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THE SERVICE STATION DEALER  
THE MAN AND HIS WORK

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GOPMAN

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This is a preliminary survey to explore three basic questions concerning the service station dealer and his relation to the oil industry. These questions are:

1. What are the underlying feelings of this group with respect to the industry and to the company they represent?
2. Do these attitudes vary with the type of operation, region, rural and urban location, etc.?
3. What factors enter into the development of critical or favorable attitudes?

The dealer is the oil industry's major public relations asset, and his behavior in his job very materially affects the kind of attitudes and opinions which the public has of the industry. Not however, in terms of short range effects -- here the dealer has very little effect. But in the long range, a given generation of dealers present to the public an image of the oil industry from which many attitudes of its good or bad will be formed. Therefore, it is important to the industry to know what kind of men are running service stations, how they behave and what their attitudes are. They lay the groundwork of public attitudes over the years.

This research is designed as an exploratory study to provide only tentative conclusion in these areas. However, in certain matters even the tentative conclusions should provide some guides to action.

Research has shown that the attitudes, loyalty, and morale of managers of retail outlets are the results of complex patterns and factors. For example, management often feels that the loyalty of retail outlets, suppliers or even employees is merely a matter of economics, of how well they are paid. Actually there is clear evidence that, although these factors are important, loyalty and enthusiasm cannot be purchased so simply, but result from a combination of factors in a situation.

This study, therefore, has been directed toward discovering the patterns of attitudes and analyzing the complex factors which contribute to them. It is not just a study of complaints about company policies and practices, or of individual gripes. These have been examined in the context of the situation in which these dealers work, and the kinds of people they are.

Attitudes are best considered as reactions of the individual to a total situation. For this reason, we have concentrated much of our attention to the dealers themselves and the kinds of people they are. In some cases poor morale may be the result of the type of individual who is working in a position, and who does not find it possible to gain satisfaction from his work. In other cases, the types of individuals found in a particular kind of work may require particular, special techniques of handling, if their morale is to be improved or maintained at a high level.

The work situation in which particular individuals find themselves has a strong relation to the kind of attitudes and morale they manifest. Without knowing the details and nature of that work situation, it is often not possible to plan best for increasing and maintaining morale. Knowing the pressures that bear upon a man in a particular job, one can set about developing techniques for offsetting and mitigating such pressures, or can search for kinds of rewards and supports which minimize the influence of pressure on morale.

Description of the Sample

This study was conducted in the Chicago area, in small communities, and on main highways outside of the city.

Two hundred and four interviews were collected with dealers in the following numbers:

- 1. Neighborhood Service Stations . . .129
    - Lower Class areas . . . . .32
    - Middle Majority areas . . .65
    - Upper-Middle Class areas. .32
  - 2. Central Urban Service Stations . . 18
  - 3. Main Highway Service Stations . . 25
  - 4. Small Community Service Stations. 32
- 204

About Ninety per cent of the interviews were conducted with dealers who handle the so-called standard brands; 10% of the interviews were conducted with dealers who handle cut-rate or "independent" brands.

We first conducted a series of pilot test interviews to determine the kinds of problems we would encounter, and to aid us in developing the best interview approach. The finally developed interview covered;

1. Factual information and attitudes towards the dealer's job and responsibilities.
2. The individual's personal background, why and how he got into his present position.
3. His feelings about his own career, either success or failure, his future plans, hopes and ambitions.
4. His attitude toward customers. Who are his customers? What do they expect of a Service Station? How does he go about meeting their expectations?
5. His attitudes toward the company. How does he react to the company, its policies and products? His enthusiasm or indifference? Whether he sees much difference between companies?

- 6. His attitudes towards the oil industry as a whole. Does he identify with it? Does he talk about it to family friends or customers? Does he feel a part of it?
- 7. What are his attitudes toward free enterprise and small business?

In addition, we added a specific technique, thematic pictures, to the schedule in order to provide data on the personality of the interviewee, and we used this information in building up the picture of the kind of man who goes into this field.

## II

## THE NATURE OF THE BUSINESS

As with any retailer, the dealer must handle two sets of demands. One comes from the customer, who has certain expectations in terms of service, attitudes, and behaviors; the second from the company who supplies him and holds his lease.

If the dealer is to stay in business and make a go of his enterprise, he must somehow meet the varied demands that these other parties to the gasoline transaction place upon him. It is true that some of their demands can be phrased in purely economic terms. However, it is not true that they can therefore be treated impersonally and dispassionately as tasks whose fulfillment is merely a means to an economic end.

The actions required of the dealer have a social meaning in our society, and he cannot be insensitive or oblivious to them. Further, his actions arouse feelings and emotions in himself which he must cope with and bring to a constructive resolution if he is to get satisfaction at his job.

Our society has a number of different ways of defining and regarding the Service Station Dealer. The views highlight different functions of his work -- but more important, they are often conflicting, and we find that there is a basic dilemma in the occupational role of the dealer.



The Business Man. Some of his acts, related to money and profits, mark him as a man of independence, authority, dignity, and some social prestige. These actions involve hiring and firing, keeping books, paying bills, placing orders for supplies, initiating advertising and new policies, meeting various governmental and licensing regulations. They mark him as a business man through his office work and business management.

The Servant-Attendant. Other duties which the dealer is conspicuous in performing cast him in a quite different light. He provides gas and oil, performs minor quasi-personal services such as wiping the windshield, brushing out the car, handles dirty and grimy objects. These activities carry the social stereotype of the attendant as a servant, one of little ability or training, who obeys the small needs of others for small recompense.

The Technician. Third, the dealer applies special knowledge and skill to the automobile and its mechanics. These activities provide an aura of respect and deference. The expert, in any field, gets prestige from the fact that lay people depend on him for help in an area where they are ignorant. Thus, the dealer has a social definition as a person of expert knowledge.

These three roles, with their different social acclaims and implications, put the Service Station dealer in a complex situation, and present problems that repercuss throughout his work activity. From his comments and attitudes, it is apparent that the contradictions inherent in the three

definitions often make a deep impression on him. He has difficulty building up an image of himself which is consistent and definite, which asserts who he is and what he can expect from his world. Master and servant, he cannot rest comfortably as either.

#### Positive and Negative Factors in the Work:

Many aspects and characteristics of the occupation of service-station-managing can be classified by their positive or negative value for the individual dealer. From our interviews we can outline these as follows:

Opportunity for Independence. Foremost among the attractive aspects of being a dealer is that it offers independence -- the chance to be your own boss, and to direct your working activities according to your own desires and ability.

Concomitant with this independence is a freedom from restraint which dealers feel their occupation ideally allows. There is no confinement to specific work, or to repetitive work. That is, unlike the clerk who adds columns of figures all day, or the punch press operator, the dealer engages in a variety of activities. The second freedom from restraint involves the fact that there is no confinement to a specific, restricted work area, -- again unlike the man who sits at the same desk or works at the same machine eight hours running. Thirdly, there is freedom from the restraint of an employer who can fire and exercise various authoritarian compulsions. There is also, according to many of these dealers, freedom from the restraint of economic cycle -- many of them regard the service station business as "depression proof".

Activity. Another of the major gratifications of this work is that it is healthy, outdoors. Many interviewees placed a good deal of stress on the fact that service station work is outdoor work, and does not confine one to the inside of an office or factory. There is a strong popular belief in the American culture that working out of doors makes one healthier, more virile and energetic. This idea seems especially attractive to many of the dealers we interviewed.

Masculinity. Also, and this is <sup>ONE</sup> very important although not always consciously recognized satisfaction, service station work takes place in a highly masculine environment. Men can cuss, make cracks about the women who walk by, and worry less about neatness than in many other occupations -- and quite a few of our informants took full advantage of this fact. Closely related to the idea of a masculine environment is the possibility of maintaining behavior and expressive manners and morals usually regarded as Lower Class.

This characteristic does not so strongly distinguish the service station from the factory as it does the service station from the office. It represents, however, one of the few areas in which it is possible to reach the status of business man without living up to highly middle class standards of propriety.

Manual Crafts. Another gratification important to some, but by no means to all dealers is that one can work with his hands, repairing and fiddling with automobiles, and exercise fairly fully whatever mechanical and manual interests he has.

Interpersonal Contact. Finally, and also quite important for many dealers, is the fact that service station work provides the chance to meet an almost endless variety of people, in casual but positive circumstances.

Our dealers are a sociable lot. Barring conflict and disagreement, they find the brief contacts with many people a source of stimulation and good feeling.

The assets of service station work can then be summarized as offering one a good deal of freedom of expression in the work day, opportunity to get ahead according to individual ability, and variety in the work as an outlet for manual and social interests.

The positive values outlined above are potent in attracting and holding the dealer to this occupation. However, they represent quite an idealized picture of the job -- and one finds often considerable disillusionment in the dealer who finds these gratifications along with equally potent frustrations. Every occupation has its good points and bad points; let us now look at some of these factors which dealers themselves indicate are the bad points.

Heavy Responsibility. While the manager likes to think of himself as independent, he also has a great deal of responsibility. In fanciful moments he may think of independence and freedom as holding out the pleasures of irresponsibility, but once he begins to work at the job he sees increasingly the impact of responsibilities and demands which he must meet if he is to make a go of the job. He

finds he not only has major responsibility for the manual work at the station (pumping gas, greasing cars, etc.) he also has to serve as Personnel Manager, Public Relations man, Advertising Director and Business Manager with the necessity for meeting payrolls, taking inventory, ordering stocks and supplies, filling out complex Governmental forms, and dealing with the Municipal authorities in getting licenses and permits.

This is the inevitable other-side of being one's own boss, and to the man not well trained for these functions, or who does not find satisfaction in them, they represent a real drawback to this kind of work.

Company Relations. There is, further, the control exercised by his supplier in the form of the provisions of his lease. Some things he may do, some he must, other things he may not do if he wishes to retain his lease. Although this relation has positive factors which will be outlined later, the negative controlling influence of the supplier often stands out in the dealer's mind. The supplier sets the prices of his products and he often feels inhibited by these because he would like to arrange the price structure some other way, either up or down. In Chicago, at least, the Union often sets the wages he must pay his help, so he is similarly inhibited here.

Customer Demands. Of equal negative import is the restriction on his freedom which the customers and their activity involves. Once in the business for a while he comes to realize that the customer provides considerable restraint, though it didn't seem so when he started. He finds that he must respond immediately, no matter how he feels, when

a customer comes into his station. He must leave his lunch to fill a gas tank, get up from the comfortable chair to check someone's oil and wipe his windshield, leave an interesting bull session with the other workers to give a passing tourist some information. What all this boils down to, is that the dealer soon finds out he can't really control the flow of work in his station, that it is controlled by the random, unorganized influx and exodus of customers. This fact often gives the dealer a feeling of not being master in his own house. In other occupations, studies have shown that a good deal of the worker's energy goes into efforts to control his environment, and especially the flow of work. The dealer may develop some techniques of doing this in the service station, but by and large he finds that the flow is not manipulatable to any real extent, and that he can really manipulate it only at the cost of reducing his volume.

Housekeeping. Another frustration is society's definition of the service station as a place which should be neat and clean. This value, this definition by society is directly opposed to the dealer's desire to operate in a masculine environment. Yet, he knows that he must seek to put up at least a front of neatness and cleanliness, no matter how much he would prefer not to wash his hands when he goes out to meet a customer, or not to wash down the driveway every day.

