Affluence, rationalisation and the skilled worker : A critique of the affluent worker paradigm and a local case study.

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Abstract

This thesis presents a critique of the classic Affluent Worker study and a case-study of the experience and perspectives of skilled engineering workers during a period of rationalisation at the end of the 1960s.
In the critical assessment of the Affluent Worker study it is argued that the conceptualisation of class in terms of market situation provides the consistent organising focus of that study, and that the impoverished treatment of production relations which follows from this focus is the source of key weaknesses in the resulting analysis, both in regard to the complexity and dynamics of consciousness and action in the workplace and concerning the treatment of similarities and differences in the experience of waged work.
Accordingly it is argued that the marxian analysis of production relations provides a more appropriate starting point, not only for discussions of the generic features of wage labour but also for understanding the distinctive experience of particular groupings of workers and the sources of heterogeneity in the character of waged work.
The case-study of engineering workers in three Sunderland factories pursues these themes. It documents a contested, uneven and piecemeal process of rationalisation and intensification of skilled labour; relates this pattern to the character of the distinctive accumulation strategies of specific sectors and firms; and explores the subtle changes in the organisation of the labour process and in forms of craft consciousness and trade unionism which result.
In particular the case-study comments on sources of heterogeneity even in the experience of craft labour itself, and outlines the manner in which limited rationalisation in this period tended to nourish both a sceptical and circumspect craft consciousness and a fairly effective but defensive trade unionism.

AFFLUENCE, RATIONALISATION AND THE SKILLED WORKER: A CRITIQUE OF THE AFFLUENT WORKER PARADIGM AND A LOCAL CASE STUDY

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List of Tables

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Confidentiality

In accordance with undertakings to my informants I have used pseudonyms to maintain personal anonymity. I have, however, identified the firms where the research was conducted, because this allowed a more adequate indication of the economic conditions and work processes involved, and thus a more adequate social analysis. I wish to request that these firms are not identified by name in any published discussion or quotation of material from this thesis.

Declaration

No material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in the University of Durham, or at any other university.

A summary of the analysis in chapters 5 and 6 was given as a paper at the Seminar Series on Workplace Bargaining at Kings College, Cambridge, December 1983, and to the British Sociological Association Annual Conference at Bradford, 1984. The paper was subsequently issued as Warwick Working Paper in Sociology 7, "Skilled Workers on the Margins of Rationalisation: a Local Study", (Department of Sociology, University of Warwick) 1985.

Acknowledgements

I must first of all, though very belatedly, thank those workers at the three Sunderland firms and local trade union officials and managers who spent time helping to educate me in some of the realities of factory life. I also wish to thank my supervisor, Richard Brown, for his advice, support and patience over the years; and my colleagues at the University of Warwick, especially Simon Clarke, Peter Fairbrother, Bob Burgess and Duncan Gallie, for their help. I have benefited from stimulating discussions with Ken Grainger about the experience of another group of skilled engineering workers who faced rationalisation during the 1970s. Finally I must thank my family for their forbearance while I completed this work.

Part Two

Rationalisation and the Skilled Worker:

A Case Study of Sunderland Engineers

Chapter 5

Studying Sunderland Engineers: the Research Process and a Rational Reconstruction of the Research Design

In this part of the thesis I will present an empirical study of the experience and outlook of one category of Sunderland engineering workers, those who worked as skilled 'turners' in the marine engineering and aero-engineering firms which were important employers in the district during the post-war period. This report will be based largely upon material collected during fieldwork carried out between 1968 and 1970, while I was a research student in the Department of Social Theory and Institutions (as it then was) at the University of Durham; though some further data, particularly that concerning corporate strategies, was assembled during the later 1970s. The initial inspiration of the research was the Affluent Worker project, or rather the initial research publications of that project and the discussions and research initiatives which they had provoked.[1] However, the research was inevitably reoriented as it proceeded, both as a result of theoretical quandaries over such central notions as 'traditionalism' and 'orientations' and as a consequence of such practical research exigencies as negotiating access to specific workplaces. Thus what I intend to do in this chapter is to present a 'rationally reconstructed' version of the research design; one which represents in a fairly coherent fashion those features of the research design which emerged as essential elements of the final research project. This account will also benefit from hindsight and incorporate the analytical pre-occupations which have emerged not only during the fieldwork but since, and it will touch only lightly on the dilemmas and inconsistencies of the research process. These latter topics will then be addressed in the second section of the chapter, both to recognise the divergencies between process and rational reconstruction and to notice certain features of the research process which offer substantive insights, especially in relation to the divergent bargaining relations between management and workers found in the three firms where interviewing and observational studies were eventually carried out.

The Research Design

Put in its most general terms my research interest in this part of the thesis is in the experience of a relatively prosperous grouping of industrial workers in one of the declining industrial areas of Britain during the post-war boom. More specifically I am concerned with the ways in which relatively skilled workers in such a setting experienced the phase of rationalisations and productivity initiatives which marked the late 1960s. Thus I am able to address questions about the character of class consciousness and action during the post-war period, and more specific arguments about the persistence and transformation of skilled work in that period. However, to explain the specific design of the research it is necessary to turn from such characterisations to a consideration of the way in which the fieldwork developed out of an engagement with the Affluent Worker study.

The initial objective of my research was to throw further light upon developments within the working class in the post-war period by a virtual replication of the Affluent Worker study, but in the contrasting setting of proletarian traditionalism as defined in Lockwood's famous typology. In terms of that study I was concerned with the character and implications of wage and effort bargaining among workers deemed part of the traditional solidaristic working class. However, even before the full development of the debate and critiques surrounding the Affluent Worker study which have been reviewed in part one of this thesis, any attempt at straightforward replication was undermined by ambiguities associated with the two key terms of this characterisation, namely 'effort bargaining' and 'traditionalism'. The manner in which each of these notions was interpreted and questioned in the course of the research design led my study away from replication and into a format appropriate to the characterisations in the previous paragraph. I will now outline these interpretations and specifications, dealing first with traditionalism and then with effort bargaining.

In part one I noted both the elastic character of the concept of traditionalism within neo-weberian sociologies of market and class situations, and the specific arguments which developed around Lockwood's classic exposition of the concept in relation to the Affluent Worker project.[2] In the latter context the issues raised (in the early 1970s and after my fieldwork was complete) included: the significance of assumptions about stable and isolated one-class communities; questioning

of the implied homogeneity of class experience and the absence of significant intra-class divisions in such settings; queries about the relationships between parochial and communal solidarities and wider political and cultural affiliations, and about the radical potentials of each; and finally, more general criticisms of the a-historical character of the treatment of sociological types, especially when that treatment implies that flux and the 'cash nexus' are recent rather than recurrent features of employment relations. While many of these critical points were sharply formulated only later, they presented themselves in rather cruder form when attempts were made to specify an appropriate setting for my fieldwork. Firstly problems arose from an ambiguity in the role of the notion of traditionalism within the discussion in the Affluent Worker publications. This concerned the difference between the designation of traditionalism as a common property of the bulk of the working class, an inclusive benchmark against which the proto-typicality of the mobile instrumental workers of Luton could be asserted, and the more precise but limiting specification of the context of proletarian traditionalism constructed by Lockwood.[3] In the first context the bulk of post-war industrial and community sociological studies could be enlisted to locate the 'deviance' of the affluent worker; in the second only the specific ethnographies of dockland and pit village represented the appropriate sources from which to draw contrasts. Since my interest was in the similarities and differences between the Luton workers and others in the main stream of post-war class experience it was the looser conception of the former usage, or at most a much qualified version of Lockwood's typification, which guided the specification of a research site. Secondly, and allied to this, it was apparent that within any broader definition of 'traditional' milieux there were numerous varied and distinctive occupational and community niches, each associated with somewhat specific class experiences, while working class cultural and political traditions were not simply anchored in such niches but had a certain independant existence. In these terms the notion of traditionalism did not connote a tightly defined cluster of work and community circumstances and political and cultural concomitants, but offered only some rough indication of settings within which a closer specification of the target for research would have to be made in its own terms.

With these considerations in mind I decided to focus upon engineering workers in Sunderland. There were pragmatic grounds for such a choice: namely a slightly lower degree of unfamiliarity with engineering than with

most other potential industrial settings, and the relative proximity of Sunderland to the University of Durham together with the availability of cheap rented accomodation in the town. However, there was also a fairly coherent analytical rationale for these choices, grounded in the broadly conceived notion of traditional working class situations noted above: in a number of respects Sunderland approximated well to Lockwood's ideal type, without constituting a particularly extreme or unusual setting, while engineering in the town spanned a range of older firms and newer factories manufacturing both long established products by traditional methods and high technology products using newer techniques.

In relation to the community setting Lockwood stressed "the isolated and endogamous nature of the community, its predominantly one-class population, and low rates of geographical and social mobility[4]. In these respects Sunderland represents a less stark example than might smaller, one-industry communities, but nevertheless fits Lockwood's specifications fairly closely. Thus Sunderland is clearly a predominantly working class town. According to the statistical survey of British towns conducted by Moser and Scott using the 1951 census data, the town ranked nineteenth out of 157 in the proportion of manual to non-manual workers, with the former constituting 88.5% of the population[5]. By the 1971 census the proportion was 76% of male workers (50% being classified as 'skilled')[6]. It is less easy to provide a straightforward indication of isolation, and low rates of mobility, but again Moser and Scott provide some comparative information: they report that the 'commuting ratio' for Sunderland is exceptionally low, ranking it 144 out of 157, while overall population change has been slight, with a net fall of 2.4% between 1931 and 1951 and a net increase of 2.0% between 1951 and 1958[7]. However, such overall population stability has, of course, been accomplished by considerable out-migration more or less balanced by natural increase (between 1931 and 1951 a net out-migration of 15% was balanced by a 12.6% excess of births over deaths)[8]. Thus, in common with many other old established industrial areas, any pattern of stable and settled social relations has been accompanied by substantial migration away from the area, especially among younger people. Dennis stresses that "annual net migration has proceeded at a much heavier rate in the 1960s than in the 1950s. The annual average loss due to net migration from Sunderland County Borough in the years 1951-61 was 960. The annual average net loss from the borough from 1961 to 1965 was 1,915"[9]. In such demographic terms, then, Sunderland approximates in important respects to Lockwood's criteria, but the central significance of out-migration emphasises the manner in which it also diverges from the

ideal-type - though in a way similar to the experience of other established communities based upon declining traditional industries. In the latter respect, the significance of traditional industries for employment opportunities in the town, Sunderland clearly has a more diversified industrial and employment base than a pit village or railway town, with the post-war expansion of aero-engineering and electrical engineering (the latter providing employment mainly for women) and the longer term presence of a glass works as well as substantial municipal employment. Nevertheless, the town remains heavily reliant upon the traditional industries to which it owed its nineteenth century growth[10]. In 1961 20.5% of the employed male labour force still worked in shipbuilding and marine engineering, while 4.5% worked in coal mining[11]. The centrality of these industries has certainly meant that the town and its workforce had experienced the vicissitudes of crisis and insecure employment associated with the basic industries of Britain's nineteenth century industrial development: from the cyclical booms and depressions of the late nineteenth century, through their prolonged crisis during the interwar slump, to their uneven decline during the 1950's and 1960's[12].

A final point which needs to be made in relation to this basically demographic profile of Sunderland, and its relationship to the Lockwoodian characterisation of the traditional working class community, concerns the social organisation of neighbourhoods and their relationships to employment patterns. The tight correspondence between neighbourhood and employment, documented in some of the classic ethnographies of working class communities, and central to Lockwood's schema, might be expected to remain a feature of small one-industry communities despite the impact of municipal housing policies and industrial relocation. However, this is less likely to be the case in large towns. Thus Sunderland has had an active local authority housing policy which has built large municipal housing estates on the expanding periphery of the town. These developments, which were especially characteristic of the post-war period through to the 1970's, were accompanied over a longer period by a slum clearance policy which became increasingly contentious as it encroached upon the well-established owner-occupied 'cottage' districts which had been traditional artisan neighbourhoods[13]. At the same time new industrial estates were established in some of the older areas of the town, such as Pallion and Hendon, where the newer electrical and aero-engineering firms mentioned above were located (together with a variety of small firms), and the employers on these sites have drawn workers from across the expanded town[14]. Thus, while interviews and documents clearly indicate that in the pre-war days at least some areas of Sunderland were characterised by an intimate

relationship between traditional industries and neighbourhoods, this pattern had been severely attenuated by the policies outlined above. Thus a local parish priest could remark of Pallion, in a nostalgic account of its past and a jaundiced view of its present, that in the pre-war period "nearly all the men and boys worked in the old-established industries of ship-building and marine engineering and most of these, in those days, were able to get home for dinner, even though some took their bait to work".[15] On this basis, then, any characterisation of Sunderland as a locus of a 'traditional working class' must also recognise the transformations in residential patterns and in relations between home and workplace which have marked its post-war experience. In this respect the citizens of Sunderland escape from the historical-cum-sociological backwater to which Lockwood confines his traditional worker, without approximating to the alternative ideal-type of the social location of the privatised worker. Such a pattern of experience among many groups of manual workers is, indeed recognised by Lockwood, though in a rather backhanded way, in one of his remarks in the 'sources of variation' essay:

> "traditionalists...are to be found in industries and communities which, to an ever increasing extent, are backwaters of national industrial and urban development. The sorts of industries which employ deferential and proletarian workers are declining relatively to more modern industries in which large-batch or mass-production techniques are more and more the major modes of production. Again, the small isolated country town, or the mining village, or the working-class enclave, such as is represented by the dockworkers' community, are gradually becoming linked with, or absorbed into, larger urban concentrations and with an increased amount of voluntary and involuntary residential mobility of the labour force the close link between place of work and community is being broken down."[16]

In such terms Sunderland, and other similar locations, represent a complex intermediate situation, which escapes from the typological straightjacket but represents one mainstream range of experiences against which the Cambridge diagnosis of trends and developments within the working class can be assessed.

For Goldthorpe and Lockwood, of course, the notion of the social location of the traditional worker involved more than merely the demographic parameters discussed above, for it implied insertion in an established culture and social institutions; though the emphasis in their discussions was on the correspondences between community and industrial

locations and social imagery, and the significance of mediating institutions was only lightly touched on. Nevertheless Lockwood's emphasis on "public and present oriented conviviality" clearly had its institutional counterpart in the pub and the club, while the analyses of the Luton data clearly imply that communal solidarity is exemplified in the vitality of local trade unionism and Labour Party politics in 'traditional' working class areas.[17] Thus any assessment of the appropriateness of Sunderland as a research site must also consider the character of such local working-class institutions.

Once more, in this context, some of the complexity and specificity of the Sunderland setting vis a vis the Lockwoodian characterisation becomes apparent, and in ways related to the questions raised about 'traditionalism' in the debate surrounding his paper. Thus Sunderland in the 1960s had a thriving circuit of working mens' clubs: the Municipal Handbook of 1966 lists thirty-two, of which eighteen were neighbourhood clubs.[18] However such clubs could not simply be assimilated to a 'traditional' stereotype, for not only were they the distinctive locus of social activity in many of the dispersed peripheral housing estates remarked on above, but they had also developed new variants in working-class entertainment. Thus Jones can characterise them as "palaces, run by manual workers as a collective enterprise, providing a new and delightful circuit of entertainers", while also noting the potentials for commercial entrepreneurial pressure and petty corruption besetting this "workers' control in leisure".[19] In various respects, then, such 'traditional' working class institutions were characterised by notable change and innovation in both institutional and cultural terms.

Such complexities and ambiguities have also characterised the more formal institutions of the Labour movement in Sunderland throughout their development, as can be seen from a glimpse at the industrial and political history of the town. The last decades of the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of 'skilled' trade unionism in various forms in mining, shipbuilding and even engineering; but despite convergence towards moderate and 'respectable' trade unionism, there remained important differences between, for example, the organisations of the shipyards (rival local organisations of boilermakers, shipwrights and others, intermittently committed to conciliation schemes but also capable of strong and solid strike action) and the engineering works (where the ASE was only slowly displacing the more informal, inclusive but ephemeral activism which had characterised the 1871 nine-hours movement).[20] Following this consolidation the 1900s saw the emergence of Lib-Labism as an

effective political force in the town: Alexander Wilkie, the General Secretary of the Shipwrights, did well as an unsuccessful Lib-Lab candidate in 1900, and Labour and Liberal gained the two Sunderland seats in 1906 and regained them from the Conservatives again in December 1910[21]. Nevertheless, the inter-war depression brought not only mass unemployment and the cowing of trade unionism in all three sectors, but also limited political advance: Labour only captured the Sunderland constituencies during the 1929-31 interlude[22].

