Training for Production

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IF INDUSTRIAL production is to be restored in Western Europe during the present difficult postwar period it is essential to remove such elementary obstacles to production as insufficient or poor training on the part of the workers, unsatisfactory relations between the workers and their supervisors and poor work methods. These problems must be met and solved if German production is to compete in world markets and fulfill its role within the European Recovery Program. Facing up to these difficulties, organized labor, industrial management and governmental authorities in the Bizon have found a common interest in a specialized training program sponsored during the past three months by Military Government.

The program began with an Institute in Employee Instruction Training conducted at Oberursel near Frankfurt. On-the-job training and personnel administration are generally more advanced in the United States than in Germany; therefore, the services of Mr. John J. McCarthy, corporate personnel director of Gimbel Brothers in New York City, were requested for a three-month period to conduct the institute and inaugurate the program in the US Zone.

THE COURSE given at Oberursel is the first of three supervisory training courses that were developed by the US War Manpower Commission during the war to train supervisors in the three abilities all supervisors need: skill in handling personnel relations problems, skill in improving jobs and skill in instructing workers. The institute conducted by Mr. McCarthy has been confined to Employee Instruction Training to answer the immediate problem caused by certain shortages of skilled labor, need for instructing new entrants to the labor market and re-training of workers in new skills.

If supervisors use progressive instructional technique important reductions in training time can be effected. Through better on-the-job training, employees will learn the job correctly the first time resulting in less spoilage of materials and equipment. Industrial management in the United States has always looked with favor on these programs as they result in increased production, decreased training time, better utilization of manpower, materials and equipment. They also insure improved management and labor relationships because of the greater consideration given to the worker as an individual.

THE RESPONSE of the German management, labor, and governmental authorities to the program has been amazing. Before conducting the institute Mr. McCarthy and a representative of Manpower Group, BICO, spent two weeks in the US Zone meeting with representatives of the trade unions, industrial management, and the labor and education ministries in each state explaining the purpose of the training program and obtaining German reactions. It was made clear that Military Government was offering the basic training on a take it or leave it basis and that once the program had been launched it would be carried out under German auspices.

The response was immediate and committees for each of the states were formed at Wiesbaden, Stuttgart and Munich to select representatives to attend the training course and to sponsor the program in the state. An unexpected by-product of the meetings with the Germans was the response of the state OMG officials who sat in. In Stuttgart, Mr. Edwin Beal, manpower adviser of OMG Wurttemberg-Baden, asked why the training wasn’t being offered to MG personnel and OMG officials in Munich demanded that it be made available and immediately made arrangements for facilities in Brechtsgaden where the training could be conducted. Mr. McCarthy agreed to give an intensive one-week course for Americans after completing the two-week institute for German personnel at Oberursel, and invitations were dispatched to the OMG’s, EUCOM Headquarters and the Eu-

Mr. McCarthy conducts a class at the Oberursel school as Rolf Schirm (right), director of the supervisory training program, watches. (DENA-BICO)
European Exchange Service to send US representatives.

The two-week course at Oberursel proved a successful experiment and had many interesting sidelights. It was conducted in a large residence converted into a school by the Hesse trade union movement where as many as 50 union members can be housed and fed while taking short training courses in trade union leadership. Although the Employee Instruction Training course was not essentially a trade union matter, the Hesse trade unions made the school available to Military Government and assigned three trade union members to attend, including the training leader of the school itself. A total of 33 persons attended, of which 15 represented industry, labor and the labor and education ministries. The remaining 18 persons were sent by the European Exchange Service which had been invited originally to send three persons but had urged Mr. McCarthy to accept 18 Germans from PX and warehouse installations throughout the zone.

On the opening day the skepticism of the students was clearly apparent. They felt, as Mr. McCarthy put it, that “they were to be sold another hot-shot American idea” and they came prepared to resist. In addition, there was cleavage within the group, coming as they did from such different backgrounds as industrial management, trade unions, US Military installations, PX’s and the German government. But where they were prepared to resist they found that there was nothing to resist. Instead of being propagandized they met complete frankness. Instead of being lectured they were treated with easy informality and soon they found they were participating, talking, listening to the other fellow and thinking things out for themselves. One Military Government representative of four years’ experience said it was the most amazing demonstration he had seen of democracy in action since his coming to Germany.

And it was at that point that the surprise package was delivered, so to speak, to Military Government which had sponsored the program for the Germans. It was originally viewed as primarily a practical system of training first-line supervisors in personnel relations with the end objective of getting more and better production. But the major appeal that the course had for the participating Germans, particularly the trade union representatives, was the conception of the worker as an individual and as a human being. Now Military Government found itself sponsoring a program that would not only improve production but, at the same time, introduces a practical, working concept of democracy into German industry—a kind of industrial democracy—which had not existed before.

As one student stated, “We have learned more about democracy in these two weeks than from all the preaching of the past three years. This is tangible and practical and we can get our teeth into it. And, best of all, it can be spread rapidly to many people.”

The essential feature of the program is its simplicity. The courses have so organized the knowledge that it is presented in simple, logical steps which can be applied daily by the supervisor in his place of work. The course in Employee Instruction Training gives a four-step method on “How to Instruct” and has as its basic principle the statement that “If the worker hasn’t learned, the instructor hasn’t taught.” When the objection is raised that some individuals just can’t grasp a particular job, Mr. McCarthy points out that the supervisor should never have placed the individual on the job in the first place.

The other two courses in supervisory training—personnel relations and job improvement—are to be given at later dates once the first course is well established and underway. These courses are also patterned on simple four step methods and are just as interesting, if not more so, than the course in “How to Instruct.”

Following the Oberursel Institute, a week’s appreciation of all three courses was conducted at Berchtesgaden for US personnel and a representative of CCG Staff College in the British Zone of the Bizone. On completion of the appreciation talks, the group drafted a letter to the US Military Governor recommending that Military Government and EUCOM give full support to the program so that it could (Continued on page 24)