TWI Can Help Solve Nurse Power Problems

New needs for on-the-job training in hospitals

By WALTER DIETZ

In hospitals, as in war production plants and essential war services, new needs for or new applications of on-the-job training are constantly being uncovered. There always will be supervisors—persons responsible for directing the work of others—who need to acquire or to develop the basic supervisory skills of

(a) Passing along to others the know-how of a task (Job Instruction).
(b) Making improvements in doing a job (Job Methods).
(c) Getting along with people (Job Relations).

The war emergency, with its changing conditions and situations, constantly drains manpower from the home front to meet demands from the fighting front. This develops a steady stream of men and women flowing from essential war or civilian activities into the several branches of the armed forces, and creates a replacement problem which can be met adequately only if training programs can be expanded speedily and efficiently. Urgent manpower requirements cannot be supplied from a never-failing pool of workers, because there is no such pool. We must use men and women already at work, more effectively; their productive abilities and skills must be increased, or directed to tasks new to them. Manpower must be saved through improvement and simplification of job methods, through better utilization of equipment, through more harmonious and more co-operative relations between workers and their immediate bosses, and between the workers themselves. All this must be accomplished while the workers are at work—on the job. It all calls for new training, retraining, and additional training; for improved and multiplied supervisory skills.

A striking illustration of this may be found in the situation in which hospitals are now found with respect to the nurse problem. An overtaxed and never overabundant nurse supply has been fairly raided through the drive for nurses to meet the pyramided nursing needs of the armed forces. Under-Secretary of War Patterson recently told Congress that the Army alone needed 16,000 nurses in addition to 250 replacements each month. In a Seattle, Washington hospital, for example, the superintendent and director of nurses told her administrative associates in mid-March that they had lost 25 per cent of their registered nurses so far that month, with a possible loss of another 50 per cent. This, she stated, stressed the need of Training Within Industry's Job Instruction program for hospital ward helpers as it became more and more necessary for ward helpers to take over routine duties formerly handled by nurses.