

CORRESPONDENCE

Drink and Work.

To the Editor: The workmen's compensation act of New York, defective from many points of view, forces the attention of employers on the drink question. They know, in a general sort of way, that alcohol predisposes to accident but they are apt to neglect the much more important facts that the food value of alcoholic liquor is very slight and the cost is a great drain on the purse of the workman.

The above considerations caused an inquiry as to the amount of beer consumed by 1500 employees in a New York foundry and it was ascertained by actual count that 510 cans at 10 cents each were brought into the works at the lunch period. This cost, while equaling 1½ per cent. of the payroll, does not represent the total consumption per man per day but it shows that far too much is being spent, from the employer's point of view, on a substance that is no real aid as a work producer and a great extravagance as far as food is concerned.

That such a condition is worthy of remedy is easily demonstrable but many employers are unwilling to approach the problem because they fear that the workman will consider his rights are being infringed upon. There is no doubt but that some incipient alcoholics will feel aggrieved but if the employer plans out his campaign slowly and systematically he will have little trouble from naturally sober men who, together with their families, will have reason to thank him. On the other hand the employer gains many advantages in both quality and quantity of work.

The first step, in a scheme of this kind, is to demonstrate quietly the food value of bread, cereal, beans, meat, etc., in comparison with beer, which may be done most easily by leaflet or chart placed in the pay envelope or on bulletin boards. Later on other statistics should show the effects of alcohol on injured men, the difficulty which they experience in recovering and any other facts which show where men lose by drink.

While this educational campaign is in progress an effort should be made to ascertain the viewpoint of workmen as to the supplying of temperance drinks and the possible exclusion of alcoholic liquor from the works.

The next step is to provide a substitute for beer in convenient places in the factory. Employers do not like to face this problem but the contingency has to be met in order to make the plan successful. As a matter of fact there is no great difficulty. It will be found, for instance, that 20 qt. of strong coffee can be made at 5 cents a quart and this decoction can be diluted to half and still make a good drink. Two pounds of finely ground coffee, 4 qt. of milk, 1½ lb. of sugar, and 36 qt. of water make a drink costing about 2½ cents a quart.

Men who are accustomed to pay 10 cents for beer, which they often drink because nothing else is accessible, will not be slow to recognize the saving effected if they get coffee at about 6 cents less than the beer and without the trouble of going to fetch it. Coffee at 4 cents a drink would leave a margin for working expenses. Workmen like a hot drink in winter but they would probably prefer a cold drink in summer. Iced drinks, however, often cause cramps to furnacemen or those engaged in heavy work in summer and they would find hot coffee the best all-the-year-round drink if they could be induced to take it.

Employers who study this question will find that alcoholics are subject to accident, take longer to recover from the effects, are less accurate, less efficient and more prone to disease than abstainers. All these are good arguments why owners should inquire into the relation between their employees and drink, which is the sort of work which superintendents never seem to have time for.

J. D. HACKETT.

New York City, January 15.

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Catalogues Preventing Improvement.

To the Editor: There is no question that ball bearings have come to stay. The way they withstand wear is making engineers sit up and take notice, and their efficiency as compared with the old type of plain bearing is so high as to warrant the commendation of any engineer. Yet, we find that the ball bearing is not being adopted as rapidly as it perhaps should be. The same holds for roller bearings. Manufacturers are prone to stick to the older type that has proved reliable and "efficient enough" for their purposes.

In talking to a manufacturer the other day about his product I asked him why he doesn't use ball bearings. "Well," said he, "ball bearings are better than plain bearings all right, but our catalogues are all made up showing plain bearings and it would be a big nuisance for us to have to make new cuts of all our machines and make the other necessary changes. Perhaps we will begin to use ball bearings in a few years, shortly before we get out our next catalogue."

W. F. S.

The Bridge & Beach Mfg. Company, St. Louis, at the stockholders' meeting held January 19 re-elected directors as follows: Hudson E. Bridge, Leo H. Booch, Henry C. Hoener, John F. Shepley and Louis H. Riecke. The board elected the following officers: Hudson E. Bridge, president and treasurer; Leo H. Booch, vice-president and manager; Henry C. Hoener, vice-president; Louis H. Riecke, secretary.

The Ford Motor Company, Detroit, Mich., announces an order for 40,000 motor cars for shipment to one of the allied nations. It is the largest recorded single order for motor cars and is said to involve \$16,000,000 to \$18,000,000.