the employer of men would like to know. He has his own ways of judging men - born of experience, observation, and reflection. Are these tests which will automatically settle the matter and relieve him of his errors or even reduce the percentage of his errors. He has opened his mind to proof and the phrenologist and psychologists are busily trying to convince him. I have seen labor forces replenished solely on the height and depth of the forehead, the color of the eye, the shape of the nose, the curve of the chin and I have never heard more enthusiastic and confident claims than from the advocates of the system. What is there in it? We have an authoritative answer from one of the most trustworthy sources in the country. - Dean Schneider of the College
of Engineering of the University of Cincinnati. Co-operation between college and shops in the education of young men has been carried on in Cincinnati for several years under Dean Schneider's direction. It has been, of course, a nice problem to select men for different kinds of work. Was any help to be obtained from those who claimed that aptitude and ability were shown in physical characteristics. These claims were put to the test by the faculty interested. For instance it is declared that a certain-shaped head means a directive money-making executive. I once knew an employer to haul from a group of entirely uneducated applicants a man with this particular shaped head and make a place in his counting room for him. A great executive should not be lost to his business, he said. I don't know what became of the man. The business a few years later went into the hands of a receiver.

Mr. Schneider picked out at random a number of well-known money-making executives, had their physical characteristics charted. He found they did not conform to any law. After full tests of the methods and principles of this school he says:

"We were forced to the conclusion that this system was not reliable."

Are the claims of the psychologists any more reliable? Can they, as a few have claimed, decide in a laboratory what a man is and is not good for? Are the tests to prove your normality, your ability, your character? Dean Schneider and his colleagues have been testing those claims. Selecting men from two classes of graduates — men who had been with them five years and whose work since leaving college they had followed so that they felt they knew something of their abilities, they had them tested in the psychological laboratory.
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In no case did the psychologists find the young men to have the abilities which they had found themselves to have. I do not understand Dean Schneider to conclude from these tests that psychology can give no aid at all in determining characteristics only that the proposition has not yet been proved.

In opposition to this experience is one of the cloth-craft Shop of Cleveland where it was found that the estimates from applying the tests to a group of its executives and skilled employees were almost exactly those that had been formed in the shop after long experience.

Probably the wisest conclusion in regard to psychological tests is that while they may be suggestive they are not final and that either to reject or accept a man on their showing is quite as foolish as rejecting or accepting him in the shape of his head. They may show with fair accuracy what a man cannot do - but they do not give a clue to much that he might learn to do. The human being is too wonderful a creation, he has too many possibilities hidden from himself and all men to reveal his powers at one sitting to the cleverest devices of any physiological wizard.

Whatever the care in selecting a man - hiring is no longer an adequate word - his true value will only come out in the test of the job. That test is applied by our modern employer in ways as revolutionary as his selecting and they are vastly more important. That is, that which happens after a man is hired is recognized as more decisive in the problem of holding him than anything that can happen before.

Possibly the greatest thing in the man's favor is that you now care whether he goes or stays. You have already made an investment in him. You know something about him which have led you to accept him. You are interested in proving that your judgment has been sound. This employment system is one of the chief functions of your
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business. It must make good like the planning department - the sales
department. It makes good by holding the man it has selected and what
this means is that from the start the girl or man is going to have a
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more pitiful and stupid than plunging men and women into big labor
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that has been the custom. It has been particularly cruel and waste-
ful in the case of the new-comer immigrant. Picture what your feelings
would be if brought up a peasant in some remote and peaceful village
of Hungary you were set down in a room of whirring, rattling or
spinning frames or sent to wheel a barrow up and down a great factory
where mighty cranes carried large iron weights, kettles of molten metal,
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that neglect to instruct has. I have frequently asked men and girls
why they threw up a position and again and again received the answer -
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shows you". The new system of shop management is designed to meet
this neglect of workers. The new-comer is taught his task by somebody
who knows how it should be performed and in what time. The instructor is
a part of the staff. However simple the task it is regarded as worth
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teaching. It does matter how you scrub - how you wheel your barrow - how you pack your pickles. There is a best way to do everything. This attitude of mind towards all work - the effort to dignify it - to make it a skilled operation makes of labor and of the shop where labor is so viewed - an entirely new experience. It is probable that tens of thousands of men and women are now for the first time in their lives finding that somebody is interested in teaching them to work. When they once sense this the great majority use the opportunity - for they see it as opportunity - and they come to demand it. I have known of a girl coming to an employment bureau in scientifically managed shops in high dudgeon because the instructor was giving her less attention than she once did - "But you know your task" - "Yes but I want to learn more. It is your business to teach me!" In the Clothcraft Shop of Cleveland a boy resigned not long ago because as he said the shop was no longer "educative enough." He had caught the idea of scientific management as it relates to the worker. It is a system of education.

It is not the instruction alone that is revolutionary in the modern effort to hold men. It is the study of the individual in order to discover and correct handicap which may be keeping him from becoming the kind of worker the shop needs. A man's entire physical history is known to the medical superior. If the man is lagging it may be from poor teeth, poor digestion, bad habits and an attack is made in the difficulty. One could fill an issue of this periodical with tales of men and women who through this care have been brought to an efficiency which justified the employer in holding them and which gave them courage and will to go on.

Frequently it is not a physical trouble. It is a condition outside of the shop - which holds the worker back. Going through a great model laundry organized according to the Taylor
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principles of shop management, I saw a girl singing over her collars - "There's a happy girl" I said to the wise woman who heads the service department. "Yes" she said, "and she used to be so sulky and inefficient we thought we must discharge her. I knew there was something behind it and I set out to find what it was. It was such a little thing? She was one of a big family which she helped support. She thought she ought to have a room alone and the mother wouldn't consent. Well I scraped acquaintance with the mother and finally made her see the justice in the girl's desire. Now she is as happy as she can and she earns a great deal more money."

