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A Look at the Safety Record

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An address before the Empire State Gas and Electric Association Convention, Lake Placid, N. Y.,
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I HAVE long interested myself in all problems that may affect the relationship between employer and employee, but only in safety work have I found such whole-hearted employee-response, such rich rewards in dollars saved and lives spared, such pleasurable satisfaction with a humane job well done in society's interest. Let me persuade you, gentlemen, that, though the effort be great, you will never regret it; though the earnestness of your initial course may at first meet with some opposition from self-interested sources, you will before long have won the respectful admiration and support of those very dissenters; though the modest needs of safety may appear avoidable expense, you will inevitably return that cost many times over in any single year's dividend from improved accident experience. It is regrettable that all of our safety dividends cannot be more definitely shown—but they are there. I mean not only the dollars but the saving of suffering and increased morale of employees.

The first step in the job is the one you will all find the hardest—finding the man to direct the work. No man can be taken from another job—especially if he has failed in it or done it poorly—and be expected to be an efficient safety man. This has often been done in the past due to a lack of the full appreciation of the value of safety. Invariably such a man is temperamentally if not otherwise unfit to carry on a work so definitely requiring a man of strong dynamic force, liberally endowed with powers of persuasiveness and true leadership. Certainly a weakling cannot command the respectful attention of men of higher position, especially if they are forewarned by knowledge of that weakling's performance in other jobs. If you have allowed yourselves to be persuaded to give the safety direction into such a man's hands, you are licked before you start.

Be sure that your safety engineer reports to the top directly and not through any operating unit. Unless he finds himself in a position of parity with the operating branch all the way from bottom to top, your safety man will soon find he



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can accomplish nothing without the sanction of the very men whom he must curb in their unsafe course.

Management in industry is charged with many responsibilities of tremendous consequence but none more grave than safety. No longer may he explain away a succession of disasters, or an abnormal number of accidents, with a few words of vain protest at an unkind fate that has gratuitously enveloped him. His world knows too well that accidents do not happen; they are caused, and not entirely by the unfitness or carelessness of the men who are hurt.

The army—that paragon of discipline—tells its officers that they are responsible for the safety of the men under them. We men, too, are officers in an army—the vast army of an important industry—and the men engaged in the gigantic task of generating electricity, manufacturing gas, and distributing both are entrusted to our safe-keeping just as surely as are the plants and other physical properties of our various companies. In so far as we have failed in our duty toward our employees in the vital matter of protecting them against the wanton waste of serious accident, we lay ourselves open to the charge of having been derelict in that duty; and we may well thank our

lucky stars that, in this country at least, industry is not governed by so rigorous a discipline as army regulations impose. We might be court-martialed.

Let us look a moment at safety, that we may see just what the nature of our duty in respect to safety is. The risk of fire, explosion, or other disaster to physical properties should, of course, be reduced to its irreducible minimum. Equipment should be, of course, so constructed and installed as to eliminate every avoidable risk of accident to the reasonably careful workmen. There remains, then, only our part—we must teach our employees how to work safely and must see to it that they do work safely.

Give your safety engineer not only the unqualified backing of an executive independent of the operating groups, but also the financial support so deserving a job requires. Let him have a few colleagues to help him educate your workers, and inspect your properties; and give him the cooperation of seeing to it that his reasonable suggestions are promptly complied with. He will soon prove by his results whether he deserves your continued support. Remember always, however, that the safety man must be a super-salesman; if he is the man you want to keep and support, you will find throughout your personnel a general consciousness of his presence, appreciative comment from the great bulk who are benefited, silly criticism from those few with fancied grievances. Should you find your experience otherwise, beware lest you find you have no safety engineer at all and your whole safety effort prove in vain.

If you would know what an efficient safety campaign can accomplish, I point to our own record, my pride in which you will better understand if you will bear with me for just a few moments more.

Our industry is of its very nature a hazardous one, filled in its every operation with the potentialities of frequent and serious accident. In a recent tabulation by the National Safety Council thirty reporting industries are classified as to accident frequency rates per mil-

lion hours worked. Of these tobacco led with the extremely low rate of 2.22, and lumber lumbered along last with 57.29. Our industry stood fifteenth with 12.34 followed only by industries whose record shows them to be habitually among the poorest performers in safety.

Reduced to a ratio of accident incidence by hundreds of employees, our industry's rate comes to 2.55 nationwide. Without the Consolidated Edison group of companies, the rate is 2.75, because that company's low rate of 1.43 brings down the national average to this marked degree. I should like to make the observation that the Consolidated Edison group, although ten years ago worse than the rest of the industry in the matter of accident frequency, has by the adoption of an active safety campaign, placed itself in the lead.

