

# How One Big Business Is Taking Care of Its Employees

## The National City Bank Club Provides Its Members With Necessities and Pleasures

By Arnold Prince

WALL STREET was booming along as usual. It was the luncheon hour, and that famous thoroughfare, where so much that is casual and commonplace rubs elbows with the near-miraculous and strange, was filled with the workers in the banking and brokerage houses out for their noonday meal. Some of these were bankers, important personages whose names meant something on the bottom line of a check. Others—and, of course, these were greatly in the majority—were mere office assistants, brokerage clerks, stenographers, paying tellers and others peopling the busy hives on this most interesting of streets.

Part of the hurrying human stream came from the big colonnaded granite structure at 55 Wall Street, the National City Bank, and part from the offices of the International Banking Corporation—known on the Street as the I. B. C.—and the National City Company. Like autumn leaves caught up in contrary winds, the hastening bipeds milled and eddied, casting off occasional side shoots as groups disappeared into basement cafes or nearby restaurants.

### Like a Grocery Store

But not all were bound for lunchrooms and sandwich emporiums. Here and there, it might have been observed, individuals dropped out, crossing the street to the tall building at 60 Wall Street. Taking the elevators to the sixth floor, they formed into line, passing through a door into what seemed to be an old-fashioned "corner grocery" which some enterprising merchant, with an eye to the unusual, had somehow managed to establish on one of the upper floors of a skyscraper in the financial district. The fragments of conversation overheard as the line moved forward strengthened this impression.

"Four pounds of sugar, please—yes, two collars—some coffee—what is jam selling for to-day?" were some of the remarks.

The line continued to go forward steadily, the clerks behind the counter working swiftly handing out the packages. Those who called for sugar presented little yellow cards which the men behind the wooden barrier punched when handing out the comestible. This part of the proceedings resembled scenes witnessed in many cities in Europe during the day, and a person of imagination might have got the impression that somehow one of these scenes had become lost and was being repeated in New York regardless of the armistice and the proceedings at Versailles. The people in line did not look like war sufferers, however, being, on the contrary, well dressed and apparently well satisfied with their lot in life. They and the clerks exchanged pleasant remarks as the work proceeded.

### A Food Sale

What was going on was one of the sales of food and merchandise held daily by the City Bank Club to its members. The club is composed of the employees of the National City Bank, the National City Company and the International Banking Corporation. As the resources of the National City Bank alone are in excess of \$1,000,000, 000 something of the character of the organization will be indicated.

The City Bank Club has been in existence for several years, but recently, doubtless because of the mounting cost of necessities, its activities have been greatly extended. Even gigantic concerns like the National City Bank and the two others, with their vast wealth and branches all over the world, cannot overlook the human element, and, as with ventures of much smaller magnitude, realize the importance of looking after their employees. That time-wrinkled saw about the chain being as strong as its weakest link is not so far from the truth after all.

The National City Bank and the two other corporations have 3,400 employees in New York City alone, which does not take into consideration the thousands they have in the other cities of the world. Recently, like all other humans, these employees have felt the effects of the high cost of living, which accounts to some extent for the interesting spectacle witnessed each day in the big building at 60 Wall Street, and probably had something to do with the following item which appeared in the newspapers recently:

"Purchase of the Dreier residence, at No. 6 Montague Terrace, Brooklyn, to be made into a clubhouse was announced yesterday by the City Bank Club, the organization of the staffs of the National City

Bank, the National City Company and the International Banking Corporation.

### To Live at the Club

"Fifty members of the club will make their homes at the clubhouse, which also will be a social and recreational center for the entire organization of 3,200 members. The property is to be remodeled for the purpose.

"The rates will be \$50 a month, which will include a room and two meals a day. The house will be run on a cost basis and is expected to maintain itself. It will be used for temporary accommodations, in addition, of some members of the college training class conducted at the bank each year. These young men are selected from many American colleges to enter the foreign service of the bank."

The item did not add, as it might have, that the City Bank Club also pays part of the tuition of a large number of its members attending night classes at various universities of the city; that it conducts an investment fund where employees may deposit their savings and earn good interest; that in connection with these activities it has for members a housing plan under which they are assisted in buying their own homes, and that, in addition, it offers opportunities for healthful recreations, such as tennis, baseball, basketball, bowling and other athletic exercises. Occasionally, too, the club gives dances, dinners and other entertainments which are quite elaborate in their character.

