

and was injured by their falling on him and two others. His back and ribs were broken. He was taken to the E— Hospital.

Statement of physician: "U. J— has a chance to live but he will be partially paralyzed."

Note: U. J— died August 30, 1912.

QUESTIONS

1. Should the employers of these victims have borne any responsibility for these accidents? If so, in which instances?
2. What do these cases tell you about the state of medical care in the early 1910s? Do you think these workers got the best care possible at that time?
3. Should it be the responsibility of government to regulate workplaces to prevent accidents like these?

Machinist Orrin Cheney Testifies to Congress on the Taylor System of Shop Management, 1911

Frederick W. Taylor developed a system called scientific management around the turn of the twentieth century. By 1911, enough firms had mimicked his method of handling labor that it became widely known as "Taylorism" or the "Taylor System." The two outstanding traits of Taylorism were paying workers by output in order to get them to work harder and timing workers performing specific tasks so as to ensure that they did their jobs in the "one best way."

One of the first employers to use the Taylor System was the United States government arsenal in Watertown, Massachusetts. Efficiency experts versed in Taylor's ideas showed up one day and began timing the skilled machinists who made parts for the arsenal's guns. Here, machinist Orrin Cheney describes his first experience with this new production regime. This kind of resentment led to a strike at the arsenal in 1911, shortly after the experts arrived. Although the strike only lasted a week, it had a great impact on people's perception of scientific management.

The congressional hearings from which the testimony below is taken culminated in the passage of a law banning the Taylor System at federal employment sites. Nevertheless, many private employers, whose workers were not organized enough to resist, implemented Taylor's ideas at their workplaces during the 1910s and 1920s. Taylor's ideas are still very influential today.

Excerpt from "Taylorism and Other Systems of Shop Management,"
Hearings HS 62-B-1, U.S. House of Representatives, October 4, 1911, 22-25.

The CHAIRMAN [of the Congressional Committee]. Do you know something about the introduction of the Taylor or similar system of shop management at the arsenal?

Mr. CHENEY. I know something of it. I have worked under it.

The CHAIRMAN. Will you state, for the information of the committee, what information you have in connection with the introduction and operation of the Taylor system?

Mr. CHENEY. I was given a job, I started on it, and I got set up on the job and was working all right on it and this expert came down with his stop watch and said he wanted to take the time. I said I did not believe in [a] stop watch for me, and I did not propose to have it. He said I would have to have it, and so I let him do it. Well, he told me to put it up to another speed, a higher speed than I was running. I was running a pretty good speed, I thought, that would turn the work out and turn it out right.

The CHAIRMAN. That is he put the machine up at a higher speed?

Mr. CHENEY. He put the machine up at a higher speed. Well, I put it up at a higher speed and started. The work was a good deal rougher, but on this particular job it did not matter—the roughness—because it had to be finished in another machine. I had timed myself on this piece before he timed me. I knew just what I could turn out a piece in, at the speed I was running, to a second, taking in all the operation at once. He put the stop-watch on and gave me a time limit. It was $19\frac{1}{2}$ half minutes. I had turned the same piece out on the feed and speed I was running on in $19\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, and I was doing a better job. . . .

When he put it up at this other speed I had so much trouble with it that I had to work hard myself to hustle and keep in his limit, his premium limit. Then he went along and I got another job and I started. We had the machine speeded up to a very high speed and a lieutenant who was in charge of the shop came through the shop and just then my belt jumped off the pulley, and I told the lieutenant that I could not follow this man's instructions and do my work and do it properly. I told him that I never had a man tell me what speed and feed I should run my machine on. My work was always given to me. "Well," he said, "you have got one now." I said, "I see I have and I do not know how long I shall keep it." Well, I started working and in a few

minutes the major came down and he started and said, "Cheney, I understand you refuse to carry out these instructions." I went to say something and he said. "Shut right up; you will carry out these instructions to a letter." . . . So I could not say any more, and I started in and tried to carry out the instructions, and the job was not passed by the inspector, and I had a card to fill out why it was not. I filled out the card and told him the reason why was because I did not have time to do it, and that was the last I heard of it. . . .

The CHAIRMAN. Will you tell the committee why it was that with the machine speeded up at greater speed, you were unable to get out the work any faster, and that when you did put it out that it did not pass inspection?

Mr. CHENEY. I had to water the tools more than what I did before, and I was doing it on a different speed. I was running a coarser speed in my way, then, I was on a faster speed, and there were little different things in the machine that I could overcome at a slower speed which I could not at a high speed. And the trouble I had with the belts—they would not stay on the machine—they kept jumping off. Then there was also the oiling up of the machine and different things.

The CHAIRMAN. Then before this timepiece was placed upon you, you had used your own judgement in relation to the speed?

Mr. CHENEY. I had used my own judgement.

The CHAIRMAN. When the timepiece was placed upon you, you had to use the judgement of the management as to the speed and feed?

Mr. CHENEY. I did. And the man who held the watch over me told me to put it up on a higher speed. He told me, he said, "I know nothing about this particular machine whatever."