Only in 1945 was the political hold of Labourism consolidated, with a Labour victory and the implementation of 'municipal socialism' at the local level as well as the capture of the parliamentary seats. Even then the 1950's saw the Conservatives gain one of the parliamentary seats of this solidly working class town: they gained it in a celebrated 1953 by-election, and held it until 1964, when the seat became a Labour marginal. At the local level Labour control was more enduring, lasting until 1967, and it meant a massive slum-clearance and municipal housing programme, a city centre redevelopment project, and the development of other aspects of collective amenity[23]. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, such municipal Labourism operated on a specific and quite narrow organisational base, separate from workplace organisation, dependant on an alliance with reforming municipal administrators, and with a rather passive relationship with its electorate. These features are clearly documented for the 1960s in Norman Dennis's discussion of the experience of Millfield, one of the remaining inner-town working-class enclaves, in the face of the council's clearance and re-housing policy. He characterises Millfield as "artisan working class, mellowed by good wages, the mass media and Marks and Spencer's", and notes that:

> "basically the Millfield situation is one of acceptance rather than protest and conflict. Both the men and the women with jobs are strongly organised at work, but in a variety of unions and only as rank and file members. Unionism at no point touches local community affairs. People who are already politically active in the community are likely to owe favours for small greviances attended to by councillors, perhaps years ago."[24]

Such features of a 'passive' Labourism were almost certainly even more prevalent in the newer council estates than in this homogeneous and close-knit enclave, which returned a Conservative councillor between 1958 and 1971, when Dennis, himself a local residents' association activist, recaptured the seat for Labour. Such, then, are the complex contours of local solidarities and political traditions characterising the "fairly homogeneous working class area" of Sunderland[25].

Turning now to the specific industrial setting of the research, and the notion of 'effort bargaining', I need to say more at this point about my focus upon engineering. This too was guided by a concern to address the experience of the mainstream of the post-war working class within one of the established but declining industrial areas of Britain. In one respect the choice of engineering reflected a rather naive fixation upon engineering as a typical form of manufacturing employment, when any full analysis of the experience of such employments could just as legitimately have focussed upon shipbuilders or glass workers or other among the forms of manufacturing employment in the town. However, there were two more legitimate reasons for focussing on engineering, one arising from the much-studied character of the industry at large and the other concerned with the particular local mix of engineering employment.

Firstly, workplace studies of engineering such as that of Lupton in Britain and Roy in the United States provided the exemplary accounts of effort bargaining in the extant literature of industrial sociology served to indicate some of the main social processes of shop-floor negotiation which Goldthorpe et al had, in a rather loose fashion, contrasted with the narrow effort bargaining of their 'instrumentalised' workers.[26] In addition, a series of articles in the early 1960' had focussed upon the significance of workplace bargaining initiatives in the process of 'wage drift' within the engineering industry, in a manner which suggested that variations in management-worker relations, between localities, factories and even workshops, might be particularly evident in the industry, rather than being masked or contained by elaborate or restrictive national negotiating arrangements.[27] Secondly, the engineering industry in Sunderland itself offered the prospect of studying workers sharing a common labour market but working in rather different types of engineering firm, since the town contained both old-established marine engineering companies which were founded on craft-based small-batch production of parts and, among the post-war arrivals, advanced electrical and aero-engineering firms. It therefore offered, in this context as well as that of the community setting, scope to address the position of workers who fell between the ideal-type extremes of Lockwood's typology, but who, nonetheless, constituted part of the more loosely defined traditional working class against which the prototypicality of the 'affluent worker' had been assessed.

The decision to focus upon engineering represented only a partial specification of the research population. In addition it was necessary to

select some sub-category of engineering workers, and also to decide which particular workers I would approach. On the first count I followed through two of the criteria which had influenced the selection of engineering in the first place, namely the hoped-for visibility of effort bargaining processes and the concern to consider people who shared a similar labour market location but worked in several rather different workplaces. The latter consideration led me to restrict my attention to one particular category of workers, doing roughly similar work in the various factories I hoped to study. The former led me finally to focus on 'turners' working on conventional lathes (turret and capstan lathes) as an appropriate occupational sub-category, likely to be found in significant numbers in most mechanical engineering establishments and forming a fairly distinctive sub-labour-market. One of the consequences of these decisions was that I limited my attention to only one technology, at least in the narrow sense of distinctive man-machine systems though not in terms of subtle variations in that 'system' or in terms of differing products and their ramifications within the production process. In the context of the controversy then raging about the significance of technology as a determinant of industrial conduct, this represented an explicit decision not to engage directly with that debate, but to focus my attention on other aspects of the social organisation of work and management-worker relations.

On the second count, the precise manner in which I would select those turners I would study in detail, the points made so far simply suggested that I should attempt to consider workers in several different engineering firms. Beyond this I found myself confronted with a major research dilemma arising from the distinctive research approaches and traditions associated with the Luton study on the one hand and the effort bargaining ethnographies on the other. While the former had focussed on detailed interviews with a sample of workers drawn from varied work locations across the workplace, the latter had pioneered detailed ethnographic studies of particular work groups on the basis of overt or covert participant observation.[28] Each of these strategies has costs and advantages. The sample interview strategy offers scope for a fairly detailed probing of respondents' attitudes and experience, but, as was seen in discussion of the Affluent Worker study, tends to abstract them from the texture of social relations in the work-place and from the dynamics of actual conduct. On the other hand, the participant observation strategy offers an unrivalled insight into the texture and conduct of social relations, but almost inevitably involves a considerable period of time to focus on a small cluster of workers of unknown typicality while it may also miss the opportunity to probe

attitudes possible within a private interview. As I was concerned to gain a fuller understanding of workplace social relations than Goldthorpe et al provided, but also to cover the range of attitudes and experience which they considered, and to do this in relation to more than one workplace rather than just one workgroup, I was driven to attempt some combination and compromise of these two strategies. Given the limited resources, particularly of time, available to the solitary researcher, I decided to seek to interview all the members of several workgroups in each of the workplaces to which I gained access, thus gaining a more rounded view of the experience of those workgroups than would be provided by a sparser sample while also accumulating a population of interviewees in each works. In addition I sought to supplement such interviewing through 'informal' observation during the course of the interviewing programme. The analytical counterpart to these research design decisions was a dissatisfaction with the manner in which Goldthorpe et al had researched and conceptualised 'instrumental orientations' and 'effort bargaining', a dissatisfaction fueled largely by the contrasting sophistication of the workplace ethnographic studies, but also by the initial critiques of Goldthorpe by Robin Blackburn and others who emphasised the problematical and open-ended character of the labour contract in all instances of capitalist production and wage labour.[29] Together these literatures directed my attention away from a narrow focus on orientations to work towards a concern to explore how workers in specific settings experienced and negotiated their positions in the labour market and within the process of production. For these purposes my decision to interview workers in specific workgroups seemed appropriate, while still allowing the potential of appropriate comparisons with the findings of the Luton study. In the terms which were popularised by Westergaard's later intervention in the 'affluent worker' debate, such a research strategy made possible an exploration of the character of the 'cash nexus' as it was experienced by this group of workers[30].

The research design outlined in the previous paragraph focussed attention on the selection of workgroups in each factory, and for this purpose I attempted to choose those approximating most closely to the sub-category of 'turners' mentioned above. Several features of this selection process deserve note. The first is that the notion of 'workgroup' is itself ambiguous, a point I had failed to appreciate but very soon discovered, so that I relied primarily on a combination of administrative criteria (such as supervision by the same foreman or chargehand) and locational criteria (such as the clustering together of similar machines

performing related processes) in the designation of target groupings. Together these features defined categories of workers in terms used by both management and workers, without assuming any particularly close-knit pattern of sociability and social closure[31]. Secondly, I found that when I deployed the yardstick of 'turners operating conventional lathes' in relation to the workplaces where I eventually gained entry I was able to designate a limited number of groupings which proved to be appropriate, and I was able to approach and interview workers in each of these groupings. Though such selection was admittedly a rough and ready process I was not faced with dilemmas and choices between workgroups within the workplaces where I did my fieldwork, but was able to encompass all the relevant groups. Thirdly, this selection of workgroups, rather than a direct sample of individual workers, meant that I did not impose the limiting parameters of age, marital status and wage level deployed for their specific purposes by Goldthorpe et al, but obtained populations characterised by the varied demographic profiles of the workgroups and workplaces investigated[32]. While this limits the direct comparison of the two samples such an approach was essential to comprehend the specific texture of social relations in the factories studied. I will now provide some indication of the demographic character of the work-groups studied, and the manner in which I will present the material collected from interviewing and observing these workers.

I will deal with some of the problems encountered in applying the strategy of individual interviews and informal observation to clusters of workers in several factories when I discuss the research process in the final section of this chapter, but for the present I wish to focus on some of the features of the population of workers whom I interviewed. I eventually gained access to three different engineering companies in Sunderland; two marine engineering concerns, William Doxford and Sons (Engineering) Ltd. and George Clark (Sunderland) Ltd., and one aero-engineering works, the branch factory of Rolls-Royce Ltd. (until the previous year Bristol Siddeley Engines Ltd had owned the Sunderland factory)[33]. In the larger marine engineering company, Doxfords, I interviewed 21 workers in each of two locations approximating my requirements and since there were subtle variations in the work they did and also in traditions of workshop administration, this provided some scope for internal comparisons as well as comparison with the other workplaces. In the second marine engineering firm, Clarks, I interviewed 19 men in the small turning-section which was the only one of its kind on the site, and one of the few remnants of what had been a much more substantial works.

Table 1: Basic Parameters of the Sample

Company and workgroup	Doxfords group a	Doxfords group b	Clarks	Rolls-Royce
Number in sample	21	21	19	27
Age				
21-30	8	7	2	16
31-46	10	10	7	10
47-65	3	4	10	1
Marital status				
Single	6	4	3	3
Married	15	17	16	24
Family Size				
0	5	4	8	6
1	5	5	6	4
2	3	4	1	12
3	1	2	1	1
4+	1	2	0	1
Income*				
Under £15	-	-	1	-
£15-£19.19s	1	3	3	7
£20-£24.19s	10	7	10	18
£25-£29.19s	10	11	5	2
Skill status				
'Time-served'	20	19	11	15
Machinist	-	2	7	8
Other**	1	-	1	4
Neighbourhood***				
Pre-war town	10	6	8	7
Peripheral estates	9	14	7	13
Villages	2	1	4	7

* Reported average weekly earnings, net of tax etc., i.e. 'take-home pay'

** e.g. Government training centre retraining; related apprenticeship

*** Zones based upon Norman Dennis People and Planning Diagrams 5.A (ii), indicating built-up areas in 1945 and 1967, to provide a guide to proximity to work and to town centre (rather than housing type, though the vast majority of the peripheral estates are post-war council housing schemes).

Finally, in the Rolls works I interviewed workers who worked the two shifts on the main lathe section in the plant, 27 such workers in all. Some of the basic characteristics of the workers in the four workgroups I interviewed are set out in table 1. As I have already noted, the selection of workgroups, rather than a sample of workers confined in advance according to parameters of age, marital status and income, leads to some systematic differences in these respects between those interviewed in the different factories. Thus, unlike Goldthorpe et al, I do not have populations in each workplace comparable in terms of such parameters. However, the variations found between the groups clearly relate to distinctive features of the histories of the different workgroups and enterprises, and in that sense they represent characteristics of likely analytical significance. Thus, for example, the contrasting age distributions found in Clarks and Rolls reflect the facts that the former company is an old-established firm, which has run down its Sunderland works but retained some of its older and most experienced workers, while the latter is a post-war arrival which has recruited and trained much of its workforce since the mid-1950s. Such variations, and others visible in the table such as variations in wage levels and in proportions of apprenticed workers, point to important features of the local labour market inhabited by these workers, as well as having implications for the process of management-worker relations in each workplace.

In view of the earlier discussion of the relation between employment and neighbourhood in post-war Sunderland, and its lack of fit with Lockwood's ideal type, I have also included in the table some indication of the areas where my interviewees lived, using the division between the pre-war town area, which is generally close by the industrial areas along the river and south down the coast, and the peripheral housing estates, predominantly council housing estates some distance from both the major workplaces and the town centre, with the additional category of villages to cover those living outside the town boundaries, in pit-villages and other small communities. From this data it is evident that more workers lived in the peripheral estates than in the old established areas of the town, thus reinforcing my reservations about the 'traditional' link between work and neighbourhood in such a town as Sunderland in the post-war period. In addition it could be added that only two or three workers in each workgroup lived close enough to walk to work, even on quite generous assumptions about walking distances.[34]

I now wish to turn from a characterisation of the strategy of data

collection to the issue of presentation. The analytical strategy which I intend to adopt is to focus discussion first on the workers in the two workgroups in the larger marine engineering company, Doxfords. As a group of craft workers earning relatively good wages and having enjoyed relative job security in the post-war period, but working in a traditional engineering sector and in a community which has been on the fringes of the post-war boom, they represent <u>one</u> exemplary sample for the purpose of investigating the cash and effort bargaining concerns of workers outside the supposedly proto-typical vanguard groupings studied by the Cambridge team. Such a sample of skilled workers also, fortuitously, constitutes an appropriate case-study for discussions of the fate of the craftsman in post-war Britain: both in regard to the suggestion made by MacKenzie that such workers were <u>more</u> appropriate candidates for a critical test of the embourgeoisement thesis than the bulk of the Luton sample, and in regard to more recent discussion of the decline or survival of such workers in the face of capitalist rationalisation of the labour process.[35]

Having considered the position and experience of the Doxfords turners I will then consider the other two groupings, from the second, run-down, marine engineering works and from the 'modern sector' aero-engine works, each of which can be seen as a distinctive variant on the effort bargaining and labour market experience indicated by the analysis of Doxfords. I have chosen this mode of presentation not only because of the appropriateness of treating the Doxfords workers as an exemplary group of 'traditional' craft workers, but also because of the uneven character of additional and background material which I was able to collect in the three research settings. As I have already reported, my chosen research technique was extensive interviewing combined with informal observation, but I accompanied this with the collection of additional documentary material on collective bargaining together with interviews with some stewards and managers. The vagaries of access, which I will discuss further in the following section, meant that I was able to assemble substantial documentary material about the recent development of workplace collective bargaining in the first location, Doxfords, but only much more limited material in the other two workplaces. This has reinforced my decision to present the material in the way outlined above.

In summary, then, the research design which evolved from my initial conception of a replication of the <u>Affluent Worker</u> study in a 'traditional' setting was a case study of the experience, and especially the effort

bargaining and labour market experience, of a grouping of fairly well paid engineering workers living and working in a long-established and rather depressed industrial area. To complete my discussion of the research design I want to highlight two positive features of this case study which take it beyond mere replication, and to note one final element of the research which is related to them. The first is that the workers I studied can be viewed not only as one grouping within that ambiguous category the 'traditional' working class, but also, more specifically, as just the sort of grouping which would, potentially, be much affected by the schemes for rationalisation and restructuring of Britain's manufacturing sectors which were being canvassed in the early 1960s, for example in Wilson's 1964 Labour administration with its faith in 'technological' revolution. Secondly, my decision to consider several workgroups in different firms allows comparison of the manner in which different managements and corporate strategies condition the experience of similar workers, as well as comparisons with studies of workers elsewhere such as those in the Affluent Worker project. However, to follow up such positive themes, even in a tentative fashion, requires an attempt to trace the impact of state initiatives and corporate strategies which were impinging on the workers I interviewed. This provided the stimulus for the final component of my research design: following my fieldwork in Sunderland I sought to piece together documentary evidence, primarily from government reports, company reports and the financial press, to provide some indication of the logic of the employers' initiatives and management strategies which confronted the workgroups I had studied. This material provides the substance of the next chapter, which serves as a prelude to the discussion of the actual employment experience of the workers themselves.

The Research Process

While many features of the research follow from research design decisions, which in turn match the analytical focus upon the cash nexus and 'traditional' manual workers, such decisions by no means exhaustively describe the course of the actual research. In this final section of my discussion of the conduct of the fieldwork I wish to focus attention on a number of dilemmas and decisions which were made for me, rather than being deliberate choices, though they arose from the interplay between my intervention and characteristics of the social institutions I was attempting to research. Each of them can be seen as involving, in one way or another, issues of 'access', and each underlines the political processes which are integral to social research.

I intend to use the notion of 'access' in a more general way than is usual, to address the question of the accessability of different settings and types of information within the workplace where I conducted my research as well as the initial gaining of entry to those workplaces. Nevertheless I will begin with the latter, or rather with the process of selection of 'target' firms which preceded approach and access.

