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China's First Woman Despatcher

Chen Chi

The exemplary achievements of Sun Hsiao-chü, New China's first woman despatcher, have made a great impression on me. Her sturdiness and her well-developed muscles are typical for the women of New China. Her father was a railway worker, and from early childhood she wanted to be "a glorious worker just like him." In 1949, after finishing elementary school, she passed the examination for apprentice and went to work in the railway station office at Chichihar in Northeast China. The stories of the new deeds of men and women of New China encouraged her. Her superiors decided to train

her for a coupler. "A coupler doesn't have an easy job. He has to couple the engine to the carriages, and if the junction isn't right there are sure to be accidents," she thought. Bearing in mind, however, the courage and determination of those other workers in New China, she accepted the offer with alacrity, and in 1950 she became a coupler in the Chichihar station. "Who has ever heard of a woman coupler before! Women have their own work, what do they want to do men's work for?" people said. These and similar sarcastic remarks stung her, and she felt uneasy under them. But the secretary of the Chinese Communist Party branch at the station kept encouraging her. She felt that a great many people were backing her up. "Let them scoff at me as much as they like," she thought to herself. "I'll shut them up with my work."

As soon as she started her work as a coupler, she was beset by difficulties. The main trouble was that physically she was not well fitted for this job. She had to run after engines which were constantly on the move and join them quickly to the carriages, and

after her first day's work she was dead tired. Excessive fatigue made her suffer from insomnia. "How am I going to carry on with my work if things go on like this?" she thought. Though she had but little confidence in her own strength, still she persisted in her work. Just when she was getting accustomed to her work, a cold wave of twenty degrees below zero swept through that region. Her hands were frost-bitten and her feet swollen. "Never mind! Dress the chilblains and get on with your work," she said to herself. Her strong will and resolution impressed the very people who had scoffed at her before. She became a model coupler.

On April 1, 1951, she was transferred to the Chichihar Railway Administration to learn despatching. There is even more to this job than to a coupler's. A despatcher is like an army commander, he has to direct the work of scores of stations and thousands of trains, he has to organize about a thousand engine drivers and railway workers in the work of transportation. People without organizing ability are not suitable for the job. According to the regulations of the railway

administration, couplers have to undergo three months of training to qualify as despatchers. Sun knew it was a difficult job. She felt that redoubled effort should make up for her lack of ability. So every morning she went to the office an hour before the others arrived, to study transportation regulations and books on despatching. If she had any problems, she was never shy of asking other people. That is why they all called her Miss Inquisitive! After she had studied for just one month and five days, the cadre in charge considered her professionally up to standard and promoted her to regular despatcher, an unprecedented thing.

"I must prove myself worthy of the care my superiors have taken over my training. My work has got to be better than that of others," she decided. One day, she heard a comrade say that Zkolko's method of despatching was the most advanced one in the Soviet Union, so she was not a little surprised to discover that nobody had studied this method. "Tun Tai-yuan, Minister of Railways, has time and again called upon us to learn from Soviet experiences so that we can

improve our work. Then, why don't we adopt Zkolko's despatching method? This is where I step in!" Sun Hsiao-chü reasoned. From the chief despatcher she borrowed a book on Zkolko's despatching method and started to study it carefully everyday. Soon she had finished about ten chapters. One night as she was lying in bed, pondering over the principles of the new method and going over her personal experience in despatching, it suddenly dawned upon her that the essence of the method was: Know the facts, grasp them thoroughly, keep close to the workers and rely on them. "Shouldn't I apply this principle to my work?" she asked Chu Yung-hsiang, the chief despatcher, to whom she had gone with her discovery. But he was non-committal, so she went to talk over the matter with the other despatchers. One of them, Cheng Pao-ling, made fun of her, saying: "My dear girl, you don't know yourself. New to the business and start to talk about advanced methods!"

