

Full Text Of Pres. Harry Straus' Speech

FROM PAGE ONE

Now let us talk for just one moment about the purpose of the Five-Year Club. As I told you when we met about a year ago, the purpose of this club is that all of us who are members should become better acquainted; that this club should develop fraternity, good fellowship and respect for each other, to the end that those who are working within the various corporations, such as Ecusta, Champagne and Endless, will know each other and realize that only united we can win, and if we pull in opposite directions we are bound for defeat.

We wanted to start the Five-Year Club exactly on September 2nd, 1944, which was the exact date of the five-year period, at which time so many of you here—by far the largest portion of you—had worked for us five years, or rather I want to say at which time we worked together for five years. We were in the midst of war activities. The situation, which at one time was in the hands and the power of all of us, had been taken over by the government, and we had restrictions as to policies, wages, bonuses; and the particular type of bonus which is represented by the Five-Year Club was under the control of the government. I promised you, and I made this statement frequently in the past, that as soon as we reached the five-year period, all of you would be entitled to become members of the Five-Year Club, which, you know, includes a 5% bonus over your base wage. According to laws in effect at the time, we had to make application to the War Labor Board. We naturally wanted to comply with the law. We filed applications, and, to my greatest disappointment, we were turned down innumerable times, for reasons inexplicable to me. I don't know why, but they saw fit to turn down our application, submitted to them by personal appearances before them, when I told them that we had made the promise to you in good faith. We appealed our case. We went to the National War Labor Board in Washington. They turned us down. They sent us to Atlanta. They turned us down; and so on and so on. I have told you this before.

V-J Day Declared

About this time, our Army and Navy succeeded in subduing our enemies, and V-J day was declared. As a result of this victory, which had far reaching effect on the lives of all of us, President Truman rescinded restrictions on wage increases, bonuses, and things of that type. Immediately I gave instructions to our Accounting Department to get busy and make out the checks, retroactively to the first day when all of you were with us five years, and that is September 2nd, 1944. This was a tremendous relief to me because I felt I had performed the promise which I had made to you in good faith.

Tonight we are at our second meeting. We are not only simply meeting to have a good time, but I also have the pleasure of being able to present to you the retroactive checks for the 5% bonus which were coming to you since more than one year ago; and all those who are members of the Five-Year Club will continue to receive that bonus.

I hope in four years from now—because we have all been working together for six years—all of us, and many more of us, will meet right here and become members of the Ten-Year Club.

The arrangement for all this payment was not an easy one. It required the checking up of all payroll records of all of us here, and, as I stated before, there are 350 members of this club. Each one of your weekly payrolls, for six years, had to be carefully checked, tabulated, and figured. It was quite a job to accumulate and tabulate and finally arrive at the right amount which is rightfully coming to all of you. Our Accounting Department, our Payroll Department has worked laboriously on the job, and I know they did a good job. If, through no fault of ours, we have made a mistake, or have omitted somebody, I assure you—and I want you to take my word for it—it was not done intentionally. If you will bring such cases to my attention, we will look into them.

We have in the little program before us printed, in the middle pages, the Five-Year Service Bonus Plan in fair and simple language, in seven paragraphs. We tried to explain and lay down the conditions and the laws for governing eligibility to the Five-Year Club. From today on, we want to live up strictly to these rules, and everybody who qualifies under them will become eligible for membership in the Five-Year Club, and will have to enter strictly according to these very simple and plain rules, which all of us must try to live up to to the best of our ability. I will ask the editor of the ECHO to publish these rules in the next issue which will appear in a few days, so that those who are not present here tonight, for one reason or another, and also the prospective members of the Five-Year Club, will know exactly the rules and regulations which govern the eligibility to our Five-Year Club.

Strenuous Years Endured

Ecusta, Champagne and Endless have passed through five very strenuous years. We worked successfully. We have lived up to our obligations towards our customers, and we have made many friends. This was only possible by close co-operation and by application to your work which all of us here—and even those who are not assembled here tonight but who are working for Ecusta, Champagne and Endless—have contributed to the various corporations to make this possible. For this success, I thank you all. We must treasure this as a franchise, which is very valuable to all of us. We must guard it; we must protect it; we must improve on it. We are making good cigarette paper; we are making good booklets; we are making good belts; and the belt of tomorrow, the cigarette paper of tomorrow, and the booklets of tomorrow must be better than those which we are making today. This must be our ambition. Our various corporations—the three of them—I don't want to enumerate them each time; when I say "we", it means all of them) have a national and international reputation. We have made friends and customers in practically every part of the world. We have sent our merchandise to countries which

