

STATE OF WISCONSIN
INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

MADISON August 23, 1916.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,
133 E. 19th Street,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:-

Sometime ago you asked for other service letters which the commission might be sending out. The one I presume you have is the only general service letter that has, up to date, been sent out. We were fortunate in getting the National Public Health Service at Washington to come into the state and help us on the sanitary and health side of our work, so we shall soon be in possession of sufficient facts to enable us to continue that work.

However, we are sending service letters to individual manufacturers that seem to need information most. About a year ago a couple of employers from a town where I used to live and for whom I used to work in their mills, appealed to me to set aside the order requiring circular jointer heads in planers. The old square head jointer is a most dangerous machine. I am not sure that you understand what these are, but they are used for planing boards, and a square head, when a hand gets started into the opening, never stops going until the fingers are all cut off. Circular heads do not admit of such accidents. These employers presumed upon their acquaintance with me, and for the sake of saving \$50.00 appealed to the commission to set aside the order requiring a circular head. On my visit to the town I looked over the plants and I was assured that those jointers had been in the same condition for thirty years; that no accident had ever happened on them; that no one ever used the jointers except the foreman, etc. I said, "Well, the commission will allow you to run them, but at the same time we will not set aside the order. That is not necessary, because, as you say, no accident has ever happened upon them and never will. But if what you say is not true, and someone should get hurt, he would be entitled to the 15% penalty. If you have a mind to run that risk, we will allow the jointer to run." The 15% penalty above mentioned is 15% additional compensation paid for injuries occurring on machines or in places that do not comply with the orders of the commission. That is to say, a person to whom an accident occurs gets 65% of his loss in wages and then 15% more is added because the machine did not comply with the law.

I came back to the office and had our jointer accidents looked up, and I wrote each of these men as follows:

"I am sure you will be interested to know of two accident reports that came in to the commission this week, one of which caused the loss of all four fingers of the left hand, and the penalty assessed will be in the neighborhood of \$150. The other was an accident where the first joint of the index finger was cut off. Blood poisoning set in and death resulted. The penalty for this accident will be in the neighborhood of \$450. Both of these accidents occurred on jointers similar to yours."

Nothing came of this, and a week later two more accident reports were dug up and similar letters written. The following week brought results. Both jointers were provided with circular heads.

We are now having another experience with the pattern shops and polishing and buffing rooms in Milwaukee. There are 50-odd in number and we have been trying for nearly a year to get better conditions in these shops. On August 16th we wrote inquiries to each of them asking when proper exhaust systems would be installed. We received three replies from the 50-odd shops addressed. The following letter was then addressed to those who had not replied:

"Within the last two weeks letters were sent to you and the other shops in the city of Milwaukee who appeared to have either no exhaust systems or systems that were not up to the standard. Up to date we have received replies as follows:

Letter #1

'We have your letter of August 16th regarding equipment of our pattern shop with an exhaust system, and beg to advise that this matter is now in the hands of the contractor, and if everything goes forward satisfactorily, the equipment should be installed before October 1st.

Thanking you for calling this to our attention, we remain,'

Letter #2

'We came in receipt of yours of the 16th inst. and note what you say regarding the pattern shop exhaust system ***. Our Mr. _____ has been in communication with a concern, I think it was the Consolidated Sheet Metal Works, regarding this system, and since the receipt of your letter have instructed him to again get in touch with this party, or someone else, and take care of it promptly.

'Assuring you that we will take care of this exhaust system at once, we remain, with kindest regards.'

Miss Ida M. Tarbell

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Letter #3

'Replying to your letter of August 16th, we are glad to advise that the exhaust system in our wood-working department has been installed and is working at the present time. We finally decided to pipe the shavings and dust across the different buildings to our power house, and are disposing of same in this way. This system *** is working out very nicely.'

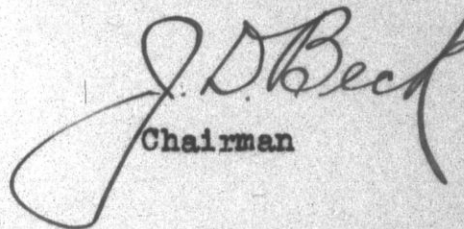
"If we have not already received such a letter from you, may we do so at your earliest convenience?
Yours very truly."

We are now getting replies from them at the rate of five or six a day. I believe this is one of the most effective ways of securing a compliance with the law. We had a similar experience with coal docks.

I am not sure that this information will be of any interest to you, but I know the scheme is working well.

Very truly yours,

Industrial Commission


Chairman

B/F