THE RECORDING & COMPUTING MACHINES CO.

DAYTON, OHIO

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS
TO THE COMPANY

October
Thirteenth
1916

Mr. Houston Lowe,
Dayton, Ohio.

My dear Mr. Lowe:

Replying to your letter of October 6th, in reference to the inquiry from Miss Ida M. Tarbell, I will be very glad indeed to give you a brief regume of conditions here. I may say, however, that it will be impossible to cover in any full manner at all the interesting points that exist here at the factory, as we regard this as a social development in its broadest sense as well as a manufacturing development.

We have over four thousand girls here of different classifications. Most of them have come from excellent homes and all of them are watched and guarded over with care, and we feel here that we have a real responsibility in regard to each one of our employees, and particularly the women, that extends far beyond the question of how many pieces of a certain product they produce per day.

The things which we are doing, we do not talk much about, but I can assure you that the development is proving very astonishing, and I am sure that it will prove interesting to you and Miss Tarbell, with whose work I am very familiar and whose efforts I admire very much.

I am strongly of the opinion that our experiment here is proving so successful in many lines of social development that it would pay Miss Tarbell to pay us a visit and spend several days with us to go over these matters herself. If she wishes to do so, I will be very glad indeed to give her my personal attention and explain to her in detail just what we are doing, for, unless this were done by Mr. Ohmer or myself she might miss many of the points which we are trying to press home.

In the first place, the things that we are doing for our employees are done for them alone and they were started by Mr. Ohmer not in the spirit of commercial gain, but because he felt that it was the right thing to do. We have found as a result of doing these many things that we have not only benefited the girls in their daily life and their daily sources of enjoyment, but that this has reacted and benefited us by enabling us to get a huge output at a very satisfactory cost.

Answering Miss Tarbell's question directly, I would say, first; we had our experiences with men last year and found them unsatisfactory. They would not give us their best efforts in their work--they would not come up to the standards of outputs

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determined for the various jobs and did not seem willing to respond to fair treatment. In addition to this, when they thought they had us at an advantage, they struck without any reason whatsoever. We then determined to replace them with women.

The women have proved remarkably efficient workers. I, personally, have made time studies of our various operations and have thus determined the shortest possible space of time in which an operator can produce a piece of work. Having determined this, we then determine what the average production should be, making a fair allowance so that the operators should not be under a severe strain in crowding for output. Having this data, we check our operators up by daily efficiency records, which shows us who are the best operators and who are the poor ones. We are very careful not to discharge an operator on the impulse, but as soon as we find an operator falling below the amount of work they should do, we go to them and take the matter up with them kindly and explain to them that it is necessary for this output to be maintained--that if their physical condition is such that they cannot do this work, we will transfer them to work suited for them--that if their lessened output is due to lack of skill, we will place them in a school and teach them how to produce the work in better quality and quantity and thus make more money. We have found this to be unfailingly satisfactory. We not only get the benefit of a thoroughly trained force, but we secure the good-will of our employees, for, they feel that we are taking personal interest in them no matter how humble their position.

Our system of pay is based upon a generous bonus system, this being based on a day rate of 20¢, 22-1/2¢, 25¢ and 27-1/2¢ per hour. Our invariable policy is that if a woman can do as much work as a man, she should get the same pay.

We have started, I believe, the first school in the country for operators with women teachers, where operatives are trained before they go into the shop. The result of a weeks work here, during which time she receives 20¢ an hour, is a surprising degree of efficiency. After they get into the shop, they are further trained by floor instructors, who are watching out for them all the time and teaching them how to overcome their defects. The school is highly developed and is proving a great success.

In regard to the efficiency of the women, there is no question but that they are much more efficient than the men. I mean by this too that they are more efficient based upon the same conditions--that is to say that they produce more work compared to a man when the man is in earnest and is using his best endeavors to get out the work. This is due to a number of reasons, to which I could go into at length, but have not the time now. The analysis of this condition is most fascinating.

