POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2035

Machines Which Turn Out 60,000 Checks In a Day

They Are Part of Uncle Sam's Equipment to Eliminate Errors and Save Time; Incidentally, They Save Clerk Hire; Answering Questions Mechanically

(New York Times.)

From one aspect Washington becomes more like a huge factory every day. Wherever mechanical appliances can be installed to save labor or time it is done by order of that most arbitary chief of staff, Necessity. There are offices now in the departments in Washington, where an immense amount of clerical business must be transacted each day, which look like the operating room in the shoe district in Massachusetts—row after row of complicated machines, different in kind. Some take the place of ten persons, some twenty-five, some fifty; and one, run by two girls, does the work of 100 typists.

Experts go from one bureau to another to see where new appliances may be introduced. Likewise new methods are constantly supplanting old ones, the wholesale taking the place of retail methods. Formerly in Washington time was a remote consideration; each job stood out by itself as something to be completed with all nicety. Checking systems against errors has been devised which were probably as near perfection as humans could devise. They were cumbersome, it is true, but with time they could find a mistake of five cents in any far-off corner.

War is putting all these systems to a new test—is it worth the trouble in money and labor? Here is an illustration: In one office there was a checking-up system which required an annual maintenance outlay of $20,000. How much did these toiling clerks actually save Uncle Sam a year? Efficiency experts investigated. The average was found to be $80 annually. The system is to be abolished; the clerks will be transferred to something more productive. Everywhere the cobwebs of immemorial red tape are being torn down and cast into the waste basket. Single transactions, that used to follow one iron-jawed groove, are now massed into a large group, owing to the vast expansion of bureaus, and one swing of a lever does the work.

Questions are answered by machinery, for instance: "How many colored groops were enlisted from the Sixteenth Congressional District of Pennsylvania?" One might imagine a clerk looking it up in a book and making a count; instead, a bunch of cards is run through a machine—b-r-r-r—and there is a result! So, too, the question: "How many children of soldiers enlisted from the Nineteenth New York will become eighteen years old next year?"—this being the time when children pass out from allotment payments. Another bunch of cards passes through a machine in a single operation, and there is the answer. It is the application of the punch-card machine to war's need of time-saving. The cards have holes in them opposite the respective classifications, and the machine picks out and counts the total of any hole desired.

Messengers long ago became scarce in Washington. The necessity of communication between departments and bureaus has multiplied a thousandfold. A device has been installed in numerous government offices to take the place of the telephone, now much overloaded because of heavy business. For example, when the Adjutant General's office desires to send a message to another branch of the department all that is necessary is to write it out on a pad with a certain pen electrically connected via the telephone wire with a similar pen in the office. An answer is received in the same way.

In the various auditor's offices figures must be added each day to hitherto unheard-of proportions. Under the old way, with adding machines where each item was listed separately on a tape, the task in some offices would border on the insurmountable. New machines, which do not list the individual items, have been introduced. These add 6,000 items an hour, 40,000 a day for one clerk, about five times as many as before.

Dictating machines have been extensively introduced in the government offices and erstwhile stenographers sit all day at typewriter desks transcribing from the cylinders of the machines. Where uniform letters are required, automatic typewriters have been put in; these machines work on the principle of the player piano. All this work is being brought under a system, in charge of experts. In some rooms there are 200 or more typewriters.

In the disbursing office of the bureau of war risk insurance more machinery is used to do clerical work than in any other bureau in Washington. All the available space in one large room is taken up by machinery; any casual observer would take it for the operating room in some manufactory and realize least of all that here checks for the dependents of our soldiers were being prepared, filled out, and signed. It is virtually an operation which passes from one automatically accurate machine to another of different pattern. The output is beyond the possibilities of what was dreamed of by the most imaginative in this class of clerical work a few years ago. As many as 60,000 checks have been turned out in this room in a day. The monthly output is now around 800,000 checks, and with each new quota from the draft the number increases, so that in transacting the present great volume of business provision must also be made for rapid expansion.

