

THE TELEPHONE SITUATION IN CHICAGO.*¹

BY WILHELM BODEMANN.

In 1896 the telephone situation in Chicago was briefly this: We paid \$225 per annum for a business telephone—grounded, of course, and not any too good at that. The general public had not placed private phones in their homes and did their telephoning in the drug stores and to such an extent that I had hard work getting the store phone for my personal use, much less could my patrons get me on the telephone to send in orders.

Not being long on patience I went to the then general manager of the telephone company, A. S. Hibbard, and General Superintendent Zeublin for relief, especially since a medical friend, who as a rule was not in the habit of indulging in profanity, came in one day and was furious because he could not telephone for some drugs he needed in a confinement case. He waited and waited and finally jumped into his buggy and came down, raised Cain in seven different languages, saying: "Why didn't you throw out that old goose who monopolized your phone for forty-five minutes talking to Nelly about her new dress and hat?"

Well, Mr. Hibbard checked up my phone and found that it was used on an average of 175 times for outgoing connections. I asked the telephone officials if they could not put in a device so that the public would have to pay for each connection. Messrs. Hibbard and Zeublin reluctantly consented to do so, provided we would have the nerve to do so.

I went to President Tom Wooten and the C. R. D. A. executive committee and this committee approved my proposition and submitted it to a mass meeting. After I had talked for about an hour the mass meeting seemed to be in favor of my proposition. When George Pierre Danton Engelhard let loose a firebrand, oratorical cyclone, the air was blue with such words as "monopoly," "octopus," "despotism," "egotism," "tyranny," etc., and the C. R. D. A. turned down the plan.

Loyalty to the association would have ended the scheme, but I was loyal to the cause. I, of course, was sorry, but all the more determined. My Hyde Park druggist friends were with me and we put in the first public pay telephone.

In spite of the fact that the telephone officials adopted my plan *reluctantly*, the fiery opponents of our scheme charged Mr. Wooten and myself with being bribed.

When the Chicago druggists saw that we in Hyde Park received not only relief, but turned expense into revenue, cut out the "free lunch" "dead heads" to such an extent that the number of outgoing calls in my store was reduced from 175 to 20 a day, making it possible for my patrons to place orders by phone, the rest of the druggists tumbled over themselves to get into the band wagon and the former opponents became enthusiastic supporters of the *new way*.

In 1898 when the N. A. R. D. was born, I moved that the N. A. R. D. should carry the propaganda to the country and a committee for this purpose was appointed and in 1900 made a standing committee, of which I have been chairman ever since, and with the efficient coöperation of that able secretary, Samuel C. Henry, there are no cities and few towns of any size hanging on to the old way—

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¹ With this contribution a reprint of an article on the subject in 1911 was presented.

the "dead beat" way, paying for the service for the public, who might as well expect us to pay their gas, milk and meat bills.

I emphasize the work of Mr. Henry, a diplomatic, tactful official of the N. A. R. D. and am frank to admit that as a diplomat I am a fizzle. I rather prefer a fight in the open than a smooth process of persuasion, but it seems that the blend of these two proceedings worked well. The druggists now do not have to pay a flat rate, in most cases have to guarantee a certain amount and on all receipts over that sum receive a commission.

THE CHICAGO VETERAN DRUGGISTS' ASSOCIATION.*

BY WILHELM BODEMANN.

The Section on Historical Pharmacy of the AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION should not only record history, but should make history, and this is my notion of doing it.

The commercial interests of the drug trade are being taken care of very efficiently by the great N. A. R. D. The intellectual interests are in charge of the pharmaceutical colleges and handled so forcefully that the "standard" has been raised so high that it takes a strong telescope to see the tail end of the dear thing.

In 1898 Chicago launched a veteran druggists' association, taking care of the sentimental interest of the craft, and that's where your Section should come in to *make* history. Blast the bugle call to all *city* and *state* associations who have not already started veteran associations to do so at once.

We found in Chicago when T. N. Jamieson conceived the organization of the C. V. D. A. that the druggists who had been in business for over twenty-five years would have become estranged had they not met regularly for the purpose of keeping the home fires burning. They would, perhaps, meet occasionally on the street, ask "How do you do" and hardly have time to tell each other "how they *did*." Since we have our regular weekly Round Table of the C. V. D. A. we are so interested in each other that we have an average of 80 per cent of our membership at each meeting. We decorate the members and celebrate the anniversaries of their births during the week on which they occur, taboo discussion of religious, political and business topics and gather old records for the future historian of pharmacy by filing our biographies and photos. We attend funerals of our members in a body and drop a carnation—just one—as a last tribute to our deceased member. The carnation was made our emblem by our gracious patroness, Mrs. Jamieson, when she decorated us at our first meeting.

No discord has ever marred the symphony of our lovefeasts and our platform has proved such an iron wall against disharmony that we went through the terrible World War without a break in our platform, although our members being made up largely of American citizens of foreign descent had friends on both sides of that deplorable holocaust.

Therefore, my brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable and abound in the work for love, friendship and humanity by going to it in the cause of veteran druggists' associations.

* Presented to Section on Historical Pharmacy, A. PH. A., Philadelphia meeting, 1926.