It didn't discourage her. She had faith in the superiority of the Soviet method. Working in the spirit of Zkolko, she went

out frequently to get acquainted with the facts. She kept a close eye on the thirty odd stations under her command, and when she was off duty she would go there herself to collect informations as to the capacity of their installations and to ask the workers how they felt about their jobs. She often made inspection trips together with the engine drivers and discussed with them the ways to increase engine-haulage. Her way of doing things struck her colleagues as being extremely odd, for as a rule despatchers did not leave their offices but directed transportation according to the map of the train-traffic. None of them had ever done as Sun was doing now, going everywhere to see conditions herself. One day, when they were talking about their work, Cheng Pao-ling sneered at her again. "Don't we manage things perfectly well without going out to investigate?" he said. "We're fed up with the sort of people who are always introducing novelties!" "But I'm a green hand," said Sun modestly, "so I've got to know first the actual situation." Turning to Cheng, she asked him: "If you are quite well acquainted with it, surely you can tell

me how steep the incline is between Hsintun and Yian?" Cheng was silent. "And on which bridges the trains have to slow down?" Cheng remained speechless. "We despatchers," Sun Hsiao-chü told him, "are like army commanders. How can we expect to win battles if we're not well-informed about the enemy?" Having been shown up by her in this way, Cheng acknowledged his mistake and set out to follow her example.

Early last year, when Li Yun, national railway model worker, called upon the railway workers of the whole country to launch a patriotic "over-traction" movement, Sun said to herself: "Pulling more carriages means carrying more freight. That'll be a great help in the construction of our country. I'm going to look into this." Having carefully studied the lines under the control of the Chichihar Railway Administration, she came to the conclusion that on the slope between Hsintun and Yian the engines which pulled heavier loads might meet with difficulties, and that, if only this could be overcome, it would be possible to carry out "over-traction" everywhere else. With this in mind,

she made a trip to inspect that section of the line and held discussions with the engine drivers. When she found it was possible to put "over-traction" into practice in that section, she said to herself that bare possibility was not enough, it should be turned into a reality and to that purpose human effort was indispensable. Knowing the engine driver Ma Hung-tao to be a man of high political consciousness, great aspiration and superior technique, she talked the matter over with him. "Don't you think it's possible to do 'over-traction' in that part of the line?" she asked him. "Well, there's no harm in trying it," replied Ma after some consideration. Relying on this, Sun proposed to start "over-traction" in that section. One of the despatchers, Kwang Hsi-fu, raised objections: "We've nearly broken the engine by making it pull loads of 1,700 tons. How can we make it pull still more?" Sun explained to him with concrete examples how it would be possible for the engine to pull more carriages. "If it's possible, why shouldn't we try it out?" she asked. "We're not going to stay out in the same corner for ever, are we?

Keeping conditions static, is that what we proletarians should do?" She managed to convince Kwang and he finally agreed to the proposal. With her encouragement, the engine driver, Ma Hung-tao, undertook to put "over-traction" into practice. He made a safe journey with a freight of 2,550 tons and arrived at his destination four minutes ahead of schedule. This tangible fact completely smashed conservative views. Today, every engine driver can do "over-traction" between Hsintun and Yian and because of the success of the experiment in that most difficult section, "over-traction" has been put into practice in all other parts, thus creating an enormous amount of wealth for the nation.

Sun Hsiao-chü now is one of the best-known railway despatchers in the country. She has at her finger-tips all the thirty odd stations and dozens of engines under the control of the Chichihar Railway Administration. Not only does she know the stations and the locomotives but also their staff. She can give you the name, personal history, special ability and political character of every single station master and engine driver

Being so well-acquainted with the facts, she has managed in her despatching work to "know the enemy as well as yourself" and to "win every battle" just like a good army commander. All the plans drawn up by her are a hundred per cent practicable, being based upon reality, and all her ideas work out well for the same reason. This despatching method of hers, which is based upon a thorough understanding of the situation and a close alliance with the workers, has now gone into despatching textbooks all over the country.

Sun Hsiao-chü is just 22 now, and has had only four years of schooling. But her exemplary achievements are a good lesson for those people who issue orders without first making a careful study of the facts, for those who talk big but never take trouble with their work and for those who have feudalistic remnants in their mind and look down upon women. We all should take Sun Hsiao-chü as our model and learn from her example!



Sun Hsiao-chü speaking on her working experiences at a discussion meeting held by the All-China Federation of Labour.

