

we can understand why that system worked so well. We had two major products—incandescent light bulbs and radio receiving tubes. The simplicity of the problem was not the reason our program went so smoothly. Behind it was the fact of an on-the-spot top management with an interest in safety work. In operating with a regard for the hazards to life and limb involved in industrial operations, not only were they on-the-spot, but they knew personally from experience, day to day, week to week, year to year the personnel, equipment, and process, so the program had a personality to it that stemmed from the very top reaches of the organization and helped to make it of importance equal with other aspects of the job. Then came the War with its terrific demand for expansion. In fact the War experience upset us completely—especially our safety and accident prevention work.

First, there was the tremendous influx of new employees. Not only the added ones to meet war-time orders, but the terrific turnover we experienced during that period. The draft and the spreading out of supervision contributed to the break up of our experience pattern. The threads of the past were gone. The personal know-how, the individual familiarity with operations, with possible sources of hazards and accidents were broken and, in many instances, lost. Top management went on the road or moved away to new locations or jobs. Overcrowded conditions increased the problems. New products moved

in. We had a lack of help. We could not hire the people we wanted, even when we scraped the bottom of the barrel. The need for new materials—the need to be self-sufficient—the pressure to get out the war production—all affected the change.

It was out of an almost actual breakdown of our operating system that we developed a new point of view and a new plan—the plan to decentralize operations. That plan is of interest because, while Sylvania in toto is counted as a large company, the decentralization process broke us down to small operating units, many brand new, many well below 100 employees total, so our experience has meaning now for the small or average sized firm. It has meaning for the large firm which, like Sylvania, is decentralized with regard to its manufacturing facilities.

Decentralization of operations forces a centralization of administration and service functions. It forced us to centralize our safety and accident prevention work. We were fearful of the change initially because, added to all the burdens of these war-time changes, we were a little alarmed that we would be so far removed from any personal contact, with front line management out at the finger tips of the decentralized organization; that our program would be a paper program; that we would talk a good game of accident prevention, but really would fail to have a workable one.

We feared that the write-up, the chart, the forms, all the procedures would look good, but the