The designation of those companies and factories which it would be appropriate to approach could not depend on a straightforward sampling procedure because there was no clearly defined population of firms from which a sample could be drawn. While information culled from trade directories provided a list of 'engineering' firms, such sources provided substantial guidance about firms' products rather than production processes or the composition of the workforce.[36] For more appropriate information I turned to the local AUEW District Secretary, who provided a fairly detailed indication of the employment structure in all of the substantial establishments in the town. I turned to him not only as a knowledgeable informant about the industry but also as an official representative of those workers whom I eventually hoped to interview, since my next formal approach was intended to be to the managements of specific firms, and only through them to workplace union organisations. The information he provided served as an adequate pragmatic basis for the designation of some appropriate target firms; but at this point I want to note some features of this process which underline the tension between formal and explicit criteria of approach and selection and more informal political processes.[37] The first point is that substantial dependence upon the District Secretary meant that my map of the local employment structure must have reproduced the biases of trade union perceptions, concentrating on larger plants with substantial groups of members and on the most unionised and (perhaps) better organised even among them. However, the engineering sector is very thoroughly organised in the Sunderland district so that such biases cannot have excluded significant numbers of the sorts of workers I was looking for; and indeed my analytical concerns corresponded in important respects with the contours of trade-union perceptions, since I was concerned primarily with the experience of an established and collectively organised section of the working class. The important point about the research process at this juncture is, then, simply the significance of such informally or implicitly made decisions in such a context, where there is no simple framework for sampling. One further aspect of my reliance upon the official district union organisation for employment information in the initial phase of my research also deserves

note. This is that my use of such information, and also my presumption that an approach to the District Secretary would serve as initial 'clearance' with workplace trade union organisation, tended to assume close and uniform contacts between workplace and full-time official across the different factories in the district. In reality, of course, such relations were very variable, with some factories keeping the District Secretary somewhat at arms length.[38] This meant not only that his guidance was more accurate in some cases than others, but also that my assumption that stewards would know of me in advance was naive.

Following the initial designation of 'target' firms, the further process of selection and entry was very much a process which was modified through time. This temporal aspect had several components: firstly, information gathered at the first research site, both from interviewees and other informants, influenced the selection of those firms to be approached next; secondly, having decided to approach firms in 'waves' of two or three (to avoid long delays between acceptance and the start of fieldwork on site), my approaches were paced by the unfolding outcomes of approach, negotiation, rejection/acceptance and fieldwork at the succeeding firms; and finally, the limited time available for research within the span of a two-year SSRC studentship increasingly over-shadowed the pursuit of suitable 'sites'. A number of features followed from these conditions of the research process. Firstly, it was possible to use the information about the labour-market experience of workers in the first research setting to form a better view of the structure of the local labour market for such workers, and this influenced the selection of later firms. In this sense the specification of the population of firms to be approached was a cumulative process which allowed me to focus on three firms which were, to some extent, interlocking parts of a local labour market. Secondly, while my decisions had some influence on the unfolding process of selection, the main influence on the make-up of the sample was management decision-making in the various firms approached. Thus I rejected a couple of firms as potential settings because they did not have clusters of turners of the sort I was seeking, but among more suitable firms I was at the mercy of a management 'yes' or 'no'[39]. The difficulty this presented, apart from the time consumed in some fruitless negotiations, concerned the unknown biases in the sample of firms thus obtained. While on one hand it proved difficult to fathom the grounds for either rejection or acceptance, on the other such grounds could quite plausibly be relevant to the logic of the research. For example, one firm gave as a reason for

refusal of my approach their company-wide policy to exclude outside academic researchers: but it was also evident, from both informal contacts and press reports, that this firm was in the midst of management initiatives which had met with shop-floor opposition. In another case management explicitly cited a period of reorganisation and change as a basis for feeling that it was an inappropriate time for research. Clearly it is quite possible that such criteria, quite rational from the point of view of management (and even, possibly, workers), will have biased my fieldwork away from situations of upheaval and conflict, thus giving the impression of less management pressure and more pacific industrial relations than, in the round, the sorts of workers I wished to consider would have experienced.[40] All that I can say in this regard is that the case-studies I did carry out reveal important features of management-worker conflict in engineering (such features were not <u>absent</u> from the firms which let me in), while in addition I have called attention to this potential bias of my material. The final noteworthy feature of the temporal sequence of my research concerned the build-up of pressure on routine fieldwork tasks as entry into the later firms was delayed by rejections and as the deadline for completion of the fieldwork approached. This meant that the interviewing and observation at Doxfords could be carried out at a more leisurely pace and more extensively than originally envisaged, while at Rolls, especially, the interview timetable was squeezed and there was less time to develop research contacts beyond those being interviewed. These circumstances contributed to the unevenness of the background material available for the different research sites, though as will be seen they were not the only determinants.

While the reasons for positive 'entry' decisions remained almost as opaque as the rejections, some features of the process of acceptance varied between the three companies, and these variations in the micro-political processes of the different firms indicated important differences in their wider social relations. In the case of Doxfords the production manager sponsored my application, which was then rubber-stamped from above before being formally broached with the unions; final agreement being conditional upon the willingness of the unions to cooperate after the works committee had heard a presentation of the proposal. This appeared to reflect the strong position of the workplace union organisation in the plant, as well as the relatively limited role of the personnel department. At Clarks the decision appears to have been the prerogative of the works manager, who managed the small local site more-or-less single handed,

without reference to higher authority. This reflected the isolation and autonomy of the small subsidiary site which continued to operate in the skeleton of the former Clarks works. Finally, at Rolls the personnel manager was a rather unenthusiastic gate-keeper who appeared to have accepted the research in part because of the tradition of relatively open access in the company and in part because of the interest expressed by the works convenor. Thus in this case sponsorship might be said to have come from the union side, possibly as a minor symptom of the convenor's concern to articulate the grievances of the shop-floor in the face of substantial uncertainty about management intentions. While such interpretations of the micro-politics of gaining entry are essentially partial and post-hoc reflections on my experience they do indicate some of the influences which must have borne upon my initial understanding of the different workplaces; and they certainly continued to represent important resources as I developed my analyses of the different companies and work groups.

One final aspect of the initial phase of the research process should be mentioned at this point, if only to avoid the suppression of a part of my initial plan of research which is absent from my rational reconstruction of the research design. This concerns my original intent to investigate the position of engineering workers in a 'new town' development in the north-east as well as a long established industrial town. In pursuit of this intent I investigated the possibility of field research in a number of engineering companies in Newton Aycliffe, but I eventually decided to concentrate specifically on the Sunderland firms. One reason for this was the time needed to carry out viable fieldwork in the three Sunderland companies; but several other contributory reasons indicate some of the specific characteristics of the Aycliffe firms and thus, by implication, the specificity of the Sunderland research within the range of research settings available even within north-east engineering. Thus, while the Sunderland District Secretary of the AUEW may have had uneven contacts with different workforces within the town, the contact of full-time officials with the Newton Aycliffe factories was much more tenuous. Based in Darlington, 5 miles away from the Aycliffe industrial estate, they had limited contact with the small, often only partially unionised companies which predominated there. Secondly, many of these small companies did not employ significant concentrations of 'turners' largely because they tended to employ small numbers of workers deployed across a wide variety of machines and processes. Finally, a number of the companies, particularly those which were American-owned, reported that they

had in-house social research projects (a reflection of 'advanced', or Americanised, management?) which made it inappropriate to allow me entry. Thus, despite having negotiated permission to conduct research at a couple of small Aycliffe firms with small groups of relevant workers, I decided to focus my fieldwork effort in Sunderland.

-- - Having outlined some of the vicissitudes of gaining entry, I must now consider some of the problems of 'access' which remained significant once I gained formal management and union approval. These problems hinged around the considerable ambiguities about the scope of the research which remained (in the mind of the researcher as well as among the researched) following that approval, and thus the continuing negotiation of the implications of the initial research remit which characterised the process of research.[41] Such negotiations must be a feature of any research project, but they gained a certain specificity from the setting and focus of my research. Since I was operating in the context of employment relations and was concerned with the effort bargain such ambiguities and informal negotiations were inevitably coloured by the sensitive and conflict-prone character of management-worker relations on the shop-floor. Aware of these circumstances but accepting then orthodox methodological prescriptions concerning an ostensibly neutral research stance, I sought to cast myself in the role of an innocuous 'outsider', a 'research student' who wanted to understand what it was really like on the shop-floor and who needed help in his education. In my own view such a research role was largely accepted by both management and workers whom I had dealings with. Thus, for example, I had only four refusals among the workers approached for interviews, one in each of the workgroups.[42] At the same time occasional remarks made by my respondents indicated both a concern on their part to communicate the realities of working life but also a certain scepticism about whether anybody cared. Thus one answer to the final interview question -- 'is there anything we havn't mentioned which you think is important' -- raised "my big grudge - the half-truths in T.V. and radio and newspapers about the shop-floor"; and in casual conversation another respondent forcefully insisted that:

> "you've been collecting useless information; nobody will listen, nobody knows what it's like to be stuck in the place, have to clock in at 7 /to clock out at 5. When people criticise strikes they generally don't know what they're talking about"

As will be seen, it was in something of this spirit that many of the workers I interviewed sought to 'educate' me.

Nevertheless, the conflicts of interest and perspective characteristic of management-worker relations defined an alternative vocabulary of types -- rate-fixers, management stooges, trouble-makers, politicos -- which could also be imputed to my actions in interviewing and observation on the shop-floor, with potentially damaging and distorting results. In regard to the latter role, it was almost inevitable in 1968 that some elements of the 'politico' would be amalgamated with my role as 'research student'. My approach in this regard was not to pretend to disinterestedness but to be prepared to be drawn into political conversation in a modest way without seeking to initiate discussion, couching my contributions as offerings of the outlook and experience of some University students -- as something of a quid pro quo for their willingness to disclose their outlook and experience to me. In retrospect I believe I was more circumspect and conventional in this aspect of my research strategy than was necessary or appropriate; but such an approach did appear to facilitate my research within the limits of that conventional framework. However, it was the former role -- that of rate-fixer -- which occasionally surfaced as a more real threat to my research, especially in the initial stages of my contact with the shop-floor, and in a fashion which was quite instructive concerning the character of shop-floor social relations. Thus on one notable occasion I found that my naive inquisitiveness about a puzzling and apparently dangerous aspect of the work process, directed at a craftsman with whom I had had little previous contact, prompted suspicions that I must have been linked with the time-and-motion and rate-fixing department. The result was that one person refused to be interviewed, while several others had to be persuaded by those whom I had already interviewed or talked to at length that there was no basis for such suspicion. This incident, in a workplace characterised by relatively good bargaining relations between management and men and a considerable degree of shop-floor initiative in production, was a valuable reminder of the underlying assumptions, and potentials for informal mobilisation, underpinning those features.

While the negotiation of permission to interview specific workers and the more diffuse process of observation and information gathering served to expose elements of such conflicting perspectives in each workplace, perhaps the most revealing feature of the patterns of scepticism and cooperation concerning my research related to the variations between the workplaces in the patterns of access thus defined. My initial approaches to management, unions and potential respondents were couched in terms of an interest in the "ideas and attitudes of engineers about .... your job, engineering and the wider community" and in terms of a focus upon interviews with a grouping of

workers (and related supervisors and union representatives) together with visits to the workplace to familiarise myself with working arrangements and arrange the interviews.[43] On reflection this may have been an unduly modest interpretation of my own interests (influenced in part by fears about requesting too much while attempting to gain entry), and in some contexts it proved possible to extend its scope without any difficulty. On the other hand, on some occasions it was interpreted very narrowly by people I approached, so that they expressed surprise at my interest in things which might reasonably have been regarded as pertinent to my initial remit. As I have implied, the ease with which I was able to extend my remit, or on occasion had it extended for me, and the instances when narrowed interpretations were adopted by prospective informants did not vary randomly, but varied systematically between the workplaces. At Doxfords, despite their considerable cooperation and help, it was people on the shop-floor who tended to remain circumspect about some aspects of shop-floor bargaining, or occasionally even queried the scope of my enquiries (as in the example given above); while management was quite prepared to 'enlighten' me about the complexities of their task, and particularly about the drawn-out negotiations surrounding the payment system. On the other hand, in Rolls-Royce the management were not at all interested in enlarging upon the most routine discussions of corporate policy, while many shop-floor workers were keen to have their say about the short-comings of management and the problems with <u>their</u> pay system. I do not believe that such differences can be explained in terms of changes in my own research style, though I arrived at Rolls with more experience but also in more haste than I had worked at Doxfords. Rather, I consider both these differences and the different patterns of sponsorship of the initial entry as symptomatic of important differences in management-worker relations in the two factories. At Doxfords a well-organised and stable workforce had, during the 1960's consolidated its bargaining position in relation to a somewhat uncertain management: their reflex was to defend that position with some circumspection. At Rolls a less well entrenched workforce faced a changing, and apparently increasingly stringent, management; and tended to see themselves as already embattled. As for the workers at Clarks, in the context of general anxiety about job security but limited day-to-day managerial control the main doubts about the research expressed by these workers focussed on an internal division, by questioning where my sympathies lay between the craftsmen and semi-skilled workers who composed the group I interviewed.[44]

My final observations about the research process concern some rather

more mundane problems associated with my chosen research design. The first problem concerned the interplay between the interviewing and informal observation of workgroup members. When Hickson combined participant observation and interviewing in his study of output regulation he met the following problem:

> "it did appear that response in the interview situation was probably inhibited, and perhaps slanted, by the prior acquaintance of interviewee and interviewer on the shop-floor....probably some subjects felt that having previously chatted with the researcher investigator on the job there was no point in sitting down for the specific purpose of talking to him again. This impression appeared to draw some support from an analysis of the length of interviews, showing that the machine-minders who knew the investigator most closely averaged least time with him as interviewees."[45]

While my observation was less intense and sustained than Hickson's, and, perhaps as a result, I did not find any clear relationship between prior observation and shorter interviews, his experience nonetheless pinpoints the complex fashion in which such different research approaches can interact. In my experience those who were most chatty informally could also be the most talkative in the interview, but still there was some tension between the two types of interaction. Thus in one workgroup I found it easiest to engage in casual interaction with those workers who were favoured with the jobs with most 'self-act', while it was only in the interview context that less favoured workers occasionally expressed their dissatisfaction with the way work was allocated. Alongside such subtle variations it should also be noted that I experienced the series of interviews not only as a series of comparable encounters, but also as a cumulative introduction to the specific workgroup. This must have coloured the character of the interview encounter, for example as I accumulated subtle hints about important relations and also corrected some of my false assumptions, but I have nevertheless continued to treat the interviews largely as discrete and comparable events for analytical purposes. While such features must characterise many interview series, they are particularly evident in the context of the interviewing of a whole workgroup population.

The above remarks lead into the next problem area, which concerned the social structuring of interview settings. My initial intent had been to arrange interviews at worker's homes. However some people, those with a hectic social life or unmarried men living at home for example, did not appear very keen on home interviews, while my presence in the workplace

over fairly extended periods was seen as evidence that I could just as easily interview people at work, at lunchtime or the like[46]. Having experienced such reactions in my small pilot/project, and mindful of limitations of time and the need to maximise participation (completing the interviews became something of an imperative in what, in retrospect, amounted to a form of research 'goal displacement'), I approached the main research with a willingness to interview people wherever appeared convenient, subject to my undertaking not to disrupt production in any way[47]. In consequence I questioned people in many different settings: at home, with or without spouse present; at work, over one or two meal-breaks or during a quiet spell during the nightshift; or even, on a couple of occasions, in a quiet corner of a pub or club. While a few of the work-place interviews were particularly perfunctory I was unable to pinpoint any other significant differences, apart from those concerning home-centred leisure, across the interviews, so once more I have treated them as equivalent. Finally, in regard to the interviews, I should note that I did not tape-record them, but sought to write down the comments of my informants in their own words as far as this was possible. This should be borne in mind in reading the quotations from both interviews and observational notes in the chapters which follow, for some of their staccato character arises from this mode of recording and reporting on interview remarks and comments.

Turning to the final topic in my discussion of access, the variable accessability of non-interview sources of data, I want to comment briefly on both observational and documentary evidence. Firstly, in relation to observation, I initially cast myself in the role of visitor getting acquainted with both people and work processes, while the major legitimation for my presence remained the interviewing programme. This made possible a quite varied range of visits, spanning different times during both day and night shifts (though some surprise was initially expressed about visits to the night shift), but it meant my visits focussed on conversation and repartee in ways which militated against observation in the sense of watching. Indeed, it would be quite difficult to envisage any acceptable basis for the more passive observation required for such techniques as 'time sampling', given the salience of time-and-motion study in managerial control of the shop-floor, and on this basis I quite soon abandoned the naive idea of deploying such techniques as a supplement to more casual observation[48]. Secondly, in relation to documentary evidence, I had hoped to be able to duplicate the sort of analysis of job cards and job times developed by Lupton, Roy and others. However, even in my pilot

project I had encountered the problem that a good deal of tacit knowledge of the different jobs and work processes was required to interpret much such material[49]. In the main research I encountered the added difficulty that in two of the factories the old piece-rate systems had been recently abandoned, while in the third factory management were unwilling to give me access to such material -- not least because of the continuing conflict over job times on the shop-floor at that time. Thus, once more, the material of this sort which I was able to gather as a supplement to the interviews proved fragmentary and of only limited usefulness; though again the specific contours of access were indicative of some of the characteristic features of management-worker relations in the different factories.

