

Carrier's Letter Writing Course

By Helen G. Curran, *Employment Manager*
Carrier Corporation

Our course in Effective Letter Writing began as a result of a request from some of our sales order department correspondents, which was relayed by their supervisor to Mr. Milton C. Towner, Director of Training. An announcement of the course was posted, and seventy employees registered to take the course. Because of the original interest shown by the sales order group, the first class was made up of seventeen correspondents in that section. A second class began a few weeks later and included sixteen correspondents from our service and export departments. Soon after the completion of the sales order course, a third was established for sixteen accounting and treasury department correspondents. We are planning a fourth course for engineers whose jobs require a good deal of letter writing, and a fifth for secretaries who are frequently called upon to compose letters.

This grouping of people who work together seems desirable; the class members share common problems and understand each other's difficulties. Each class lasts one hour and is held on Corporation time. The course takes ten to twelve weeks.

The Frailey letter clinic film was used as a point of departure for class discussion but not as a guide for the work of the course. In this film, reel two, "Shave Off the Whiskers," and reel four, "Think Before You Write," have been particularly helpful. The other four reels do not apply too directly to problems which are non-sales.

At the first meeting the conference leader outlines:

The reason for having the course,

The method of conference discussion (this method has worked very well. By presenting examples to the class as problems, there is always discussion, resulting in most cases in getting the right answer from a member of the class.)

Class members are asked at the close of the first meeting to hand in a list of topics which they would like to have covered in the course. Out of this listing have come enough ideas from the class to make them feel that the course is built to fill their needs.

Later, discussion of the suggestions for class

content written by the members of a correspondence manual for the Corporation. Class members are told that their ideas and problems will be of assistance in formulating this manual. Actually, the manual will be written in just this way after the five classes contemplated for this season have been completed.

Class members are told that the discussion leader secures copies of their machine dictated letters. These are read in class without identification to provide examples of their own mistakes. This appears to be the most interesting part of the class work, and usually the member will identify his work. Frequently members will ask us to criticize specific letters. Each week's letters are read, corrected, and handed back to the employees. This takes a great deal of time on the part of the discussion leader, but seems to be the only practical way to point out errors and to determine improvement.

One session of the class is given over to the use of the dictaphone. The supervisor of the transcribing department and the local representative of the dictaphone company review the proper mechanical use of the machine and give specific instructions for getting better results in machine dictation.

Course Outline

- I Objectives of Letter Writing
- II Tone in Letter Writing
 - A. Adaptation to reader
 - B. Courtesy in language
 - C. Positive attitude
 - D. Avoidance of hackneyed phrases
- III Planning the Letter
- IV Organization of the Letter
 - A. Letter openings
 - B. Letter closings
 - C. Outlining the letter
- V Language of the Letter
 - A. Completeness
 - B. Conciseness
 - C. Sentence structure
 - D. Words
- VI Types of Letters
 - A. Inquiries
 - B. Orders
 - C. Adjustments
 - C. Credits and collections