Weather. Opposed to the healthy, outdoor quality of the work is the fact that the weather is not always good. This may seem a minor point, but it often sours the manager considerably, if he is the one who places great value in the outdoors.

Customer Personalities. Opposed to the opportunity to deal with a lot of different people in positive, congenial manner, is the fact that the customer does not always respond to the dealer with the same congeniality and positiveness which he desires, does not always provide gratifying human contacts. As will be seen in Section 4, Relations to Customers represent one of the strongest potentialities for frustration and low morale and a frequent cause for low morale.

Effort. Finally, there is the point of long hours of work. The dealer seldom is able to know when he comes into the business that he may have to work thirteen, fourteen or fifteen hours a day, and that it is often economically impossible for him to get out from under this burden for a long time to come. Actually, working long hours has some value, personality-wise, for many of the men in this occupation, but it also leads to many frustrations and gripes. For one thing, going along with long hours is a consequent isolation from any persons or activities which do not take place on the premises. A man doesn't get to see his wife and children very much, or old friends unless they come to see him. He can't go to the movies so often or watch television so much. He can come to feel oppressed and deprived by this situation, although if he stays in the business long he manages to make some adjustment.

These then are the negative aspects of being a service station dealer. Many of the men who get into this kind of work are essentially unaware of them. We often heard the comment that "if I knew then the things I know now I wouldn't have ever started out". Or, "I would have done things a lot different if I'd known any better". These men are

drawn into this occupation in the first place because to them the positive aspects listed are both visible and very attractive. Later, many seem to wake up to the fact that they have been under some illusion -- after they've been in it a while they become aware of many things not so attractive about the business.

We must look for the balance, for the net goodness or badness of morale which an individual dealer finds between these positive and negative factors. Subsequent chapters deal with the kinds of men who go into this occupation, and why they especially find attractive some of the aspects, with the work situation and the forces which daily impinge upon the dealer and how these build slowly his impression of the occupation and adjustment to it, and finally with the consequences of these factors for the attitudes of the dealer towards his company and the industry in general.



## III

## THE MEN WHO ARE DEALERS

Examination of the dealers showed a wide range of individual adjustments to the occupation. However, there were certain general patterns and characteristics common to the sample as well as certain groupings within it.

Occupational Histories. We find that few of the men in this field have had clear-cut occupational aspirations. Few of them have wanted very much to go into a particular kind of job, and few of them have worked very hard to achieve a solid beginning in a particular career. Most of them held other jobs before they came into the Service Station business and drifted into the latter on the hope that it would offer them something they were not able to find in the jobs they had been on. A few individuals, in childhood and adolescence, planned seriously toward a career, for example, that of doctor or lawyer. These people have been disappointed in their aspirations, very often by depressed economic circumstances; or as they grew up they found that their interest waned.

In many ways, the world of work did not hold much interest for these men when they were younger, before adulthood made it necessary for them to work; they did not develop ideas of where they would go or what they would do when they had to leave school and family. (The boy in Cassanada U.S.A. is thus not unlike our group of dealers, especially if one subtracts that part of his character which makes him a dramatic figure.)

Social Origins. Social economic status shows a wide range, from dealers with Lower-Lower Class backgrounds to some with Upper-Middle Class backgrounds. The majority, however, are from Upper-Lower and Lower-Middle Class backgrounds and relatively few come from Upper Middle or Lower-Lower backgrounds. Most of those with Upper-Lower and Lower-Middle backgrounds see the Service Station business as an avenue for achieving a respectable, though not highly demanding status in the society. The majority of them had manual jobs before entering the business, rather than white collar or clerical jobs, and gravitated to the Service Station as a place where their manual interests can be applied but where the lower status and rather strongly subordinated position usually involved in manual work is not paramount.

Attitudes Toward Authority -- Against and For. This latter motive is closely related to a psychological characteristic which is typical of the group -- a striving for freedom from participation in the usual hierarchy of business and industry. Most people in America have bosses, a long line of them up to the top man. Our interviewees from Upper-Lower Class and Lower-Middle Class backgrounds were close to the bottom of the authority hierarchy in the positions they held before coming into the Service Station business. These men developed a longing for a kind of work in which there would not be so many layers above them, in which they could "be their own boss." They manage to save up or borrow enough money to go into the Service Station business in the hope that there life will be less governed by people with superior status. Often we find that these men, sorely pressed by

circumstances of their dealer job, still cling to it because "at least you're your own boss, you don't have a foreman telling you what to do."

However, not many of these individuals have developed techniques for adjusting constructively to work outside of a highly structured authority dominated situation. This is not surprising, since most work relations in the United States are highly structured. In the family and school system as well as the working world, Americans are taught to get along with authority, to depend upon authorities for direction and goals in their activities. Training for independent functioning is both less common, and much less explicit. Thus, our respondents often experienced a good deal of shock when they became dealers, at finding concretely and all of a sudden that they have to make a wide variety of decisions with few precedents and that if they make the wrong decisions they can quickly go under.

We find another side to the coin of striving for independence, a side of which the men are not so highly conscious, and which they do not readily admit verbally. This side involves a desire for control and guidance from more experienced, more competent, authorities; a real need for that same authority hierarchy which their desire for independence took them away from. (This is not an uncommon psychological characteristic; we often see in salesmen the same striving for independence and freedom of action combined with subjective need for direction and guidance from authority figures.)

These basic attitudes lead to conflicting statements by dealers -- they may at one time berate their supplier for exercising too much control, for "dictating" to them; at another time they are equally resentful of the supplier for not giving enough support, enough help in the business of the Service Station. Actually, the structure of the industry provides both independence and guidance. The dealer leases his property from someone, and runs the business pretty much as he pleases but within the confines of the requirements of his lease, and the informal pressures and guidance which the suppliers provide.

Attitudes Toward People. A second quite common characteristic of the group is the desire for casual relations with people. They like contacts to be relatively free and easy, with no strong emotional or economic demands made on the individual.\* Our informants like people, like to be with them and to be active in relation with them. However, they don't want to get too close, or to have to make a stable, long term adjustment to any sizable group. They like the kind of contact in which one greets the customer with a hearty hello, asks "Fill 'er up?" and passes a few remarks about the weather and events of momentary interest, receives friendly, congenial replies and bids the customer farewell. If this goes on with the same person day in and day out, so much the better -- the man has the gratification of being nice and friendly to people, having them be nice and friendly to him, and no important emotional demands being made by either individual. This is quite different

\* Here again there is considerable similarity to the salesman.

from the adjustment one must make to a work group with whom one deals day in and day out; here stronger emotional ties and conflicts develop, and it is not easy to escape when the relationship is unsatisfying.

Many of our informants also characteristically react fairly quickly to rejection or to frustration by other people; they also tend to react with fairly strong emotion. These men seem fairly ready to see in others evidence of a lack of personal friendliness, and to see the other motivated by "getting something for nothing" or "trying to do me out of what I've got coming."

Thus, they show at the same time a positive congenial orientation toward people, and a tendency to fairly quickly sense or even imagine rejection from those people when not met with similar positiveness and congeniality. Unlike some other groups of people (accountants, engineers, many professionals) these dealers do not take human relationships as matter-of-fact, highly work-oriented things; rather they tend to expect a good deal of personal gratification from their relations with other people, and quickly become irritated and resentful when the response of other people is such that they receive no gratification.

One factor involved in the readiness to react against the demands of others is the frequent yearning for irresponsibility and lack of pressure in these men. Basically, many would like not to have to strive with their gratification. Rather they would prefer to go along with just a comfortable expenditure of energy and receive automatically the reasonable income and good regard of the people around them. Thus, when confronted with the demands

\* This human characteristic is stronger in these men than the average.

of those with whom they deal, as well as with the demands of self respect, that they be active, energetic and accomplishing, they tend also to feel resentful or hard pressed by their circumstances.

Mechanical Interests. In another focus, we may note that mechanical interest is not a very strong factor in the personality and work orientation of most of the dealers we interviewed. A few have it, and see in their Service Station work the pleasures of repairing cars, solving problems which arise in the cars, etc. However, most of the dealers hire someone with that interest and skill if they are able. Their mechanical interests are much more on the level of "pattering" and for them this area is a relatively minor aspect of the business. They have a certain amount of pride in "knowing their way around" a car and in being able to fix the most common things which go wrong. They do not show the same fascination with an automobile's insides that one finds in regular auto mechanics, racing car enthusiasts, stock car fans, and the like. They tend, by and large, to be much more people oriented than object oriented, although they have enough of the latter to maintain them in this business.

Social Environment. Finally, let us take up the question of differences among dealers in small town, highway, and urban stations. There are many more similarities than differences between these men. The differences which exist seem to result from the different social environments of the two areas, small town vs. urban.

The social differences select dealers, both through determining who will survive and through offering particular customer-dealer relations. The data indicate that this selection can be seen in trends, but not in basic or essential differences.

We first note again that the small town dealers have more stable ties with the people when they serve and meet, and that their relations with people flow along more smoothly. There are fewer dealers of one type discussed below, (page 25) whose main interest in the Service Station business is money and money for its own sake, and there are fewer very poorly adjusted, erratic dealers. For the bulk of the dealers in both areas, however, we think that the pattern outlined above is, by and large, characteristic.

The main highway dealers are a mixture of the small community and the urban types. Quite simply, those highway stations closely adjacent to the city are often run by men who are, in all respects, urban individuals; those stations where the dealer grew up and still identifies with a nearby small community tend to attain the more stable ~~the~~ personal pattern characteristic of that area.

The characteristics outlined above, we regard as fairly characteristic of the majority of the dealers interviewed. These characteristics are important in understanding their adjustment and attitudes, but they by no means tell the whole story. In the section below, we will describe various "types" of dealers, according to their ways of adjusting to the occupation and the degree to which they have been able to meet successfully the contradictory demands of the work. We can mark off some stages in the continuum between success and failure so that some of the characteristics of the men making various adjustments become apparent.

### The Energetic, Accomplishing Dealers

This is a broad classification that can be further divided into three sub-groups. What the dealers in this group have in common is that they look to their occupation as providing opportunity for them to progress toward some life goal. And they work toward it in a fairly vigorous, well organized manner. Such a goal may be quite consciously clear and well defined, or may be relatively vague and unarticulated -- that is, more along the line of "just wanting to get ahead." The men in this group are trying to make an increasingly productive and profitable adjustment to life, by operating their business with a certain amount of success. Although they choose the occupation for varying reasons and work at it with varying degrees of skill and competence, they have in common the view that the Service Station business provides a potentially satisfying and rewarding opportunity.

#### The solid citizen type of dealer.

This group is one of the largest in our sample. These dealers typically run the stations Americans regard as the average, friendly corner Service Stations. Usually they are fairly new, at least well kept up. The dealers are quite busy, and the stations require two or three men besides the owner. In many cases the station is managed by a partnership of two men.

The motivation of these dealers for Service Station work is positive -- they want to get something from it -- and they have the necessary drive and skill to do a good job. They have essentially mastered the complexity of the work situation and are clearly getting enough satisfaction from their work to compensate for the unrewarding aspects.