We Are Working for Peace

LI CHAO-CHEN

National Model Worker

I am a woman worker in the Tientsin Bedding and Clothing Factory. My colleagues and myself are all working enthusiastically for one common purpose—to make our motherland stronger, richer and more prosperous for the defence of world peace.

Since the liberation, our factory has been extensively renovated and the output is constantly on the increase. A great number of workers have been promoted to the post of administrative cadres. Last year, the director of the factory assigned me a new task, to take charge of a large group of more than 120 women workers. At first, I felt pretty

uneasy about this new task. There were so many people in the group. I thought, what could I do if anything unpredicted should happen? I went to talk the matter over with the director. "Since you have done well as leader of a small group," he said, "you can do equally well as leader of a large group. You have only to rely on the workers. If there is any difficulty, consult them." His encouragement gave me confidence. "That is right," I said to myself, "a hundred brains are surely able to do more thinking than just one single brain." With this principle in mind, I often called together the leaders of small groups to exchange experiences. In the large group, all the leaders of small groups kept in contact with me, and in each small group, all the activists were in constant touch with the leader of that group. In this way, all the workers in the large group fall into place.

Then we launched the red flag emulation drive. All the workers joined with great enthusiasm. The rate of our daily output increased from the 6.8 suits fixed by the factory to 7.3. But we did not rest content with this

record. On National Day, 1951, I went to Peking to attend the celebrations. There I met Comrade Kiang Wan-shou, a model worker in the Northeast Bedding and Clothing Factory. We were in the same trade and I had read about his exemplary achievements in the papers. I asked advice of him and he told me many of his valuable experiences. When I returned to the factory, I proposed to do some experimenting to improve our working method and I obtained the support of the Factory Administration. I called together the leaders and activists of the small groups and discussed with them how to improve the organization of the work. We decided that division of labour should be practised within the large group instead of the small group as we had done up to then. It wasn't easy going at first, as it was a new experiment. It was like treading out a track on a steep hill. The average rate of output was lower than before, it was then only 6 suits. Later on we adopted the working method of the Soviet advanced worker F. Kovalev. After one month's painstaking experiment, the output of our group was raised

to 7.5 and finally to 8.3 suits. We fulfilled the task assigned to us for the first season of the year seventeen days ahead of schedule

Our contribution to the state is very insignificant, yet look how the People's Government concerns itself about us. Take the women workers in our factory for example. Before the liberation, there were more than 65 per cent of us suffering from irregular periods, while the married workers were, for the most part, exhausted from overwork and this often caused painful deliveries and miscarriages. But now the People's Government has set up health centres for women and children. Women workers are given pre-natal and post-natal care which safeguards them during the period of pregnancy and after. As a result of proper treatment, irregularity and painfulness of periods has been cured among us. Creches have been set up in the factories to take care of the children of women workers, relieving the mothers of a great burden and worry. Wang Hsiu-lan, one of our women workers sent her baby to the factory creche, and in three weeks it put on nearly one pound and four ounces.

Before the liberation, women workers had to return to work three days after the delivery. Now they are given 56 days maternity leave with full pay. So it is natural that they are much keener on their work than before. •

In order to make our happy life safe, all the women workers in our factory have taken an active part in the movement for the defence of peace. We have not only signed the Appeal for the Conclusion of a Five-Power Peace Pact and voted against the rearmament of Japan by America, but also collected signatures for the Peace Pact among our relatives and the residents in the neighbourhood of the factory. We made many gift bags to send to the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers. To make these bags, which they filled with gifts, some of the women workers even took out the material they had kept for their wedding day. Many of us have applied to be sent to the Korean front. Now we are working with unparalleled ardour to welcome the Peace Conference of the Asian and Pacific Regions which will soon meet in Peking.

Recently we received a letter from Kutesmena and three other Soviet women workers. Now let me quote here a passage which also voices the sentiments of Chinese women workers:—

“We are working with the sacred will to render greater service to the cause of defending world peace. We know that the stronger and the more unrivalled our motherland becomes, the more freely all the peace-loving people of the world shall be able to breathe.”