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PEQUOT SHEETS AND PILLOW CASES

Pequot Mills

NAUMKEAG STEAM COTTON CO.

Salem, Massachusetts

J. FOSTER SMITH
AGENT

ERNEST N. HOOD
TREASURER

June 6, 1932.

My dear Miss Tarbell:

Your kind letter of the 16th ult., reached me in due course, and I must apologize for my delay in answering it - if you will believe me I've been extremely busy, or perhaps could better say very much occupied with affairs this last fortnight. In a long business life it has seemed to me that prosperity and full time running isn't anywhere near so exacting as this last-few-years struggle to get blood out of a stone, or perhaps more to the point, make a dollar in the textile business! Especially this has been difficult for us on the Naumkeag with our high standard of wages and tremendous effort to keep them up in face of most determined competition.

With the above apology for my really inexcusable delay in writing you, I want to say, in the first place, that it pleases me very much indeed to learn that you have a continued interest in the cooperative effort at the cotton mill in Salem.

In spite of the temporary set-back of the present moment I think our experiment has worked out extremely well, particularly when I recall the age-old prejudice of the workers against anything like time studies. I further think my operatives have been quite exceptional in their favorable reaction to this invasion of pencils and notebooks, charts and stop watches into the routine of their accustomed jobs.

We carried on the research in "Waste Elimination" - that is what we called our work, and please understand that time and effort may be wasted quite as readily as cotton and supplies - for nearly three years with what I am proud to write was an extremely harmonious attitude on the part of the two thousand employees, and what, in effect, was an extension of work - usually opposed by organized labor - was effected with little acrimony and no unpleasant reactions.

Please also note that in every job study I was insistent that increased payment was provided in every case where greater effort was required of the operative. Also in every study ample fatigue period was allowed. This fatigue period, running from 20 percent to as high as 35 percent, was based on theoretical job standards but actually often ran much higher than the studies indicated.

Job standards were largely based upon end breakage, especially in the spinning and weaving departments, and this end breakage has been steadily lessened ever since the studies began.

I might explain that end breakage is the term used to denote a

broken thread or yarn in the spinning and weaving machines, where in the event of a thread giving way it becomes necessary to stop the machine to mend it, with a consequent loss of output - ergo, the fewer ends down the greater the production and consequent remuneration of the operative.

As a result of these studies every effort has been made to improve the preparation of material and this has resulted in greater care than ever in the purchase of raw material, the upkeep of machinery, and even the purchase of improved appliances - a contribution on the part of the management amounting to many thousands of dollars.

In these times of unemployment you will be interested to know that the relatively large number of employees eliminated in the course of the extension were taken care of through the natural turn-over of our people, due to the many causes that will naturally occur to you - marriage, sickness, moving away, change of occupation, etc., etc. This absorption was materially helped by the fact that the changes extended over rather a long period.

Just now we are marking time in our cooperative effort due to quite understandable causes, but none the less distressing to me who has the thing so much at heart, and so sincerely desire to carry it on to a long-last happy conclusion - perhaps conclusion is the wrong word, since such cooperative work as I have in mind is continuing indefinitely - I have abiding faith that we shall take it up again, and this interregnum may turn out to be just a breathing spell to prepare my friends in the Mill and me for a fresh start with renewed courage and enthusiasm!

In the matter of gains from the experiment I believe the employees have profited in that the management has come in closer contact with them and their problems than ever before, and a bond of understanding has grown up which was formerly, and even now in many plants, is entirely non-existent. As I have already stated job standards have been fixed and in most cases the remuneration has been increased. The management has profited in a saving of direct labor cost - most important in these lean times in the textile business - but particularly gratifying from my standpoint is this new-formed knowledge that Labor, once shown, will cooperate with management in any sincere effort for quantity and quality production and at a fair rate of wages.

I must however tell you that many of my fellow-manufacturers have done all that I have, and more, in the way of extensions and stretch-out by the old-time methods, but I rejoice in the fact that what has been achieved on the Naumkeag has been accomplished with good will and helpfulness on both sides.

When I talked before the Taylor Society so long ago I possibly told the company there that my whole business life had been passed amid the whirr of spindles and the throb of looms, but I do not recall I definitely stated that I started in at the very foot of the ladder, right out of school, and have consistently kept a-going in the same mill ever since. It's been a frightfully long time - fifty-four years - but not for a moment has my job palled on me, and today I approached my desk with eager interest and all my old-time enthusiasm knowing that there would be, inevitably, something new and intriguing awaiting my careful attention - and there was!.

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Perhaps it was my first hand knowledge of what my employees feel - their needs, their hopes, interests, aspirations, inhibitions - that made me particularly interested in this experiment, and gave me courage to take on the proposition, and in what seemed everlastingly long-drawn-out studies and numberless conferences the forbearance necessary to its successful accomplishment.

It would give me great pleasure to show you over the Naumkeag, and tell you directly about our experiment, and to that end hope you may sometime visit Salem, in the meantime, believe me, dear Miss Tarbell, with kindest regards

Sincerely yours,

Agent

Miss Ida M. Tarbell
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New York, N.Y.

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