In Conclusion

It has been emphasised in recent years that social research does not generally proceed from a clear-cut array of hypotheses to a research programme which flows unambiguously from those hypotheses, but is always more open-ended and exploratory in form. I have sought to recognise this by presenting (i) a rational reconstruction of a research design, which does not pretend to represent the point of departure of the fieldwork as much as the emergent logic of my project as it came to completion; together with (ii) some indications of the social relations of the research process, relations which are of substantive as well as methodological significance. At the same time it will be evident that my research strategy was somewhat circumscribed by my concern to conduct a 'modified replication' of the Luton study in a contrasting setting; and, indeed, as a consequence of the limitations of some of the other aspects of my fieldwork and the emergent centrality of my interviews, my research mirrors the research strategies of Goldthorpe and his colleagues more closely than I would have wished. Certainly it reproduces some of the deficiencies for which I have castigated their research, sometimes in an exaggerated form as the product of a brief period of post-graduate solo research. Nevertheless, I hope to have provided a sufficient rationale for the fieldwork I am going to report in the following chapters to be regarded as a small and specific, but methodologically defensible, contribution to analysis and debate concerned with the experience and prospects of the British working class. It should also make clear the areas where my later commentary makes connections with more recent topics of debate which were unenvisaged in my research design and process, such as arguments about 'deskilling' or the 'manufacture of consent'[50].

chapter 5: footnotes

1 Among such research initiatives, I had a glimpse of a project on white-collar workers, conducted by David Weir at the University of Hull and reported in D.T.H. Weir "The Wall of Darkness" in David Weir Men and Work in Modern Britain; and Richard Brown was developing research on 'the orientation to work and industrial behaviour of shipbuilding workers on Tyneside' when I arrived at Durham. The latter project has been discussed in the preceeding chapter.

2 In particular in relation to the material contained in M. Bulmer (ed) Working-Class Images of Society.

3 Compare the discussion in Goldthorpe et al Affluent Worker pp 86 and 118-120 with Lockwood "Sources of Variation".

4 Lockwood "Sources of Variation" p 18.

5 C.A. Moser and Wolf Scott British Towns London 1961 p 116.

6 1971 Census of England and Wales Economic Activity County Leaflet: Durham London 1975, table 4.

7 Moser and Scott British Towns p 116.

8 Ibid.

9 Norman Dennis People and Planning: the Sociology of Housing in Sunderland London 1970 pp 38-39.

10 As Dennis notes "Sunderland as an economic and social entity is essentially the creation of nineteenth-century industrialism" Ibid p 132.

11 1961 Census of England and Wales Occupation, Industry, Socio-Economic Groups: Durham London 1966. (1971 figures: 16.5% and 7.5% respectively).

12 A brief indication of the history is provided by Dennis People and Planning chapter 8; and additional glimpses in the pastoral history of a shipyard parish, C.H.G. Hopkins Pallion 1874-1954 Sunderland 1954, pp 50-51, 71-77, and chapters 11 and 12.

13 These developments form the subject matter of the studies of Sunderland housing by Norman Dennis, People and Planning and Public Participation and Planners' Blight, while B.T. Roberts "An Ecological Analysis of the Evolution of Residential Areas in Sunderland" Urban Studies 1966, provides additional background information.

14 See Sunderland Municipal Handbook Sunderland 1966, and also Hopkins Pallion 1874-1954 and Pallion 1939-1968 Sunderland 1968.

15 Quotation from Hopkins Pallion 1939-68 p 4, and see also Pallion 1874-1954.

16 Lockwood "Sources of Variation" pp 20-21.

17 Ibid esp. pp 17-18, and Goldthorpe et al Affluent Worker esp. pp 167-179.

18 Sunderland Municipal Handbook p 89.

19 D.A.N. Jones "The Media in Sunderland" The Listener 26 October 1967 p 517. Jones also touches on the role of municipal labourism in collective leisure provision, mentioning the theatre, libraries but also transport in this regard.

20 The most useful source on these variations, and on the development of trade unionism in the North East in general, is J.F. Clarke's dissertation on Labour Relations in Engineering and Shipbuilding on the North East Coast in the Second Half of the 19th century (Newcastle University; M.A. in Economic Studies, 1966), esp. chapters 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8. He documents the following patterns of development in late nineteenth century ship-building and engineering unionism in Sunderland:

Boilermakers 1872: 4 branches and 963 members; 1890: 9 branches and 2,508 members; 1905: 11 branches and 3,583 members.

Shipwrights The persistance of a cluster of local societies, Boatbuilders (1872), Ironworkers (1882), and Hylton and Sunderland Shipwrights, remaining autonomous until after the turn of the century.

Engineers Minority nucleus of ASE members, 1870: 330 members; 1877: 449 members; but actions in 1871, 1883 and 1890 embraced non-Society men also. Thus in 1883 "about 1400 men left work.. including a large percentage of non-Society men" (Clarke Labour Relations p 358).

Patternmakers Sunderland Branch founded 1872, membership 1892: 60.

United Machine Workers This and related societies began to organise the semi-skilled machinists: Sunderland Branch 1891.

'Helpers' First independent strike in Sunderland 1871.

Other useful sources are E. Allen et al The North-East Engineers' 'Strikes of 1871 Newcastle 1971, and David Dougan The Shipwrights Newcastle 1975.

21 Dougan The Shipwrights pp 112-113; M. Kinnear The British Voter: An Atlas and Survey Since 1885 London 1968.

22 The background of mass unemployment in mining, shipbuiding and heavy engineering is outlined in C.L. Mowat Britain Between the Wars: 1918-1940 London 1955, esp pp 126, 273-4 and 279, and Mowat also notes the over-crowding and high infant- and adult-mortality rates which characterised Sunderland as well as other depressed areas. Kinnear British Voter gives the election results. 'A dramatic indication of the local reality of the economic crisis in the inter-war period is provided by the graph of the shipping tonnage launched from the town, in B.T. Robson Urban Analysis: A Study of City Structure Cambridge 1969, figure 3.2, p 80.

23 The character of Sunderland's municipal socialism is glimpsed in Dennis People and Planning and Public Participation and Planners' Blight, where its depiction, warts and all, is all the more interesting because it is provided by a Sunderland man who is also one of the sociologists who produced the classic study of a 'traditional working class community', Coal is Our Life. Other glimpses are provided by Jones "Media in Sunderland' and in N. Morton A Modern Transport System for Sunderland Sunderland 1965. The election results in the post-war period are summarised in the following figures:

	North:			South		
1950	Lab 54.1%	Cons 38.1%		Lab 49.6%	Cons 40.2%	
1951	Lab 53.9	Cons 46.1		Lab 50.3	Cons 49.7	
1953 by-election				Lab 46.1	Cons 48.6	
1955	Lab 53.1	Cons 46.9		Lab 48.1	Cons 51.9	
1959	Lab 52.4	Cons 47.6		Lab 49.1	Cons 50.9	
1964	Lab 55.4	Cons 41.9		Lab 51.6	Cons 48.4	
1966	Lab 60.8	Cons 39.2		Lab 57.5	Cons 42.5	
1970	Lab 60.6	Cons 39,3		Lab 56.4	Cons 43.5	
1974	Lab 52.4	Cons 31.6		Lab 49.6	Cons 34.5	

24 Dennis Public Participation and Planners' Blight pp 34-35. His whole study illuminates the asymmetrical relationship between the politicians and the planners in the 're-development' alliance (see e.g. pp 45-46 and pp 238-239); and between them and the 'public'.

25 The characterisation is Paul Corrigan's in Schooling the Smash Street Kids London 1979 p 8.

26 See esp Roy "Efficiency and the 'Fix'" and Lupton On the Shop Floor; but also L. Klein MultiProducts Limited: A Case Study of the Social Effects of Rationalised Production London 1964, and D.J. Hickson "Motives of Workpeople who Restrict their Output" Occupational Psychology 1961 35 pp 11-21. See also my discussion in chapter 3 above.

27 Particularly S.W. Lerner and J. Marquand "Workshop Bargaining, Wage Drift and Productivity in the British Engineering Industry" Manchester School 1962 pp 15-60, and "Regional Variations in Earnings, Demand for Labour and Shop Stewards' Combine committees in the British Engineering Industry" Manchester School 1963 pp 261-96; and A.I. Marsh and E.E. Coker "Shop Steward Organisation in the Engineering Industry" British Journal of Industrial Relations 1963 pp 170-90. These studies provided the major bases for a number of more general diagnoses, ranging from W.E.J. McCarthy The Role of Shop Stewards in British Industrial Relations (Donovan Commission Research Paper 1) London 1966, to T. Cliff and C. Barker Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Stewards London 1966. See also D.J. Robertson Factory Wage Structures and National Wage Agreements London 1960.

28 Compare Goldthorpe et al Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour with Lupton On the Shop Floor, esp. appendix 1, 'Research Techniques'; and see R.G. Burgess In the Field London 1984 esp ch.4.

29 Robin Blackburn "Inequality and Exploitation" New Left Review 42 March/ April 1967. For a fuller discussion see chapter 3 above.

30 Westergaard "Cash Nexus", but see the reservations expressed in chapter 4 above.

31 The ambiguities associated with the notion of the workgroup have since been well explored by Stephen Hill "Norms, Groups and Power: the Sociology of Industrial Relations" British Journal of Industrial Relations 1974 12.

32 I have used the term population of workers to emphasise that I approached all the workers in each of the workgroups selected. Thus I sampled workgroups and interviewed populations of workers. In view of the fact that I considered all workgroups meeting my criteria in the three workplaces it could be said that I sampled workplaces rather than workgroups, except that that ignores the vagaries of gaining access to specific firms, vagaries which make the process more of a lottery than a sampling exercise.

33 Further details of these corporate entities and their management strategies are provided in the next chapter.

34 Thus Doxfords is situated in Low Pallion and the nearest Doxfords turners were one living in Millfield and a couple on the Ford Estate; Clarks was in Low Southwick and two workers there lived in Southwick; and Rolls, on the Pallion Trading Estate, had one worker in Pallion, and the next nearest on the Nookside Estate, one and a half miles away.

35 See MacKenzie "Affluent Worker Study" esp. pp 246-250, and The Aristocracy of Labour for his argument; D.J. Lee "Skill,Craft and Class" Sociology 1981 15 pp 56-78, and more generally Stephen Wood (ed) The Degradation of Work? on the issue of craft skills in the post-war period. This latter literature and the issues it raises are given some further consideration in the conclusions of chapter 8 below.

36 The directories used were Kelly's Manufacturers and Merchants Directory and Kompass Register of British Industry and Commerce.

37 On the basis of my discussions with him and other informants I pinpointed eleven companies as worthy of an approach; two were found to be unsuitable on approach; three rejected the proposal to research on their site; three accepted the research; and the remainder were not approached.

38 Such variations have since been widely documented, for example by Ian Boraston et al Workplace and Union London 1975. It should also be said that the District Secretary's blessing was, in reality, a mixed blessing in relation to the attitudes of workplace representatives, not least because he was a particularly forceful personality whose original power base was one of the firms studied, thus sharpening fears of encroachment upon their autonomy.

39 One of the companies which rejected the research proposal did so after several months of discussions which had appeared to offer good prospects of gaining entry. In retrospect it was evident that the firm were looking for some 'application' for the research, something I was unwilling to offer; and it was also clear that I would have been wise to drop my interest in that firm after their initial prevarication, rather than invest scarce time in discussions with them. It should be noted that all the firms which did allow me in did so without any further restrictions than the normal ones of confidentiality, and at this distance in time from the original research I can report the names of the companies without breaking any personal confidences.

40 These issues, of conflicts of interest over access among groups within a research setting and of the impact of differential access upon the generalisability of findings, overlap with some of the other issues which have been discussed in the few considerations of 'access' problems in the literature, but they have not been very systematically discussed anywhere. See Robert Burgess In the Field chapter 2, and his "Early Field Experience" in Burgess (ed) Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual London 1982 for general overviews of the issues; and Gary Spencer "Methodological Issues in the Study of Bureaucratic Elites: a Case Study of West Point" Social Problems 1973 pp 90-103 for one of the few detailed accounts.

41 This broader conception of 'access' is recognised in Burgess "Early Field-work Experience" and In the Field, and in Leonard Schatzman and Anselm Strauss Field Research Englewood Cliffs 1973.

42 In all the statistics for potential interviewees and actual interviewees in each workgroup were as follows:

	Population:	Absent, ill or moved:	Refusal:	Interviews:
Doxford a	24	2	1	21
Doxford b	23	1	1	21
Clarks	20	0	1	19
Rolls Royce	29	1	1	27

43 See appendix for details of the interview schedule.

44 I will explore the salience of this division, as well as the character of collective bargaining in the different firms, in later chapters.

45 Hickson "Motives of Workpeople" pp 112-3.

46 This is a diluted version of the phenomenon noted by Hickson.

47 In accordance with recommended practice I conducted a pilot project to test-out and improve my interview schedule and other research tools, as well as to gain fieldwork experience. In addition to the points noted in this and the following paragraphs, the main lesson from the pilot project was in the modification (especially shortening) of the interview schedule.

48 Goldthorpe et al regretted their reliance on 'impressionistic' observation rather than quantitative 'activity sampling' techniques in the Affluent Worker study (Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour p 6). However, on the basis of my experience I remain sceptical about the utility or appropriateness of such quantitative techniques. It is also worth noting that Hill utilised such techniques to study foremen, but not workers, on the docks "because the use of watches and note-books was too reminiscent of work

study to be acceptable to the shop stewards" (Stephen Hill The Dockers London 1976 p 43, and see also pp 38-42 and 118).

49 In this context the wide range of small batch work in the factories being studied exacerbated the problems of interpretation facing the field-worker. Compare Hill Dockers p 118.

50 These issues, which have been central to the 'labour process' debate, are touched on particularly in chapters 7 and 8. For an overview of the relevant literature see Paul Thompson The Nature of Work London 1983.

Chapter 6

State Initiatives and Corporate Strategy: the Context of Worker Experience

As I have already noted, my research strategy did not give me access to private information about corporate strategy or management decision making, but at the same time I have argued that analyses of the class position of wage workers cannot be divorced from consideration of the dynamics of corporate capital. An adequate class analysis must address the capital-labour relation, both in specific employment relations and more generally, rather than confining itself to the weberian treatment of work and market situations. Hence in this chapter I will seek to develop some account of state initiatives and corporate strategy as they structured the experience of the workers I interviewed. This will involve consideration of the manner in which the 'problems' and 'prospects' of firms in the marine engineering and aero-engine industries were analysed in the process of state policy formation and implementation, followed by specific discussions of the corporate strategies and performance of the companies in each industry. The focus on state initiatives arises in part because the documentation associated with policy formation affords one of the few public resources in charting the sectoral problems and strategies of capitalist enterprises, though of course there is no simple relation between state diagnoses and private corporate actions. However, an additional reason for such attention arises from the centrality of the two sectors of which these industries are a part, namely shipbuilding and aerospace, in the formation of the distinctive state strategies for the restructuring of British corporate capital which characterised the decade of the 1960s. Thus the material in this chapter not only traces out the character of state intervention and corporate reorganisations as a context for the analysis of the shop-floor experience of the workers I studied in Sunderland, but also provides a useful starting point for broader comments on the significance of this particular phase of state activity and the restructuring of class relations.

Analytical Preliminaries

The character of inter-corporate competition, corporate policy formation and state intervention in post-war capitalist economies are all topics of considerable theoretical controversy, and though I do not propose to develop any particularly novel contribution to theorising

on these topics, such controversy necessitates some comments on the analytical assumptions underlying the more specific discussion which follows. Analyses of the character of corporate competition and the role of the state have tended to focus on the role of the giant multinational oligopolistic firms which dominate contemporary capitalist economies, and the relations they have with the state. The radical-orthodox interpretation of such firms, across the spectrum from Galbraith to Baran and Sweezy, emphasises their capacity to manage and mute inter-corporate competition,and the complicity of the state in this process through its management of aggregate demand and subsidies to research and development.[1] While these emphases grasp some critical features of the transformation of capitalism in the twentieth century simply by focussing on the role of the giant corporation and the increasingly significant collaboration between corporate managements and the state, their theorisation of each of these aspects remains seriously deficient in ways which point up the need to develop more adequate accounts of both contemporary competitive relations and the role of the state.