The reasons these dealers emphasize for getting into their work are quite diverse. Some assert that they wanted a better living, some independence, others the desire to work with their hands, and still others being outdoors and dealing with people. Whatever their particular combination of individual motives, they have found ways to gratify their needs in the work situation and also maintain the essential control over the activities necessary to make a go of the job. Many of these "solid citizens" dealers attain moderate success and, finding that it provides what they need, do not continue to strive so energetically. These are men who have mastered the trade and are content to do it competently. They do not have a constant striving to move ever "upward and onward", and their stations are usually run in an efficient but not fast-paced or demanding fashion.

Community-wise, this is a fairly isolated group. They are caught up in their jobs and have little time or even interest for local business and community activities. From their point of view, they mind their own business, and do a good job at really hard work. They spend considerable time at the stations, go home at night for a few hours with the wife and to sleep, and return early to work the next day. Their private and public lives are separated, and they make no conscious effort to integrate the two -- a characteristic which distinguishes them from the next sub-group within our energetic type.

The socially active dealer.

These men place the strongest emphasis of their work adjustment on dealing with customers and, often the broader community. They are very sales and public relations-minded and they tend to take much less a matter-of-fact attitude toward the people they come into contact with. There are not many men who fit into this group; however, their importance in terms of creating favorable attitudes toward the oil industry is such that we will devote further attention to them.

They are set apart from the above sub-group by the fact that they desire to be more than just successful Service Station dealers; they want to be considered successful business men in the community at large. They usually have an even higher level of energy than the previous group and are also usually quite efficient and well integrated persons. One knows them by their tendency to be less of the station attendant and more of a "manager." They strive to professionalize their work, realize the importance of efficiency and "top notch" service and conduct their business in a highly planned and thoughtful manner. Their stations are often larger than the average, more assiduously cleaned and busier. Usually they employ more men. They tend to be quite selective in picking workers and careful in training them. These dealers emphasize the importance of satisfying the customer as a major way of competing and they are generally pretty skillful at public relations. They often take extra time to talk to customers, to tell them about their cars and thus to give them the feeling that the dealer is a competent, trustworthy man

who is sincerely interested in the problems of the customer's car. Even when they do not always live up to this ideal, it is close to their hearts and they strive to.

As these men become more and more professionalized in their occupation, and as they come closer to their ideal of achieving a solid social status, they tend to spend a good deal of time integrating themselves into the larger community. One finds these dealers actively participating in local clubs and associations. They become active and trusted community figures (thereby gaining in status). They are less often isolated in the community than the solid citizen type; when they are isolated, they are unhappy and try to work out ways to become less so. They are much less harassed by the demands of the work, for with their drive, skill and detachment, they have gradually risen from the grease pits and the island and moved into a more orderly office setup. They strive to manage their affairs in such a way that most of their time is devoted to taking care of the business end of the station, and to contacting customers and other people in the community.

#### The economically ambitious dealer.

This is another relatively small group, made up of men who look at the occupation purely as a way of making money. Most of them have a pretty clear idea of what the work is like, and many of them dislike the Service Station business except for the fact that they can make money from it. Nevertheless, they are usually efficient, shrewd and calculating; they do not let their dislike of the work or the customers interfere drastically with their operating a large, efficient and profitable

station. Many of these men probably do not stay long in service station work; some do. Since their main interest is making money, in one sense they would be just as much at home operating a self-service Laundromat or Dry Goods Store. They may have selected the Service Station business because of some particular experience or opportunity, but many of the gratifications which the work provides are not important to them.

Because they see money in running a station which is ever larger and handles ever greater volume of business, in one sense they are quite effective, productive workers. However, their single-minded interest in money makes some of them vulnerable to the temptation of more or less unethical practices in dealing with customers. They are the kind of men who sell a battery simply to sell it, not because the customer needs it. They are the kind who will put 20¢ oil in a car and charge the customer 40¢. Although few are downright dishonest, the strong emphasis on money, and the relatively weak emphasis on professionalization makes them more ready than some, to cut corners and give the customer less service than he pays for.

Many of this group are rather well educated (some with college educations) and have accepted an occupational status considerably lower than is expected of them. By and large, they are bitter men in strong rebellion against authority and society and out to get what they can. They control their desire to make money quickly and easily, primarily through fear lest customers or suppliers retaliate against them; not because they have any strong feeling that they should not cut corners.

### The Anathetic Dealers

This type makes up a fairly sizable proportion of our sample. It is set apart from the energetic types discussed above because the dealers in it are notably less motivated toward solid accomplishment. They look primarily for stability, and security from their work; they do not put a good deal of energy into working for increasing rewards. Attitudes toward their jobs and customers are neither strongly positive nor strongly negative; they don't want to do anyone any harm, but neither do they feel a strong drive to do anyone a lot of good. A fair number of these men got into the work during the depression, or subsequent slow times, not so much because they really wanted to, as because they could find nothing else really interesting.

Notable is the fact that they seem to have much less energy to put into work than the first groups. They are not vigorous or driving, nor do they exercise much planning or foresight in organizing their work. Once they have mastered the essentials of the job, they tend to work along in a routine which does not change much and which is not especially adaptive to changing situations. Essentially, these men got into Service Station work because it was a better job than they could get elsewhere -- and they think of it as a job, not a profession. They think of themselves more as self-employed workers (who pump gasoline into the appropriate hole in the left rear fenders of whatever automobiles drive in) than as independent business men. They tend to describe their occupation as "Service Station Attendants" rather than "Service Station Manager or Dealer." This, in spite of the fact that they may lease or occasionally even own their station.

Initially, many of the dealers in this group seem to have approached the idea of running a filling station with enthusiasm, and saw in it opportunity to win a better life or to get ahead. But, as they worked in the station they became aware of the more negative aspects of the job and were unable to do much to offset them. Some were attracted by the desire to make a good deal more money than they had been making, but when they discovered what long hours it took, they simply settled into a routine.

In short, these men seem to have approached the occupation with less initial energy and expectations than the above groups, or to have reduced their expectations when they found that fulfillment of them would be more demanding than they had thought.

These men are by no means completely undesirable dealers, nor are they strong assets to the industry. Given the pressures of the job, they often become quite irritable and cantankerous, only to regret it later. Their service is occasionally inefficient, and certainly not as attractive to most customers as that of the stations managed by the more vigorous men discussed above.

Usually their stations are somewhat smaller than average, with fewer facilities for work other than dispensing gasoline and oil and quite minor repairs. They do not keep their stations so clean -- it is too much of an effort and they tend to be somewhat less careful of their own and their attendants' appearance.

In general they are congenial enough men who enjoy meeting people (when they don't give them any trouble), and talking and sitting around during slack periods. In some neighborhoods they may build up quite a loyal following among friends and neighbors, many of whom will enjoy dropping in to "shoot the breeze" with the dealer.

These men work when a customer drives in, but they don't go out of their way to get new business. They may deplore the competition of the new, (particularly built) super service stations, and from such parts and appliance suppliers as Sears but they don't seem to have the resources or the drive to compete.

#### The Unstable Erratic Dealers

Not a very large percentage of our sample fall into this category. They are, however, worth particular consideration because of the extremely marginal way in which they operate, and because of their instability. By and large, these are men with clearly negative motivation; that is, as far as one can judge they've gotten into Service Station work to escape from quite unpleasant characteristics of other jobs they've had, and they have only the vaguest notions of the good things about service station work. Typically, they are the most resistant to authority, the ones who want most to get away from a "boss" this is much more important than being their own bosses.

They want the freedom of this occupation -- but they seem to want freedom from many of the bothersome restrictions of other jobs, rather than freedom to find greater self expression or increased

opportunity. Thus, anticipating little or no positive satisfaction from their work, they find little, and soon fasten on the many negative aspects of the work. Quite a few of them no sooner begin managing a station than they begin to think and plan about getting into something else. The turnover among this poorly integrated group is quite marked. This is perhaps just as well for the oil industry at large, for these men do not run their stations, or conduct themselves, in ways that are likely to develop a positive attitude toward the industry in the public. In general, they harbor strong resentment toward the work, and toward the people who are their customers, and show this attitude in the irresponsible and unreliable way in which they perform on the job.

In this group are many men who get into the filling station on the spur of the moment. By and large, they are novices without technical know-how of either automobiles or business principles. Oftentimes they are inadequately financed and therefore tend to locate in "cheap" sections in run-down neighborhoods. And such stations, under the ineffective management, only tend to fall into increased disrepair. When they find (or suddenly wake up to the fact) that they are not in an "easy spot", they most usually let things go; they let a deteriorating business slide farther, for they simply do not possess the internal vigor or resourcefulness with which to overcome obstacles.

In view of the fact that this occupation appears to attract some unstable, undesirable men, it would seem that great care should be given to the selection of men to run stations.



## IV

## THE WORK SITUATION OF THE DEALER

The broad outlines of the dealer's work situation were given in Section II -- there we pointed out that the service station is a place where the dealer and his employees work, and where they come into contact with various people for the purpose of transacting business. We can best characterize the work situation of the dealer in terms of certain social interpersonal relations which are always present in his work situation, and the social and psychological meanings of these interpersonal relations for the society and for the individual involved in them. First let us consider relations with customers since these are the relations which take up the most of the dealer's time, which concern him most vitally in terms of earning a living and, we find, which give him the most trouble.

The Customer-Dealer Relation

For the dealer, motorists have two "distinct sides" -- they can be a source of social, as well as economic, satisfaction; they can be a source of unsatisfying, disrupting demands. The latter meaning is always present, the first is present only when the dealer is able to adjust to the demands and manipulate them in his own interest. Motorists who primarily make unpleasant demands (as defined in the dealer's mind) are thought of as bad customers; motorists whose demands can be put to positive psychological use are thought of as good customers.

The labels of "bad customers" really refer to factors in the work situation which can be frustrating, rather than to personality or character. "Good customers" also does not describe types of people so much as it labels social gains the dealer can acquire, given the tasks he performs. Frequently these gains depend upon the dealer training his customers so they will behave in ways that allow the dealer to "earn" a social living as well as an economic one.

The customer of a filling station is in a relatively unique social position with respect to the person who serves him. First of all, the customer himself initiates action for the station by bringing his car into the drive. When he does so, someone from the station must respond and ask him what he wishes. Dealers find that they are constantly on call, "having to hop up and come running every time the bell rings." They find they are "business men without leisure" with the need to keep books but no time to do them. They find that when they lay aside their lunch that "maybe it takes me three quarters of an hour before I can get back to it." Further, it is often merely a brief, unskilled assistance that is demanded, e.g., pumping gas. It is therefore difficult for the attendant to feel that he is giving a specialized skill anyone else could not easily perform, a skill that warrants respect from the person for whom it is exercised.

<sup>1</sup> "Training" in this section means all the pressures -- hints, cues, mannerisms, tones of voice, cooperation or pulling back -- which the dealer uses in showing the customer how he should act. As is apparent in the comments later in this section, many dealers are quite aware of what they are doing when they work to pull a smile out of a customer, or when they comment on the weather. We define these actions as training the customer in behavior the dealer likes and wants.