In taking into consideration the interesting endeavor of these three big organizations to "keep their workers contented and on the job," the reader should not confuse the clubhouse just purchased on Montague Terrace, in Brooklyn, with the City Bank Club itself. The clubhouse across the river is merely one of the many activities of the parent organization, the City Bank Club itself. Whereas the City Bank Club has more than 3,200 members in New York alone, the capacity of the clubhouse in Brooklyn is, as the item in the newspapers stated, only about fifty.

### Cheap Club Life

Nevertheless, taken in connection with the other undertakings of the Wall Street corporations and its bearing on the present problem of the high cost of living, the Brooklyn venture is interesting. Think of getting two good meals a day, a comfortable bed and the privileges of a club in these days for \$50 a month! Of course, a majority of those who live or are to live in the house in Brooklyn are the younger



CONFERENCE of officers and executives of the City Bank Club



NEW home of the City Bank Club in Brooklyn

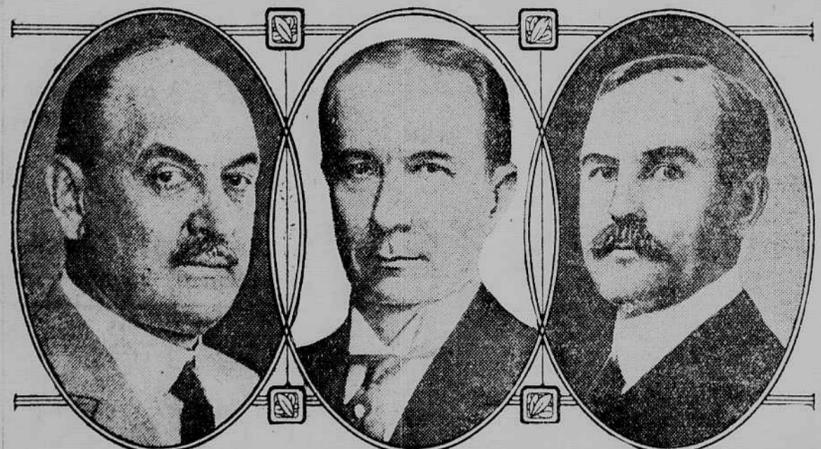
men in the banking organizations, the juniors.

"The clubhouse was purchased with the assistance of the Number Eight Realty Company," said Percy West, the president of the City Bank Club. (Number Eight is the number of the National City Bank in the Clearing House Association, and the

realty company, a club venture, took its name from that.) "The building is one of the fine old residences of the city. It is run on a cost basis, which proves quite a boon to the unmarried fellows, who would otherwise have to live in hotels or lodging houses.

"The clubhouse provides, too, a center for entertainment and recreation for all members. The spacious drawing room and halls give oppor-

### Speakers Before the City Bank Club



David R. Houston, Secretary of the Treasury

Judge Robert Lovett, Chairman of the Board of the Union Pacific

John D. Ryan, President of the Anaconda Copper Company



Charles M. Schwab, President of the Bethlehem Steel Company

Sir George Paish, English financier

Charles R. Crane, Ambassador to China

## A General Store in a Wall Street Skyscraper Has Bargain Sales in Food and Clothing

cles dealt in, but they give some idea as to comparison in prices. The savings on many items average from 25 to 75 per cent, according to Executive Steffan. The "store" buys only the highest grades, believing these are what the members want.

"The people of this country will buy the best, if the prices are within their reach," said Executive Steffan.

The hours for the sales were fixed so as to fit in with employment of the members. Orders for all articles, which range from shirts to safety pins and jams to collar buttons, are taken in the morning before the members go to work. The first sale each working day starts at 11:30 a. m. and continues until 1:30 p. m. There is a second sale starting at 4:30 o'clock in the afternoon, which continues until the last purchaser is supplied.

"Our weekly business amounts to about \$5,000, I should say," said Executive Steffan, who has general supervision over all the activities of the organization. "Our biggest trade, of course, has been in sugar. This is because of the scarcity in the market. In order to prevent hoarding we have restricted purchases to four pounds a week, and each member is provided with a sugar card which he must present at the time he makes his purchase.

### Big Trade in Sugar

"The saving on the sugar has not been as great as on many other articles, but, being able to get it at all has been quite an accommodation. We've been selling sugar steadily, regardless of the condition of the market."

