

TRAINING ON THE TRAIN: BY ART BUCHWALD

*for those Journal readers who
missed his column last February,
here is Mr. Buchwald's
endorsement of ASTD member
Feifer's* innovative plan
for continuing education*

Mass transportation is definitely one of the major problems the next decade. The ideal solution would be faster, cleaner and safer transportation for everyone. But since this is impossible, other solutions must be found to make commuting worthwhile.

Irwin Feifer, who specializes in manpower problems, has come up with an idea which certainly deserves consideration.

Mr. Feifer says that as a commuter on the Long Island Rail Road he has been able to give hours of time to studying the transportation nightmare of the 70's.

On the basis of his own experience he has applied a systems-analysis approach to commuting which, when boiled down to layman's language, can be put this way: "How can time now used to look at your watch be otherwise employed constructively and productively to further the welfare of the country?"

The Feifer Solution is to incorporate all railroads as universities and allow commuters to take courses for bona fide college or graduate credits.

While the Long Island and Penn Central trains made their way slowly toward their destinations, each car would become a classroom where commuters could do their lesson, listen to guest lectures by experts who are stuck on the trains, and be graded by the conductors who punched their tickets.

A delay would no longer mean an inconvenience, but would actually be credited to the student as an hour or two hours of classroom work.

In order not to confuse the courses, each car would specialize in a different field of study and would be so marked on the outside. When buying your ticket at the gate you would specify what subject you would like to take for the month and the agent would issue you books at the same time he sold you a ticket.

The Feifer plan is not without incentives and subsidies. One of the major

provisions of the plan is to get a grant from the federal Office of Education which would be used as an inducement for commuters to take the courses.

Each month a true-or-false test would be given by the conductor. Those who received 90 or over would be granted a \$5.50 reduction on their commuter tickets for the following months. Those scoring 80 or above would get a \$3.25 reduction and those who passed with a 65 would not be given a money reduction, but would be assured a seat on the train for the next four weeks.

The Feifer Plan is not necessarily aimed just at people who take railroads (a subway educational plan where people can study while being delayed in tunnels is now being worked out), but could also be applied to people driving to work in the morning.

Those signing up for credits would listen to lectures on the radio in the morning and evening rush hours, and do their book studying at traffic bottlenecks and red lights.

The driver-students would hand in their tests at toll booths and the toll collectors would grade them as they made change.

Most people would not mind traffic delays as it would give them more time to get their homework done.

The Feifer plan would provide for graduation exercises every six months. In the case of the railroads, the ceremonies would be held at the railroad stations with the Secretary of Transportation handing out the diplomas.

Automobile college graduates would receive their diplomas from the license bureau, and each license plate would indicate how many degrees the driver possessed.

The plan, if put into effect, would make Americans the most educated people in the world. It would also turn train delays and traffic jams into a profit. But more important, with everyone going to school, the generation gap could become a thing of the past.

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