In addition to the service that is paid for, the motorist can expect free service; his windshield will be wiped, he will be told if anything is obviously wrong with his car, his side and rear windows may be wiped, and he has a right to ask for his battery, his tires, his oil and water to be checked, his license plates put on, and his car to be swept. In our society it is common for a paid service to be performed with an unpaid-for civil and indulgent manner, e.g, "with a smile," but it is uncommon for this aspect of service to take the form of an imperative which the server is obliged to perform. In this the service station business is unique, bringing the server close to the status of a servant. Dealers seem to agree that customers often underscore this servant-master relation by acting in ways suggesting that they take the service given them completely for granted. As one dealer said: "People would not ask a grocery store owner to do free things for them that they do us."

A demeaning role is not all that a dealer must suffer in relation to his clients. The situation is problematical as well as demeaning. No standards have been established as to how much free service the station ought to give, and how much, if anything, to charge for services and commodities which people tend to define as free favors. If a charge is made, a customer may be lost. If no charge is made, then the dealer feels that improper demands have been made upon him. Thus, as in so many ways the dealer is left in an unprotected position.

"I would have lost the customer had I charged him for the small service of putting on the new hub cap or rear view mirror."

"There is minor repair we could do, but we will not do it, for they will not pay us for it, so we send them to the garage where they have to pay. They would give me 25¢ and think it was a good tip instead of paying me for the service."

In general, a bad customer is one who stresses both the servant-like character of the tasks performed for him and his executive-like control over them. When, at the same time, the client is someone who ordinarily is not in a superior relation to the attendants, e.g., a woman or an adolescent boy, then the situation is worsened.

The frequent actions of customers which frustrate the dealer are many:

Customers behave in a superior way toward the dealer, they indicate a lack of respect for his position.

They expect too much service, or service they are not entitled to.

They don't respect the professional authority of the dealer, deny his specialized knowledge, they mistrust him, indicate that they believe he may be dishonest.

They want credit and become angry when it isn't forthcoming.

They complain about prices.

They sometimes try to cheat him.

They buy only small amounts of gas and want free service anyway.

They want to use his technical facilities but not pay for them.

They treat the station as if it were not the private property of the dealer, but rather as a place open to public use without the dealers permission.

The behaviors which characterize a bad customer are ones which either (a) frustrate the dealer's desire to have comfortable, satisfying relations with customers, or (b) frustrate him in his desire to govern the station's operation as his best judgment dictates, rather than according to the customer's whim and wish.

Sometimes, what the dealer feels in these customer actions is that he is subordinated by the customer; that the customer takes insufficient cognizance of him as a business man and as a person. Many of the actions of bad customers signify a lack of respect for the dealers status -- the customer indicates to the dealer that he does not accord him the same deference he would give some other man who runs a business. Thus, aside from the purely negative value of these actions, the bad customer systematically rubs the dealers nose in his relatively subordinate status, makes him hyper-aware that many members of the society are prone to see him as working in a Lower Class, unskilled and not-worthy-of-respect occupation. This is the central frustration of dealing with customers; and it is the thing which dealers have to learn to adjust to, to modify where possible, and to avoid when they can.

The success of a dealer's adjustment depends in considerable part upon the degree to which he is able to cope with bad customers, set up the environment so that their influence is minimized,

and control his own feelings so they do not "get his goat". The types listed in Section III vary in their ability to do this. The apathetic and unstable dealers seem most impotent in the face of an onslaught of customers, most prone to become irritated, or to give in to feelings of resentment. The small time dealers usually learn to take such customers in their stride, although they do not show great facility in handling them. The socially active and economically motivated dealers often work quite carefully at offsetting and neutralizing the influence of bad customers -- the former by a congenial, salesmanlike approach, the latter by careful calculating and sometimes ruthless severing of relations with customers they find not "profitable" to deal with.

Bad customers are ones who:

- a. Express superiority in some way.

"Well lots of them look down on you, think they're better than you are and all that, and sometimes you want to tell them right where to go -- but can't."

"Some of them are friendly. Some trust you as a friend. Others think you are dirty and a servant. They expect to do the ordering. One woman ordered one of my boys to wipe the windshield in the rain. She was mad when he could not dry it."

- b. Expect too much service, or expect service they are not entitled to.

"So there are some that want more than you usually give them -- they're the aggressive type, and you give them a little edge and they try to get more. If you do their headlights, then they want their back window, and they always want more than they get and they always will."

"The customers that get me are the ones that go to Sears to get batteries and then come to my men to put them in."

- c. Will not respect the professional authority of the attendant.

"Some of them will come in here and try to take over. They will tell me how to run my business."

"Then the one I do not like is the one that stands over you while you do everything. They follow you around the car with an air gauge. They check the oil 3 or 4 times a day. They tell you how to run your business."

- d. Mistrust the attendant.

"A guy comes in and looks at you and wonders how you're going to gyp him. Even a steady customer."

- e. Want credit.<sup>1</sup>

"Why, one woman sent in her little kid with a note asking me for credit for fuel oil for a few days for 3 gallons only. And I had to refuse her, for if I gave it she would do it again and then the others would. That is the trouble being in a poor neighborhood. They would throw away their money on drink and things and I would furnish their heating oil. I cannot do it."

<sup>1</sup> Credit is extended to customers who are organized for the purpose. But in this case credit is extended by the company rather than by the individual station manager.



"If you give it you never see them again; if you don't give it, still never see them."

f. Complain about prices.

g. Cheat or steal.

"There are customers who consciously take you, ordering two bucks of gas and then saying they only wanted one."

h. Buy small amounts of gas.

i. Want to use the plant but not the attendants.

"I give as much (service) as I can. I comply with most wishes but some are impossible. They want to use the lift to put on parts bought at other places."

j. Misuse a car.

k. Treat the station as if it were not the private property of the owner or manager, to be penetrated only with his permission, but rather as a territory open to public use.

"People use the phone booth and your pencil and your paper -- all these things are expected and if you don't expect it you've got to get out of business."

The "good customer", naturally, is one who behaves in opposite ways -- where the "bad" one derogates, insults, or is carelessly inconsiderate, the good one builds up, compliments and, is congenially considerate in his dealings with the dealer.

The men in our sample characterize as good customers people who:

Allow a personalized relationship such as first-naming and passing the time of day.

Bring the dealer into positive social contact with a world of higher status, indicating respect for the dealer personally and for his competence.

Show loyalty when the station is out of the way, are steady customers.

Buy liberally from the station thus making a simple service relation take on the proportions of a business.

Give responsibility to the station by leaving the car and keys, allowing the dealer to use his discretion in servicing the car.

Good customers are, then, people who make the dealer feel that his work is something more than cut-and-dried servicing of cars, who allow him to behave in ways which gratify his desires to think well of

himself as an enterpriser, and to engage in the positive casual interpersonal relations which, as we have seen, he likes so well.

However he must work to get and keep good customers for he is in a business where rewards are hard come by. The gasoline market is highly competitive in two ways: there are many outlets and there are only little differences in the quality of the products offered. In many cases, the dealer finds that it is competitive at the other end too; if he does not sell a lot of the right kind of gas, his lease may not be renewed. He must therefore build up a clientele or a business by means of special efforts and special inducements.

The good customer...

- a. Brings the attendant social contact with a world of high status.

"Clifton Utley came in here this morning and put his own gas in when we were busy. I wish I could have a picture of that. . . . We have lots of professors that live right around here and doctors and professional people."

"With a grocery, the maid does the shopping, but here everybody comes in. I like it."

- b. Allows a personal relationship, e.g., first-naming.

- c. Shows loyalty even when the station is out of his way -- the steady customer, one who is not a "drifter" or "leecher."<sup>1</sup>

"Had a fellow come in and say he was sorry he was moving; a lot of people who trade here wouldn't dream of leaving."

- <sup>1</sup> Steady customers are, of course, in many ways a burdensome responsibility. Obligations are owed them. As one manager said:

"They are the kind we have to cater to. And the least little thing that goes wrong, you're stuck -- if his car don't start you gotta go get him and if he thinks something's your fault, you've lost him."

- d. Spends a great deal, thus making the simple service relationship take on the proportions of a business. The sale of accessories functions in this way. Thus the opposite to the "50¢ customer" is the \$23.00 customer."
- c. Gives responsibility to the attendant by leaving the car all day and letting the station use his keys and their discretion.

"If you can build up their faith in you so they can leave their car here and know that you'll do what you say you will, that's gonna help a lot. He told me he'd had it in a garage and they said they would fix it up but the squeak developed after he'd gotten it out of this garage. He said he wouldn't let them touch it any more. I'll bring it in here if there's anything wrong from now on, and you grease it and take care of it for me."

The Dealer's Clientele.

However, in addition to getting a large clientele, the dealer is concerned with the right kind of clientele. He wants his customers to be steady so that he will have a trade he can count on and persons to deal with from whom he knows what to expect. If his customers are steady he will feel that he is known and has a place in the minds of other persons. If they are the right sort of persons and make the right sort of demands, he will be able to protect himself from the decreasing nature of his job. Thus the dealer must build up and train a clientele. This is especially the case with dealers in stations who must sell at a slightly higher price than the Bulk stations.

Also, the building up and training of a clientele cannot proceed apart from changes made in the station and its attendants. To get the right sort of clients the dealer must present the right sort of station. Thus, when one dealer took over he found that his station was dirty and run-down, that it was famous for keeping customers waiting, that the attendants defined the station as a place to use foul language, that a policy game in the back of the station was attracting hoodlums, not customers. He found that customers with little to spend were "given a rough time." He had to change all of that in order to build the station into an enterprise. Action was required of him at the policy-setting level.

This client-directed action is needed not only to sell gas. It is only by being "enterprising" that the dealer can sell accessories and services in addition to gas, and accessories and services frequently provide the station's margin of profit:

65  
"You can't make a living out of gas, just out of extras. Gas just pays for the overhead."

"You make most of your profit on services inside; we use gas to get the people in."

The manager builds up his clientele in several ways. In addition to advertising he may:

1. Offer special considerations, "honor" the customer.

"I give them a thirty day guarantee on everything."

"I take care to get cars out when promised."

"And even if you know they (women who want tires checked but don't need it) don't need it, it's best to do it. It's a poor policy to say anything; they think you don't want to bother."

"Now a lot of grease jobs I'll recheck myself, because most of our customers know me and know I'll give 'em as good a job as I can, and they feel a lot happier if they know I've looked at it. Or if somebody gets a new car and brings it in, well, we'll take the book into the pit with us when we begin to work in it."

2. Greet them with service and a smile, even if this means fighting a war with the client or with attendant to establish this definition of the situation.

"I want courtesy to the public most in my men. Being polite don't cost nobody nothing. Even a blind man feels good if you are polite to him. If you are polite to a customer he goes out with a good taste in his mouth. And you like your job better. When I get a difficult customer, I like to think of myself as clever. I like to think I have done a good job on him. I get him on my side. I am very polite to him and try to get him to smile. I had a man come in here he was cranky every day. I did that to him. He comes in here now and smiles every time."

"To keep them happy, you let them step all over you but you have to."

"Customers want everything free they can get. For as that is concerned nowadays you have to fall on your knees with a customer."

3. Give the appearance of giving service with enthusiasm and sincerity.

"You have to know what you're doing and mean it. If you are going to clean a windshield, then clean it and do not erise erese with a rag."



Do not stop with taking one plug off the battery. There are two more there and you might as well go the rest of the way. Do it right. I can tell you that the attitude of "I am going to have to clean the windshield" does not apply here."