Executive Steffan added that by "massing the purchasing power" of the 3,200 members of the club many bargains were obtained through timely buying. The club also looks to the future, and laying in supplies for disposal later. Thus the club recently bought 18,000 eggs, which it put in cold storage to be sold next winter. The price will be what the eggs are worth when they were put in, instead of what they might bring then, as is the practice among dealers out for profits. As of the 3,200 employees in the three financial organizations one-fifth are girls and women, special bargains also are offered from time to time appealing to feminine tastes.

"We hold a sale of women's wear every Friday," explained the secretary. "These are held in the women's rest room at 55 Wall Street. All sorts of articles are sold, and

recently we offered a lot of nice furs which the club had been able to get at a bargain."

One of the noon sales was just starting, and a demonstration was had of how the thing works. The hall of the busy downtown structure filled with the purchasers, and a cheerful hum arose as the men and women, youths and young women, filed by.

Outside, Wall Street hummed and buzzed with rumors and reports of rising and falling prices; people were rushing lunchward or speculating feverishly between bites as to the fate of some stock or other. But up here the financial district and its worries seemed far away indeed. Shirts, collars, packages of eatables and other articles passed in a never ending stream over the counter, the occasional chuckle that went up indicating that no one was breaking his heart especially over the reverses being suffered by the H. C. L.

### An Education, Too

The club's educational plan is not as spectacular as the food sales, but it is equally as important. In addition to the studies at the universities it has courses in the technical side of banking itself. These are given at the three organizations from whose staffs the membership of the club is drawn. Instruction is given in foreign exchange, credit or banking practice and kindred subjects. A course in business letter writing is conducted especially for men and women engaged in handling the bank's correspondence.

All sorts of problems in banking, business and finance are discussed, and some of the most important men in the nation have made addresses to the classes. Among these have been Charles M. Schwab, president of the Bethlehem Steel Company; Secretary of the Treasury David R. Houston; Charles R. Crane, Ambassador to China; John D. Ryan, president of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company; Judge Robert Lovett, chairman of the board of the Union Pacific Railway, and Sir George Paish, the English financier.

The club, like the management of the house in Brooklyn, is very largely in the hands of the members themselves. Their opinions are invited on all subjects affecting their interests, either in the club or in their employment, and general discussions on these subjects are invited and encouraged.

### THE girls' basketball team of the City Bank Club



tunities for dances for groups in the bank. The house itself is located about as conveniently to the bank as it is possible to live. Only ten minutes by subway, it really is hardly a trip as distances are measured in New York. The house itself overlooks the East River, which makes it a delightful residence both in winter and summer. From the clubhouse veranda the Statue of Liberty and Governor's Island are easily visible. Just across the river can be seen the skyline of New York."

### Run by the Members

Mr. West added that the management of the clubhouse in Brooklyn is very largely in the hands of the occupants themselves, under the general supervision, of course, of the City Bank Club.

"They are confined to no strict rules of government," he explained, "and run the house pretty much as they please within the limit of the club control."

This solves the problem pretty well for the young bachelors. For the others, the 3,150 men and young women who live with their parents or have homes of their own, there is the "store" in the skyscraper at 60 Wall Street. This store is called the "Buydirect Service" department. The name, of course, is self-explanatory, and what goes on there daily will interest many in these days of high prices.

There is, in the first place, no middleman. The "Buydirect Service" makes its purchases first hand, and sells to members at cost, plus a slight addition for "overhead." That this means a saving is, of course, a fact which needs no elaboration.

"One thing to be remembered is that the City Bank Club does not give charity," said Roger Steffan, executive secretary of the club. "The house in Brooklyn is self-maintaining, and so is the 'Buydirect Service.' Only so much is added as is needed to pay the expenses of upkeep. This amounts to about 5 per cent above the cost of purchases.

"There is a saving, and, of course, we can do a great deal also in time buying. What we do is to mass the purchasing power of 3,200 persons to the very best advantage, and buy in the market where the best bargains are offered."