In making the plans not only was speed a necessary provision but also precaution to avoid errors in the myriad transactions attending the issuance of the checks. Manifestly, it was too huge an operation to be undertaken by hand; every resource of the latest machinery was called into service and connected in new ways for this special task, and some original devices not yet completed are to be added later. Here is the chain of mechanical operations, beginning after the amounts for the 800,000 checks have been computed:

The amount of each check, the person to whom it is paid, the address and the allotment number are placed on the plate of an addressing machine. There are at present seventy-five plate-making machines for this work, operated by girls. The plate is proof-read four times for accuracy. Then comes the second mechanical process in the check-making. This is done by what is known as the check-printing machine. One of these machines does the work of 100 typewriter operators. There are three in use, two girls to each machine. The checks are printed, ten in a sheet, with, of course, a different entry on each check.

At this point, when the plan now in use was being worked out, the question arose: Suppose some one should write that no check had been issued to a given name? It was too vast a detail to consider taking care of by hand, so it was contrived to place this responsibility also on the check-printing machine. After the impression is made on a new check the plate is held in its place for a moment, long enough for a broad tape of yellow paper to swing over and receive an imprint, which serves as the proof that this particular check was issued. The reels of yellow paper, when filled with the names of payees, are put into book form and filed.

Next is the posting machine, in charge of one girl operator. Here a comparison is made between each allotment card, showing in each case the amount paid and to whom and the corresponding check. A carriage bears the checks before the eyes of the operator slowly enough to see that each item of the check coincides with the items of the allotment card, which is succeeded by another at the same time that the check disappears from sight. The allotment card is the master, and if the amount on the check, or any other entry on it, does not correspond, a touch stops the machine.

It may be that the amount on the soldier's allotment card has been increased since the last monthly payment, and that by oversight the plate was not changed accordingly. The error is discovered here, and the plate is sent back for correction. Each check as it passes out of sight receives its serial number and then enters a second part of the machine, where a roller with an electrotype of the signature of the check is printed on each one.

Thence the checks move to the check-signing machine. Ten checks are signed in ink at once. A master pen, guided by the operator, controls and directs the strokes of the other nine pens. After this comes the slitting machine; it cuts the sheets of ten checks apart. This is followed by the sealing machine, which moistens and seals the envelopes containing the checks. Then comes the last machine in the chain of operations—the bundle-tyer. It automatically ties the letters in bundles of 200, in order. The checks are then ready to begin their trip to the families of the soldiers' dependents.

M. E. Bailey, a mechanical expert, who as chief disbursing clerk of the Bureau of War Risk Insurance is in charge of this work, hopes by further improvements in the present system to be able to get out the checks within the space of a few days. He thinks it possible to make the total operation 90 per cent mechanical.

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"HAD WE BUT KNOWN"

(By Ex-Judge Alton B. Parker at the Allied War Dinner at Philadelphia)

"What a pity we did not understand Germany and her people before the war, as we understand them now. We thought them a religious people, worshipping the one ever-living and true God, as do our own people. Now we know that 'The Old German God,' whom the Kaiser boasts, is a tribal Divinity, a heathen God of battles who thirsts with the Kaiser for the blood of all who refuse to become the War Lord's vassals. We accepted their claim to be a highly civilized people. Now we see that their boasted civilization is only a veneer covering a barbarism like that of the Dark Ages. The evidence includes persecution of that greatest of all Belgians and one of the leaders of Christianity, Cardinal Mercier, murdering helpless old men, ravishing women, transfixing with the bayonet women to buildings, cutting off the hands of little children, assaulting non-combatants in their homes at night with bombs, sending a shipload of unoffending men, women and children to an ocean grave, and carrying away to Germany Belgian women from eighteen to forty to add to the German warriors of the future. All to the end that all the world shall come to fear the Kaiser with his armies and his German Deity. Oh, had our people but understood that Germany's purpose was world domination, making all mankind hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Kaiser and his military casts, we would have discovered sooner than we did, that it is true that 'God Moves in a Mysterious Way His Wonders to Perform.' We would have seen earlier that God's rich blessing which bore the fruit in a brief 140 years of a great population, vast resources and unparalleled wealth, was part of a divine plan to equip our multitudes to take an important part in freeing the nations of the world from the menace of German domination and slavery. At last, but not too late, thank God, we came to a full appreciation of our duty to God, to the world at large, and to ourselves. That duty, as we all see it now, is to fight with our glorious Allies till the unspeakable tyrant obsessed with egotism and the lust of power shall be taught his place, which is a little lower than the hangman's, till his debauched mistress, the German Empire, receives the chastisement which is her due."