Turning first to the alleged stabilisation of the 'anarchy' of market relations, this is a feature emphasised even in the subtle treatment of the shift from price to non-price competition in Baran and Sweezy.[2] One counterpoint to their emphasis on corporate regulation of competitive relations has been a reaffirmation of neo-classical orthodoxy about the market, and indeed some marxian commentators have reemphasised the compelling role of the anarchy of the market in almost identical terms.[3] However, a more adequate criticism of the radical orthodoxy has involved a clear break from the conventional juxtaposition of competition and monopoly, found in both radical and neo-classical treatments, to provide a quite distinct characterisation of market relations among the giants. Such a shift has been stressed, for example, by Clifton, who focusses on the industrial and geographical diversification of the giant multi-nationals and their development of increasingly rigorous financial control over their multi-divisional structures.[4] On this basis he argues that:

> "because production for each firm is general, firms are directly competing with a much larger number of firms than those in any one of its operating divisions. Further, the tremendous number of commodities produced by each firm and the dominant strategy of growth through product innovation add enormous complexity and changeability to the competitive interrelationships among firms."[5]

Of course this characterisation shares with theories of monopoly a focus

on the dominant large-scale firms which define the character of competitive relations on a world scale, while it is also necessary to analyse the ways in which lesser firms may operate in the interstices of those relations. Nevertheless, unlike the theories of monopoly, it emphasises the uneven and crisis-prone character of the interplay of the giant corporations as the context within which the lesser firms work. Thus it matches the findings of those students of post-war international corporate competition who emphasise that such competition "must be seen in terms of a continuing pattern of unstable rivalry and shifting advantage" rather than any secular trend towards the dominance of capitals based in just one particular dominant national economy, even though the experience of British manufacturing capital has been one of a fall from relative pre-eminence in this process of international rivalry.[6] Such a view also, and crucially, stresses that such competitive relations are not merely market relations but are rather the turbulent mediators of transformations in the social organisation of production; not simply signalling some technically defined mix of factors of production but rather relating and validating, or eventually invalidating, the attempts of specific capitals to reorganise and intensify production.[7]

These considerations have significant implications for both management strategies and state intervention. In relation to management they indicate that neither a 'black-box' view of automatic and uniform management response to the market nor an emphasis upon clearly available strategic choices represent appropriate starting points for the analysis of management.[8] Rather, given the emphasis on shifting and uncertain advantages and opportunities in the organisation of production in the face of corporate rivalry, they underwrite an analysis of the short-term trade-offs and the longer-term gambles which characterise management 'strategies', as well as suggesting that such 'strategies' inevitably arise from political processes of management rivalry and top management and financial adjudication.[9] What this means is that the 'logic of capital accumulation' governs the organisation and reorganisation of production in the dominant large capitalist firms, but only in a manner mediated by messy organisational processes characterised by contradictions, uncertainties and organisational micro-politics rather than any uniform and unproblematical decision criterion.[10]

If such features are a characteristic of capitalist managements they also colour the relationship between the state and capitalist firms. They represent one basis upon which, while the state addresses problems

of capital accumulation on which its own survival depends, state policy can only represent a specific political response to the manifold problems (at international, national, sectoral and enterprise levels) which beset accumulation. In addition, of course, the very character of the capitalist state, as an institutional complex separated from private units of capital though dependant on the general process of accumulation, and also a locus of contending political mobilisations within the parameters of 'civil society', means that it does not function in any straightforward functional manner in relation to corporate capital.[11] The state is neither above class relations, as was alleged by post-war pluralists and more recently by diagnosticians of the arrival of a corporatist mode of production, nor does it simply represent a drain on private capital, as the neo-liberal market theorists argue.[12] But marxian analyses of the role of the capitalist state have yet to provide an adequate account of the features which each of these approaches elevates into a supposedly complete theory, namely the autonomy of the state from specific capitals on the one hand and the constraints which the state places on those capitals and the limits to its capability for facilitating capital accumulation on the other. Less abstractly, one of the critical questions in contemporary debate concerning the role of the state, central to the debate surrounding corporatism as well as other recent contributions, concerns the precise character of working class mobilisation <u>for</u> state intervention in industry: how far does such mobilisation remain imprisoned within the fetishised separation of 'economic' and 'political' spheres, and how far do reformist demands within those spheres nevertheless undermine accumulation?[13] In the light of such questions it should be evident that I do not wish to adhere to any 'marxist functionalist' account of state policy; but that I am nevertheless concerned with the manner in which state initiatives, often mediated by the political articulation of reformist demands for state intervention, address, and seek to facilitate the solution of, the problems of profitability and accumulation facing corporate capital, at national, sectoral and company levels. It is in the light of such considerations that I will now move to a substantive discussion of state and corporate strategies with specific reference to attempts at industrial restructuring in the shipbuilding and aero-space sectors in the U.K. during the 1960s.

1. Labour's White-Hot Technological Revolution

The political context and rhetorical framework of state intervention in industry during the second half of the 1960s was provided by a specific

variant of Labourism. This emphasised the reconciliation of private efficiency and social fairness through planned modernisation and, especially, technology-based growth; a strategy neatly encapsulated in the well-known slogan of a new Britain "forged in the white heat of a technological revolution".[14] The logic of this approach was summarised in the Labour Election Manifesto for the 1964 election: this listed the key priorities as full employment, growth and the 'balance of payments' and argued that:

> "none of these aims will be achieved by leaving the economy to look after itself. They will only be achieved by a deliberate and massive effort to modernise the economy; to change its structure and to develop with all possible speed the advanced technology and the new science-based industries with which our future lies. In short they will only be achieved by socialist planning."[15]

The sources of such a political strategy are to be found in the problems facing British corporate capital (and hence the British economy) in international competition, and in the 'economic' and 'political' dilemmas of state economic management and intervention in that context.[16] The central theme of British Labourism has always been the planning and humanisation of competitive capitalism, though there have been different variations on that theme some of which, during the 1950s, were premissed on the arrival of post-capitalism. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party emerged into the post-war period reconciled to 'planning' and, though the prosperity of the 1950s allowed an attenuation of that reconciliation, the problems of the British economy at the turn of the decade were met with fresh essays in modest interventionism.[17] Thus, as Harris emphasises, the management of national corporate capitalism in the post-war period induced a commitment to planning for growth and competitiveness on the part of both political parties, a commitment underpinned by the concerns of employers who, by the mid 1960s, "shared the general dissatisfaction with stop-go and were prepared to participate in a new approach to policy, particularly if it promised a more stable environment for investment and hope for government help in controlling wages."[18]

The specific cast of the Labour programme in 1964 was in part a response to the Conservative planning initiatives of the early 1960s, but was also a response to some of the internal dilemmas of Labourism. The key developments of the final years of the 1959-64 Tory government were the establishment of the National Economic Development Council as

a 'planning forum', with the explicit remit of growth-oriented indicative planning intended to supplement the conduct of 'demand management', and the formation of a National Incomes Commission in the wake of two attempts at a 'pay pause', intended to monitor wage movements. Such developments could be seen as pre-empting the political space traditionally occupied by Labour, though they also facilitated the legitimising of political debate about planning, and in this context the Labour Party programme can be seen as a reassertion that they were the more appropriate political agency for such interventions. However, this is only one side of the story: the other concerns the development of debate within the labour movement itself. In this respect the arguments refurbished a central strand in the politics of the 1945 Labour Government, namely a pragmatic and administratively focussed interventionism in cooperation with corporate capital, aimed at a recovery of international competitiveness and at steady growth.[19] However, this was given a distinctive, Wilsonian, gloss through an emphasis on technological revolution and technocracy. As Paul Foot has documented, Wilson's own stress on pragmatic technocratic planning had developed over a long period: through his experience of the post-war Labour administration; as a continuing theme in his ostensibly Bevanite phase; and on into the compromise positions he proposed in the Party controversies of the early '60s.[20] As such it can be seen as a symptomatic response to the dilemmas of Labourism in this period, both in regard to the active political alliance it represented and in relation to its broader electoral fate. In terms of the internal politics of the Party Wilsonism represented a basis for 'unity' among the various traditions and constituencies of Labourism precisely because it glossed over the thorny questions of wage restraint and the relative priority of profitability and welfare under the rubric of science-based restructuring and growth. On this basis, as Foot notes, it was only challenged, even in the first years of the new Labour Government, by 'satirists, splitters and sectarians'.[21] In terms of wider electoral politics it can be seen as the basis of an appeal not only to its most obvious targets, elements of the professional and scientific 'new middle class', but also to the 'affluent manual workers' argued over in the embourgeoisement debate. For them it represented a refurbishing of Labourism rather than the explicit repudiation of class politics championed by Labour's right wing, and it involved a material appeal to the mass of workers rather than an entirely 'ethical socialist' appeal on behalf of the underprivileged, but fell short of the re-assertion of a class-based Labourism which Goldthorpe and Lockwood came to advocate.[22]

Wilsonian Labourism was, then, a response to the problems facing a decreasingly competitive British capitalism, mediated by political competition with the Conservatives and bearing the stamp of the dilemmas facing a party based on the working class and concerned to manage, revivify and humanise a declining capitalist economy. At the heart of this response was a commitment to the restructuring and modernisation of manufacturing industry through a judicious exercise of state intervention. Thus both growth and the effective management of the balance of payments were regarded as guaranteed by such restructuring, while social 'fairness' (in the shape of 'a planned growth of incomes' and social reform in housing, education and the social services) depended in turn on growth and a 'sound' currency.[23] Such an order of priorities was not, of course, sharply different from that embodied in the Tory planning of the early '60s: but the positive note sounded by the emphasis on modernisation and new technology served to fudge the relative priorities of wages, profits, sterling and welfare: until, that is, the government confronted the succession of runs on the pound in the years between 1964 and 1967. In the face of such crises the Wilson administration turned rapidly to wage restraint and deflation to facilitate industrial competitiveness while protecting the pound, and these features became the premise for any industrial restructuring rather than an alternative to it. This, then, was the context of the practise of Labour's industrial strategy in the second half of the 1960s.

The initial centrepiece of the Labour industrial strategy was the National Plan promulgated by the new Department of Economic Affairs in 1965. This sought to stipulate indicative targets of production, consumption, investment and growth on a detailed sectoral basis, and was accompanied by the proliferation of sectoral EDC's and the parallel re-structuring of corporate taxation and investment grants to encourage manufacturing investment.[24] However, the repercussions on the government and the economy arising from the pressure on sterling and the defense of the pound, coupled with the permissive and optimistic character of indicative planning, rapidly led to the demise of the Plan. Thereafter there was a shift of government policy towards specific and selective sectoral and enterprise level interventions. By September 1967 such selective intervention, through the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation in particular but also through such special bodies as the Shipbuilding Industry Board, had become defined as the "dominant industrial strategy of the Government for the coming twelve months"; while the implementation of that strategy had to take place in the context of devaluation (in

November 1967) and against the background of deflation and a pay freeze (July-December 1966) which merged into a longer-term policy of tight restraint on wages (through to 1969).[25] The impact of the wages policy, in conjunction with changes in personal taxation and the impact of inflation, was a marked retardation in the growth of workers' incomes, coupled with cumulative anomalies and inequities.[26] As is well known, these features, together with the attempts at the legal control of trade unions, led to considerable disillusionment among rank-and-file Labour supporters and generated considerable wage-militancy on the shop floor.[27] The impact of the 'white heat of the technological revolution' is more uncertain: some analysts have detected an upward movement in the underlying productivity trend, and possibly increased rates of investment, despite a significant decline in rates of profit, but few are prepared to credit the industrial strategy with any major role at an aggregate level since the impact of other profound changes (such as devaluation) confounds the issue.[28] Thus the Labour governments of 1964-66 and 1966-70 were marked by crude but fairly comprehensive and effective controls over wages, but permissive, selective and fairly ineffective controls over the restructuring of manufacturing capital. It is these features which define the overall pattern of policy and workers' experience, within which the more specific outcomes in the aero-space and shipbuilding sectors must be considered.

These two sectors had long been subject to substantial state intervention, especially because of their central role in military production. This was particularly the case with the aircraft industry, which had grown into an intimate relation with the state in the context of war-time and military orders; a relation which was only thrown into question by the shifts in defence policy of the late 1950s. Thus Nigel Harris summarises the relationship in the following terms:

"Between 1950 and 1964, Government payments to the industry covered 70 per cent of the industy's total output, and in May 1957, some 60 per cent of the industy's labour force was employed on defence work. Initially expanded by military commitments (the Korean War, followed by continued military innovation), the 1957 changes in defence policy — to replace manned aircraft with guided weapons — threatened to reduce the industry's activity very seriously. Accordingly, the Government instructed the industry to bear more of the costs of its own civil projects, to concentrate its activities .. in two to four airframe and two aero-engine firms, instead of fourteen and five major firms as hitherto, and thus to contract

> its labour force from a quarter of a million in 1958 to 150,000 by 1963... the 'shot-gun marriages' were duly consummated in five firms under a government threat that it would in future only issue contracts to the merged firms.../though/ the labour force in June 1962 was 293,000..the proportion employed on defence work had decreased to 50 per cent."[29]

Thus the aircraft industry was a prime example of close relations between private capital and the state before the arrival of a Labour government, and state intervention ranged beyond military contracting to embrace influence through the purchasing policy of the state airlines, and was directed at restructuring the sector to compete in the international market for civil aircraft.

Shipbuilding had a less thoroughgoing and continuous relation with state funding and intervention during the post-war decades, not least because naval production constituted a smaller and more specialised portion of shipbuilding. Nevertheless, following the buoyancy of the immediate post-war phase of rebuilding of merchant fleets, shipbuilding began to experience marked cyclical recessions again by the late 1950s and state intervention became increasingly significant. Again Harris summarises developments:

> "the following year /1962/, the shipbuilding industry experienced a record decline in new orders, and in May 1963 the Government announced a Shipbuilding Credit Scheme to make loans to British ship-owners who agreed to order from British yards. The initial sum offered, 30 million pounds, was increased after two months to 60 million pounds, and, with the inclusion of the new Cunard liner, to 75 million pounds by October...Without the Bill, the minister said, the industry's labour force would contract from 53,000 (June 1963) to under 30,000 (March 1965); with the Bill, 70,000 could be employed between the spring of 1964 and that of 1965. This might have seemed less what the minister claimed for the industry as 'a breathing space' and rather more what he denied, 'to prolong artifically an excess capacity'. At best it was a gamble."[30]

Thus the rationale for intervention in shipbuilding appeared more defensive than that in aircraft, and was more obviously related to electoral calculations as election year approached, but nevertheless established the industry as a prime candidate for selective interventionism during the later part of the 1960s and beyond. As in the case of the aerospace sector the selective interventionism of the Labour government

after 1964 manifests marked continuities with these earlier Tory initiatives, though, as will be seen, both were assimilated to the more 'modern' rhetoric of technological revolution and national modernisation which was the hallmark of Wilsonian Labourism. It is to the fates of these two sectors within that framework that I now intend to turn, looking first at shipbuilding and marine engineering and then at aircraft and aero-engineering. The established role of state intervention in both of these sectors alongside their centrality in any strategy of growth based upon the restructuring of manufacturing was signalled early in the life of the Wilson government by the appointment of Committees of Inquiry for each sector: in December 1964 the Plowden Committee began an investigation of the aircraft industry, and in February 1965 the Geddes Committee began work on the shipbuilding industry.[31] Thus, by the time of the National Plan each committee was at work, and while the Plan indicated that both sectors would continue to play a significant role in both manufacturing and exporting it left detailed diagnosis and planning initiatives to Plowden and Geddes.[32] In consequence an examination of the development of state strategy during this period, and an indication of the underlying circumstances of each industry, has to be focussed in the first instance on the findings and recommendations of these committees. This will provide the format of the discussion which follows.

Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering: The Geddes Report

The economic position of marine engineering is intimately connected with the fate of shipbuilding itself. While little international trade in built marine engines means that domestic shipbuilding defines the demand for such engines, the cost of the main engine alone constitutes between ten and fifteen per cent of the total production costs of any ship. Thus an examination of the situation of the marine engine producers was an integral part of the investigation of the position and prospects of the British shipbuilding industry mounted by the Geddes committee. Similarly, the committee's overall argument serves to define the basic strategic options which faced the marine engineering sub-sector, and hence the firms I studied in particular.