I have mentioned the improvement in our system companies' experience. In 1927, just ten years prior to the last available complete year's experience, we had an accident frequency of 10 per hundred employees; the balance of the industry had an accident frequency of 8.2 for electric, and 8.05 for manufactured gas operations.

Those are the figures, but not all of the record. We can never hope to know how much our safety work among employees has accomplished in the prevention of accident away from plant and distribution operations. Statistics are not available to show how much improvement in non-industrial accident experience results from education of employee personnel; but we have every right to conclude that the diffusion of safety ideas through the community by a well educated and highly trained group of men and women must have its full share of credit for the general reduction of accident frequency. It is entirely fitting that a public utility should be foremost among the leaders in this important civic movement; and you will find that if you make your employees safety conscious, they will quickly earn for your companies the grateful appreciation of the citizens who are your consumers.

In brief summary, gentlemen, the achievement of safety is not difficult—that is, not too difficult to fail to attract even the most hesitant and the most doubting. There are three phases of this work—first, engineering, conducted by competent men to remove physical hazards or invitations to accident; second, education carried on by equally competent though differently trained men to

eradicate from the minds of employees any proneness or predisposition to accident; and third, enforcement, the disciplinary arm that must be yours, ready always to chastise too frequent offenders against the planning and teaching of engineer and educator, and equally prepared to bring into line supervisors who for one or another reason will not be cooperative.

The activities of engineer and educator are of necessity most effectively carried on under the general direction of a properly qualified insurance department, because the insurance mind best understands the necessity of reducing insurance costs by the elimination of losses and accidents, and therefore most consistently devotes itself to the improvement of every means of achieving the result that is the fond hope of every insurance man—a perfect experience—one without accident or loss!

Your patience will not permit me to speak as long as I might of what we have done to better our accident record. We have lectures for operating personnel twice yearly, in which by precept and picture, we set forth specific hazards and offer specific remedies. We have safety committees of purely supervisory people at which accidents and responsibility for them are discussed. We use bulletins, of commercial types readily available at reasonable cost, but more often of our own design made by our own people to meet our own problems. We subject our drivers and chauffeurs to periodic medical examination to determine their continued physical fitness, and hold special safety meetings at which problems of traffic and of car operation are painstakingly analyzed. We hale to a court of inquiry any driver who has had an accident, to give him the opportunity of telling what he thinks happened, so that he may be justified, if blameless; criticized, if blameworthy; educated, in either case.

You have noticed, I am sure, that our principal approach to safety is by the gentle method of education. We teach our people to do their work efficiently, offering them a great variety of technical job-training and other courses. We teach them to do their work safely, using every medium and device and method known to us to convey our safety lesson. And, finally, we send them out into the world we serve to show how well they have learned to do their work, and to do it safely. This gentlemen, I believe, is a duty of a public utility—and if we have hitherto learned that one's first duty

is to labor honestly for one's bread, let us now learn a duty even higher, to earn it in perfect safety to oneself and to the world.

Torchio Retires from Consolidated Edison

PHILIP TORCHIO, vice-president of Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc., retired on August 2, in accordance with the company's 70-year age limit.

A native of Italy, Mr. Torchio began his career with the Edison companies in 1895, when he was employed as a draftsman by the Edison Electric Illuminating Company of New York, predecessor of the New York Edison Company. Four years later he was made statistician, then engineer of economics, engineer of distribution, chief electrical engineer. In 1924 he became vice-president in charge of electrical engineering. At this time he also acted as consulting engineer of the United Electric Light & Power Company, New York and Queens Electric Light & Power Company, Yonkers Electric Light & Power Company, Westchester Lighting Company and the Bronx Gas & Electric Company. Before the merger of the New York Edison and United Electric Light & Power companies into Consolidated Edison Company he was senior vice-president and a director of these two companies.

Mr. Torchio is best known throughout the industry for the work he has done in the development of electricity in steam and hydraulic stations and in the unification of systems of transmission and distribution over large territories.

He originated (and holds a number of patents, here and abroad) various improvements in apparatus, cables, storage batteries and electrical control. During the World War, he was consultant in developing, with the government's representatives, plans for the interchange of electric power between electric companies along the eastern seaboard to meet greatly increased requirements of the war industries. He was also consultant for the Navy Department in the development of electrical cable for use in large, electrically propelled battleships which have power plants of enormous capacity.

Mr. Torchio is a past-president of the New York Electrical Society, fellow of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers, member of the Franklin Institute, Illuminating Engineering Society, Associazione Elettrotecnica Italiana.