

Piecework

By J. W. Henson

A piece works plant was a place where people worked on their own, and the amount of income that they earned depended upon the number of pieces they produced during their shift. If the employee really worked hard he could make a good income, but if he hung around the break room with the 'boys', complaining and telling vulgar stories, smoking and downgrading the boss, he did not do too well.

The following is the story of five men who worked at "The Widget Manufacturing Company" where widgets were assembled on a piecework basis.

Now, Wade Fowler was an industrious fellow. As he was driving to and from work he would study how he could improve his output in the factory. With his own money he hired an Industrial Time Management professional for two hours to study his motions so he could eliminate any unnecessary movements and increase his productivity. Then on his own initiative one day sometime later he approached the plant manager and told him that if he would move the assembly conveyors so that there was one on each side of him he could assemble a widget with each hand. He said that he had been practicing it at home in the evenings to be sure it could be done. The change was made and Wade's income almost doubled.

Wade was frugal with his money, and what was not used for the necessities of life he very carefully invested. In time Wade's extra effort was noticed by the company owners and he was moved into management. He began buying stock in the company and was in time one of the major stockholders in the rapidly growing and prosperous business.

Sam Cargoe was also an industrious, hard working young man and he took home much more money than the average widget maker. He did not loaf around the concession stand or take the smoke breaks that the average worker did. He took his money home and the entire family went out to eat on payday. His family left lights burning where there was no need of them stopped by the ice cream store as they wished, and spent money for everything they wanted and could afford. Sam's philosophy was, "I have worked hard and I deserve to have some nice things." They were slow about paying debts and were always being chased by bill collectors. They proceeded through life just a step ahead of bankruptcy.

Billy Harbuck was a strong young fellow. He could be seen standing around the concessions stand telling his fellow employees that they had better stand up for their rights that the owners and the foremen would take advantage of them if they didn't. His attitude was demonstrated in the work place, where he grumbled with the bosses and could be heard asking Wade Fowler, "What do you think you are doing? Are you trying to show us up, trying to make us look bad?" Wade was too busy to respond to those churlish remarks. Bill did not make much money, but he took care of the little that he did get and therefore eked his way through life, grumbling and complaining as he went.

Clay Goodman was one who never had his mind and his body in the same place. He was a likable fellow and had friends among employees and management. When he was at work he was always telling others of a TV show he had seen or a ball game that he had attended where his son was playing. He made it sound so good that one night his foreman accompanied him to the game. As the ball flew Clay sat back with his feet on the bench in front of him telling the boss about a remodeling project he was doing at home. A few days later one of his fellow assemblers went home with Clay to see his home reconstruction job. When they got there Clay could do nothing but fuss about the boss at work. He always had his mind and body in different locations. He was able to stay ahead of the bill collector therefore was a 'success' in life.

But alas, poor Charles Dubois was one who refused to tolerate the demands made upon him in the day to day work place. His production was so poor that the company finally fired him and gave his job to a more productive employee. He did not like the confinement of labor and soon lost his house, wife and children. Charles became a street person or a hobo as they were called in those years. He was a very able bodied man, but just could not, or would not, take the pressure.

One day as Charles was being carried away to the 'Poor House' the car happened to pass his old friend Wade Fowler. Wade stopped the car and said that he would give Charles a couple bushels of corn so he could support himself and not be placed in a home at the expense of the community. Charles looked at Wade from where he was reclining in the back seat and asked, "Is the corn shelled?" Wade replied that it was not, and Charles said to the driver, "Drive on!"

Wade said that he did not mind supporting persons who were physically or mentally unable to work, "but why should I get up every morning and go to work to support those who are unwilling to do the same? Is their bed more comfortable or warmer than mine? Is it easier for me to face the day? Do they grow wearier than I from a day of toil? Why should I be called upon to support those who are unwilling to do their fair share? It just doesn't make sense. What do people go to work for? To make Money? Why then shouldn't they make all the money possible for the support of their family and community? Then use their off hours for rest and relaxation. It isn't because they are not physically strong enough, it must be that they are just not smart enough to get what they went to work for!"

The End

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