

Gen. file

April 15, 1953

Mr. C. W. Anderson
Executive Vice President
Associated Industries of the Quad-Cities
212-19th Street
Rock Island, Illinois

Dear Chet:

The last two weeks have been spring vacation here for many teachers and students, and so the traffic through here has been really something, and it just simply kept me away from the opportunity of devoting time and attention to the question raised in your letter of April 2 that it required to give you any kind of an adequate answer at all. I'm sorry for the delay.

The further I dig into the problem of trying to find any samples or suggestions with respect to a questionnaire for determining the extent of economic understanding, the more I'm convinced that in the process of developing a knowledge of how to do this kind of thing many serious mistakes have been made in the past. Were I to be confronted with the problem of trying to set up a specific questionnaire adapted to a firm or firms in my own area, I think that I would try to draw as far as I could on experienced sources in the doing of this kind of thing. I have in mind here particularly at the start at least the National Foreman's Institute, 100 Garfield Avenue, New London, Connecticut. Mr. A. C. Croft is the National President of this organization. N. F. I. published a book entitled "Economic Information for Employees" by Fred Rudge in 1952. While I haven't read every word of this book, there are many thoughts in this as to how to discover the level of interest of workers or foremen, and then also some suggestions as to what to do about it after a study is made.

Then I think, as mentioned in your letter, of Claude Robinson and the Opinion Research Corporation. Probably Claude and his outfit have had as much experience in testing of the kind in which you are interested as anyone in the country. If you have available to you the reports that follow, I think that a careful glance through them would be of help to you in beginning stages of setting up a questionnaire--

"Trends in Employee Thinking on Simple Economics", February, 1950.
The full report (as opposed to the "executive summary") would be helpful as some of the questions are indicated in later pages of this report.

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"Progress Report on Foreman Thinking", December, 1952.

If these two reports of the Opinion Research Corporation are not available conveniently to you there, just let me know and I would be glad to lend our copies of them to you if you want them.

Another article impressed me very much on this whole problem. It is entitled "Economic Education for Employees" by William H. Stevenson in the Harvard Business Review for January, 1951, Volume XXIX, Number 1, pages 75 to 85. Stevenson has a firm of his own, though he is a Harvard professor, and has had some twenty or twenty-five years experience in economics education with employees.

I have just talked with Charlie Curtiss here, and he tells me that Gordon Andrews is Assistant Director of the Employee Relations Department of E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, Wilmington, Delaware. Du Pont has one of the most thorough and complete foreman training programs with which we are acquainted personally here. I suspect that Andrews would be very happy to hear from you and would be glad to assist you in any way that he reasonably could based on their experience.

I'm sending with this letter a copy of the General Mills Economics Competency Test that was designed for use in grade schools based on the teaching materials that General Mills has also developed, and which is also enclosed. I think that some of the questions in these questionnaires might be adapted to your purpose.

Actually, to do a really good job of constructing a questionnaire of the kind that you want, a great deal of time and care must be devoted to it, preferably by a person who has actually had experience in doing that kind of thing. That is why I have suggested some other possible sources of specific information by persons who have had much experience in this kind of thing. I would think also that it would be important that whoever finally completes the questionnaires should work with local business organizations where the questionnaires are to be used, as some things about these questionnaires should be adapted to local conditions. The more that can be done to avoid misunderstandings as to purpose and motivation for such a survey, the better, as a negative reaction at this stage might do more harm than good so far as a follow-through would be concerned.

I hope that some of these random thoughts will be of help to you, at least as specific source materials. If you do get a questionnaire to a stage where someone here might be able to be of assistance by reason of examining it, I would hope that you'll call on me or someone else for suggestions.

Best wishes, Chet.

Sincerely,

Iven R. Bierly

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Enc.