The argument of the Geddes report was that British shipbuilding faced a critical crisis of competitiveness which could only be overcome through on the one hand rationalisation and grouping and on the other increased productivity and flexibility of labour. The crisis had been

brought home to the industry in the recession of the early 1960s, but it had longer term origins. It arose, they argued, from the highly fragmented nature of the industry and its associated reliance upon craft organisation with only limited managerial controls over efficiency. In the period of the post-war boom the British industry could prosper on this basis, remaining dependant upon orders from the British merchant shipping companies while holding a declining proportion of expanding world production. However, the declining significance of the British fleet in comparison with flags of convenience, and the sharpening of international competition associated with periodic world overcapacity, had exposed the vulnerability of the shipbuilding and marine engineering industries.[33] Even in the context of an upturn in demand, such as that of the mid-'60s, this vulnerability was evident in the pricing of ships at an unprofitable level.

The committee rejected any special support for the industry as it stood because it denied the legitimacy of appeals grounded in terms of national defense or indirect support for the British merchant fleet rather than international competitiveness. The overall perspective of the report was that the industry had to be reorganised to compete on the world market, while the appropriate form of state intervention was deemed to be state support for a process of rationalisation by private capital. In detail the solutions proposed by Geddes involved, firstly, a substantial programme of amalgamations of yards and the centralisation of such management functions as marketing, design and development, financial control and production planning; and secondly, on the basis of that rationalisation, a movement towards more collaborative industrial relations focussed especially upon increasing effort and flexibility within a context of job security and industrial competitiveness.[34] In the view of the Geddes committee the capacity of the industry to respond to the challenge of intensified competition, in what is a virtually un-sheltered world market, could even be seen as a test case of the capacity of British industry to respond to the challenge of such vigorous capitalist economies as those of Japan and Scandanavia.

Among suppliers to the shipbuilders themselves steel and marine engine firms were singled out for detailed discussion on the basis of their contributions to production costs. The argument for marine engines paralleled that for shipbuilding itself: the sector required rationalisation by grouping into a few substantial units, and by the application of more sophisticated systems of production organisation and control.

The precise argument deserves direct quotation:

> "the manufacture of marine engines in this country is highly fragmented. Many firms may build not more than three or four engines a year. Moreover in most cases the shops in which engines are built are also engaged in a variety of work of a general engineering nature.... Efficient production engineering practise is most important in the manufacture of main engines because they are made to standard designs and are therefore suited to batch production methods, using sophisticated and expensive machine tools and equipment. This calls for a planned load of components including spares and a maximum utilisation of capacity using shift systems where possible. There is therefore a minimum level of work for an engine shop below which neither labour nor equipment will be fully and most economically used.... Such a factory would in our view have to concentrate its whole effort on the most efficient methods of production and avoid work of a general engineering or jobbing nature which would interfere with the planning and flow of production. None of the present engine works in this country measure up to these requirements, and most of them are so much smaller that there is no possibility of their ever being able to approach the degree of efficiency or competitiveness needed in the future. The conclusion is, therefore, that the building of main engines in this country must be concentrated in a small number of larger and more efficient production units. This need is, in fact, widely recognised already by both shipbuilders and the engine builders themselves."[35]

The most evident preoccupation in this central argument about marine engines, as in the whole discussion of shipbuilding, was, then, that concentration was essential as a prerequisite for the reorganisation of production. The chapter on marine engines goes on to canvass specific proposals for groupings into four engine works (and three enterprises) specialising in the three major designs of slow-speed diesel engine. However the relationship between such reorganisation and concentration and the implied process of transformation of the labour process itself remains equally significant. The report recognises that competitive pressures in the industry had already focussed attention on cost-cutting in production: "engine builders are under heavy pressure to reduce their prices so as to enable the overall price [of ships] to be as low as possible. Profits from engine building have fallen sharply in recent years"[36] On the basis of that diagnosis it concentrates on identifying the sorts

of reorganisation of production which might deliver reduced costs, and, more extensively, on the obstacles which stand in the way of effective changes in the labour process.[37] In respect of the changes in production organisation the report argues for a move away from small scale and diverse production on a jobbing basis under a regime of unsystematic management control, towards systematised and specialised batch production under more intensive control and surveillance. In addition the more detailed discussions of standardisation, financial control and work measurement in the chapters directly concerned with shipyards are clearly meant to be applied to marine engineering also.[38]

Alongside such positive proposals the report focusses on the obstacles placed in the way of such changes. As has already been noted the most evident preoccupation in this regard is with obstacles arising from the structure of ownership. This general theme, embracing the fragmented structure of both ownership and production sites as crucial obstacles to increased afficiency and cost-cutting, is applied with force to the marine-engine sector. In addition the more specific point is made that the close association of many small engine works with shipyards means that they are both too small and subordinated to the jobbing requirements of shipyard managements. Thus Geddes argues for the separation of engine manufacture from shipyards as a necessary preliminary to rationalisation, and it dismisses counter-arguments about the advantages of linkage.[39]

The report also considers the obstacles to specialisation represented by changes in the popularity of different engine designs, and adopts a more circumspect position in this regard:

> "it is not possible to predict the outcome of present competition between designs. This is likely to be fierce, but it is reasonable to assume that all of the current popular types will remain important in the market. The experience of past years shows, however, that the fashion for engine types and designs can change quite rapidly and the engine builders must be flexible enough to be able to respond quickly to such changes."[40]

However this is not seen as presenting insuperable obstacles, especially given the common pattern of licencing agreements within the industry: "each of the proposed four works would probably find it best to specialise in one particular design of slow speed diesel, as is in fact the practise today, but could remain sufficiently flexible to take up manufacture of other designs to meet changes in popularity."[41] Thus, while the report

highlighted the massive decline in the popularity of the Doxford engines in the preceeding decade (see table 2), and noted in passing the vicissitudes of the research and development of new Doxfords engines, the implications of fluctuations in the demand for specific engine designs were not seen as particularly problematical by Geddes.[42]

The final obstacle to modernisation is the entrenched position and suspicion of organised workers, both in shipbuilding and marine engine building. The perspective of the report in this respect is that the concentration and regrouping of the industry will furnish a firm basis upon which this final obstacle can be negotiated away in the process of pursuing competitive success. Thus the preamble to the report indulges in the following rhetoric:

> "shipyard workers and the trade unions which represent them and should lead them forward, must believe in the reality of a fresh start if they are ever to compete with the Swedish or Japanese worker's willing response, steady effective work, and pride in their jobs."[43]

The more detailed discussion of industrial relations in part IV of the Geddes Report spells out the implications of this stance, in terms which reflect both some of the specific initiatives which were occuring in the context of the Fairfields rescue (bargaining of flexibility and cooperation in return for relative security and retraining), and the broader national discussion which culminated in the Donovan Report (formalisation of company-level bargaining and productivity initiatives).[44] In particular they emphasise the need to codify bargaining at plant level so as to (i) facilitate productivity deals and the negotiation of new work rates and manning practises and (ii) gain control over the wage drift which had been a consequence of skill shortages and parochial shop-floor bargaining. Alongside this they stressed the importance of confidence in job security and the prosperity of the industry as a context for more flexible and collaborative bargaining, designed to reduce the 'wasteful' use of labour and the limited commitment of workers in the industry. This discussion is carried out with primary reference to shipbuilding and shipyard industrial relations, without specific discussion of the somewhat different unions and employer organisations and negotiation arrangements which the committee recognises characterise marine engineering, but the general tenor of their remarks about inefficient utilisation of labour, productivity bargaining and the reconstruction of collaborative bargaining on the premise of growth are clearly seen as relevant to marine engine establishments.

Table 2: The Decline of the Doxford Engines

Quantities of Leading Slow-speed Diesels Manufactured ('000 horse power)

Year	Sulzer	Burmeister & Wain	Doxford	Gotaverken
1956	26.4	137.8	340.0	
1957	41.2	189.6	389.5	
1958	51.7	138.4	406.2	
1959	61.7	244.6	307.0	
1960	115.6	201.0	276.2	
1961	121.2	155.9	217.5	48.2
1962	282.0	135.7	107.8	34.6
1963	264.5	129.0	55.0	35.8
1964	326.7	162.2	86.5	7.5
1965	362.2	207.1	58.1	

Adapted from Shipbuilding Inquiry Committee 1965-1966 Report (Geddes Report) London 1966 Table 4, p 62

According to the Geddes diagnosis, then, the strategic problems facing the shipbuilding and marine engineering industries in the mid-sixties can be summarised as:

(i) the intensification of international competition in shipbuilding in the 1960s; accompanied by emergent overcapacity and sharp price competition even in periods of expansion; which implied in turn increased pressures on the pricing of marine engines and declining profit margins in their production;

(ii) one response to this pressure was to attempt to standardise, modernise and develop tighter controls over the production process; that is, to move away from jobbing towards batch production and adopt the cost-cutting techniques (ranging from more sophisticated job planning and progress chasing to work measurement and tighter work standards) developed in general engineering;

(iii) another, related response was to concentrate production in a few large works and close or run-down small 'uneconomic' plants;

(iv) finally, traditional forms of shop-floor organisation were identified as key obstacles to change, but in the spirit of Wilsonian emphases on technology and modernisation-based growth Geddes implies that they will be overcome in a mutual benefit process, much as the Donovan diagnosis assumes the mutual benefit of 'orderliness' and 'productivity'.[45]

Two other points of some significance for management strategies emerge obliquely from the report, but are glossed over in the general emphasis on the synergy of mergers, large batch production and labour flexibility. Firstly, the report notes the cross-pressures arising from attempts at diversification in the marine-engine shops and from their involvement in job-shop work for contiguous shipyards, but these are dealt with cavalierly, with the recommendation that they should be abandoned in favour of the large-batch strategy. What is missing from the report is any recognition that such features themselves clearly flow from particular responses to the crisis of profitability besetting marine-engine production proper. Secondly, the report acknowledges in passing the problems which face concerns which have built their production around engine designs of declining profitability; in particular the dilemmas surrounding investment of substantial capital in new designs in the context of tight profit margins. However here again the report glosses over the contradictions between extensive development work and the strategy of standardised batch production, as well as the problems associated with reliance on licencing arrangements. In these respects the formula of modernisation, competitiveness and growth may have

oversimplified the dilemmas and choices facing individual corporate managements, as well as suppressing any recognition of the costs to workers (in job loss, intensification of labour and potential deskilling) entailed in the recommendations.[46]

In terms of implementation, too, the Geddes proposals epitomised Wilsonian Labourism in relying upon a specialist state agency to coax private firms into mergers and rationalisation. The initial intent was for the Shipbuilding Industry Board to deploy state funds according to a tight timetable and "stringent conditions", so as to facilitate and reward restructuring.[47] This machinery was established with bipartisan political support (the only parliamentary opposition being to a clause allowing state shareholding) and was welcomed by the employers' organisations, though the trade unions were rather more sceptical about such limited and permissive interventionism.[48] In practice the timetables and conditions attached to government aid were relaxed, while in the face of continuing and deepening recession in the industry successive decisions increased the money available to be dispensed under the relaxed rules.[49] Underlying these developments in the implementation of the Geddes strategy were a series of dilemmas facing the state which had been glossed over in the 'merger, modernisation and growth' package offered in the report. Just as with the more general rhetoric of the 'technological revolution', potential conflicts between immediate commercial calculations, longer term international competitiveness and the security and advancement of workers in the industry were virtually ignored. However, the actual administration of interventionism oscillated between these imperatives: while remaining couched in progressive modernisation terms: funds were dispensed to rescue near-bankrupt firms in a manner which "in some cases constituted a free gift to previous shareholders", and, while such merger-at-any-price moves were influenced by a background concern to sustain employment in shipbuilding areas, they most often provided considerable scope for corporate interests to pursue their own immediate commercial rationales.[50]

In shipbuilding proper a disparate series of mergers on the Clyde, the Tyne and the Wear were facilitated and part-funded by the Shipbuilding Industry Board, though with few of the neat modernising and restructuring consequences envisaged by Geddes.[51] Unlike shipbuilding, however, the marine engineering sector proved remarkably refractory in the face of the Geddes proposals and SIB inducements. The 1969 and 1970 reports of the Board note the cyclical revival of demand and full order books in shipbuilding--

and engine building in those years (soon to be followed, of course, by a pronounced world slump), but express regret that this situation was sustaining existing firms rather than being used as an opportunity for systematic rationalisation. The frustration of the Board in the face of the failure of the engine producers to regroup and modernise production finds repeated expression in their reports, but is stated most strongly in their Report and Accounts for 1970. Under the somewhat ironic heading of 'Reorganisation in the Marine Engine Building Industry' they say:

> "the Board regrets that there have been no developments in grouping among engine builders and it is significant that no loans or grants were made to engine building undertakings by the Board during the last year. Some 80% of orders for slow-speed diesels are concentrated with four builders, but the output of only one of them reaches anywhere near the level in terms of b.h.p. which was envisaged by the Geddes Report. If the output from the shipyards increases, as is hoped, enginebuilders will need to modernise their plant further and increase their capacity if they wish to cater effectively and economically to the needs of the shipbuilders. Opportunities for further economies from the rationalisation of units producing engines of similar design are clearly possible, but the industry, on the whole, has yet to grasp them."[52]

There was a flurry of grants to cover the costs of consultants' fees in connection with possible grouping schemes during the first year of the Board's existence: Doxfords received £12½ thousand and Clarks £4 thousand, the two most substantial sums.[53] Thereafter, however, few grants were made to marine engineering firms. Following the initial grant for consultants' fees Doxfords were conspicuous by their absence from later rounds of funding, but Clarks NEM were the major exception to the pattern: they went on to receive over £78 thousand in 1968-9 to cover "underutilisation of resources during reorganisation and improving facilities", and over £140 thousand in the last six months of the Board's activity in 1971, again to cover "improvements and underutilisation of resources".[54] This provided the context for their being singled out for praise by the Board:

> "in main engine building, George Clark and NEM has made real progress in the modernisation of facilities for the manufacture of slow speed diesel engines."[55]

I want to draw out two arguments from this characterisation of the Geddes Inquiry and the subsequent work of the SIB. The first concerns the nature of the problems and strategic choices facing specific units of

corporate capital in shipbuilding and marine engineering, whilst the second relates to the character of state intervention in these sectors. Each of these, of course, constitute key features of the wider context of the shop floor experience of the workers at Doxfords and Clarks in Sunderland. On the first count the Geddes report clearly documents the crisis of international competitiveness facing the industry, and indicates some central elements of a strategy for the survival of private capital in that context; namely mergers, pruning of capacity, standardisation and intensification of batch production, and productivity and flexibility deals with trade unions. At the same time it glosses over some of the cross-cutting attractions of jobbing production for established corporate units, while underplaying the extent to which individual companies were tied into their independant survival strategies. Nevertheless, if the latter considerations are borne in mind, the arguments in the report shed considerable light upon the specific activities of the companies where I conducted my fieldwork. This point will be taken further later in this chapter (and beyond) but for the moment I simply want to note the following. In the face of the decline of the Doxford engines that firm had clearly made a number of moves in the direction of standardised batch production, accompanied by more systematic production controls (the strategy outlined in clause ii of the first paragraph on page 56), but such moves had been limited by both commitments to jobbing production and the channelling of resources into development work on new engine designs. At Richardsons, Westgarth, the parent company of Clarks, the rationalisation of production had been premissed upon the reorganisation and contraction of capacity (as indicated in clause iii on page 56), which had left the Sunderland works as a small outpost continuing with jobbing production while most of the site was closed down.

In regard to state strategies the point I wish to make concerns the obstacles to any smooth functional relation between the state and private capital. In some respects the Geddes Report defined a strategy which presumed such a functional relation, based on the facilitation of a modernisation programme which would be desired by private capital and in the interests of 'the nation'. In the event, according to the verdict of the Public Accounts Committee, "many millions of pounds of public funds provided for distribution to the shipbuilding industry through the SIB have been spent for purposes which had little to do directly with improving the industry's ability to compete in world markets", while many more millions were dispensed through shipping investment grants which often went to foreign-controlled companies for foreign-built ships.[56] This did not

result simply from administrative ineptitude but arose "because to a considerable extent the desired effects of government-assisted changes were contingent on actions by management and workers in the shipyards and on the right economic conditions prevailing".[57] However, government intervention on a bipartisan basis had arisen precisely because of crisis conditions in the industry, conditions which tended to worsen through the late 1960s and into the '70s; while the reality of the modernisation strategy would have involved substantial centrally sanctioned closures, damaging to specific corporate interests and also generating large-scale localised unemployment. In these circumstances state interventionism assumed the character of an ad hoc and escalating rescue operation which was premissed on the assumption that the industry had to survive in the national interest. Thus, in the context of reliance upon corporate co-operation and permissive interventionism policy was guided by the interplay of existing corporate interests, qualified in a limited way by the defensive actions of organised workers. On the other hand, a more coercive interventionism would have exposed the underlying contradictions glossed over in the rhetoric of modernisation, without transcending the discrete sectoral interests of specific sectors and units of corporate capital.[58]

State Strategy and Funding in the Aero-industry: The Plowden Report

As has already been noted, state intervention in the aircraft and aero-engine industries has had a more continuous history than that in shipbuilding. Both the centrality of military projects and the massive research and development expenditures involved in the sector have guaranteed such state involvement, and have made the overall economics of the industry explicitly dependant on state policy and spending. The Plowden Committee, which reported in 1965, developed a strategic appraisal of the position and future of both aircraft and aero-engine builders by tracing the ramifications of these features of the relationship between the state and the sector throughout the post-war period.[59] In their account of developments during that period they distinguished two distinct phases. The first, covering the first post-war decade, was marked by the continued preponderance of production for military purposes. Though the industry contracted immediately after the war, large-scale production of military aircraft continued; the development costs associated with such projects were borne by the state; and this resulted in an expansion of the industry, an increase in capital employed, and higher profits. While military

production was heavily predominant, this period also saw a variety of attempts, with some government aid and very mixed results, to break into the American dominated civil aircraft production market.