"If your attitude is right and you slowly build it up, you can't lose and are going to win."

4. Be disciplined in his emotional responses.

"Some of them you'd like to hit in the teeth -- but can't. Oh, you deal with every kind; it's like house to house selling. I never know what I'm going to say until I see the guy's face -- then I know if he got out on the wrong side of bed or not. Seventy five per cent of business is what you make it. If you think it's going to be bad, it's going to be bad."

"You've got to have a dual personality when you deal with the public. You may have a fight with one -- and then you've got to change quick with another. You can't carry a grudge. You've got to throw it off quickly."

5. Employ equal treatment for all customers.

"There was a lot of talk in here about the 50¢ guy. I gave them (the employees) to understand he might be a 50¢ guy today and he might have \$5.00 for us next Saturday when he gets paid."

6. Show that the customer, or at least his car, is known, has a place.

"I am not new at serving people. People like to go to the gas station just like women like to go to one hairdresser. People like you to remember them. I try to do that. I recognize the car whether I do the driver or not. I remember a dent in the fender, a crack in the glass, or something like a label on the window. Even if the driver is different I recognize them and greet them. They like that. Nobody comes in here a stranger. They are all my friends when they have been in here once."

"Some big outfits think it's just another car. It's not like to go with groceries. The small station knows the folks who has the car and for that reason a lot of people think the small station is the place to take their car."

"But it's nice when you know what they want and when you know them personally -- like today, you can have something pleasant to say about

the weather to break the ice -- the weather today was made to order for that -- you know, the idea is to give a person a pleasant time while you separate him from his nancy."

7. Present the client with a spotless clinic and not an oily pit. In doing this, the manager not only purifies the client's world but also presents himself as someone not engaged in dirty work. The company contributes to this picture by encouraging the manager to keep his place as white as possible and by enforcing certain standards of cleanliness and neatness. The manager, other things being equal, may or may not be personally disinclined towards dirty jobs.

"I love to do dirty jobs. I want to keep clean to wait on trade but it's hard to do. When I'm just waiting on customers I wear my uniform, but if I have to do dirty work inbetween, I put on overalls."

"By rights you should be dressed clean all times. Customers like you to come in, and clean. But one of us is usually dirty. I'm doing the greasing today. In the evening it's all nice and neat. I change in the evening. People like that and anything people like you should try to do."

"We have to keep the driveway scrubbed, and I think if we don't keep it clean it's bad for business."

"The American people are funny. They want eye appeal. Something that is all lit up and flashy, the people with Buicks and Cadillacs who really spend the dough want something clean looking and you don't blame them."

Regardless of all this effort to present a white palace to the client, however, the fact is that station work is dirty. As dealers say:

"...cars are dirty and in order to give service they require you've got to lean on the car and you get some of that dirt on you."

"You cannot do the work properly if you keep too clean."

Someone has to grease cars in the rain; someone has to wash them; someone has to crawl under them in cold weather; someone has to change muddy tires. Often the dealer will solve this problem by assigning these dirty jobs to his help, especially his Negro help.

"I do everything, but I do not do greasing."

"We manage it. But I never do grease. Other fellows we hire do that."

"I wait on trade but I never grease a car."

And to balance these ingratiating devices, there are means of training or getting rid of customers who are disruptive.

"Well, when I get a guy like that I say, Gee, I'm sorry, if you can do better somewhere else that's where you should go and trade."

As mentioned, the various types of dealers differ considerably in ability to use these techniques effectively for attracting and training customers -- indeed, this is one very important measure of their ability to achieve success and avoid failure. They differ in whether or not they use a given technique at all, and in whether they use it heartily or fully, skillfully or ineptly. The quotations cited for each technique are, obviously, from men who use the technique with some energy and planning -- one way of spotting a less effective dealer is his lack of knowledge of these techniques, or his disparaging remarks about them.

The successful dealer is one who, more often than not, manages to extract a measure of pleasure from applying these techniques for attracting all customers and dealing with ones who tend to be "bad". For instance, he gets a personal satisfaction from handling a bad customer or that he becomes a good one, from controlling his own behavior so the customer changes his in a way more in line with the dealer's preferences. To be able to do this signifies to the dealer that he is a skillful, clever person, and that he need not reconcile himself to an unsatisfying situation. The less successful men are more likely to lament or grieve, to keep abuse on the customer or on the setup of the business as the only outlet from his frustration.

### Employee-Manager Relations

Persons who work in filling stations are defined, among themselves, as persons who have no pretences and don't believe in malarky. Basically this means that they do not accept as desirable the attitudes Middle Class persons take toward power and authority. Authoritarian roles are to be avoided, and if this isn't possible they must be handled from a distance and not identified with, as in the Middle Class world. So clearly are dealers not part of that world where social distance and authority are frequent things, that they conspicuously handle their own positions of authority in a special way. Typically, a  joking relationship prevails. The dealer issues his commands by jokingly taking the role of a Middle Class master, attesting to the fact that he is not serious by exaggerating and swearing. (He acts in many ways just like a straw boss. This technique for handling a line of command is commonly and quite successfully employed among the working classes in our society. A worker can bang his boss on the back and say: "This is one of the sweetest guys I ever worked with.")

A manager, as previously suggested, uses employees first of all, to get dirty work done without getting dirty. Since the worker doesn't receive the psychic benefits of being a business man, he tends to work standard hours for standard pay, minimizing his effort in a situation where the boss is always required to maximize his.

The dealer's main problems in this area are as follows:

1. The manager must attempt, in a job that is defined as dirty and outside-work, to obtain attendants who will meet the customer with Middle Class manners and Middle Class cleanliness, without having the appearance of a working class person. In other words the requirements of the manager-client relation determine in the main the issues in the manager-employee relation.

"Employees should not lose temper but refer things to me. They should not barge in while I'm trying to establish customer relationships. Honesty and sobriety. And they should be able to write well or at least to print the charge tickets."

"One of the main things we've got to be very careful of is the appearance and the way he approaches the customer. I want him to approach the customer in the spirit of wanting to take care of him. That's paramount. A bad employee can lose more customers than you can ever get back."

"I like them to be shaved and clean and neat. It's hard in this line to keep that way. We wear a pair of overalls 2 hours or 2 days and it's filthy."

"If there is a man I do not like it is one with a chip on his shoulder. I like a good personality."

2. The work set up makes it easy for the employee to have "itchy fingers."

"I have to check out twice a day or I'd be robbed blind. It's hard to train them. They're using this as a means to an end. Guys who can't get \$75.00 a week for anything else."

3. The institution of tipping, while felt to be desirable in many ways, gets the employee working for himself and the customer, instead of for the organization.

"When I took over everybody was in business for himself that was working here. It shouldn't be a business within a business. It was demoralized."

#### The Dealer and the Business Community

First, consider his relation with the rest of the business world. American business is notable for being highly interrelated at varying levels from the local community to the whole nation, in organizations, associations and interest groups. We find the majority of our dealers generally isolated from these kinds of associations. In the city especially very few of them belong to such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce or quasi-business associations like Rotary and the Exchange. Few of our dealers belong to fraternal associations of any kind, and still fewer are at all active in them. Most typically, the dealer belongs to a local church group, and perhaps to a lodge or veterans organization with which he has relatively



little contact. While Americans, especially in the city, frequently join organizations and then pretty much forget about them, we seem to see a particularly uniform picture of this sort in our sample of dealers.

The major exceptions to this rule usually fall within the category of small community dealers, our socially active group. Participation in at least some community-wide organizations is part of the definition of that group, and it reflects the kinds of interests and attitudes toward the occupation discussed in Section III. In small communities, service station dealers seem to be regarded by other business men and by themselves as obligated to belong to some small town chamber and business organization, or to the Rotary-type organization which often takes its place.

Because of the long hours which the typical dealer works, and also because of his relatively low social class background, there is not much interaction with other businessmen even informally. To be sure, most dealers know some business men in the community as customers, or sometimes as operating the shop down the street -- but they do not seem to know them very well, or to spend much time talking with them of matters and issues which might be of common concern to "independent business men".

Thus, both on the formal and the informal level, the majority of our dealers are rather isolated from other business men in the community. As seen in Section III, many dealers have a good deal of

erectly toward any active realization of their role as business men, and tend to conceive of themselves more as fair-employed workers who "mind their own business". Actually many dealers feel embarrassed and ill at ease when they come into contact with other business men, even fairly small business men. Their stronger identification with highly masculine, Lower Class ways makes them feel they have to be on their best behavior to get along and be accepted by the more Middle Class haberdasher or appliance store owner. A number of the dealers in our sample seem to expect rejection from Middle Class business men, and a few are bitter over what they feel is the condescension with which other business men regard them.

"We stay away from other business men. They think that we are a bunch of flunkys. Some of them are our customers. But they don't get their hands dirty. A lot of them look down on you. There's one man, his wife works and so does he. He has a steak house. One time in a fashionable place in the evening he met my partner and asked him what he was doing there. As if just because he was a gas man. Another time my partner took his brother along and his wife to the Chez (Chicago night-club). He met another customer there who asked what he was doing there. They think you're just a flunkey. Some of them work for a mere pittance of a wage, but they think you're below them because you get your hands dirty."

This man is extremely frank; most dealers would not like to admit even to themselves that this sort of social definition often subordinates them in the business community. Others, including some of our socially active ones, make serious and conscientious efforts to overcome such a definition and to integrate themselves into the business community. However, a number probably receive subtle (and not so subtle) rebuffs from the business man who thinks of himself as in a "cleaner" occupation. Certainly, the socially active manager striving for solid status as a business man, has a number of strikes against him, and it is probably not until he owns or manages more than one station that he really receives as much deference from other business men as he feels is just.\*

In the city, the separation of the places of work and home further compounds this isolation. Thus a few men are fairly active in their neighborhood or suburban organization, or their wives are, but this affiliation takes place around their status as homeowner and homemaker, rather than their status as dealer; the latter is relatively immaterial except insofar as it tends to down-grade the dealer in his neighbors' eyes.

\* Some outstanding exceptions to this rule do not invalidate its pertinence to the majority of dealers. For the one man we found who is highly active in neighborhood business and improvement organizations, and who seems to be making at least the beginnings of a full Upper-Middle Class adjustment, we found a hundred who were isolated and apart from the main string of the business community.

What about relations with their colleagues, the other dealers? Here too we find a fairly restricted, isolated pattern-- caused by factors of distance, long work time and particularly a lack of any highly developed group identification. Occasionally we find neighborhood stations who cooperate in the following pattern but this is neither common nor developed beyond a purely convenient arrangement:

"We cooperate with everybody. If we get overloaded with jobs we send them across the street -- and they do the signing. There's three stations on this corner and we cooperate. Keep the business in the neighborhood. If we need an article we go across the street to Ned in ---- or to Art in the ----station."

There is a trade association of dealers, and many belong to it. However, it doesn't seem very important to them, and they do little beyond pay their dues. (There seems to be a good deal of feeling that the big oil companies are too big to buck, and also many dealers feel that they have adjusted to the job about as well as it is possible to adjust and that a trade association isn't much help.)

