

THE ACADEMY OF ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING

Paper presented by

George L. Peterson, Fellow

Increasing Productivity Through "Superintendents For Progress"

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In July of 1971, several of our superintendents attended an Inspector's meeting in Savannah, Georgia. During dinner, two of them started to swap experiences and found that they both had just about the same problems. They came to the conclusion that since the Atlanta Chapter had an "Old Timers" group, a "Young Man's Club," a "Gal Friday" organization, plus some 16 different committees, that a Superintendents Club would certainly be appropriate.

When they returned to Atlanta, we sat down to discuss the project, plus subject material that would be used during their meetings. Both of these gentlemen felt that monthly agendas would not be necessary - that much could be accomplished just by swapping experiences, problems, and how they were solved. We told them that in order for the Chapter to sponsor such a program we would have to present the Board of Directors with a format that would make the meetings worthwhile for the amount of money that would be expended. They said this suggestion was reasonable and after much thought decided to discuss such things as employment procedures, termination procedure, productivity, absenteeism, safety, management rights, security, apprenticeship, etc., etc.

We then agreed that the program, plus subject material, would be presented to the Board of Directors with the following conditions:

1. It would be up to the superintendents to recruit the people who would attend the meetings.
2. It would be up to the superintendents to handle the follow up to make sure that these people attended the meetings.
3. The Chapter would not be involved except that the Manager would attend to lend his expertise to keep the meetings on an even keel.
4. The Chapter would pick up the dinner tab but would not be responsible for refreshments before or after the meeting.

The program was presented to the Board of Directors, approved, and the first meeting held in August, 1971. At the conclusion, it was decided that future meetings would be handled on a workshop basis with the high points documented and distributed prior to the next meeting. Two other decisions were made. The group agreed to call themselves "Superintendents For Progress." Also, that any firm not big enough to have a superintendent should be represented by the person responsible for activities in the field.

"Superintendents For Progress" has revealed many amazing things. As an example, we learned that all superintendents did not interpret the Labor Agreement the same way. Still more surprising, that many of them were not aware of what the terminology in certain sections of the Agreement was all about. The most important revelation was that rules and regulations not in the Agreement could be enforced if every member had an individual Company Policy.

In February of 1972, it was reported that practically all members of the Chapter had developed Company Policies and, as a result, for the first time many foremen learned what was expected of them. Practically all Company Policies covered such things as absenteeism, drinking on the job, late starts, early quits, productivity, etc., etc.

All superintendents were encouraged to meet with their foremen and job leaders following the monthly meetings. In this way, knowledge soon was filtered down to all people in the field. One firm went to the expense of holding a monthly dinner meeting with their foremen the first Tuesday of every month. It was adjourned early enough so the foremen could attend union meetings, which coincidentally fell on the same day.

"Superintendents For Progress" has been a step forward for NECA Contractors in the Atlanta area.

1. Members learned that they could and should manage their own work force and not expect organized labor to be responsible for jobsite efficiency.
2. A change was made in the Labor Agreement, which now reads:
"The Union reserves the right to discipline its members for violation of its laws, rules and agreements. Any dispute regarding the manner in which a foreman, general foreman or area foreman executes his supervisory or job management responsibilities shall be handled as a grievance against the Employer."
3. Members reported that productivity, within the first 18 months, increased in the range of 5-25 percent.
4. Field supervision, because of Company Policies, now know exactly what they can and should demand from their electrical workers.
5. Grievances have been reduced and because of this we feel it has made the life of our Business Manager a little easier. There is no doubt it has made the life of the Chapter Manager a great deal easier.
6. Mechanical and Sheet Metal Contractors have set up similar programs based on the format used for "Superintendents For Progress."