

New York City Workshops Successful

by ERICH HARDT

A brief report on the National Association of Training Director's Workshop series, "Role Playing in Industry," conducted during November and December in New York. Erich Hardt is Personnel Assistant in Charge of Training, Retail Credit Company, New York City.

NATD Workshops are planned for the general purpose of exploring the area of a specific interest, in this case "Role Playing."

The Workshop on Role Playing was set up at the request of membership. Considerable preliminary study was done on the general subject of role playing as well as on the phases most interesting to members. Some 40 people were contacted as to their opinions and experience with this training device, and these ideas and thoughts were then boiled down to several specific uses. The committee set about designing a program to follow an outline which was based on most frequently asked questions. Thus the purposes set forth for this workshop became:

1. To define Role Playing
2. To amplify it.
3. To limit it.
4. To find realistic uses for it.

The first speaker, a non-member, Theodore Jackson, Ph.D., director of the psychological division of Stevenson, Jordan and Harrison, management engineers, appeared before the workshop group on Thursday, November 8, 1951. Dr. Jackson plunged right into the subject by making the members aware of their "roleness" in everyday life. Role playing has the advantage over other methods of training in that it gives the

"feel of the total person." We get deeper in role playing than in merely talking about a situation, or having a conference about it. Our perspective is better. It involves the emotional content of a situation, gets closer to the psychological reality, brings out new information and new aspects of a situation.

Dr. Jackson described several points of application as well as means of application. He concluded by pointing out that role playing emphasizes that there is no "right way" of handling an interrelation between people—for each person there is a different "right way."

Having been introduced to the subject at the first session, the next ones were devoted to practical experiences.

On November 15, a panel was presented. Joe Jackson first presented a clear outline on techniques, methods, uses, values, and dangers of role playing, winding up with a demonstration, using members from the workshop. The idea now being clear, the next step was to present exactly how much and how little might be expected from our first experience in using the device. Bill Lybarger presented recordings of the first use of role playing with average foremen, and led in lively discussion of how to present this to such a group. Chuck Foreman then explained how he had worked role playing into the pat-

tern of regular meetings held by all levels of supervision from top down. In his company it is used regularly by line people to very great effect. Chuck further pointed out the importance of "leaving an out" for the man's possible failure, and the need for providing a "series of successes" for each participant. He expressed himself as being in favor of using recordings during the discussion, but only in the privacy of the participating group. Opinions and comments expressed must be held confidential by destroying recordings immediately after.

Workshop sessions were resumed on November 29, with Ray Fallor giving us a good description of the use of role playing in training Ethyl salesmen. They have technical "know how," but must now be trained to use it with customers and in other public relations work. Role Playing is set on a stage with appropriate props and scenery to depict a customer's office. The trainee must conduct the "role played" interview completely, including entering and leaving the office, with the customer played by a "control" man in the person of an experienced Ethyl man, interested in training. Recordings are used only after the natural "block" is broken down. Effectiveness of the program is measured by favorable comments from the field on how graduates handle their actual assignments.

The training of insurance inspectors in the Retail Credit Company was covered on the same evening. It was shown that the inspector is taught by gradual stages of a "semi-controlled" role playing to handle increasingly difficult types of people he is likely to meet. The trainee

must be taught not only how to handle people, but to get a certain amount of information out of them. He is not permitted in the field until he has qualified by handling several of these role playing sessions successfully.

The device is also used to diagnose the cause of difficulty experienced by inspectors already working in the field. The inspector plays the part of the "informant" and the trainer or supervisor the part of the inspector. By his attitudes in this "role played" situation, the inspector reveals the type of block he is meeting in his field work, and he can then be helped. A 25 minute training film on role playing was presented through the courtesy of Louis Goodman. Mr. Goodman later answered questions as to uses of the film.

On December 6, K. T. Kehrer of the I.L.G.W.U. Training School headed the program. He brought three assistants with him, who gave a demonstration of how role playing is used to train a union organizer to "sell" unionism. The union also uses role playing to train negotiators, shop stewards, etc.

This talk and demonstration, concluded the "practical application" phase of the workshop. The second hour on December 6, was devoted to a presentation and discussion of Gus Stahl's research project on the use of role playing in industry today. His organization, NFI, is going to publish his findings in the near future. Mr. Stahl presented some interesting comments on role playing, its uses, and methods by industrial training directors with wide experience in role playing.

(Continued on following page)

Second Training Institute in Los Angeles

The Training Association of Southern California, Los Angeles, is one of five organizations sponsoring the Second Trainers' Institute being held at the Los Angeles City and State Colleges, 855 North Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles. The sessions will be held in the mornings of the weeks of February 25 and March 3. Classes start at 8:30 a.m. and continue to 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday the first week and through Wednesday the second week.

The success of the First Institute held in September 1951 resulted in many requests for a repeat program. It offers a concentrated course covering not only the fundamentals of training workers for routine, repetitive jobs, but also supervisory and induction training. The subjects covered in the 32 hours of instruction are: How We Learn, Types of Training Programs—Their Need and Application, Training Methods, Planning Training Programs, Audio-Visual Aids, Local Sources of Assistance to Trainers, Qualifications of Good Trainers, Administration of Training Programs, Demonstrations of Training Programs, Leading Conferences, Practicing Management, Safety Training, How to Conduct Supervisory Training, and How to Conduct Job and Induction Training.

Other organizations co-sponsoring the Institute are: Merchants and Manufacturers Association, Personnel and Industrial Relations Association, Society for the Advancement of Management and the Southern California Industrial Safety Society.

January 19, 1952

Editor,

Journal of Industrial Training

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(Thought it would be interesting to show what "Training Director" looks like in Arabic . . . Ed.)

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The final session, December 11, was turned over entirely to Professor Alex Bavelas of M.I.T. He analysed the role in role playing as "active" and "passive." He then pointed out some controls necessary to avoid embarrassment or levity. He requested members to state problems they had experienced using role playing and tried to help them analyse the causes of their difficulties, spreading the specific problem to the general interest of all.