QUEBEC'S OLD SPIRIT HAS BEEN REAWAKENED

"It Is the Law" Is Cry, and Conscription is Accepted Fact

Pride In Its Youth — Catholic Church Pleased Because of Obedience To Authority Now Manifest

(Henry Somerville in Toronto Star.)

Quebec, May 27—Quebec is marching! There is a new spirit, or at least a new temper in this province. The atmosphere is charged with electricity, and we are conscious of something new, something different. The feeling here now is as if it were the period of first mobilization. It is just such feeling as I remember in England on the 4th of August, in 1914. There is no effusion of enthusiasm, no demonstrativeness. There is rather a marked quietness, a self-repression in accepting with wide-open eyes duties and sacrifices of which none can know the cost.

The province shows an intense pride in its young men who are now coming forward in response to the call to arms. The ceremoniousness of French communities makes enlistment and departure for training a more distinctively public act than it ever appears to be with the more phlegmatic British. The young men of Quebec, who are now donning the King's uniform, receive the benediction of the Church; and pulpit, press, and every kind of public function combine to exalt these recruits as their people's heroes, the most glorious of their race. French soldiers are surrounded with a halo of glory by their compatriots which British soldiers never expect and never receive. Perhaps this is a difference only in externals, but it must be mentioned to emphasize a salient fact of the present situation in Quebec. The new recruits who are coming forward here are representatives of the spirit that now moves the whole province.

The Old Spirit Quickeneth.

I have spoken of a new spirit in Quebec, but the word is not exact. There is a great change here, but I should say there is no new spirit; it is only the old spirit of French Canada reacting to new circumstances. Ontario papers speak of a change of heart in Quebec and magnanimously proclaim that if the change is permanent all will let by-gones be by-gones. But Quebec is conscious of no change of heart and no change of mind. She thinks as she has always thought. An English-speaking Canadian coming here asks his friends what is the meaning of this new movement, what magic has brought forth all these recruits. This is the question I have asked of French folk of all kinds and conditions, of priests, of humble housewives, of professional men, of university professors and students. And the answer I received everywhere is almost laughable in its simplicity, "It is the law."

It is the law. Conscription is now the law of the land, and naturally the law must be obeyed. That is the simple logic of Quebec. Military service can no longer be escaped, and as it is preferable to be a volunteer now than to be a conscript a few weeks later, the young man of Quebec volunteers. The sons of "the best families" set the example, and as Quebec is essentially hierarchical socially, the movement spread downward to the lower ranks, gathering eclat in its course.

The Church Welcomes Change.

The Church has been more than sympathetic. It has been almost effusive in its eulogies of the valiant youth who have come forth at the call of duty. The Catholic Church everywhere lays great stress on the virtue of obedience to authority, and this universal characteristic is especially marked in the case of the Church in Quebec. One may be sure that the leaders of that Church would have regarded it as an enormous scandal for any law defying movement to have gained foothold amongst their people. If ever there was any fear of such defiance, the present recruiting movement must have been welcomed as a great relief by the clergy, and so they are the first to encourage it and to preach the formula, "It is the law."

