

The Human Factor

Industry is made of people, men and women, young and middle-aged and old, who do a hundred different sorts of job. But whatever their work, they have two things in common: they're alive and they can be hurt. If this film can help someone to avoid injury, or saves a life, it will have been worth making.

ICI PRESENTS
THE HUMAN FACTOR

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I.C.I FILM UNIT

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Someone's had an accident. Who is it? Is it someone we know? Is he badly hurt? These are the sort of questions we ask ourselves as we see an ambulance speeding through the works. Three people are trying to answer these questions. There is the works' manager, there's the safety officer, and because it is a serious accident, the man on the spot, the foreman has been sent for. The immediate boss and perhaps, friend of the victim. The man who tries to prevent accidents. And the senior executive, to whom the injured man may only be a name on the list. All three feel to some extent involved in the accident. All three wonder: "Could I have prevented this?"

"Yes, but how serious, doc? Oh, you think he will. Yes, I see. Oh yes, we'll let her know. Thanks, doc, goodbye.

It's pretty bad. He's fractured his skull and one arm, and his spine is hurt but not broken, the doctor thinks.

- Have they taken him to the hospital yet?
- No, he'll be going in a few minutes. They're giving him a blood transfusion, he's lost quite a bit. Frank, you'd better get back to the loading bay. And tell them how he is.
- How much do I tell them?
- Just that he is pretty bad, but the doc thinks he'll pull through.
- Right, sir.
- Well, I'll go ring the division safety department. Has anyone told his wife yet?
- No, I'll ring John, he can deal with that.
- Good.
- Get me the labour manager."

The day's work must be got on with. But for these men, it's a day of doubt and uneasiness. And out in the works, the foreman is faced with another group of men, the victim's mates.

They too are doing something more than merely listening to facts. They're asking themselves if perhaps they are directly or indirectly to blame.

And finally, in the accident ward of the medical department, here's someone else who is very much involved: the victim. He's Stan Berry himself to blame. Is he a man to whom accidents happen? Did he not know the elementary rules of safety? Well, he should have, if his upbringing and education have anything to do with it.

"Steady.

- Look after yourself!*
- Take care!*
- Stop!*
- Mind how you go!"*

"Give me those scissors, Stan. You'll cut yourself if you're not careful. Not careful. Not careful. Not careful. Not careful..."

- Stop!*
- Not careful.*
- You boys will get run over dashing out into the road like that! Like that. Like that. Like that...*
- Stan! You be careful up there, I told you before not to go so high! So high. So high. So high...*
- No Stan, not like that! You'll hurt yourself! Look, I do it like this. Like this. Like this. Like this...*
- Always make sure there is no one underneath before you dive! Dive. Dive. Dive...*
- Don't use your brakes unless you have to. Use your engine to slow down, it is much safer. Much safer. Much safer. Much safer...*
- Squeeze the trigger and apply the safety catch with the forefinger. Go then.*
- The safe worker is the efficient worker. And it isn't just a question of using the equipment provided to protect you. You've got to use your brains as well, all the time. All the time. All the time. All the time..."*

Stan's like most of us. We know the safe way to behave but we don't always obey those warning voices and we can be distracted. Let's go back a few hours and you'll see what I mean.

It began as an ordinary day, just like any other day. Perhaps Stan was a little behind schedule and having to get that coal didn't help. Why can't she think of these things the night before is what I'd like to know. But still, I'm OK with time.

Now what is it? The pram! Oh, my goodness, why couldn't she have thought of that last night? I don't know. That brother of hers was here all the afternoon, why couldn't he have done it? There's the bus. If I miss that, there is not another one until ten two and that makes me late clocking in. Blasted thing! Oh, there it is. Now I have to hurry, that driver leaves on the dot. If I run, I think I can make it.

No, Stan didn't try to board it. Something stopped him, perhaps the fact that he'd taken one risk already. Still, it was a bad start to the day.

When he got to work, Stan was still not quite at his best. Strange how much small things affect a man. His place of work is not considered particularly hazardous. It's a bay where drums are stored and loaded into rail and road transport. They're big drums, eight hundredweight they weigh, and there's a great deal of moving them to and fro, either for tarring or for loading, and there are forklift trucks which are always on the move, as well as contractors' lorries and trains. And the fact that these drums get a coat of tar means there's always wet tar about the place.

It's not dangerous but it is noisy and messy. There's lots of different things going on at once. At the loading bay you need your wits about you all the time.

