FILE NAME: National Safety Council (NSC)

DATE: 1957

DOC#: NSC489

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: NSC Presentation by Hayes - Labor's Stake in Safety

NATIONAL
SAFETY
COUNCIL

TRANSACTIONS

VOLS. 1-30

1957

RK

Copy presentation by Hayes

This is sheer gain, but these laws still focus on doing something for the man who has met with an accident, rather than on driving full steam into eliminating causes for accidents. When a ship is sinking, then the whole weight of responsibility rests on manning the life boats and getting the passengers and crew off the vessel. When an auto has gone hurtling off a thruway then the weight of moral responsibility is to rush medical care.

But neither life boats nor ambulances are the full measure of moral responsibility that rests upon us today when ships still sail the high seas and cars ride the highways. Our moral sense has grown up beyond that level of moral satisfaction. In its modern concept moral responsibility stresses preventing the worst from happening on the oceans and on our roads rather than being content with picking up the pieces after the worst has happened.

Total security is a goal that is beyond our reach, but great progress can be made when men of competence and good will and devotion join together to help each other in every way possible to promote safety measures against accident hazards. The symbol of this step is, I suppose, the National Safety Congress itself. It stands for moral responsibility toward these hazards at its best, for our deepest responsibility toward the victim of accidents is to see to it that all is done to keep him from becoming a victim. And that is a worthy cause for all of us, wherever we are—in labor and management, in education and in government.

LABOR'S STAKE IN SAFETY

by A. J. HAYES

International president, International Association of Machinists; vice president, AFL-CIO, Washington, D. C.

I don't intend to stay within the limits of this title because I am certain little new information could be said about "Labor's Stake in Safety. It is obvious that no one could have a greater stake in industrial safety than the men and women who are the direct victims of industrial accidents.

To an employer — matters of industrial safety, occupational disease, accident prevention and workmen's compensation—are all tied up with economic considerations. They are important insofar as they affect—and can be made to reduce—insurance costs, training costs, and material costs. But these are all money costs—cash costs—costs that are measured in dollars and cents.

To a worker, on the other hand, an industrial accident is a matter of something that is even more tangible than money. It is a matter of a man's blood, bones and sinew—of tragedy, suffering and sorrow. And sor[illegible]mes, in fact, more than 50 times a day— [illegible]ery working day—it is a matter of l[illegible]elf to someone, somewhere, in this country.

That is why I say that labor's stake in safety is pretty obvious. Therefore I will touch upon aspects of the subject that are not often discussed—aspects that are somewhat controversial. Perhaps they are not discussed because they are controversial.

ETHICS IN SAFETY

Since my views and public statements on the "corruption in unions" issue have been as frank and honest as I can make them, I see no reason to be any less candid in stating my views about matters of industrial safety. I assure you, however, that I am not injecting controversy for its own sake, but because these are matters that concern the men and women who run the daily risk of being injured, diseased or killed on their jobs.

Safety—and accident prevention—have an ethical as well as an economic side. I don't know none of us—whether we represent labor or management — would disagree with certain basic ethical principles in the field of industrial safety. We would all agree, for example, that the objective of industrial safety should be the preservation of human life and the protection of human health. We would further agree that an employer has a moral responsibility to protect his workers against disease, accidents, mental stress and infections from the conditions of employment.

We all profess to agree that human life is not cheap; that man is not something to be sacrificed to a machine. And yet, these ethical principles are not always applied in day to day life nor are they self-enforcing. In practical application they come into conflict with individual economic interests, and thus must be enforced either through group action, or by society as a whole through political action.

As a rule, society does not move as fast as the need would indicate. We all know, for example, that the first industrial revolution had run its course for more than 100 years before society got around to adopting and enforcing rules and regulations of industrial safety. For more than 100 years industrial workers were given no legal protection against the risks and hazards of industrial employment.

Here and there, a lone individual employer might attempt to provide decent and healthful working conditions for his workers. But on the whole, the story of factory employment in the 19th century—and through the early 20th century—was a pretty ghastly one.

I don't need to go into the details that are indicative of the cold indifference with which human life was held in American mines and factories. Suffice to say, it did not seem to matter how many men, women and children were killed or crippled in the course of a day. There were always more waiting at the gates the next morning—driven by raw poverty to plead for a chance to jeopardize their lives and limbs.

SOCIETY BROUGHT CHANGES

The point I am getting at, of course, is that change—when it came—was not the result of any regeneration of moral and ethical conviction on the part of employers. It came rather because society as a whole was thoroughly revolted. It came because the American people were finally shocked enough to correct a condition that had prevailed—and grown worse—for 100 years.

[illegible] finally got [illegible] compensation to make mines, f[illegible] places to work. It aimed at this objective was the ke[illegible] were made directly sible for the result they had no cron[illegible] accidents. The whi[illegible] our industrial safe[illegible] the nation rests on[illegible] how effective our[illegible] and our occupations

ECONOI

Oh, of course, other good economi[illegible] dustrial safety. Yo[illegible] cidents add all kin[illegible] costs to production[illegible] cost of hiring and[illegible] of equipment dama[illegible] of the time lost b[illegible] an accident occurs.

But I will throw you and say that t[illegible] present long before[illegible] dent programs—an[illegible] cident prevention w[illegible] men's compensation[illegible] legislation that c[illegible] safety conscious.

So it seems tha[illegible] here is how good [illegible] tion and occupati[illegible] really, are.