"Has conscription not been the law for half a year?" an outsider may ask. The Quebec man would answer "No." Prior to the recent sweeping abolition of exemptions, the Quebec man regarded the Military Service Act not as a command to enlist, but as an invitation to apply for exemption. Everybody frankly desired exemption; everybody applied for exemption, and, practically speaking, everybody was granted exemption. This state of things was not peculiar to Quebec. It was substantially true of one part of Toronto, where I happened to be working last December, though it must be said that that district had then been denuded of a great portion of its manhood under the voluntary system. But last week I was traveling through parts of the maritime provinces where there had been only moderate volunteering and yet where the M. S. A. had failed to get a single man. All those affected had appealed for exemption, chiefly on the ground of their occupations in agriculture, and all had received exemption. The people of those parts were glad to keep their young men, but they had little respect for an Act of Parliament which they knew to be costly in operation, and which resulted in nothing except the distribution of exemption papers.

Not Conscious of Virtue.

It was possible for the members of the exemption tribunals to keep vigorously within the letter of the law, and even to interpret their duties in good faith, and yet make the M. S. A. a malodorous farce. This was what happened in law-abiding Quebec, where active resistance would have been abominated, where passive resistance would have been at least frowned upon, but where it was thought the most natural and lawful thing in the world to apply for and grant legal exemptions in the legal way. Exemptions were then the law; now conscription is the law. The one law is accepted in the same matter-of-fact way as the other. There was no feeling of obstructiveness in making the M. S. A. a [illegible] and now there is no consciousness of special virtue or of new-born loyalty in acquiescing to the abolition of exemptions. It is the law. Authority has spoken and the case is ended.

Not that the French-Canadians would submit to any law or obey any kind of authority, but when they are satisfied of the righteousness of the law and the validity of the authority they feel they must submit, with whatever repugnance. In this case they are submitting good-temperedly. "You will go, if not with light hearts, with firm wills, re[illegible] always your duty," said the Bishop of Valleyfield, addressing the conscripts of his diocese. The words of the bishop are characteristic of the temper of Quebec. The law makes enlistment a duty, and so there must be no hanging-back.

Borden and Mewburn Help.

Certain events have helped to make smooth the path of conscription. The generous words in the House of Commons of Sir Robert Borden and General Mewburn made an excellent impression. Still more important was the effect of the recent German offensive. However lukewarm in recruiting Quebec may have been, she has never been anything but heartily pro-ally in sentiment and the peril to the British army at the time of Sir Douglas Haig's famous order 'no further retreat' roused real alarm in this province. Another factor that makes people repeat with more feeling than formerly, "It is the law," is the rioting of which disgraced Holy Week in Quebec City. That outbreak is felt very keenly as a disgrace. The dominion police, whose action led to the trouble, are blamed as disreputable and arrogant characters; the demonstrators are said to have been mostly youths, and it is believed that the worst excuses were due to men from outside Quebec city; yet these things are not held to excuse what happened. Many innocent people lost lives or limbs in the affair, and those responsible for the tragedy are not spared denunciation by the people of Quebec. An eloquent Capuchin preacher, Father Alexis, said: "The disorders in our city have been even more insensate than criminal. They have rejoiced the Orangemen and the Germans; they have roused the chagrin of our friends and brought sorrow to our citizens."

There is a desire in this city to wipe out the stain of the Holy Week disorders, disorders which are now held up as horrible examples of the evils of lawlessness. So when conscription is the law, and exemptions are not the law, the young men come forward amidst the applause of their people. Whether we call this the manifestation of a new spirit is a question only of words. There has been no renouncing of "Nationalist" doctrine which has obtained such a hold on the youth of Quebec. But that is another story.

WOULD ABOLISH ENEMY TONGUE

Applause Greets Proposal in Congregational Church—No German in Ontario

(Toronto Globe.)

