

March 5, 1954

Internal Memorandum

Interview with Miss Henrietta Larson of the Harvard University, Business School

Miss Larson is in a company history devoted to the Standard Oil Company, of New Jersey.

Miss Larson tells me that in her interviews, she is using a Webster recorder. She says that at long as this technique^h is explained ahead of time, top level men do not mind talking when it is in operation (lesser men sometimes are more fearful); she always assures them that they may see the transcript and make corrections. She says that this method has several advantages over the system of taking notes and having them transcribed. In the first place the record it takes is completely accurate. In the second place, it carries, even better than notes can do, the sense of the speaker and the quality of the conversation. Its disadvantage is that it takes everything, but that is out-ranked by the system's advantages. She says also that the recorder is a great timesaver, in that the time of the interviewer is spent only once and there is no second spending of time in the process of dictation. Miss Larson recommends that in the second phase of this program, when we get into interviewing on controversial points, it will be well worth while to think of using the tape recorder in place of the Ediphone.

I discussed with Miss Larson the possible use of the Records Management group for sorting and indexing papers. She said confidentially that she could not recommend them entirely for this purpose in this operation. She thinks they were in a better state now than they had been earlier when they were devoting their attention entirely to commercial projects. She seemed to have some doubt about the caliber of the people they hire to do the work. Her recommendation was that we train our own staff to do this sort of analysing. She thought that strangers might be able to do the first rough sorting or perhaps even the second sorting but that when it came to analysing what was valuable and what was not, she would not trust anyone but a staff which had been trained in this project. I suggested

the use of someone like Professor Kincaid in Virginia with a graduate student working with him. She thought that would be an excellent idea and could hardly be improved upon. Obviously, we can not hope for Professor Kincaid every place in the country, but similar arrangements might be worked out. She stressed the necessity for historical training as well as business and ~~economical~~ training for anyone who is to work with this material.

Miss Larson suggested that Professor Ralph Heide of New York University and his wife, Mrs. Muriel Heide were people who are working in business, history. Given their combination of economics and history, she thought they would be valuable to discuss problems with. We will keep in touch with her for discussing future problems.

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