### Comparative Prices

As to the prices themselves, which drive the point home better than anything else, here is what some of them were on the day recently when

the data for this article were gathered:

|  | On the Market |
|--|---------------|
| Buydirect Service.                     |               |
| Tea, 25 cents a half pound             | \$ .40        |
| Coffee, five-pound packages            | \$2.10 2.50   |
| Safety razor blades, 70 cents a dozen  | 1.00          |
| Electric light bulbs, \$1.10 for five  | 2.00          |
| Yarn, two-ounce ball, 58 cents         | .80           |
| Sugar, 22 cents a pound                | .25           |
| Corned beef (canned), 25 cents a pound | .35           |
| Tongue (canned), 24-ounce cans, \$1.37 | 1.50          |
| Chocolate, \$1.10 a pound              | 1.55          |

These are only a few of the arti-

## Races That Are Not to the Swift

BEFORE the great war stopped many of the sports in France one of the queerest racing contests was that held during the summer months in every section of the country. It was a weight-carrying race, and for several years a young fellow named Jean Ricard had been champion, as he never failed to defeat everybody who entered against him. He was a market porter, and since a small boy had gradually become used to carrying heavy loads upon his back, so it was seemingly easy for him to keep on winning. In this odd race the contestants are furnished an equal number of sacks containing the same amount of heavy material, and at a given signal they must swing these sacks upon the back and race for the goal, which is sixty yards distant.

Jean won the championship by supporting a weight of 600 pounds on his shoulders and then ran the distance of sixty yards in fifty-eight seconds. You are able to realize how difficult it is to run a race of this kind, as the several sacks of weights are much harder to hold in position than one enormous dumb-bell of the same weight would be. It is thought that Jean Ricard will be able to hold the championship just as long as he pleases, for he is very careful of his health and is always in good condition for a race.

### The Greased Pig

A greased pig race is usually one of the funniest things to be seen at the different county fairs held every year in almost every section of the United States. A small, lean pig is selected, and after being well greased it is turned loose in the ring, and after getting a good start on the crowd of boys who are going to try to catch it the word is given and the big race is on. If you have ever tried to catch and hold a young pig without any grease on it you know what a difficult thing it must be to secure a good grip on one that

is as slippery as an eel, so the fellow who catches and holds the greased one surely deserves to win the prize, which is always nothing less than the pig itself. The amusing part of it is that often one will grab its leg, and sometimes each of the runners who lays claim to having caught the animal, but the pig is generally given to the one having the best hold on its body. If you ever get into a race of this kind be sure and put on some old clothes so you can make a big dive at the pig and grab it around the body with both arms. Another almost as funny race sometimes held at these fairs is that between slow mules, the fellow able to make his mule go around the ring in the slowest time getting whatever prize is offered.

### Turtle Races

Turtle fishermen of Florida have had races with turtles as their steeds, to the great amusement of the onlookers and bathers at the different beaches. Two large sea turtles, each weighing several hundred pounds, are usually selected for these queer contests, while the fishermen put on their bathing suits and get upon the backs of the turtles, which their friends are holding out on the beach. At the signal to go the turtles are released, and, of course, begin a race for the water. After reaching it the clumsy creatures would dive down and continue crawling along the bottom, but their riders shift their weight to the back part of the shell and at the same time pull upward on the front part, which prevents the turtle from putting its head under. Instead of letting them swim out to sea the riders guide the turtles by pulling them to the right or left so that they race along parallel with the shore and the spectators get a good chance to see the final result. Some of these races have been known to continue for miles and at the finish the winning turtle would be exhibited as the

champion swimmer of that particular beach.

Before the war Hagenbeck's famous zoo in Hamburg, Germany, had several large tortoises which became so tame that the children of that city were allowed to ride them whenever they pleased. After the riders were on their backs the tortoises were induced to follow attendants, who walked before them holding lettuce leaves in their hands.

Many laughable races were started in this way, for even the attendants themselves began taking so much interest in the affairs that they would strive in every way to make their tortoise cross the line before the others. The boys and girls who rode them also became very much excited, and would try in every way to make their mounts win, for nobody likes to be a loser, even in a tortoise race! But slow as it is, the tortoise is always sure to get there, just as it did in the old fable of its famous race with the fleet-footed hare that thought it could take a long snooze and then win the race.

### At the Bronx Zoo

In the New York Zoological Gardens many amusing races also take place in the big tortoise pen whenever two of these creatures spy a bit of food at the same time. Although these tortoises are quite large, nobody has been allowed to ride them as yet. In this same zoological garden there are spirited races between the sea lions whenever they are fed their ration of fish. The attendant feeding them will toss the fish to opposite sides of the pool, and in their haste to reach them the sea lions will leap through the water and often up into the air at such speed that the eye can scarcely follow their movements. Of course, the fortunate sea lion winning these races gets the fish for his prize.