Amid scenes of wild enthusiasm the members of Bond street Congregational church last night endorsed by a standing vote the demand of the minister, Rev. Dr. W. G. Milarr, that the German language be abolished from the province of Ontario. Dr. Milarr described the scene to the Globe after the service. "I asked them," said he, "if they would support me in a movement to abolish the German language from Ontario by making an appeal to the new minister of education, the Hon. Dr. Cody. They went wild with applause. I asked all those in favor of such action to stand. Everybody in the church stood up and wild applause broke out again."

In the course of a short prelude on "Fighting the Hun," Dr. Milarr said: "The German conception of God is simply a German deity, not the God of the Bible or the God of Christianity. There is no Christ in German philosophy. The German language is the history and the glorification of a nationality."

Americans' Example Cited.

Then followed his appeal to Hon. Dr. Cody to abolish the German language from the universities and high schools of the province. He mentioned that last Tuesday the state board of education of California put an end to the teaching of German in the universities and public and high schools of the state. Similar action had been taken by the Kansas City, Philadelphia, Omaha and Portland school boards and by the German Evangelical Synod of Missouri.

The preacher expressed the belief that the English language would be the universal language, and the standard of Christ the universal standard of the world.

When Canada's soldiers came home they would not tolerate the German language in the dominion, and if the people at home did not take action at once they were not being true to the gallant men in the trenches.

COMMODORE'S VIEWS OF Y. M. C. A. CRITICS

Chatham World:—The Y. M. C. A. war organization at the front was spoken of in condemnatory language at a Great War Veterans' Association gathering in Ontario the other day. The particular grievance mentioned was that pay was asked for the meals and lunches served to the men, the only thing served free being some coffee in the trenches.

In view of the great volume of testimony to the good work of the Y. M. C. A. organization at the front we are compelled to regard these strictures as proof of the charge that some of the G. W. Veterans are impressed with the idea that they ought to have the earth and all the fatness thereof as a partial reward for their services.

It is a good thing for the country that only a few of them are in this class, and that the others are willing to work, are learning new trades if no longer able to engage successfully in their former occupations, and, imbued with the spirit of self-helpfulness, are taking upon themselves the duties of citizenship and contributing to the prosperity of the country in peace that they fought bravely for in war.

No man should be an idler, simply because he has been partially disabled and has a pension, but should get busy. He owes it to his family, to the community, and to himself to go to work. Idleness injures a man physically and morally. There is something for every man to do, and every man ought to be doing something, even though he can get three meals a day without work.

Colonel T. T. Sharples, of Ottawa, formerly head of the late military hospital commission command in Canada, now of the staff of the adjutant-general in Ottawa, arrived in the city last evening. He is en route to Fredericton in connection with the new district depot.

Where Talk Isn't Cheap

Hon. Mr. Dennis' Move to Abolish The Senate Hansard

(Ottawa Journal-Press.)

In his move to abolish the Senate Hansard, Senator Dennis will have the sympathy of all those in a position to know of the waste in energy and money which the printing of Hansard involves. And if there is one thing in connection with parliament which more than anything else does violence to common sense, as well as to the imperative need for war economy, it is the printing of this official Hansard. To quote Senator Dennis:—