By the mid-'50s military strategy and the rising costs of R and D brought a substantial, though erratic, cut-back in military spending. In this context "the manufacturers embarked at their own expense on a range of new civil projects, including the Trident and the VC 10, and the Spey engine", but they soon turned to the government for state aid.[60] Thus Plowden summarises the position in 1965 in stark terms:

> "the main types of military aircraft recently built in Britain for our Armed Forces have failed to sell abroad. At the same time, heavy increases in the estimated costs of these projects during development threatened to throw an insuperable burden on our own defence budget... British civil aircraft of the new generation of advanced jets have failed in general, in spite of their technical qualities, to realise the commercial expectations with which they were launched. The main projects now in the civil programme have together absorbed over the last five years substantial private capital, as well as an increasing contribution from Government funds. They do not as a whole promise a return commensurate with the investment."[61]

Underlying this situation the Plowden committee diagnosed a squeeze between intensifying international competition (basically American) and escalating R and D costs. The American producers benefited from a substantial and continuing military orderbook and a well established predominance in civil aviation based on a large home market. This meant that US airframe and aero-engine companies were able to sustain much larger production runs than the British manufacturers.[62] Thus R and D expenditure could be written off over more production units, production organisation could itself be standardised, and so-called 'learning costs' became less burdensome. On this basis, and in the context of a continuing capacity to capitalise upon state-financed R and D for military and space projects, the American industry was in a very strong competitive position: lower prices and longer production runs sustained each other and reduced the impact of escalating R and D expenditure.

This basic pattern, the squeeze between international competition and R and D costs, was given an extra twist through the interplay between market relations and high-technology, long-gestation production. Plowden's characterisation of this deserves quotation:

> "the difficulty has been less the character of the technological

changes than the speed with which they suceeded each other. The pace has been embarrassing, for no sooner has a new aircraft been brought into service than its successor has followed hard behind. The military customer, with his crucial need to possess the most up-to-date equipment, has been faced with perplexing choices....the aircraft or weapons take so long to develop that they are always liable, through some unexpected technical development, to become out of date before they are in full production. The high costs involved bring heavy penalties for faulty choices. The civil operator has similar problems. Competition between international airlines is intense, and an operator risks heavy losses if he commits himself prematurely to an aircraft which is succeeded in a short time by a type offering marked technical or economic advantages."[63]

The airframe sector bore the brunt of these pressures in the second post-war decade. Aero-engine production was less vulnerable because particular projects were somewhat flexible between military and civil markets and between different airframe specifications. Thus the aero-engine firms were able to sustain a strong competitive position in international markets, and remained quite profitable in the early '60s. Yet the engine producers were not exempt from the growth of R and D expenditures, and the parlous position of the airframe producers did ramify into the aero-engine field.[64] Thus by the mid-1960s the pressures outlined above were begining to have an impact:

"Rolls-Royce engines formed 31% by value of sales of installed turbine engines in civil aircraft in the West between 1956 and 1964. British engines, especially Avon, Orpheus and Tyne engines, were used in military aircraft built in European and other countries. But British engines have been meeting increasingly strong competition and the level of exports of new engines sold seperately from aircraft had fallen by 1964 to just over one-third of the 1961 peak."[65]

The experience of the RB 211 in the late 1960's, which will be discussed below, was to exemplify the same squeeze, between American competition and escalating R and D costs, in the aero-engine sector as Plowden identified in the airframe field.

Having made this diagnosis of the industry's performance, and on the basis of forecasts of declining demand for military aircraft and continuing tight competition for civil orders, the Plowden Report went on to prescribe a reduction of state expenditure and a slimming down of the industry on the one hand, and increasing reliance on collaboration with European producers to improve the relationship between R and D costs and sales on the other.

In regard to state aid the report argued that extant levels of funding could not be justified. Defense, technology transfer and balance of payments considerations were judged to justify some state funding, but the social costs of unemployment, wasted skills and poorer jobs were emphatically ruled out of consideration. This was made particularly clear when the committee argued that:

> "many of the most highly trained and highly skilled people might find it hard to get work that interested or paid them as much as their previous work, or that fully used their aptitudes and skills. Such downgrading of skills might involve much personal hardship; but it would seem a totally wrong order of national priorities to maintain the industry at a level any higher than it would otherwise be, and encourage young people to develop their skills, in order to allow certain people to continue to do what they are particularly good at".[66]

In these respects, then, the Plowden version of modernisation and rationalisation for competitiveness, applied to a sector which in terms of both high technology and state involvement was a more obvious exemplar of Wilsonian themes than was shipbuilding, was more blunt, less willing to gloss over the conflicting interests subsumed under 'modernisation', than was Geddes. Even in relation to those grounds for state funding which were accorded legitimacy, the objective was defined in terms of keeping such funding lower, as close as possible to levels for other industries.

In the mean time, the report argued, state aid should take a form which complemented funding from private capital. This was conceived of in terms of (a) launching aid with repayments based on sales, and (b) state involvement through shareholding and board level representation, the latter being seen as an alternative to any detailed parallel structure of financial and production controls or nationalisation. Indeed the issue of detailed parallel controls was central to the Plowden Report's recommendations, and the argument for their removal was made most forcefully with reference to those existing control structures which had accompanied earlier state funding.[67] However, while this side of their argument was widely welcomed by the firms, the other side, the recommended state shareholdings and board representation, was very controversial. It was rejected in a 'note of reservation' by one member of the committee, and vigorously opposed by the industry (though it should be noted that aero-engines, still profitable at this time, were anyway excluded from the state shareholding provision by Plowden itself).[68]

In respect of the relationship between R and D costs and production runs, the Report argued that projects with very high R and D expenditures (such as advanced military aircraft) or limited prospects for substantial sales (such as long-haul jets) should be relinquished to American producers. In the remaining areas European collaboration should provide the basis for spreading expenditure over longer production runs made possible by bigger markets. The dual strategy of the Report, of changes in state funding and control on one hand, and European collaboration on R and D, marketing and production on the other, was also seem as having immediate ramifications for the existing grouping of firms in Britain. American firms constituted the key competitors. Thus, even following the mergers that had already occurred in the UK industry in the early 1960's competition between UK firms in this context could be self-defeating. In these circumstances the Plowden Report recommended a permissive approach to the merger of the airframe producers on the one hand and the engine producers on the other, perhaps building on the production-sharing arrangements already in operation to give one big UK company in each of these areas; permissive, though, because of the uncertain implications of the dual strategy prior to negotiations with European producers.

The rhetoric of the Plowden Report as a whole was very much that of the aero-industry being a test-case of the capacity of the British industry to survive in the face of international competition through the deployment of technological skills. Slimmed production and manpower with European collaboration would bring increased productivity and competitiveness and demonstrate the possibility of British success on the basis of high-technology, skill-intensive production. Indeed the report repeatedly formulated its ultimate objective in terms of creating, on the basis of the above strategy, a sector which would become profitable enough to be emancipated from substantial state funding and become an increasingly attractive prospect for the investment of private capital. The major grounds for industry opposition to the Plowden recommendations hinged not on the arguments about European collaboration, longer production runs or a civil exports drive, but on the shift away from an emphasis on state funded high-technology military aircraft as the bedrock of British aircraft production. It was this shift which underpinned both the recommendation to buy American for the most R and D-intensive products, and, less directly, the proposal for state shareholdings in lieu of detailed bureaucratic controls; and these were the proposals most resented by the industry, especially in the context of continuing cancellations of military projects by the Wilson government.[69] Such resentments do point up some of the cross-

cutting imperatives of state policy in the sector, such as commitment to costly defence programmes, pressures for economising on state expenditures, balance of payments and other advantages of home purchasing, concerns to facilitate the long-term viability of private capital, interests in the detailed regulation of private production by the military customers and by the dispensers of state funds, and finally concern (not least for localised electoral reasons) with protection of employment. In addition they also draw attention to the point that a high-technology modernisation strategy appeared to be contradicted by the purchase of US equipment in the most 'advanced' sectors of production. Nevertheless, Plowden does indicate in a fairly stark fashion the options and pressures facing both the individual units of capital in the aircraft industry, and state policy makers concerned with this sector of the manufacturing and exporting economy, pinpointed in the Wilsonian rhetoric of industrial renewal.

For the aero-engine producers, primarily Bristol-Siddeley and Rolls-Royce, the implications of the Report can be summarised in the following terms. They faced the same problems as the airframe manufacturers -- declining and uncertain military orders, intensified competition and escalating R and D costs -- but in a delayed and less severe form. According to Plowden this meant they would become increasingly reliant on launching aid from the state, but given their continuing profitability this would not justify a state shareholding. European collaboration and rationalisation of production were as relevant for them as for the airframe companies, and while the two large companies might represent sufficient concentration in the industry a note of caution was also sounded in this regard:

> "if circumstances arose in which competition between the groups, both receiving large Government-financed research and development contracts, became destructive and weakened the industry as a whole in relation to its American competitors, amalgamation could well be in the national interest."[70]

Finally it should be emphasised that, while escalating capital costs rather than wages were clearly identified as the critical problem for the industry, the recommendations for mergers, collaboration, and the consequent reorganisation of production had clear ramifications for the experience of shop floor workers.[71] This was indicated at one of the several points where the Plowden Report commented upon the advantages enjoyed by US producers:

> "witnesses from the industry pointed out that productivity suffers when procurement policy is indecisive. Surplus labour is retained in

the hope that further work will be received. In the lulls when a contract is being reviewed and its future is in doubt the employees rarely work at full stretch, though the overheads remain high. The practice of ordering aircraft in a series of small batches prevents manufacturers from setting up the most efficient production arrangements. Efforts to keep down costs by reducing the rate of spend sometimes increase the size of the final bill. All these things contribute to poor overall productivity. Manufacturers in the United States gain many advantages through their longer production runs.

> These runs afford the benefits of 'learning' in production, they justify higher investment in jigs, tools and specialised equipment and they provide the environment for bolder production planning."[72]

Thus the committee implied that a more stringent but less erratic commercial environment and larger batch production would combine to limit 'overmanning' and allow tighter production controls, though how far the move from small batches was realistic remained uncertain while the implications of such developments for craft skills and job control remained unspecified.

The Sunderland aero-engine workers, more than the workers in marine engineering, existed on the periphery of large and complex corporate entities. In 1965 873 people were employed in the Sunderland factory, out of a total of over thirty-one thousand Bristol Siddeley employees; and after the merger they were a very small part of the Rolls-Royce empire which, in 1967, employed over eighty-eight thousand people.[73] Nevertheless, the very fact of the merger, which brought the transfer of production at the Pallion factory from Bristol to Derby work, attests to the impact of the processes analysed by Plowden on the experience of those workers. The 'logic' of the merger, and some of its ramifications, will be examined below in relation to the development of the corporate strategies of Bristol Siddeley and Rolls-Royce, but at this point it can be noted that not only did the twin exigencies of intensified competition and escalating R and D costs condition the merger itself, but they continued to beset the resulting corporate empire, resulting in job losses, pressures for savings in production, and ultimately bankruptcy and rescue by state takeover.

As for the analysis of state policy formation and strategy, the Plowden Report can be seen to have wrestled with the dilemmas posed by the major role of the state in both funding R and D and purchasing products of the aircraft industry, without producing any neat mechanism for

resolving those dilemmas. It can also be seen to have diagnosed in fairly accurate fashion the problems posed by international corporate competition with US firms integrated into the 'military-industrial complex', and to have defined some of the likely corporate responses, in terms of mergers, rationalisation of production and appeals for continuing state aid. The rather mixed fate of the Plowden recommendations, both in terms of immediate political reception and longer term adoption, perhaps serves to underline the contradictions and limitations of state policies designed to revitalise manufacturing capital, when they are caught, for instance, between economic imperatives particular to one sector and others of more generic relevance, yet are unavoidably implicated in the survival of that sector. Putting aside consideration of such exigencies of state strategy I now intend to consider briefly the positions and strategies of the specific marine-engineering and aero-engineering firms which employed the workers I interviewed.

Doxford and Sunderland Ltd. (Marine Engine Division)

Doxford's were a pioneer of marine diesel engines, having designed a prototype on the eve of the First World War and engined some of the small number of ships launched during the depression. During and after the Second War they gained a pre-eminent position in British marine-engine design and production (with other UK companies building Doxford engines under licence).[74] However, during the late '50s and early '60s other engine designs challenged this pre-eminence, and by the mid-1960s they were in eclipse, dependant for their orders upon the shipbuilding divisions of the Doxford and Sunderland company.[75] This rapid decline of the Doxford engine was clearly documented in the Geddes Report (see table 2 on p 55 above), and continued through the late 1960s: by 1968 it accounted for only 0.85% of total UK diesel output and 7 engines, against 29.23% and 261 engines for Sulzer and 23.32% and 208 engines for Burmeister and Wain, its erstwhile competitors.[76] Thus, Doxford, with the only UK-designed range of slow-speed diesel engines, suffered not only from the general decline in the competitiveness of UK shipbuilding but also from the diminishing popularity of those engines. In this context the company sought to protect its position firstly by falling back upon orders tied to ships built by Doxfords and secondly by research and development work aimed at the recapturing of some of its lost market. This meant that, by the time of the Geddes Report Doxford's marine-engine division was set on strategies which cross-cut those recommended in the report: rather than the merger

and rationalisation of independant marine engine firms, it was part of a shipbuilding group and seeking its own salvation through an isolated R and D effort.

Turning to the financial position of the Doxford and Sunderland Group, it is evident from table 3 that the group experienced a major crisis of profitability during the 1960s, and particularly after 1965. These figures relate to the company as a whole so that the overall pattern of performance cannot be projected directly onto marine engineering. However, as was noted above, the major purchaser of Doxford engines in this period was the Doxford shipyards so they shared the exigencies of pricing and profitability indicated by the figures. In addition the notes indicate the significance of R and D expenditure on new engine projects, while separate figures for the Engine Division, available for 1969-1973, underline the contribution of that division to the decline in profitability at the end of the '60s (see table 4).

The profit and loss figures for the 1960's reflect the vulnerability of Doxfords, in common with other UK shipbuilders, to cost-inflation on fixed-price contracts in the context of intense international competition. In both 1966-67 and 1971-72 this resulted in substantial losses, and the period culminated in the takeover of the company by Court Line in 1972. The Company Report for 1967 drew out some of the implications of the company's position:

> "the future of the British shipbuilding industry and of our own precise position in it remains obscure. On the other hand a definite improvement in our affairs has taken place [profits are 'hoped for' next year]....Although the shipyard and engine works were busy throughout last year, the lack of new orders, both for ships and engines, in recent months has been a cause of serious concern.... reduction of costs is a paramount need to which we must direct our energies....If we continue to go it alone we shall do our best to reduce costs, and thus to increase our competitive strength by increasing our efficiency and streamlining our organisation. It may well be however that really substantial strides in this direction will require a merging with others of our present shipbuilding and engine building interests....The success of the Doxford 'J' engine is, of course, a factor important to the future of this group, whether on its own or as part of a larger group. The first flow of orders, as I explained a year ago, was embarrassingly above our available capacity."[77]

Table 3:

Financial Performance of Doxford and Sunderland Ltd.