Finally, there is the whole area of relation with the family. We did not investigate this specifically, but some of the dealers talked about it, and we think it is important enough to mention here. The long work day, and the often relatively low profits, often make difficulty for the dealer with his wife. The dealer's relation with his family is often marred by relatively little contact, by his feeling of harassment on the job being transferred to family relations, etc. Thus one man told us:

"My wife is getting tired of it, and she's got up with it for a long time too. I go home, I hardly get anytime to rest and it's time to come back again."

Although some dealers get more time for their families by operating the station with a partner, many more than seem desirable come to feel overworked within their own families. It is possible that those in the business who find this a real hardship or those whose wives make a big income of it leave the business of being a dealer fairly quickly and find an occupation where hours are shorter and more regular.

Thus we see in the dealer's relation to individuals other than his customers, suppliers, and employees, a fairly common pattern of isolation; a pattern which runs all the way from the broad level of the business and local community down to the intimate circle of the family.

## V

## ATTITUDES IN THE DEALER-COMPANY RELATION

For the dealer the "company" is, in differing ways, both a vague, and a concrete thing. In the totality of its operation, and in the variety of its enterprises it is just about as vague to him as it is to the ordinary citizen -- but its specific jobs of distributing supplies to him, and often leading to him, are very concrete. Mostly, his attitudes toward the company revolve around the direct, specific interactions the dealer and company have -- the dealer attitudes toward the company as a whole seem to have little directly to do with his specific attitude, and to reflect more of his general view of industry and the oil industry.

However, let us first examine some of the characteristics of the company-dealer relationship as the dealer sees them. (Let us first examine some important attitudes in view of this relationship.)

If a dealer owns his own station, then he may hold a purely-business relation with his supplier. As one dealer said:

"From my point of view the different companies are about the same. It's just a business and I don't feel a part of them. When I pay for gas I'm done with them. It's just a business thing."

The dealers who own their stations tend to look upon dealers who don't as less fortunate. The dealer-owner feels considerably more detached in his relations with the supplier, and more independent in his attitudes.

If a dealer leases his station from a company -- as is usually the case in our sample -- then he must adapt himself to a set of company controls. These are rooted in the crucial fact that the company can cancel the lease (apparently on fairly short notice) of any dealer who does not succeed in making his enterprise meet company expectations. Many dealers feel that though they patiently build up a clientele and fix up their stations they can never be sure for whom they're doing it. One manager put it:

"We dispense ninety-five per cent of their products, but are their step-children. They are only concerned if you don't cooperate, then they throw you out."

Company controls determine the dealer's actions in several different ways. Many informants discussed the following kinds of company controls which they feel operate.

1. The controls oblige the manager to buy all his basic supplies from the company which holds the lease. Thus the manager often feels he cannot exercise business discretion in the case of bargains and "deals elsewhere." The managers talk like this:

"It's an unwritten law to buy only from \_\_\_\_\_ and not to take advantage of "buyers". If you do this, and they can trust to open at seven and stay open all day, you are as nearly independent as you can be without owning the property outright."

"They can get you out in 24 hours if they see someone else dumping gas in your tank -- otherwise 30 days. The way they have you tied up is unfair."

2. Company controls may oblige the manager to carry accessories sold by the company, whether or not he favors their brand or even wants to carry accessories at all. (Some companies seem to have a reputation for using these controls, others seem not to have.)

"There's plenty of pressure on you to buy their tires and other products -- and plenty of them. Nobody tells you to buy, but it's like you lived in a building and your landlord didn't like you, you'd get the idea. Sometimes they pile too much on you."

"Big companies push a lot of each of their products on the dealer. If he doesn't sell it, that's too bad -- he's got to eat it or get rid of it somehow."



- 3. Company controls station and dealer to maintain order and service and cleanliness which he often feels cuts down on actual selling time.

"They watch your every move. They can walk in and say. 'This place is dirty, you're out on Monday.' -- and you are."

"They have greasers who come around -- they might let hold the air of the tire and come in and see if you catch it. Course he's got to let you know who he is afterward."

- 4. Company controls can oblige the dealers to sell at least a certain minimum volume of gas. The dealer often feels that this means he must maintain long hours and neglect repairs which mean more money and more job respect to him.

"Ever notice that the companies build their stations with only two bays, one for greasing and one for washing? They don't want you to do anything else -- and they have literature showing how much you can make on grease and oil and gas."

- 5. Companies can adjust their own prices to keep the dealer's profit fixed regardless of how well he does.

"As soon as you make \$650 a month they come out and raise your rent or lower your rates."

In the face of all these limitations on what the dealer would like to do, he often ends to feel that he is merely a company agent, with a half-employed label but not really working for himself -- and he feels this way whether the limit is one real or merely imagined. As one dealer said:

"They enter the attendant with the idea that he's his own boss, but if they had to pay them by the hour, if they had to pay time like they pay their gas deliverers, their profit would be cut in half. They get a guy to think he's his own boss and he's not. If he doesn't do what they say he's out."

"You could almost say the dealer is nothing but a commission agent. We're not so much salesman as order takers, and the price is the same everywhere."

In addition to the work contingencies created by company controls, the dealers see the company is causing other troubles. For instance, there is the price war:

"Price wars are produced by companies themselves trying to get rid of a little stale gas."

"They only give token assistance during a gas war; they don't care if you sink or swim. Thirty to 50¢ go under in each gas war."

Finally there is the fairly common feeling that the company doesn't care what kind of people run its stations, that they either will to take a lease, or supply gas to anyone regardless of how well or poorly he knows the business, and that they leave it up to him to "burn or break" -- in other words that the company does not give any real support to the struggling dealer. As one man said:

"The company doesn't care an applicant so long as he has some money; they don't care if he loses it, just so he sells gas."

These then are some of the negative views of the operation of company controls in the supplier-dealer relationship -- held to varying degrees and with varying vehemence by different dealers.

What are some of the company actions and characteristics which have positive value for the dealer? These are not so well described by our informants, since they tend to take more for granted the things the company does well, and to think more about things the company does which they disapprove of and on which they feel hurt them. Some positive actions of the company however do appear fairly frequently in the interviews; they are:

1. The company is technically efficient, and efficient at distributing. Most of the managers seem to have few gripes about the company on this score. Gas and oil and accessories are delivered on time, are delivered in the quantities the dealer needs he must have, and there are few hold-ups on this score. The tanks never get dry, and the dealer doesn't have to worry about his supplies.

- 66
2. Along with this the company is usually given credit for keeping the plants, the service stations, the mainly good repairs, and taking care of technical matters for which the dealer is not trained. The company is said to "fix broken equipment quickly" and "paint your buildings; and clean your tanks once a year."
  3. Some dealers do not go along so heavily with the criticism concerning accessories, etc. as do the above. They feel that the stress on accessories and on cleanliness is, after all, to the dealer's own advantage and they value the company's success with seeing that a lot of accessories get sold, and with seeing that the station is kept clean. The griping on these matters seems to stem from how much the company's representatives "step on the toes" of the dealer in pushing these factors.
  4. The company's big advertising budgets are often valued by the dealer, since the company thereby makes business for him. There occasionally is some disapproval of sharing the costs of local advertising, but the general idea that the company advertises aggressively and competitively is valued, (except for criticisms from a number of dealers, to the effect that the companies stress free service so much that customers come to take for granted more service than dealers feel they are entitled to.)

5. The company is often valued for the technical excellence of its products, and for "bringing out new products all the time" which the dealer can then use to boost his business.
6. Finally, a number of our dealers feel positive toward their supplier because the company and its representatives are "nice guys" to do business with. These comments seem to reflect a general good feeling about the relation with the supplier and his representatives, and goes along on much the same basis as the dealer who feels that his customers are "nice guys" to do business with.

When one looks at the factors listed which elicit negative response from the dealers, and those listed which elicit positive response there is a curious difference between the two sets of factors. The positive ones by and large, have to do with technical quality, efficient distribution and the like. In a sense, the dealers are giving their suppliers credit for knowing their business so far as the product goes and so far as getting it from refinery to station goes. Except for the fairly frequent but by no means overwhelming mention of the fact that the supplier is a "nice guy to do business with" there is little positive feeling toward the company with regard to the more human, less technical factors in the relation.

This latter is exactly where the company comes in for the most criticism. It is in the area of control -- that is, of human relations -- rather than technical factors that major criticisms are brought against the supplier.

How serious are these negative opinions? A dealer's particular experiences with a particular company determine his attitude toward that company. Thus, a dealer, while being aware of all these negative and positive things which can be said about service station suppliers in general, may have highly positive, highly negative or middle-ground attitudes toward his own supplier based on his particular experiences with it.

When we look at the overall attitude of the dealer toward his company, the balance of positive and negative feelings, we find that most dealers take their suppliers pretty much for granted, feel fairly positive toward them, but not highly so.

A few dealers value their relation with the company highly, and regard it as "one of the best". They tell us, "I wouldn't want to work for any other company, so and so has done real well by me." There are not many of these people, however.

More frequent are somewhat negative attitudes towards the supplier, concentrating on the company's controls over the dealer, and feeling that the company uses its controls in ways which frustrate the dealer and are detrimental to his welfare. These feelings, too, are not wide-spread in our sample.

At present most dealers seem to feel fairly well satisfied with their suppliers. The underlying potential toward a negative reaction seems much stronger than that for positive reaction, and if we interviewed dealers at a period when they were more sorely pressed, we would undoubtedly find many of our dealers who at present seem to take the company pretty much for granted being quite vehement in their criticisms of the company.

There seems to be some relation between the nature of the dealer's "ownership" of the station and his attitude toward his suppliers. As mentioned, dealers who own the land and structure of their service station tend to take the company pretty much for granted, to feel that they have selected their own supplier and if they weren't satisfied with him, they would change to another, and not meet problems in doing so.

There is another group of dealers (not large, but larger than the number of owners) who lease their stations from some other source than the company which supplies them. These dealers are not so likely as some others to feel deprived by the supplier, or to feel so much at his whim because their lease comes not from the company but from another source. They share a little the dealer-owner's attitude, viewing the relation to the supplier as fairly business-like, where they retain considerable autonomy.

The most frequent negative expressions concerning the company are found in that group of men who lease their stations from the company who is their supplier. Here we get statements about how the company can arbitrarily cancel a lease on 30 days notice, and bitterness over the company's indifference to the dealer's welfare. (Even so, nowhere near the majority of dealers in this category hold such negative attitudes.)

Finally, there is the small group of men who manage companies as related employees of suppliers, receiving perhaps in addition a commission on the sales. These men work by and large, for "independents" and "to their suppliers". They are surprisingly, their level, as a group some of the highest of all the categories studied. They deal a close relationship with their suppliers, and they tend to feel that they are well treated by him. They present much more the positive picture of a chain-store manager who gets along well with the home office, and who feels that he has a chance to get ahead within that organization.

These considerations bring us to the question -- in what sense would and to what extent do these dealers view themselves as "independent business men"?

That the dealer is an independent business man is very definitely a part of the ideology of the occupation. Probably almost all of the men who go into the occupation, go into it with the idea that they will be independent business men, masters of their own fate, and able to exercise initiative and judgment without outside controls.

As was seen in listing the company controls which the dealers feel imposed upon them, few dealers feel whatsoever that they are full-fledged independent business men. Most owners, and some very successful owners, still adhere to the ideology, and regard themselves as, in all major respects, independent of the company which supplies them.

