

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR,

Work Study—Another Way of Doing It ?

No one who has read the inspiring article in your issue of April, 1956, by Lieutenant-Commander Dibsdall and Engineer Lieutenant Allies on 'Work Study—One Way of Doing It !' can fail to be impressed by the results achieved, and by the thought provoking methods adopted. We want to know more about 'Work Study', and how it should be brought into ship life.

There does, however, seem to be a danger that what should be common sense may be masked under a new name, with yet more office work, another section at Bath and a mound of paperasserie all round. The ultimate test of its success, admittedly proved in many industrial processes, must be judged not merely on 'time for the job done', though this, of course, is itself vital for a quick turn-round in part. To achieve the best possible use of man-power (the real object) all the overheads must be taken into account, and this must include the man-hours devoted to planning, documentation, etc., and allowance for the working hands to recover themselves before the next job (they will occasionally need a 'night in' !), together with an appreciation of all the human factors involved.

No, sir, I am not carping. I am merely displaying my ignorance ; but I feel that there are many equally ignorant, who need converting by sound indoctrination, which I trust your columns will soon be able to provide.

In conclusion, I would like (with the editor's permission) to quote a letter from *The Manager* of January, 1954, on 'Work Study at the Festival Hall'.

‘ For considerable periods the four oboe players had nothing to do. The numbers should be reduced, and the work spread more evenly over the whole of the concert, thus eliminating peaks of activity.

‘ All the twelve first violins were playing identical notes. This seems unnecessary duplication. The staff of this section should be drastically cut ; if a large volume of sound is required, it could be obtained by means of electronic amplifier apparatus.

‘ Much effort was absorbed in the playing of demi-semi-quavers. This seems an excessive refinement. It is recommended that all notes should be rounded up to the nearest semi-quaver. If this were done, it would be possible to use trainees and lower grade operatives more extensively.

‘ There seems to be too much repetition of some musical passages. Scores should be drastically pruned. No useful purpose is served by repeating on the horns a passage which has already been handled by the strings. It is estimated that if all redundant passages were eliminated, the whole concert time of two hours could be reduced to twenty minutes, and there would be no need for an interval.

‘ The conductor agrees generally with these recommendations, but expresses the opinion that there might be some falling-off in box-office receipts. In that unlikely event it should be possible to close sections of the auditorium entirely, with a consequential saving of overhead expense—lighting, attendants, etc.

‘ If the worst came to the worst, the whole thing could be abandoned, and the public could go to the Albert Hall instead.’

S. TONE-DEAF

(Sgd.) ‘ K ’

SIR,

‘ Unplanned ’ Maintenance

‘ Notes from Sea ’ in these columns constantly remind us that ‘ man is born to trouble . . . ’ The following fragment, found in a file of war-time vintage, is perhaps a little ‘ dated ’ for insertion under this head and my excuse for proffering it must be that it may even now serve to comfort some keen young submarine E.O., impatiently working out his G.S. time in an unaccustomed aura of hot steam.

The occasion of writing, as I well recall, followed a total (but happily temporary) failure of a prime-mover which left my ship like a sizzling log, only 50 miles from the Equator and in the middle of a tiresome convoy operation.

Bad maintenance, no doubt—and bad verse—but spoken from the heart !

Ballade of Departmental Frustration

List to the twang of parting funnel-guys !
 Hark to the tinkle of the turbine-blade !
 Smoke from hot bearings get into one’s eyes,—
 Only the blind could still be undismayed.
 There’s precious little vacuum, I’m afraid,
 God knows what else goes on behind the scenes ;
 Ah—well ! It’s just as I have always said—
 They do things different in Submarines.

My boiler densities are hard-a-rise,
 Tubes wilt like candles ; all the brickwork’s frayed ;

All makers' handbooks are a pack of lies—
 No steam-tight joint has ever yet been made !
 Leaks, squeaks and rattles shrill a serenade
 Of anguished longing after boiler-cleans.
 Plague on this hothouse for the underpaid !
 They do things different in Submarines.

Licking their pencils, and with fiendish cries,
 My masters view the broken bits displayed.
 It's plain that, in their querulous surmise,
 Another Chief has failed to make the grade.
 It seems my welcome has been overstayed ;
 In future I must live by other means ;
 Steam-engineering, thou'rt a fickle jade !
 They do things different in Submarines.

ENVOI

Prince, though you tell me that my future trade
 Must be to mind municipal latrines,
 One thought shall light for me that stygian shade—
 They do things different in Submarines.

H.M.S. *Foxhound*, 1941

(Sgd.) R. F. STORRS,
Captain, R.N.

SIR,

What is an Engineer ?

The Times was recently taken to task by a correspondent for a headline which had asserted that the 'Engineers' were out on strike. It was objected, firstly, that the characters on strike could not accurately be classed as Engineers and secondly that Engineers, like other professional gentlemen, do not go on strike. A later letter suggested that the misuse of the word 'Engineer' is so common that it must be considered normal usage and that professional engineers not wishing to be confused with 'rude mechanics' should protect themselves by using their full titles and qualifications.

This correspondence recalled the definition of the 'professional engineer', printed in the *Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3. I remember thinking at the time that this definition excluded, among others, Leonardo da Vinci, James Watt and Emmet. So much care had been devoted to ensuring that no important qualification had been omitted that the standard of accomplishment required was rather more than could reasonably be expected of one poor ordinary mortal.

Classification is a necessary evil. We must have lists of pegs, square and holes, round, complete with their toleranced dimensions, in order to ensure that we do not inadvertently insert an ill-fitting peg, square, into a round hole. Are we not in some danger, however, of taking ourselves too seriously, with consequent loss of sense of fellowship with the great body of men from Chiefs of Highland Steamers to Engineering Mechanics, who also take an honourable part in 'directing the great sources of power in Nature for the use and convenience of man' ? Are we not all of one company, votaries of the wheel and the mechanical aid, each using his brains, knowledge and ability to lighten the work of the world ?

Qualifications are necessary when applying for work, but we should beware of mentioning too frequently what we believe to be ours in the course of ordinary conversation. So far as the Service is concerned, we each do our job according to our capacity. Let us do our utmost to achieve an atmosphere of unity and

cohesion irrespective of degrees of qualification. May our abilities be apparent from what we do and not from what we say. Both in the Service and nationally, what matters most is that we make certain that everyone has the opportunity to develop his talents to the maximum extent. Only thus shall we continue to survive in this brave new world.

(Sgd.) H. F. WAIGHT,
Commander, R.N.