

NEED OF IMPROVEMENTS IN WASHHOUSE ARRANGEMENT

The arrangement of present-day washhouses is not conducive to the efficient use of labor. The efficiency with which many operations can be performed depends not on the ability and skill of the individual operator concerned but rather upon the output of some previous operation. This is true of most assembly-line processes.

In the case of celery washhouses each side of a stripping and packing chain constitutes an assembly-line process, within which there is only a limited amount of flexibility for balancing the amount of work among the various workers. The method was first established by small firms using only one chain. In recent years many houses have expanded by adding a second, third or fourth chain. A firm using four chains, therefore, has eight separate assembly-line processes, each with only a limited flexibility for balancing the amount of work each individual in the line has to perform and, in addition, allows for no flexibility between chains.

Packers and sorters constitute the great bulk of washhouse labor and, as explained previously,¹⁹ the accomplishment of all the sorters and packers depends on the team of sorters and packers which has the largest volume to handle. Likewise, the accomplishment of the team is automatically limited by the output of either the sorter or the packer, depending on which is the faster.

The individual who closes the crates can close only as many as the packers on one side of a chain pack. A four-chain house employs eight crate closers, each of whom is engaged in productive work for only part of the time.

The present system of sorting out sizes on the packing chain, placing the packed crate on a conveyor to be mixed up with other sizes, only again to be resorted by size in a huge sorting room, constitutes a paradox. The sorting rooms of many washhouses are as large as the space occupied by the balance of the plant.

The lack of flexibility between individual chains could be overcome by handling all celery on one rather than on many assembly lines. One possible way this might be done would be to have all the celery deposited on a common stripping and sorting chain. The individual sizes sorted from this chain would be placed on cross conveyors so that all of one size would pass

¹⁹ See section on sorting and packing.