However, implicit in their attitudes and beliefs (and sometimes explicit) is the notion of dealers is a feeling that they are not really independent.



Well-adjusted dealers don't take this too much to heart. Usually, they gloss over the fact that they don't exercise complete independence in their occupation, and find satisfaction in feeling that they are self-employed salesmen representing a big, successful, and generally fair company. The poorly adjusted dealers, ones who have not been able to make their peace with the structure of the occupation are inclined to feel "I've been robbed" -- to feel snared by a system which held out the promise of independence without giving it in reality.

As we have seen in Section III on the personalities of the dealers, the majority of dealers actually do not really want to be independent, no matter how much they consciously say so to themselves and others. They want a situation where they are able to exercise some independent judgment, and have considerable freedom of action, but always with basic support and guidance from a persons company authority. One reason we do not see strong positive attitudes towards the company is that:

The support and guidance which the company provides, and which the dealer values, is often not seen as anything special, but regarded as a right by the dealer.

Where he sees independence and freedom of action limited by the company, where he is frustrated in some action which he desires, he sees the company as exercising more control over him than it "should", or at least than he would like.

In summary...

We can say that most dealers in our sample have no strong positive or negative feelings about the company. When dealers do have strong feelings about the company, they are more likely to be negative ones than positive ones. Thus, we get a picture of attitudes in this area as representing a fairly tenuous adjustment between the dealer and supplier, an adjustment which it is easy to knock off balance, and difficult to build into a strong positive tie. From our interviews, we would guess that those dealers with strong positive attitudes toward the company have them more because of the particular personality of the dealer than because of the company's actions. Apparently the company's actions engender in the majority of the kinds of men who become dealers a matter of fact attitude tending toward, if anything, the negative side.

We believe, on the basis of our study and comparative material from many other studies in industrial relations, that these attitudes come about primarily through the isolation of the dealer from his supplier. In such an isolation, where the dealer knows relatively little about his supplier and has infrequent, not very meaningful contacts with him, the potentialities for strong positive relations are not great. Further, given the frustrations which always attend working in the world, and particularly in the dilemma-ridden occupation of service station dealer, the potentialities for negative attitudes are fairly strong.

We find very little evidence of meaningful personal relations between the dealer and a representative of his supplier. From our informants comes a picture of contacts confined to fairly frequent meetings with the truck driver who delivers gas and relatively infrequent meetings with anyone higher in the supplier company structure. In one sense, the fact that the only person he sees very often from the company, is the truck driver, stands as a symbol to the dealer of the supplier's lack of personal interest in him. The truck driver is certainly not a high status person, he is at the low manual level of the company's hierarchy: -- yet he is the man that the company sees fit (from the dealer's point of view) to have as its representative to the dealer. The District Manager or salesman is not a well known figure to most of the dealers. They see him perhaps once a month or, likely, once every three months. Many of them are happy that this is so -- from their present point of view, they don't especially want to see the dealer, since he does not signify good news to them. It does not seem reasonable to expect that a company can build strong loyalty among a group with whom it has such little contact, and with whom contacts so often (again from the dealer's point of view) take on a controlling, suppressing, rather than supporting and guiding connotation.

The monthly dealer's meeting which most of the major suppliers seem to hold, has served a valuable function in building what little feeling or meaningful relationship there is between the dealer and his supplier. Although most of our dealers are not highly enthusiastic about these meetings, they do seem to value them. They value the information they get about new products, and the various other aids which they receive in this connection. Being human beings, they value also the consideration of the buffet luncheon or supper and something to drink.

VI

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE OIL INDUSTRY  
AND INDUSTRY IN GENERAL

In this area, service station dealers are not so different from other people in the same social class. Generally, they have attitudes quite similar to other people's and the effect of being a dealer seems to have consequences primarily in one specific area of attitudes toward industry and the oil industry.

In general, the service station dealers give up-  
the same pattern of attitudes as the other people  
with positive attitudes toward the industry. Over and over again, the dealers express the same pro and con feelings as were obtained in the original oil report and in the report on people with negative attitudes towards the industry. The pattern is one of a few dealers with highly positive attitudes toward the oil industry, most of them with positive attitudes without a great deal of interest or involvement in the industry, and some with negative attitudes, displaying feelings of disgruntlement and dissatisfaction with the status quo. The negative dealers are perhaps more vehement in their negative attitude toward the oil industry than are most of our other negative people -- with them the resentment is much less theoretical.

The dealers we interviewed feel a "identification with the oil industry, feel that in some ways they are part of it, although they are essentially distant from it, as they are from the company. The

industry is too vast, encompasses too many complex activities for them to feel fully and integrally identified with it. The most common feeling is that "by rights" the dealer is a part of the oil industry -- but the way things are set up, he is not treated as a part of the industry. The dealer protests that if it weren't for him there wouldn't be any oil industry, there wouldn't be any final distribution from producer to consumer. However this is so much bound up in the nature of things that the deeper, emotional attitude of being a part is not strongly felt. Dealers can bolster their own feelings of worth and importance by considering themselves the most important part of the oil industry -- however, they don't believe that other parts of the industry agree with them. Many feel like the man quoted on page 61, more the "stepchild" of the industry.

Being a dealer does not seem to have any great effect in developing more positive attitudes towards the oil industry than is present in comparable non-dealers. One exception is in the area involving administrative and technical improvements, research and development. Dealers, through their interest in cars and the fact that they earn their livelihood from dispensing the oil industry's products are somewhat more aware and involved in progress from technical improvement and development. Therefore, this aspect of industry-functioning often stands out more strongly for them than, say, improvement in labor relations or general "progress". In net effect on the degree of positiveness of attitude, this greater interest in research and technical improvement does not seem to have any strong effect. One can perhaps deduce that this area is, however, the one where dealers show least resistance to information favorable to the industry.



The dealer's confusion on this score often comes out in the seemingly contradictory statements that "big businesses are all a bunch of monopolies," "they control the prices and how their products are distributed" -- and -- "there's too much competition, it's cutthroat the way the things go on around here." The general feeling seems to be that the big oil companies do not suffer from this situation, and that's why they don't do anything about it. If a man has fairly good feeling about his company he doesn't blame the company so much, and he projects his hostility on to the competitor, saying that he is unethical or that his product is poor. If for any other reason the dealer tends to feel negative about his company, then the tough competitive situation becomes just another evidence of the fact that his supplier is more interested in profits than in the dealer's welfare.

It is likely that the dealer does not get much support from the people he comes into contact with, his friends and neighbors, in feeling deprived by this situation. As was pointed out in earlier reports, the "small business" theme is not one which has strong emotional meaning to most Americans. By and large, they value the large distributing set-ups, and though they may lament the passing of the small unit as the most common form of retailing, they do so more with nostalgia than real regret.

By and large, dealers do not seem to talk much about their feelings on industry, the oil industry, or their specific oil companies with other people. Certainly they do so more than an average amount

of discussing these things, and perhaps they do somewhat less than average. Similarly, they do not seem to have a great deal of interest in what comes to their attention from newspapers, radio, etc., on the social, economic and political questions which involve the oil industry or an oil company. In the first place, this is partly because of the kind of people they are. Coming from University Class backgrounds, they are strikingly apathetic & uninterested in such issues. Secondly, being oriented primarily to individual activity at an isolated service station, being very much involved in their own problems, their own long work hours, etc. -- they are perhaps even more interested in relaxation and entertainment when they finally do go off the job, and much less interested in concerning themselves with public affairs.

Thus, at the broadest level, we see in the dealers a group who show little strong enthusiasm for their work, their companies, or the industry they represent. They work hard and conscientiously to the best of their abilities, but they do not communicate a pride or enthusiasm which would "sell" the public on the industry.



## SERVICE STATION MANAGER PROJECT

### Introductory Phase Interviewer Instructions

In preliminary conference with project supervisor, the interviewer will be assigned an area and type of stations to be interviewed.

In the interview the station manager is to be encouraged to talk freely about himself, his station, customers, company, etc. with a minimum of questioning or guidance. As the interview progresses, comments and questions may be used to get into significant areas or to follow important ideas. If the basic areas are not covered in one interview, there should be repeat interviews.

The interview will be explained as a study of small retail businesses and their managers. It must not be connected with oil companies or the oil industry. We do not want them to think that it is a study for their company or supplier.

Describe the station and report activity and other significant observations.

Each interview should be discussed with the project supervisor. As soon as a group of interviews are completed, we will hold a staff conference to analyze the material.

In the interviews try to cover the following areas:

1. Interview the manager generally about his job, what he does, how he feels about it, etc. Find out the nature of his relations with suppliers, how he feels about these, etc.
2. Interview generally about what sort of responsibilities he feels he has to his customers, what sort of services he should supply.
3. Interview about his attitudes toward customers. Who are his customers (get him to characterize them, if he can)? What do they expect of a service station? How does he go about meeting these?
4. Interview about his personal background, occupational aspirations in the past, why and how he got into his present position, where he expects to go from here, if anywhere.
5. Interview about his feelings about his own career, his feelings of success or failure, future plans, hopes, and ambitions. Find out what other people or businesses have affected his success or failure, and what he thinks will affect his future.
6. Interview about his attitudes toward the company? What does he think of the company, its policies, and procedures? Get him to talk about concrete incidents or facts which illustrate his feelings. Does he see much difference between oil companies?

7. Interview about his attitude toward the industry as a whole (oil). How much a part of it does he feel? In what sense is he a part of the oil industry? Does he talk about this aspect much to family, friends, customers? Does working in the industry affect how he reacts to what appears in the newspapers about his industry?

8. Interview generally about his attitudes toward large enterprises, small business, big business, etc.

# 1. Training Subordinates

not indirectly → Manager <sup>public as customer</sup>  
Public as customer.

2. Who do the Boss want to hire & why? what are the traits of them.

3. Finding a good way of selection around loyalty regarding his employees  
How does he mix with the other business in the local economy.

In customer willing wanting to have be 'perfect' environment, restaurant like,  
man talk, - What's going to be business need? - just  
so beautiful don't split.

## ideal Station

1. An Type of all-around: 1) Grease Oct. and.

2) Head Writer.

3) Business Man. [ spec

## The time approach.

How do you perceive your business strategy of all time.

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8. Interview generally about his attitudes toward free enterprise, small business, big business, etc.

# Training Subordinates

not necessarily → Manager <sup>Public as customer</sup>  
Public as customer.

Who does the boss want to have & why, in what sense the traits of them.

Training a good way of creating around loyalty, regarding his employees  
and look to be in with the other business in the local economy.

on customer utility wanting to have be permanent, restaurant table,  
an table, - What's going to be business and  $\frac{1}{2}$  - just  
beautiful design style.

## ideal States

- On Types of Allround:
- 1) Grease Out. vol.
  - 2) Head Writer.
  - 3) Business Man. [ spec

## The time spent

How do you perceive your utilization status of material.



Retail Outlet Study -- Schedule B  
Service Station Form

This schedule is made up of several pages on which you are to record the respondent's remarks concerning some very general questions you are to ask him about himself and his station, a series of more specific questions, two thematic pictures, and a social data sheet which should be filled out in full.

