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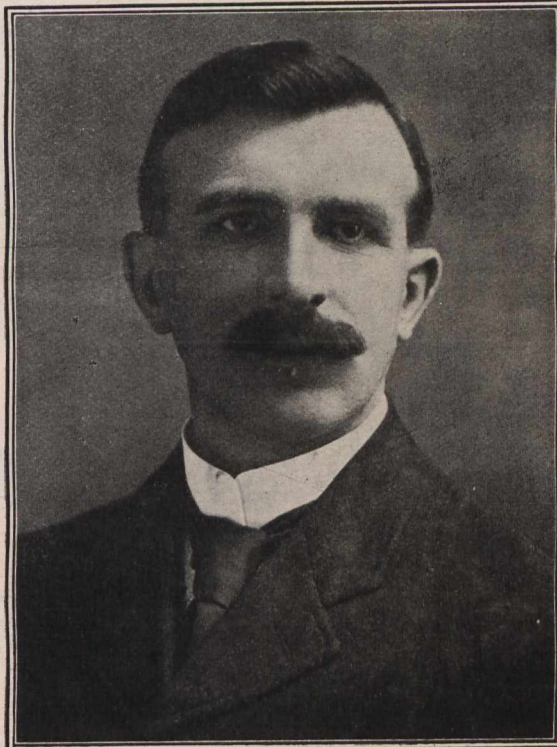
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## Shop Timekeeping and Labor Dis- tribution.

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Before endeavoring to illustrate the methods necessary for the proper handling of shop timekeeping, it will be well to enquire briefly into the theory of the subject, and by so doing better fit ourselves to understand the matter in detail. The latest report of the Interstate Commerce Commission shows that in the year 1906 railways paid out in wages \$950,000,000, and of this amount the shop pay rolls represented \$220,000,000, or about 23%. These figures will, no doubt, impress you with the necessity for extreme accuracy in the matter of shop timekeeping, whether the work be paid for by the hour, day, month, or piece. Any carelessness or inaccuracy in the method of compilation will, necessarily, result in injustice, either to the employe or to the company, and, it might be noted, involves also something far beyond the amount a company may lose through particular errors or omissions. It means dissatisfaction with the company if an employe loses the just return for his labor. It means the building up of an improper spirit if he gains something that does not belong to him, and the question of method by which the recording of time may be kept is of secondary importance to the knowledge that accuracy and truthfulness are enforced and a fair and just return is made to the employes for services performed, coupled with a correct distribution to the company for the money expended. There can be no chance hazards in this matter any more than in the matter of a company's traffic or the care of its monies. It must be known that the men have worked as represented, and that the rate paid is correct, also that the amount of money shown on the pay roll is charged to the accounts upon which the labor has been expended. These are the vital features of shop timekeeping, and whether a company shall have an efficient or an inefficient shop management, whether there shall be economy or extravagance, responsibility or irresponsibility, largely depends upon these features being properly appreciated. It can be stated as a general proposition that shop timekeeping should be taken care of under the direction of an officer acting independently of the person who hires or the official who directs. The officer to whom is assigned the charge of the timekeeping and labor accounts should, by performing his duty faithfully, protect

the interests of the employer and employe by preventing the introduction or growth of irregular or improper practices, and by affording the management accurate information of the extent and purpose of expenditures for labor and the measure of economy that has characterized such expenditures, and by formulating such a system as will insure the payment to employes every cent earned. To obtain these results calls for indefatigable watchfulness and the exercise of much skill and integrity, and he



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must be upheld in the exercise of the prerogatives of his office, allowed to go ahead untrammelled in the performance of his duty, and at the same time receive the most hearty co-operation of all with whom he comes in touch.

Various systems have been introduced with a view of bringing about these most desirable results. In days gone by, when shops were small, men reported directly to their leader or boss, and there was neither roll-call nor checking in or out, but as time progressed and shops grew, and the number of employes outstripped the immediate supervision of the boss, the necessity of some system of checking the employes on

and off duty became evident. As stated, the systems devised varied considerably, each, no doubt, having its redeeming features, and one cannot overlook the fact that it is necessary to study the physical conditions of the immediate surroundings before the most suitable, efficient, and economical method can be decided upon. My first experience was with the metal check system, a system which, to-day, boasts many advocates. Each employe is designated by a number upon the staff record of the time office, and upon passing in to work through the check office is given a metal check number to correspond with his number upon the staff record. This check he retains until passing out from work, when it is deposited with the check clerk, and so on. This method, however, proved to have its weak spots. For instance, it was virtually impossible to detect an employe depositing more than one check, thereby leaving a loophole by which he might assist a co-employe residing in the opposite direction to the check office or defraud the company by depositing the check of an employe who had decamped. But the most serious objection arises from the fact that, in the case of a dispute regarding the allowance or disallowance of certain time, which disputes, as a rule, come up some little time after the occurrence, the evidence available, when boiled down, resolves itself into a deadlock of one man's word against another's.

As the shop buildings or repair yards became more dispersed and grew, the distance from the check office to the immediate location of the work also became greater, and, as a consequence, resulted in the loss of valuable time to both the employer and employe. Some measures were, therefore, necessary to overcome these weak spots. To establish a record of evidence by which to satisfactorily dispose of the question of disputes, and to overcome the loss of time between check office and work, or vice versa, by inaugurating some system of time registration right at the job. Hence the adoption of mechanical time registers or time clocks. These registers or clocks are of various capacities, i.e., 50, 100, 150, 200, and 250 numbers, but for big shops and large staffs the most convenient register is one of 150 capacity. Each register is designated by a number, although in some plants the registration numbers of the clocks run in sequence from one up. The system of registering, assembling, and accounting for the time recorded on the registers is as follows: A successful applicant for work is given an order by the shop superintendent upon the timekeeper for a number upon the