The girls are secured from all kinds of places. We have whole families in here which I am careful to place upon the same shift. We give the girls to understand that they will be as fully protected here as they are in their own homes and we will not tolerate a single instant any attentions on the part of the workmen or Foremen that are not perfectly proper. I am safe in saying that

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any one of our girls that might be subjected to attentions that were obnoxious would feel free to come instantly to Mr. Ohmer or myself and have the matter straightened out at once.

Most of our girls have never worked previously in a factory. We have here over 120 school teachers--a number of the best musicians in town--all kinds of theatrical talent here and have drawn from some of the dry-goods stores some of the best women in the artistic sense. I am inclined to believe that the pride we take in our workers reacts on them and makes them feel a pride in the factory.

Their average earnings under the bonus system of pay will range anywhere from $3.00 a day up to as high as $7.00 a day. We adopt the policy of never cutting a bonus rate after once having set it, for, we feel that our time studies should place us upon a safe foundation and that afterward we should give the operators every incentive to use their skill.

We watch the girls very carefully to see that they do not subject themselves to too much of a nervous strain. We have a fine hospital--nurses--doctors--rest rooms and an excellent restaurant that will seat nine teen hundred, and another restaurant that provides sandwiches, coffee and fruit. We give the girls two rest periods of ten minutes each, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. We let them out five minutes before time so that they will get seats in the street cars. We have monthly dances--a Company Band of high degree of excellence, and we very often have such unusual performances as a Fashion Show with excellent gowns, shirt-waists, etc. which are given as prizes.

The last Fashion Show we had was a grand success, which was handled by Altman & Company of New York, who sent on five of their best models and some of their finest gowns.

This Fashion Show by the way was one of the most interesting events from the human standpoint that I have noted. We had prizes offered for output, quantity and quality considered, consisting of one hundred fine gowns from Altman's, three hundred shirt-waists and a large number of stockings, gloves, etc. During the two evenings that we gave the prizes, we had a Fashion Show consisting of the five models from New York and twenty of our own girls, who by far outshown the New York girls. The Fashion Show Girls were all dressed in the gowns from Altmans, which were displayed at their last show at Madison Square Garden.

One thing that impressed me of interest, was the manner in which the prize winners selected their prize gowns. We had on exhibition some two-hundred and fifty gowns for them to choose from--some of them of a flashy and attractive appearance which would not wear well, and others of a more substantial quality that combined both durability and excellent appearance. Much to our surprise, our prize winners without exception passed by the more elaborate, expensive and flashy gowns and selected the ones that were more durable and of neatly appearance.

It may interest you to know too that both the girls and men are saving their money. We know this from the records of the Building Associations, one of which will soon establish a branch here

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at the factory. We are also contemplating a very large experiment in the lines of furnishing our employees with good clothes, fuel and all the necessities of life at a low price, without profit to the Company. We have already done some things in this line which have proven of great benefit to them, and we believe that we can accomplish much in the mentioned lines that are unusual in the history of such attempts in the past.

Mr. Ohmer, our President, has not only inaugurated the above ideas, but has already started a novel method of insuring that our employees secure special discounts from our city merchants on all goods furnished them.

This report of mine is written very hastily and may not cover the situation as Miss Tarbell would like it covered. If, however, she will let me know what further information she desires, I will be glad to furnish it.

I am quite sure that the work we are doing would prove of sufficient interest to Miss Tarbell to justify her paying us a special visit to go over the situation. Should she desire to do this, either Mr. Ohmer or myself will be glad to go into all of these matters personally.

Assuring you that it would give us much pleasure to give you and Miss Tarbell any further information that you may desire, I remain

Sincerely yours,

C W Carpenter

Manager of Works.
Recording & Computing Machines Company
Dayton, Ohio.

As you know we do no advertising & consequently have said little about our work.

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