

We laid it aside. We tried the elected representatives of management and labor. Then we got a little more fanciful. Somebody said, "Why not put a box over by the door with a slit in the top of the box and hang a scratch-pad there. If anybody has a gripe let him write it on a piece of paper and drop it into the box." It seemed like a tremendous idea for upward communication.

A friend of mine at a large electric appliance firm told me that he was going through the slips in one of their boxes one day, when he came across an interesting one. It said, "For three straight years I have told you that my foreman is a son-of-a-bitch. You have not done a thing about it, and this is the last time I am going to tell you about it." This, I think, reveals what is wrong with the complaint-box system. Management simply doesn't know what to do with all the crackpot complaints they get. If they don't do something about them, they are worse off than if they had no box.

Then along came somebody with a great idea. He said, "We have the wrong label on the box. We ought to put on there 'Suggestion Box.' Let us get some constructive ideas. In fact, let us pay for them. If a man puts a workable idea in the box, let us give him \$10 for it, or even \$15, \$20, or \$25." It seemed like a tremendous idea. And it fell pretty flat on its face. Almost every industry adopting this cash-incentive plan for constructive ideas wish they had never dreamed it up in the first place. Somehow it all gets built right into the next union contract, and they seem to be losing money and not gaining money with it.

Then along came some college professor, I think. He said, "You people in industry are doing some very peculiar things. You want to find out what the people down at the bottom are thinking about. Why don't you ask them? I could build you an opinion survey and let you know in 2 weeks what all your people are thinking." "Very good," said management. "Let us have one of those." They paid out a nice retainer to this professor. Two weeks later he came in and gave them all the figures. He said, "Here is what your people are thinking about." It seemed like a tremendous idea, and it fell flat on its face. The thing wrong with it is that a man's ideas can change in 24 hours. Let the president of a company come and announce that the next few days look awful rocky for the company and the opinion of all the workers shifts.