And that's a go[illegible] my whole adult life[illegible] As a matter of f[illegible] it by the very thi[illegible] here today!—an ind[illegible] to work at 17 y[illegible] father was totally[illegible] injury—an injury th[illegible]

In the course of[illegible] and dealing with t[illegible] —which are, of co[illegible] members of my u[illegible] present system of[illegible] and occupational d[illegible] pletely and wholly[illegible] needs of our comp[illegible]

I am not alone i[illegible] are, in fact, many[illegible] ment today who

research project does tend to show a correlation between employment and disease, the authors find it is almost impossible to get their work published or distributed.

The result is a deplorable lack of information about occupational disease. We are years behind other countries in this respect. One expert in this field said that research in pneumoconiosis in this country is 25 years behind that of Great Britain.

SECRETS PREVAIL IN INDUSTRY

Industry actively opposes objective research and free interchange of information on occupational diseases because it is more afraid of the possibility of paying compensation benefits than it is that workers will die from lack of proper information and adequate precaution.

Here are specific examples that will illustrate this point. There is some medical evidence that the chemicals used in the dye industry and in the manufacture of synthetic rubber cause or contribute to cancer of the bladder. In fact, one of these—amine—is so dangerous that it has been outlawed for all industrial uses in Britain since 1951. But efforts to prove, publicize and restrict the dangers of this deadly acid have hit stubborn resistance in this country. The large chemical companies have refused to find out if amine does contribute to cancer of the bladder and have strongly resisted independent research into this problem.

Much the same situation holds true in the asbestos industry. There appears to be decided after-effects on workers who produce asbestos in that there is a marked correlation between asbestos employment and lung cancer. Here again, the industry has been traditionally reluctant to cooperate in a full scale scientific study of this curious correlation. This reluctance to do research in health hazards recurs in industry after industry.

DOCTORS OFTEN BIASED

But even worse when workers do succumb to cancer of the bladder or the lung, or to some other equally horrible diseases, we are treated to the spectacle of company doctors who testify that the disease couldn't possibly have been caused by their employment. Doctors are supp to be above reproach in our society. s a labor official I have known of too y cases in which company doctors have testified against workers and for management in occupational disease cases even though they knew their testimony was biased.

It should not surprise us that doctors can be unobjective in these cases where their testimony is bought and paid for. We have only to look at the wide-spread difference of opinion among doctors as to the effect of cigarette smoking to see that their testimony can sometimes be something less than truthful. Most doctors who are not in the pay of cigarette companies are convinced by all the scientific evidence on record that cigarettes undoubtedly contribute to lung cancer. But the doctors on the payrolls of the tobacco companies either deny that cigarettes contribute to lung cancer, or at best maintain that there is not yet enough proof.

As we contemplate these conflicting views among professional men—and as we thoughtfully study the reluctance of industry to be honest about this matter of occupational disease—we cannot help but wonder whether the lust for profits has made many men forget the real purpose of life. What is the real purpose of life? Is it production and profit—or the well-being of the individual? If there is conflict between the two, do we sacrifice production and profit or the well-being of the individual?

The ethical answer is obvious. But the practical methods of reaching the logical ethical conclusion are more difficult.

FEDERAL ACTS NEEDED

We could make a start by enacting comprehensive federal workmen's compensation and occupational disease legislation to take the place of the chaos that results from having 48 different state systems. But I have no hopes for such a constructive approach in the foreseeable future. I am afraid the insurance lobby, and the employer groups that profit from weak administration are too strong for us at this time. So we'll just have to make that one of our long range objectives.

But there are some things we can do right now. We can try to have programs set up in the National Institute of Health and in the Public Health Service which would recognize the importance of occupational disease—and which would put the research effort in this nation on a par with that of other civilized industrial nations.

If we cannot get decent factory inspection from the state goverment, then we the labor movement must resort to self-help. Many unions are thinking in terms of collective bargaining clauses which would require the employer to adopt the safety standards set by the American Standards Association as the minimum acceptable in the shop.

LABOR FIGHTS FOR SELF

We are also prepared to bargain for more supplemental injury benefits when the compensation provided by state laws is not adequate to sustain a worker and his family. Although our efforts will directly benefit only the 17 million organized workers, perhaps they will release new pressures that will eventually result in improved legislation benefiting all workers.

The American labor movement has but one purpose—one reason for existence in American life—to serve and protect American workers. There are times when we

ke ourselves p
keep looking for
with American
society.

I may have o
this indictment
our business co
derelict in my d
an elected offic
greatest unions
candidly that w
not satisfied wit
to industrial hy
compensation an

In a sense
the National
that can be met
faced. If we
count on your
better legislatio
the state and
gether, make
and safer nati

GOOD COMMUNICATIONS H

by GEORGE SCRIVEN

public relations director, United Rubber, Co·k, Linol
America, AFL-CIO, Akron, O

Our organization has been safety minded for many years. The record on that score speaks for itself in a loud and clear manner. The results of our efforts, in cooperation with enlightened managements, tell the story of how we have seen the number of accidents reduced in the plants in which our members work. I shall not go into specific figures on frequency rates and such.

I don't suppose any of you would dispute the flat statement that good communications help safety. But I'd like to try and give you some of the techniques, the how and the why of that statement.

First, let's do a little word analyzing. I certainly don't want to sound like the pontifical professor lecturing his class on semantics. But when we say *good* in our topic, "Good Communications Help Safety," we immediately infer that there is another kind

besides good
think there
munications
Within th
would say
which gets
sults. In th
think our
because we

Now for
phrase. Yo
the *good*
sending the
ceiving it.
War II, a
in the Paci
When I se
it, I didn