

NYU - BELLEVUE TALK - March 31, 1949



OUR COMPANY
When I joined (Brake Shoe) 38 years ago office talk about doctors and medicine had only to do with the sickness of a member of the family or some friend. I am sure no one in our headquarters ever mentioned Industrial Hygiene. Nurses in industry -- I am not sure I even knew there were any except in extremely dangerous industries where adequate first aid facilities were essential. In fact, in 1911 there were only 75 industrial nurses as compared with 11,000 last year. Although we had many foundries I don't think silicosis was a word I heard during the first ten years. Lead poisoning was recognized but we were ineffective in eliminating its danger and as a matter of fact not very excited.

Today we have a Medical Department, and its Director is recognized as a most important member of our management. He has a strong staff. Today, a look at our departmental expenses quickly proves industrial nurses are accepted as essential.

What we argue about, what we spend important money on, has changed amazingly in my Brake Shoe years. Yes - and more rapidly in the last 20 years. Business is fully alive to responsibilities which in the old days were, to say the least, not fully accepted.

Not too long ago there was a feeling generally that company employees were indebted to the employer. Now I spend an important

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part of my time trying to help the superintendents and foremen of our sixty plants better understand the fundamentals of our debt to all men in the organization who pull their oar in advancing the company toward its objectives. Also, we must teach all in supervision the findings of medical science as applied to occupational health problems. They must, for example, be taught the proper use of exhaust equipment. Times have changed amazingly. At last we are beginning to get a better sense of proportion as to which things are important and the degree of their importance.

We know that plant people are entitled to the best possible in working conditions. We know whatever that means in expense is a necessary expense. We know that a strong Medical Department with a nurse at each plant is not only something companies owe their people but is a profitable investment in human relations.

The Industrial Nurse is the best contact we have with the man and the man's family. Her interest in the problems of the family will open the door to a feeling of friendship and unlock the frankness which makes possible a contribution to the lives of many families.

What I have said applies generally to industry, depending on its degree to the type of business. We not only know the necessity of good doctors but unfortunate experiences have taught us the importance of having doctors quickly available. As part

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of our human relations obligation, we have accepted for a long time our responsibility to help support local hospitals. It is only in the last two years that we, in Brake Shoe at least, have accepted our responsibility to help support Medical Schools and Medical Research.

Until recently, Industrial Hygiene has been years behind medicine. That distance has been greatly shortened. We in industry are now effectively taking hold. Progress will be retarded, perhaps actually stop, unless there is a sufficient flow of competently trained doctors and nurses to our ranks. Back of them must be adequate research and with them carefully trained engineers who recognize health hazards and know how to correct them. Today ~~the~~ company which plans to continue in business needs these people just as definitely as it needs engineers and technical men.

Each year there is a greater flow of corporate funds to engineering and technical schools. Such contributions are recognized by more and more companies as sound investments. They help sustain the supply of adequately trained engineers for our ranks. These men are essential to continuous improvement in production and products. Except in terms of the tax law, such contributions are definitely not charity.

Medical education likewise needs corporate support. In my opinion, the importance of Medical Departments to industry

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establishes beyond any doubt that such donations are a proper operating expense.

The average tuition for Medical Schools in the U. S. is \$513. The average yearly cost of educating each student is \$2200, a difference of nearly \$1700. These figures do not include the cost of a graduate year which is needed for specialized industrial training. Although tuition can be raised in some degree, the amount possible would make a very unimportant dent in that \$1700. There are 78 Medical Colleges. If these substantially increase tuition there will be even fewer medical students in our country.

Medical Schools cannot survive without adequate funds. We must go to our Boards of Directors, even stockholders, if necessary, and supplement medical school funds with company money. In making such recommendations we can say that there will be less security for stockholders in business investments unless there are available an adequate number of properly trained men and women from our medical schools. Such people are essential to meeting our obligations to company people. Also, they are an essential if our determination to build better and better human relations within our companies is to be intelligently pursued.

When NYU-Bellevue opens the door to corporate funds, they are giving Commerce and Industry an opportunity to invest money

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in the protection of their own future, the protection against the damage to them which will result from a shortage in medical school graduates. That shortage exists today and will rapidly become much more acute unless sufficient funds are promptly supplied for medical education.