we never thought would ask for merchandise made here. And we are very proud of the fact that they not only wanted to buy this merchandise of ours while they couldn't get it elsewhere, but we have their assurance that they want to adhere to our products, even when other sources of supply are available to them again. One of our proudest achievements is that we have received many orders to ship our paper to France. All of you know that, prior to the incorporation of Ecusta, the largest—I think 95%—of all the cigarette paper which was consumed in the United States was made in France. Champagne Paper corporation, of which I was at that time, and still today, the president, was the importer of the largest share of that paper. Can you rejoice with me when I say that instead of importing cigarette paper from France—due to the help and co-operation of all of you—we are shipping today American cigarette paper, cigarette paper made in Pisgah Forest, to France, where they appreciate our merchandise and consider it better than what they made themselves. I will see to it that this will always remain like this. I don't feel that we need fear that cigarette paper and supplies of other articles will be replaced by imported merchandise.

The important part of our program tonight is the distribution of the bonus checks; and it is also a pleasure to present to each and everyone of you who is a member in the Five-Year Club a little emblem, which has imprinted on it your membership in the Club, and also the name of the corporation for which you work. We will distribute these in a few minutes. I hope you will have as much pleasure receiving your check, as I have pleasure in giving it to you; and I hope this little silver emblem, which bears the name of either Ecusta, Champagne or Endless, will be worn by you many, many years to come with pride, dignity and honor, and will remind you of the Five-Year Club, which really made it possible for you to own it.

Heads Bowed In Tribute

Before we go much further, I want you to remember with me, with bowed heads and with a great deal of reverence, the four members who sacrificed their lives for our country, who should be with us today, but who were called away. We want to think of them for just a few seconds. Their names are: Christie P. Costanza, William M. Heaton, Theodore Schepkowski and Talmadge Stockstill. God bless their souls.

I want also to welcome as our guests tonight some of our soldier boys, and I especially think of Harvey Souther, who I remember when he came to our office, in what is today Mr. Bennet's home. He wore knee pants, was a little boy. Today he has a lovely wife—I happen to know her—and is the proud father of two children, and is a brave soldier. I also want to recognize James McCormick, who I welcome here. His father is sitting right next beside him, and I understand another one of his boys is in the Army. I am very happy to see you both with us tonight.

Before I conclude, I want to welcome some of our Honorary Members; men who have contributed to the success of Ecusta, Champagne

and Endless, and who we decided last year to elect as Honorary Members. I have reference to Mr. Ralph H. Ramsey, a man all of you know, and a man who is a true friend of Ecusta. As I have said so often before, and never hesitate to repeat, he is responsible to a great degree for Ecusta anchoring in Pisgah Forest.

I also have reference to Mr. C. V. Hanlon—I don't think you know him as well as you know some of the others—looks after our freight matters. He contributed a good deal to the winning of our freight case, which resulted in giving flax fibre—the raw material which Ecusta and its subsidiaries originated in this country—the same freight consideration as it receives to other destinations. Mr. Hanlon did a marvelous service, which will have a far-reaching effect on other commodities which play an important part in Southern industries.

Patent Attorney Praised

I also want to refer to Mr. Parrott. Mr. Parrott all of you know. He is the handsome patent attorney from Charlotte, who takes a good deal of interest in our patent affairs. His job is not only to protect the new ideas which anyone of you should produce, but also to protect us from infringing on other peoples' patents, so that we can always be proud of what we have created without stepping on other peoples' toes.

Let us now proceed with the distribution of the checks. However, before we proceed with this, I want to take occasion to express my thanks to Mr. Eversman and his staff of artists, who have contributed so greatly to our entertainment tonight. As usual, they worked while we enjoyed ourselves, and are always ready to do something to make our gatherings and parties a success. I thank all of you.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Leon English and the staff of handsome, efficient and lovely young ladies who took care of us tonight for their help. They certainly helped to give us a splendid meal, and the way it was served did not interfere with our enjoyment of it.

It is impossible for me, due to the fact that our family is so big, to hand each of you your checks and pins, so I have asked the various heads of the departments to give you your individual documents.

(At this time the pins and checks were distributed. Miss Mary Sue Thorne pinned the Endless Belt Corporation pin on Mr. Straus; Mrs. Marie Nelson pinned the Champagne Paper Corporation pin on Mr. Straus; and Mrs. Sonya Colwell pinned the Ecusta Paper Corporation pin on Mr. Straus.)

I hope that all of you received your presents, and as I have mentioned previously, I hope you will enjoy the pins and wear them with pride for many years to come.

I would like to add that all those who are in the Army and Navy, and who have left our services—I hope they will come back soon and in good health—have automatically been elected members of the Five-Year Club, and will receive their certificates and their emblems on the day they again enter the friendly gates of Ecusta, Champagne and Endless. I hope

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