Both the new processes of selecting and directing men are hostile to the old ways of discharge. These ways have been a big factor in the cultivation of floaters. It was the foreman to whom discharge was left. His firing was as arbitrary as his hiring. What could you expect of a foreman who needing new help would throw apples into the crowd of applicants at the factory gate and hire those who caught the apples? This story is vouched for in a sober investigation of unemployment.

Men went out because the foreman had a grouch or as I heard one man say "He didn't like my face." There was irresponsibility and cruelty practiced. The foreman believed often that he kept his authority only by abrupt and unreasonable discharge of men. This could go on endlessly because there was no system in the office of checking up those taken on and laid off. It would not be fair to make these assertions without qualifications. Everyone who knows anything of industry knows that in all shops there are foremen who are wise, patient and
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A cause of restlessness among workingmen which is being
met in many places has been the lack of a shop organization providing
for advancement and providing so clearly for it that the worker him-
self saw how it could be earned. It is not floating labor alone that
is forcing this re-organization for advancement on employers. It is
the difficulty that many industries are having to get enough men or
women for higher positions. An employer of some 7000 men and women
whose plant is practically always running full tells me that while twenty
years ago they always filled higher places from the force they rarely
do now. "We must get them from the outside."

The chief, though by no means the only reason for this,
has been the failure to grade operations in such a way that men and women
could see one task leading to another naturally. Your modern shop
takes on something of the nature of a graded school. Workers are shown
the next step and urged to take it. One successful shop organizer
that I know declares that every man he trains holds three jobs - the
one he left - and on which he is keeping his eye that the man who has
succeeded him may not fail in it - the one he holds and for which he
was fitting himself before he got it and the one ahead to which he
Even in great factories where the operatives are practically all mechanical and monotonous there are always grades of attention and skill required. These are graded according to their difficulty—the pay in each being adjusted properly and the new comer starting at the bottom is shown the open road. 

The ambitious take it instead of taking lease to look in other quarters for a chance. This just and intelligent organization at once checks floaters. Not that a majority of workers in our factories and shops are eager for promotion. What the great majority seek is the task they do well and easily under fair conditions. They must be prodded constantly to work up and this stimulation they do receive. It is a feature of the system. It is not unfrequent to find both men and women who do not and cannot respond to efforts to advance them. They belong to the large class with limited capacity. They can learn to do a few things well but they cannot learn everything and they shrink from new ventures. Such a case was reported at the last meeting of the Society to promote the Science of Management. A girl put to work in a clothing factory had become most proficient on a simple operation. The work of the place is carefully graded and Mary was finally advanced. She was a complete failure at her new task. She was tried on other work with the same result. Finally utterly discouraged with her own failure and the atmosphere of dissatisfaction in which she found herself Mary left. A few months later she came back. She was tried at various machine operations with no success. Then it was suggested that she be put back on an operation as simple as that in which she had first succeeded. Immediately she began to make progress, and eventually she became most proficient in the particular work. Mary had found her limit and was perfectly happy oper-
The dislike to be moved up in a system by no means proves that the person is subnormal. In going through a machine shop with the late Frederick Winslow Taylor he pointed out to me a man whom he said was the most skillful machinist he had known in all his wide experience. He had tried again and again to persuade this man to take a position as shop foreman or superintendent feeling certain that his great skill would be invaluable in directive work. The man had always refused. He wanted his machine. He did not want to direct. He belonged to that great mass of men who wish only to be let alone in the task they like - a wise arrangement of nature for the far day when men and women will be sufficiently developed to "go it alone."

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This belief in man & the possibility of doing something with him lead to the feeling that the new dispensation was in mold conditions. He knew that men could not change unconsciously without it. His vision was not the model making him infinitely of men in profit-seeking and good making in his judgment because to know men are the most important. It can be laid down as a principle that the employer micro-management is not necessary, but understanding and using the means that human beings react to bound to fail. It human beings react to your surrender is to know that
The new executive.

The new executive is not a martinet, that is to say not copyist.
Hiring and Firing

humane. They feel their responsibilities and hold their men but they have not been in the majority if one judges from recent figures of labor turn-overs.

Under the newer practice arbitrary discharge is impossible. A man is hired to keep. He goes in for reasons. His record is carefully kept. If as sometimes happens a foreman suddenly announces that he won't have the man under him, it is the man's record to which appeal is made. "This matter of fitting the man to the job is so important" one of the executives of a big Illinois plant writes, "that no foreman is permitted to discharge a man. He can only return him to the Employment Department where an effort is again made to fit him to work he can do. The superintendent believes that any man who is satisfactory to the Employment Department is acceptable to the Medical Department is capable of doing some work well. "His task is to find the job the man fits best."

The results that have come from the re-organization of plants according to these methods have been really spectacular. The Ohio firm which made the investigation referred to at the opening of this article declares that if the twenty firms which it found hiring 69,000 men to keep an average force of 44,000 had applied the methods which they had worked out (practically the methods above described) they would have hired only 27,600 and would have saved $1,760,000; what the 41,400 hired and fired would have been saved no man can compute.

The American Button Company of Rochester, New York, claims that in the last few years these new methods of handling their force — methods carefully planned and thoroughly and carefully applied have reduced what they call the "exchange of employees" 40% and they
Hiring and Firing

business. It must make good like the planning department - the sales department. It makes good by holding the man it has selected and what this means is that from the start the girl or man is going to have a chance.

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