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Walter J. Staab

Assistant to the Superintendent The Pittsburgh Press Pittsburgh/ Pennsylvania

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EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TRENDS: A DISCUSSION

WALTER J. STAAB

Assistant to the Superintendent
The Pittsburgh Press
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

At the *Pittsburgh Press*, we have always supported a fundamental principle of disseminating information. This principle extends to assisting beginning printers in order to widen their knowledge of the printing industry, an effort which is accomplished by using the highly developed talents of older and more experienced employees. However, we have never had a deaf person as a trainee since the already experienced printers are not able to communicate with the deaf person adequately. Unfortunately, the deaf printers we now employ could not fill the bill because their knowledge of the trade is insufficient. As a matter of fact, these deaf printers rely on each other too much rather than seeking out more experienced hearing printers to give them a little extra help.

Changes in the printing industry are taking place rapidly. The deaf person, as well as the hearing person, must learn his trade and learn it well. Too many deaf printers can do but one thing—linotype or ad composition for example—rather than being able to perform a number of jobs. We have tried to teach them other processes, but to no avail. They are either satisfied with what they have, or we have not been able to communicate with them adequately. If they are unwilling to learn, new methods and machines will eventually force them out of work.

In the printing trade here, a six year apprenticeship is required. To qualify as an apprentice, an applicant must be able to type 40 words a minute and must have a high school education. Once accepted, the company and union have an obligation to make good, competent journeymen out of these men. Almost every deaf person with *The Pittsburgh Press*

has learned his trade in some other city or state where he obtained his union card in less than a year. He often obtained his card by learning a few basic fundamentals and becoming competent in one particular phase of the trade. He then thinks he is a printer, but, in our estimation, he is not.

From our point of view, the deaf person would be well advised to do a number of things before he applies for a job. This preparation would help the person secure a job and to hold it as printing skills are altered in the future.

First, he should go to a reliable trade school. The school should provide instructors who have particular competencies in the student's major interest; thus, a student interested in newspaper work should be instructed by a newspaper printer, while a person interested in "quality work" should be trained by a job shop printer. In these examples, the newspaper printer works on a production basis with limited time, and the job printer depends on quality taking more time with each item.

As a second point, the prospective printer should become an excellent typist. In the near future, typists will be taking the place of linotype operators, so competency in this skill should be developed early.

Third, he should learn cold type processes. We run a training program in this area; but only two or three deaf people out of about forty in our shop were able to learn the necessary skills. If the deaf person had some knowledge of cold type processes before he enters the trade, he would have much of his problem solved.

As a final point, the deaf person should apply for an apprenticeship where he will take a six year training program under the direction of a foreman-printer. Working against this suggestion is the idea that the deaf person can make a "fast dollar" with the minimum amount of training. However, if the beginning printer completes his six years of apprenticeship, he will possess the skill to do the following:

- Proof presses.
- Break-up and distribution of type (learning the type cases.)
- Composition (hot and cold type.)
- Makeup (Ludlow, dump, correction bank, classifying ads, assembling news pages.)
- Linotype, intertype, and head-letter machines.
- Perforating (typing), and monitoring.
- Ad machines.
- Photocomposition machine, camera, developing, typewriter, proofing and layout of ads,

When he has learned these skills, he is a printer.

The importance of adequate preparation cannot be over stressed. If facilities are available in schools for the deaf, be sure to hire a good, all-around competent printer to serve as the instructor. The instructor's printing background should not have been acquired mainly from a book, but rather from actual experience. Such an instructor should be well paid since he will make the difference between deaf students being employed or being over-looked. Regularly, we have healthy, hearing people stroll into *The Pittsburgh Press*, work a day or two, and then be dismissed by the Superintendent. This is usually because they did not learn all their trade, only part of it. These people drift from one shop to another, and one city to another, looking for steady employment.

Any newspaper in this country will welcome a competent printer with open arms. Often, if there are no situations available at the time, they will make an opening for him as soon as possible so that they won't lose him. Competent printers are assets to a company because they bring along with them a certain pride in their work and a desire to fulfill their obligations.