1. Ask the respondent to tell you what his job is, what he does at the service station. Ask him how long he has worked at this station. Find out if he owns, leases, or is employed by someone else (get details fully)

2. Ask the respondent what sort of services the station supplies to customers. What kinds of things they expect it to provide. What sort of things does he think the station owes its customers. How does he think the customers regard him and the station (what is their attitude.)

3. What are his customers like? How would he describe them, what kind of people are they -- if "all kinds" ask what kind the majority are. Ask him to tell you what kind of a neighborhood this is, describe it. Ask him what he thinks about neighborhood vs. transient customers -- and does he prefer one or the other.

4. Ask him how he happened to get in the service station business. How long? How did he happen to go with \_\_\_\_\_ company? Did he start right out as a (owner, manager, helper or what- ever)? Or had he worked before doing something else in a station? What sort of thing lead him to decide to go into this business?

5. Ask him about his personal background, where did he grow up, what other kinds of work has he been interested in, what did he want to become when he was a kid?

6. What does he think of the service station business now that he's in it? What is it like as a job. What are his future plans, what does he think he will do in the future? What sort of things does he think will affect whether or not he is able to carry out his future plans?

7. How many people work in the station? What do they do, what different jobs are there in this work? How many of these various jobs does he himself do. What does he think are the most important of the various things he does on the job. Are there any things he does that no one else who works there does, or does well? What does he think of tipping -- do customers tip -- who do they tip?



8.  
What does he do about finding subordinates?  
and does he select them. How does he look  
for the subordinates? What kind of problems  
does he come with them?

1. Suppose he were approached by a young man who  
was thinking of going into the service business  
and was looking for a partner. What kind of  
things could he tell the boy to better prepare  
him for what to expect? What good things could  
he tell him about the business? What things  
that aren't so good, that the young fellow  
might not like?

10. Ask him how much contact he has with the company which supplies him with goods. How many different suppliers does he have. Which one does he think is most important to his business? Who are the people he sees from these companies? What are they like?

What about \_\_\_\_\_ (the company he gets his  
from): What's his general impression of it?  
What sort of things does it require of him?  
What sort of things does he expect from them?  
What does he like most about that company?  
What are some of the things he doesn't like  
about them? (Get examples and incidents here,  
please.)

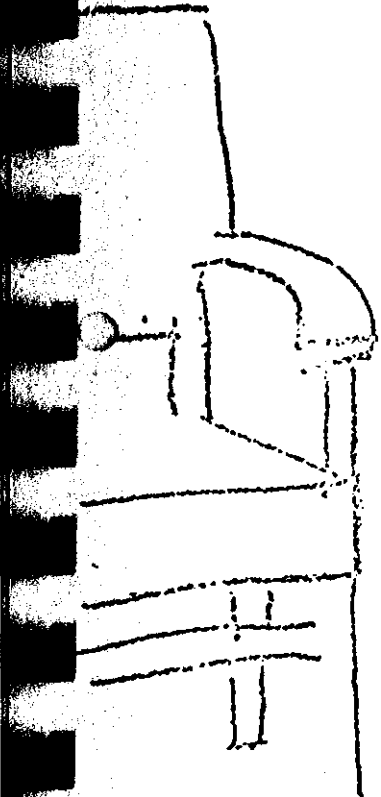
What is his impression of other oil companies; what does he think of them (along the lines of what he has said about his own)?

13. What about garages, body and fender shops and the like? What sort of business does he think that is in contrast to his own. What's different, what's the same, etc.?

14. Aside from customers and the representatives of his suppliers, what other people does he come into contact with as a result of his job? (How come, what are these people like, etc.)

15. Does he, or any of his men go to meetings sponsored by the company? Why or why not? What does he think of these? What kind of printed material does he receive from the company? What does he think of these?

16. How does he think he fits in with the oil industry? How is he a part of it, or is he? What does he think the really important part of the oil industry is?

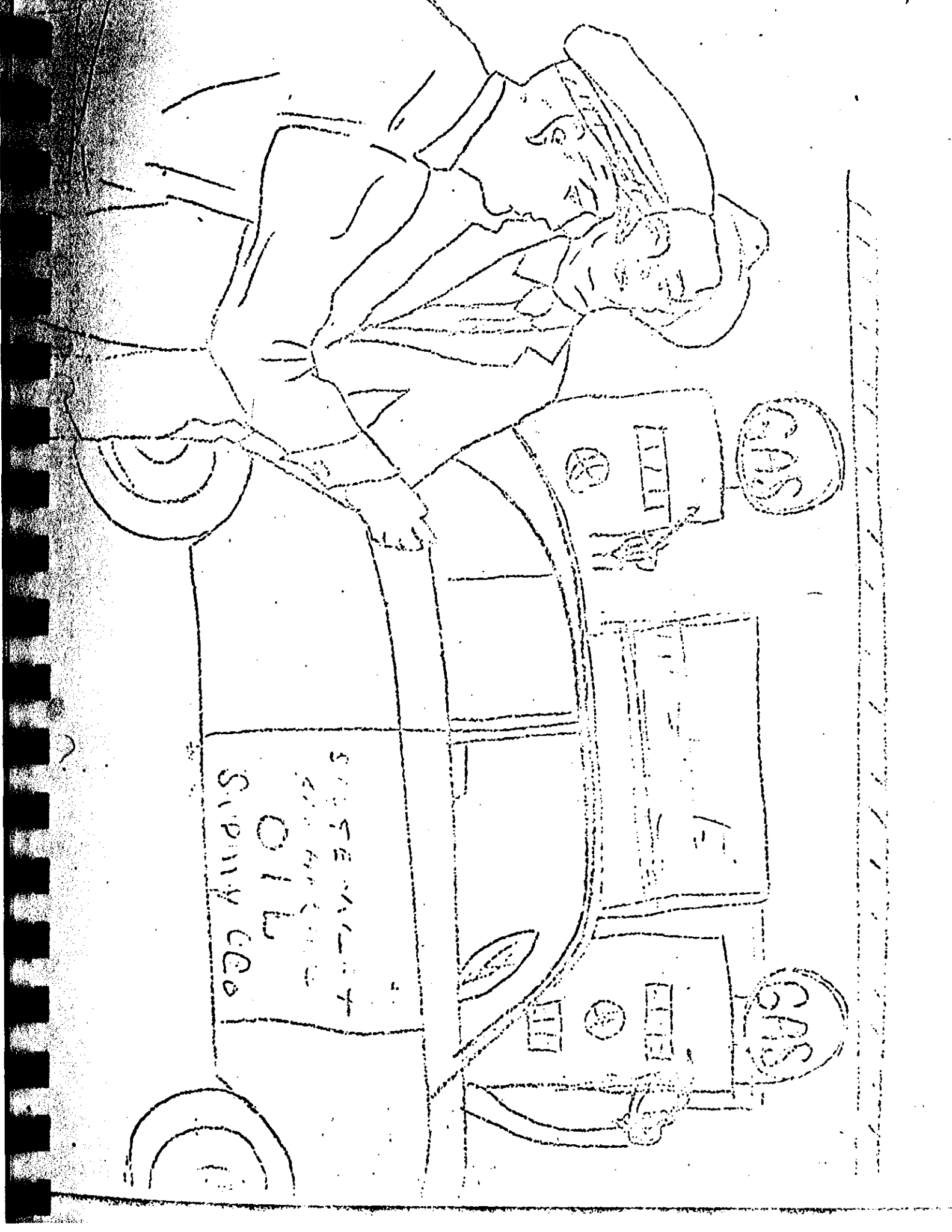


Ask the respondent to tell you a story about  
the picture on the opposite page, what is  
going on, what lead up to it, who the people  
are, what they are thinking, feeling, doing  
and what the outcome might be. (Do same with  
picture on next page.)

...change the subject a little. I have  
...uncompleted sentences here about business  
...like you to complete them with the  
...thing that comes to your mind after I  
...then to you.

- a. Most company's profits are...
- b. The successful corporation is one that...
- c. Big business....
- d. The main thing about corporations in industry is...
- e. The government's right to control industry...
- f. People who run companies...
- g. There aren't many oil companies that...
- h. The people in the oil and gasoline business who really make money are...
- i. The main thing about the oil industry is...
- j. Small oil companies...
- k. People who say there is lots of competition in the oil business....
- l. The really big oil companies...
- m. People who say oil companies are monopolies...
- n. Opportunities in the oil business, especially to some others, are....





19. Ask him to tell you a little more about some of the ideas he has about business in general, and the oil industry. What does he think of big business, and small business these days. How does the oil industry fit in with those ideas.
20. Ask him if he talks with friends, or customers, or his family about these sort of things. Does working in a service station affect how he reacts to what he hears or reads about business in general, about the oil industry.

21. Ask him what other businessmen he knows in his area? How does he know them? What sort of contacts does he have with them? When does he see them? Does he belong to any business associations, which ones? What about the local businessmen's association? If not, why not? Does he know about any other service station managers and whether they belong or not? (Concerning his answer) Why does he think this is so?

Respondent what name he calls his occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Is wife employed? If so, doing what? \_\_\_\_\_

How old is he? \_\_\_\_\_ 25/ How long has he been married? \_\_\_\_\_

How many children does he have? (ages, sex) \_\_\_\_\_

Get specific job history for past 15 years. (Where, what, how long.)

Last position \_\_\_\_\_

Next last \_\_\_\_\_

Next \_\_\_\_\_

First job \_\_\_\_\_

What was his father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

What was his wife's father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

20. What was his schooling? (Where, how far, what major subjects, interests?) \_\_\_\_\_

21. What was last grade wife completed in school? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Has he taken any courses since stopped formal school? What? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Father's education \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's father's \_\_\_\_\_

24. Where does he live? \_\_\_\_\_

25. Ask him to describe the place, apartment or house, no. of rooms, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

36. Has he moved within the last five or ten years? When? Why?  
What kind of a neighborhood and apartment did he live in?

37. What magazines and newspapers does he read?

(Which ones does he subscribe to -- mark with an S)

38. What organizations does he belong to -- church, lodge, or  
whatever? What offices, if any does he hold? How active is  
he in these?

39. Is he called on to contribute to things like the Community Fund,  
Red Cross and the like at his station? Does he contribute?

40. If he has a son, what sort of business would he urge him to go into?

41. On this, and top of next page, give your impressions of the informant.  
Describe his looks, manner, dress, speech.

Describe the station. What did it look like, what were the buildings like, how large is the location, clean or not, how much activity while you were there, and all else that you observed? (Use next page for this or any other comments you may have.)

Occupation what were his duties and responsibilities  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. Is his wife employed? If so, doing what? \_\_\_\_\_

24. How old is he? \_\_\_\_\_ 25. How long has he been married? \_\_\_\_\_

26. How many children does he have? (ages, sex) \_\_\_\_\_

27. Get specific job history for past 15 years. (Where, what, how long)

Last position \_\_\_\_\_

Next last \_\_\_\_\_

Next \_\_\_\_\_

First job \_\_\_\_\_

28. What was his father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

29. What was his wife's father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

30. What was his schooling? (Where, how long, what subjects, interests?)  
\_\_\_\_\_

31. What was his grade when he stopped school? \_\_\_\_\_

32. Has he taken any courses since stopped formal school? (Yes or No)  
\_\_\_\_\_

33. Father's education \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's father's \_\_\_\_\_

34. Where does he live? \_\_\_\_\_

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