Yes, everyone has to be on their toes. And there's one man whose job it is to see that they are: Stan's foreman.

"Hi, Stan!"

Loading trains goes on steadily most days, but often trucks come in for special orders, and it's quite common for these to be urgent.

"You've finished that train load, says the foreman, well, here's your next job. That truck over there, he wants a dozen right away. He'll back down to the crane. Yes, of course you'll want your loading chit. Well, get it then," he said. Well, you know what foremen are like. Stan just left his coat with his loading book up on top. Most days he probably wouldn't have. Then it happened.

And there it is, one moment a fine healthy man, seconds later a bag of broken bones, a near corpse, something to be handled with care. And why, why did it have to happen?

At the investigation they know it didn't happen, it was caused. How, they want to know. What went wrong? Can we stop it happening again? Chairman of the committee is the works manager, and there is the safety officer and the foreman. Fourth member is M. Joe Rogers, a works counsellor.

"Staton, you were driving the contractor's lorry on the 23rd, is that right?"

- Yes.
- Did you know that truck wasn't allowed between the banks of the drums?
- No.
- Were you reversing fast or slowly?
- Well, it was like this, sir. I was backing at a normal speed, but I was looking straight behind me. Once or twice, I tried to look over on the near side to see if it was all clear like. The drums stopped me seeing the forklift truck until it was nearly on me.
- You were driving the forklift truck that was involved.
- That's right, I was.
- And tell us what happened.

- I picked up my load and drove along the line of the drums. I found that I couldn't take much of a sweep at the corner because the crane prevented me. Then, as I turned, I saw a lorry and braked. I skidded.
- What made you skid?
- The melted tar is very bad for skids.
- Was your hoist moving as you drove?
- Well, not at the time of the accident.
- Was it before?
- Well, as I turn after picking the drums up, I usually lower them.
- Do you know this to be against the code?
- Uh, yes.
- Thank you, Craig. Now Frank, just a couple of things. Did you see the chocks nailed properly?
- No, M. Wally.
- What was he doing on the drums? He'd finished loading his rail wagon by then, hadn't he?
- Yes, he went up for his loading chit, he'd left it in his coat.
- I see. Well, we'd better decide on our observations.
- Well, it's one of those cases where a chain of 5 or 6 unfortunate circumstances occurred at the same.
- Yes, and it all leads up to one serious accident. Well, what are we going to say?"

"What are we going to say?" says the works manager. What indeed is there to say? That lorry drivers shouldn't back their vehicle so fast? That forklift truck drivers shouldn't cut corners? That foremen should see that chocks are nailed? Or will they find Stan Berry guilty of negligence? Or will the works manager charge himself with failing to safeguard his men's lives? Whichever way they turn, it's the human factor they'll come up against. For no human is infallible.

Of course, the committee tries to see that this accident won't happen again. That these are all men of good will, men who don't like people being hurt, men who are determined that the product must be made and distributed without even occasional loss of life or limb. A hundred years ago, even 50 years ago, this might not have been so.

As long as we're dealing with the human factor, we'll never abolish accidents all together. But today, most manager feel deeply about their work's accident rate. They try to see to it that mistakes do not recur.

And Stan himself, recovered thanks to good medical attention, will be as fit as ever he was. Stan is a very average sort of chap, certainly not a reckless one. But because of a chain of circumstances, and the human factor, he nearly lost his life.

Think what else he risked. His hands for instance, they're adaptable tools. They can do heavy work and they can do delicate work and are more sensitive and efficient than any machine. His legs, with their strong muscles, and his back and their ability to work together with arms and hands to lift and carry.

Then there are his senses which he also risked, his hearing and his eyesight. And both these are connected to his brain, most complex and perfect of all human mechanisms. Intelligence,

judgment, memory, the power to coordinate all the other parts of the body, the power of reason that lifts us above the animal. The seat of all these is the human brain, all these irreplaceable and precious things were risked.

But of course, it is not only Stan Berry we've been talking about. It's us, you and me and all of us. Here's quite a crowd, about a hundred and thirty thousand people here, all having a good time. But nearly half as many people again are injured in industry every year.

And these, can you guess the number? About 750, that's the number of people killed in British industry last year. Some no doubt brought death on themselves. Some almost certainly were the innocent victims of other people's negligence. But most, we can be certain, lost their lives because a number of people, perhaps including themselves, didn't do quite the right thing at a given moment. Call it the human factor.

To stay alive and be safe is not one man's responsibility, it's everybody's.

Transcription: Loïse Poinot