

Research Meetings - Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company - March 1929
to December 1931

19th Meeting - February 18, 1930

"The Technician read a statement of which the following is the gist. He called attention to a change in the way of settling cases of what is a fair job which he thought ought to be realized and perhaps considerably changed. Previous to the starting of a joint research committee - a suggested change in a job was reported by the Management to the Executive Board for action. But since the establishment of Research - apparently every question of this nature is held up for the Research staff. This condition was admitted to be true by all the members of the committee who expressed themselves.

"The Technician gave his opinion that there is a serious element of weakness in this attitude. He stated that it was his understanding at the beginning of the new plan that the new machinery for determining job standards had two purposes. One to settle the questions at issue in the Company's proposal of December 13, 1929 and two to settle other questions at issue as they arose. It was not the purpose to be the only body to work upon all questions of job assignments.

"He went on to make a comparison with the Country's judicial machinery. There are local courts, district courts, circuit courts and supreme courts, for the states and for the nation as a whole. Questions do not go to the higher courts unless the lower courts do not settle them. He asked if we could not use this principle and make independent settlements - appealing to the Research machinery only in case a satisfactory settlement cannot be reached.

"There was considerable feeling expressed that the Research Committee should have all such questions to decide. Both management and Union members felt that the machinery was designed to settle such questions and that none other should do so. A Union member pointed that even in the lower courts of justice the recorders have some legal training. And the member stated that all of our jobs should be settled by someone with training in elemental time study.

"The Technician stated that the matter was worth considerable thought. He stated that there were three considerations which should be kept in mind when discussing this decision.

(1) That the Research Committee must work in a very thorough manner even though a very few people are involved - it cannot afford to slight its study. And there are a large number of jobs which it can scarcely afford to work out while other jobs involving a large number of operators are still in dispute. It should work upon the important work first - work which has more chance of reducing the costs - thus making a larger saving for improvement in our business and increase in wages of those concerned.

(2) That research work is never finished. That in any live company where all are alert for improvements in product and process - there will always be work to do. We seem to have the opinion in the committee that things get finished and will never be studied again. It is true that by collecting the times in elements or small parts we can often make a fair readjustment very easily and quickly. But at present there is a great deal of work to be done where the elements are not satisfactorily settled, and even where they are - attention must be paid to those jobs which have changes in conditions and product. As an example a suggestion has already been made which would change one of the jobs which is settled and approved. This suggestion will be held up until one or two others come along on the same operation and then some changes in the job will have to be decided upon.

(3) That the best thing that can happen to a Company is to encourage and not discourage research upon anyone's part. The overseer with the desire to see for himself by test - the operator who is alert to experimenting with changes in his method - are better employees - more open-minded, and usually get more enjoyment out of their respective jobs. The Technician stated that he felt that if our machinery should discourage this sort of attitude it would be very bad for the plant in the long run.

No decision was requested - the matter was brought up for the thought of all. We are carrying on an experiment without much precedent to help us - and all agreed we should study our progress and not drift into unsatisfactory customs.