What gratification can any honorable member derive from the expenditure of $33,000 a year for publishing reports of what is said in this House under such conditions as I have described? An expenditure of say $330 for each member; or equal to $70 or $75 for each bound volume—the most expensive edition de luxe books in the world! And, if it is in order, I may be permitted to say that the cost of the Senate Hansard is only a fifth, or perhaps one-quarter, of the cost of the Commons Hansard. But that is a matter over which we have no control and may not express an opinion. Lest any one should question the accuracy of the figures which I have mentioned as the cost of the Senate Hansard, I will give the details of the expenditure for the last session, which I am frank to say is larger than the average. In round figures the cost of reporting, editing and typewriting was $11,000; translation into French, $5,000; and the amount charged by the Bureau for printing, etc., was $17,000—total $33,000. The cost of printing was for labor and material alone and did not include interest on capital or overhead expenses. In previous years the cost ran from $20,000 upwards. But the principle is the same. The cost of printing the 2,000 or 2,700 copies in English and binding 700 into volumes exceeded $10,000, while the cost of printing the forty-five "unrevised" copies in French for daily distribution—that is, two or three weeks late—was $4,500, or equivalent to $100 a copy for the session. I have not the figures of cost of issuing the fifty bound volumes of the "revised" edition in French, because that edition, now eight months overdue, has not yet been completed and the cost made up.

Thirty-three thousand dollars for printing the Senate Hansard may seem to be a mere trifle, but the addition of similar unnecessary sums, here and there, soon run into a million and a million dollars, in these days of financial strain, is no trifle. And what is true of the Senate House is many times more true of the Hansard of the Commons. The cost to the country of the Senate Hansard is mainly represented in editing and printing. But the overwhelming balance of cost so far as the Commons reports are concerned, is found in the ruinous impediment placed in the way of parliamentary progress by backbenchers who talk and talk interminably for the benefit of Hansard in the pathetic belief that what they say will be reverently devoured by an eager populace. It has been computed that a day's sitting of Parliament costs the country in the vicinity of $10,000. If one adds to the cost of editing and printing Hansard the number of extra days Parliament is kept in session by the long procession of dreary verbosity with which members clutter the records, then Hansard is revealed as one of the most expensive pieces of foolishness with which this country is burdened.

While inclined to disagree with Senator Dennis that absolute discontinuance is the best remedy to apply to the case of the Senate, we believe that ruthless use of a blue pencil would remedy evils we have cited in regard to both the Senate and the Commons. It should be possible to preserve all in regard to the proceedings of the Commons that it is desirable to preserve, without spending hundreds of thousanads of dollars annually to record everything that amateur statesmen may have to say about the future of "this fair country of ours," the state of culverts in Nova Scotia, or the "noble constituency which I have the honor to represent." In the British House, the Hansard staff used to have a space schedule, that is to say members were graded in their importance and given space in Hansard accordingly. For example, a speech by Mr. Lloyd George, or by ministers or leading statesmen of of the Opposition, or by the introducers of a bill, were given verbatim, while an "oration" by Mr. "Joe" Martin, St. Pancras, was given the restricted space deserved. We believe that application of some like common sense policy to the Canadian House of Commons would do a great deal of good. It would meet the case of the expensive bore who wanders on for three hours at a stretch about some petty parochial matter with which not more than a hundred persons in all Canada are concerned, and, by eliminating a lot of unnecessary printing, expediting the business of the House and improving the character of the debates, it would effect a triple achievebent of value.

Last year an editorial board was appointed to supervise and, if possible, obtain a saving of money in connection with parliamentary printing. We believe that the motion of Senator Dennis affords this board with an opportunity of overhauling the whole Hansard system, and we think a great deal of money could be saved the country if some system such as that prevailing in the Old Country could be adopted.

BRITISH BACK TO NORMAL MEAT RATIONS BUT NO FOOD RESERVE IN SIGHT

Washington, May 31—British workingmen, whose meat ration during the last few weeks dropped almost to the vanishing point, now are back on the normal allowance under the compulsory rationing system. A cablegram to the food administration from the British ministry of food yesterday announced that this had been made possible "thanks to the splendid response from America."

Supplies of butter and cheese still are short in England, but imports from the United States are expected to relieve that situation also. No reserve of any food is in sight, however, in spite of the decreased consumption which has accompanied strict enforcement of rationing.

During April the United States sent to England 359,058,000 pounds of beef and pork products, compared with 161,000,000 pounds in April, 1917, and 43,200,000 pounds in the same month of 1914, before the war began.

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