Year	Profit Before Tax	Profit After Tax	Retained Profit
1960	1,248,318	660,318	375,506
1961	819,361	427,361	59,478
1962	723,097	375,124	170,511
1963	668,141	405,218	188,546
1964	550,929[a]	422,929	206,257
1965	437,168[a]	512,168	299,754
1966	(loss) 3,155,843[ab]	(loss) 2,465,933	(minus) 2,512,199[c]
1967	(loss) 157,876	(loss) 157,876	(minus) 374,126
1968	1,219,245	480,245	126,495
1969	1,599,000	875,000	521,000
1970	562,000[d]	309,000	93,000
1971	(loss) 1,249,000[d]	(loss) 1,010,000	(minus) 1,089,000
1972	(loss) 1,542,000	(loss) 1,342,000	(minus) 1,421,000

Note: (a) after writing off development expenditure on new 'J' engine, 1964: £104,920; 1965: £139,132; 1966: £41,499.

(b) including estimated future losses on existing contracts of £2,500,000.

(c) income tax recoverable on basis of 1966 loss and substantial investment allowances on M.T. 'North Sands' credited to 1967 accounts.

(d) after charging Doxford Seahorse engine development costs less grants, 1970: £35,000; 1971: £152,000.

Data from Company Reports, summarised in Extel Statistical Cards D1 - DQ 22 updated to 14/4/70 and 25/8/71.

Table 4:

Doxford Engine Division Performance 1969-73

1969	(loss) £41,000	1970	(loss) £58,000	1971	(loss) £102,000
1972	£201,000	1972(March/Sept)	£178,000	1973	£462,000

Data from Department of Trade Court Line Ltd. (Final Report) Investigation under Section 165(b) of the Companies Act 1948, para 297, p 72, 1978.

(see also P.W. Clarke and B.D. Costello The Shipbuilding Industry - a survey for private circulation - London 1966 pp 130-139 for related data for 1961-65, showing the limited contribution of engineering as a whole).

This statement, despite its platitudes, might have been issued at any time in the late 1960s as a fair indication of the company's position. Its themes recur in company reports and press comments throughout the period, and can be summarised in terms of:

(i) fluctuating order books with persistent pressure on pricing;

(ii) continuing hopes for improved prospects based on new engine developments - the 'J' engine in the mid to late '60s and the Seahorse in the early '70s - without much evidence of increased market shares or increased profits on that basis;

(iii) persistent references to drives for increased efficiency and reduced costs, as in a Financial Times report in 1969 that "an efficiency drive is in hand";[78]

(iv) tentative but unenthusiastic discussions of the grouping and rationalisation strategy advocated by Geddes.

In sum, then, the evidence is of a persistent preoccupation with economising and rationalising measures within the existing corporate structure, but also with the possibility of developing a new successful engine design, as responses to a continuing squeeze on profits. Again this pinpoints the continuing rationales for jobbing production in the context of Doxford's self-contained strategy, though it also reaffirms the existence of the pressures which prompted Geddes to recommend a shift to larger batch production and tighter production control. It also underlines the fact that a long period of relative prosperity for Doxfords during the post-war period gave way quite rapidly during the 1960s to deepening crisis. By 1971 the overcapacity in the industry was acute, and Doxfords was reportedly working at only 75% capacity, though that was still better than the figures reported for the majority of the surviving marine engine builders at that time.[79]

George Clark and N.E.M. Ltd.

George Clark and N.E.M. were part of the substantial marine engineering interests of Richardsons, Westgarth and Co. Ltd. -- a group which throughout the post-war period also embraced ship-repairing, mechanical and electrical engineering and steel fabrication among its activities. The group as a whole sustained losses over several years in the early and mid 1960's, and was generally regarded as being in a parlous state throughout that period, while by all accounts the marine engineering side of the business contributed disproportionately to this position. Thus the Financial Times commented in 1967 that:

"the point is that Richardsons Westgarth has still to produce the

> convincing solution to its problems. Judging from its record, losses in four out of the last seven years -- and the state of demand in shipbuilding, there is little to be said for soldiering on as it is ....the current focus of negotiation is the marine engine activity, though hiving it off before profits are in sight is not going to be easy and Richardsons Westgarth can hardly afford to consolidate more losses."[80]

In the event the parent company did not divest itself of marine engine building but embarked on a major reorganisation and rationalisation of production facilities through the late 1960s; becoming (as has been noted) the major beneficiary within marine engineering of state funding dispensed by the Shipbuilding Industry Board. At the same time the company continued diversification into steel stockholding and general engineering, though this became a more prominent feature of corporate strategy in the early 1970s than it was in the late 1960s.

The rationalisation of marine engine production had an immediate and profound impact on the Sunderland Works of George Clark and N.E.M. This, the oldest existing marine engine firm on the Wear, had participated in the major amalgamation to form Richardsons Westgarth in 1938, and had, by the mid 1950s, become a major producer of the increasingly successful Sulzer diesel, produced under licence.[81] According to the Geddes figures the marine engine interests of the Richardsons Westgarth Group as a whole were, by the early 1960s, the producers of the largest total output of engines for merchant ships in Britain, and very much the biggest producers of the popular Sulzer designs.[82] Of the Southwick (Sunderland) works of George Clark it was reported in 1965 that they had:

> "secured an order to supply Clark-Sulzer machinery for two 24,000 ton bulk carriers, [and] would like to increase their labour force of 750 by ten to fifteen per cent to meet the growing volume of work on hand. 'Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to find men. We particularly need skilled men, but there is a shortage everywhere' the works director...told the Echo today."[83]

However, the rationalisation measures prompted by the losses sustained by the group (and the proposals and incentives following Geddes) brought the virtual closure of the Sunderland works in 1967, as production was consolidated on the Tyne. The impact of this development was graphically conveyed in the local news report of the announcement by the company:

> "over 400 of the 640 men employed at the Sunderland engine works of George Clark and N.E.M. Ltd. are to be paid off by the end of July in a phased run-down. By mid-summer only one department of the 113-

year-old works will still be in operation, with production in future being concentrated at the company's Wallsend works. The news came in an announcement by the company's managing director....'We regret that the position forecast last December -- that unless more orders for engines were obtained, there would be heavy redundancies in our engine works -- has occurred...It has therefore been decided to concentrate production of the current order book at the Northumberland Engine Works...'...the Wear District Delegate of the Boilermakers' Society described the announcement as 'a great shock'.."[84]

Thus the explanation given for the virtual closure was lack of orders, which made retrenchment inevitable, though this prompted the immediate question "whether the run-down is due to lack of orders or is a move towards the type of amalgamation recommended by the Geddes Report?".[85] This question was posed by the local Labour M.P.s in the hope that the former might be alleviated by "short-term orders" while the latter might provide more political space for debate, though in the end it would only be a question of "alleviating any hardships caused by redundancy".[86] In retrospect the closure can be seen as very much part of the process of Geddes rationalisation. Following the run down, largely accomplished by June 1967, George Clark and N.E.M. Ltd. went on to gain substantial financial assistance from the Shipbuilding Industry Board (80% of the total grants bestowed upon main engine builders) to rationalise production and increase capacity in line with the Geddes analysis of economies of scale.[87] Thus the S.I.B. Report for March 1971 noted the only significant development as "the modernisation scheme [at George Clark and NEM] started in 1968. When complete, this will have raised their productive capacity from 8-9 engines per annum, equivalent to about 100,000 bhp to 25-30 engines per annum, equivalent to some 300,000-350,000 bhp".[88] This became the context in which the Southwick works continued, throughout the 1960's and the 1970's, to operate as a small offshoot of the main, rationalised, production sites, surviving largely on remnants of production operations which were not easily accomodated in the rationalised process. Final closure came in 1980.

Turning back to the overall financial performance of the Richardsons, Westgarth Group during this period, 1967 represented a minor turning point. In the autumn the chairman reported on "confidence in the long term exemplified by capital expenditure approved", while "much work has been dome towards a scheme for rationalising marine engineering on the N.E. Coast, but the outcome cannot presently be anticipated", though "for the time being uneconomic working of available capacity appears to be unavoidable".[89] The following year the overall performance of the group was

Table 5:

Financial Performance of

Richardsons, Westgarth and Co. Ltd.

Year	Profit Before Tax	Profit After Tax	Retained Profit
1962	(loss) 767,162	(loss) 710,162	(minus) 710,162
1963	(loss) 134,154	(loss) 110,153	(minus) 110,153
1964	200,243	173,243	(minus) 7,778
1965	120,572	107,182	(minus) 66,450
1966	892,673	(loss) 861,883	(minus) 861,883
1967	147,299	(loss) 147,299	(minus) 147,299
1968	367,850	267,350	(minus) 28,194
1969	616,500	401,500	46,847
1970	571,636	407,636	52,983
1971	687,909	476,271	92,064
1972	1,320,304	883,304	351,325
1973	1,402,966	830,172	271,595

Data from Company Reports, summarised in Extel Statistical Cards RI - RN 79 updated to 19/8/71 and 17/8/72.

improved by withdrawal from an unprofitable Atomic Power Construction venture, but still drew the comment:

> "Richardsons Westgarth have produced the expected surplus after 4 losses in the previous 7 years. Nevertheless the 5% dividend is covered only by dint of the recovery of tax overprovisions. In fact the results do nothing by themselves to suggest that Richardsons Westgarth is close to getting back on an even keel....What the share price has to cling to is the resurgence of UK shipbuilding which is producing badly needed orders for the marine engine side, and presumably brings nearer the day when that troublesome section can join in a N.E. Coast rationalisation scheme -- to which end there have been longstanding negotiations."[90]

The overall performance of the Group between 1962 and 1973 is shown in table 5, though as a Financial Times report of 1968 noted "what the confused Richardsons Westgarth situation cries out for is a breakdown of the groups' results so that a reasonable idea can be gleaned of the size of the individual profits and losses. Sadly this is once again lacking".[91] Clearly the marine engine company remained a persistent problem for the group throughout the period, and was a constant preoccupation in terms of rationalisation projects and grouping proposals. Despite being the main beneficiary of state aid during the life of the S.I.B., rationalisation (it was largely confined within corporate boundaries (rather than embracing all the builders in the region) and there was sustained pressure on all locations for increased efficiency and reduced costs. In the early 1970's the Group achieved a substantial improvement in profitability, to which both the Wallsend and Southwick works contributed, but in 1971 the engine works as a whole were still only working at just 63% of the much increased capacity.[92] These circumstances constitute the conditions surrounding the precipitate run down of the Southwick works in 1967, and its continuing but precarious existence as a small production site thereafter, and thus the context within which the experience of the remaining workers must be understood.[93]

Rolls Royce Ltd. & Bristol Siddeley Engines Ltd.

Perhaps the best insight into the positions of these two companies in the mid 1960s, and the circumstances surrounding their merger in 1966, is provided by the Report of the Inquiry into the bankruptcy of Rolls Royce Limited, published in 1972 following the collapse of the merged company under the weight of R and D expenditure on its new big engine, the RB 211.[94] The discussion which follows leans heavily upon this report,

supplemented by press commentary and managerial reminiscences.

As the Plowden Report noted, the aero-engine firms prospered in the first post-war decade. After an initial contraction they were able to expand, primarily on the basis of military work. This was particularly true of the two companies, Bristol Aero-Engines Ltd. and Armstrong-Siddeley Ltd., which first formed a joint venture and then merged in 1959. At that time 71% of their business was with the Government, and the merger was itself prompted by the proposed run-down of military expenditure and the need to develop a firm basis for competition in that context, not least with Rolls Royce. The conditions of post-war prosperity, largely dependant on military work, provided the setting in which the Bristol Aeroplane Company (as it then was) established a branch factory in Sunderland, rapidly expanding into three large plots on the Pallion Trading Estate after arriving in 1951.

Even at the time of the merger which created Bristol-Siddeley Engines Ltd. some of the pressures discussed by Plowden appear to have been in evidence. The problematical relationship between technological advance, based on high R and D expenditure, and current profitability, based on established production runs, can be glimpsed in the terms in which the two concerns were apparently compared and judged complementary. Bristol Aero-engines was regarded as technologically advanced but financially weak while Armstrong-Siddeley were deemed to have a healthy cash-flow while lagging technically.[95] Following the merger the company continued to rely fairly heavily upon military orders, and (it became clear as a consequence of the Wilson Inquiry) relied disproportionately for its profitability upon military spares and repairs contracts which the company regarded as offsetting development costs.[96] It did, however, engage in some important civil projects.

Rolls-Royce engaged seriously in the development and production of aero-engines for civil aircraft rather earlier. Between 1951 and 1966 they developed a series of turboprop and turbojet engines which were used for both military and civil aircraft. As the Department of Trade and Industry investigation notes "some, such as the Avon, started as military engines and later were turned to civil use. Others, like the Spey, started as private venture civil engines which later had military applications".[97] Though the return on investment in these engines was of long gestation, they were the basis of the company's sustained profitability, a profitability based increasingly on civil work.[98] Between 1956 and 1965 the

proportion of civil aero-engines sold increased from 40% to 67% of the total. The crucial role of such engines in the Rolls Royce competitive strategy was underlined by the fact that "in 1963 the Spey became the first engine in airline service to carry a ten-year parts-costs guarantee".[99] This series of engines did not, however, provide the basis for engining the new generation of passenger aircraft anticipated for the 1970s. Thus Rolls Royce began initial design work in the early 1960s on a big, advanced technology engine which would be an effective competitor for this role. This was to become, after the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation had placed its order for such an engine in 1968, the famed RB 211.

Meanwhile the pattern of inter-firm competition in the aero-engine field envisaged by the Plowden Report had developed. The two companies were competing for diminishing military orders while competition in the civil field was also intensifying. In this latter context there was a real possibility that Bristol-Siddeley would develop links with an American competitor in its battle with Rolls Royce, thus ultimately weakening the overall competitive position of the British firms. These problems prompted Rolls Royce to acquire Bristol-Siddeley, to remove the threat of the US link up, and to overcome the tendency for state funding to go disproportionately to their competitor.[100] The merger was thus primarily defensive, though the discussions within the company at the time also emphasised the possibilities it offered for the rationalisation of marketing, production and, especially, capacity utilisation. Thus, among the advantages of merger noted at the time was "the control of the total British capacity in the event of a contraction in requirements, which would enable us to influence how and where this should take place", with analagous advantages of control in the event of a shortage of capacity.[101]

The merger was finalised in September 1966, but the merged company continued to face the twin problems of escalating R-and D costs and intensified competition, while also confronting the task of integrating two large and complex corporate entities. By the time of the merger the Spey engine was becoming the 'bread and butter' basis of Rolls Royce's profitability. Its development as a 'private venture' project had, apparently, placed then unprecedented financial strains on the company in the first few years of the 1960s.[102] However, by the mid 1960s the Spey and its variants had become the lynch-pin of the company's viability:

Table 6:

Financial Performance of Rolls Royce Ltd.

Year	Profit Before Tax (£'s)	Profit After Tax (£'s)	Retained Profit (£'s)	R & D Expenditure (£'s)
1960	6,212,000	4,196,000	2,835,000	5,358,000
1961[a]	2,544,000	2,544,000	1,531,000	6,315,000
1962	1,819,000	1,819,000	1,028,000	4,721,000
1963	5,856,000	4,035,000	2,772,000	4,634,000
1964	6,511,000	3,680,000	2,139,000	4,565,000
1965	6,933,000	4,554,000	2,863,000	5,391,000
1966	8,429,000	5,287,000	978,000[b]	6,818,000
1967	11,827,000	7,252,000	757,000[b]	5,688,000
1968	15,919,000	8,793,000	1,301,000[b]	6,364,000
1969	6,407,000	4,135,000	44,000[b]	10,286,000[d]
1970[e]	(loss) 12,200,000	(loss) 9,000,000	(loss) 87,800,000[c]	10,900,000

Note: (a) The DTI Report noted that Rolls changed its accounting basis in 1961 because of financial difficulties arising from R and D costs of the Tyne and Spey engines: "the previous practice had been to write off in the profit and loss account all R & D expenditure as it was incurred" but from 1961 it was decided "to carry forward in the balance sheet some part of the money spent on R & D". Without this change 1961 and several other years would have shown a negative retained profit. (DTI Report para 538).

(b) On the basis of the DTI Report figures retained profit for these years would read: 1966 £1.6m; 1967 £1.4m: 1968 £1.5m; and 1969 minus £10.7m after deduction of additional R & D provision mentioned in note d. Otherwise the DTI and Gray (Company Report) figures agree.

(c) This includes a special provision on the RB 211 for future production losses of £78.8m.

(d) This excludes the special provision of £11m additional R & D expenditure on the RB 211, allowed for in the final accounts.

(e) Figures for 1970 from the DTI Report.

Data from Robert Gray Rolls on the Rocks Salisbury 1971 tables III and IV pp 92-93; and Department of Trade and Industry Report into the Financial Affairs of Rolls-Royce HMSO London 1973 Appendix 1 (DTI Report).

in 1967 the Financial Times reported that "1968, which is expected to be the peak period for Spey engine deliveries, should be good for Rolls", and later reports confirmed the boom in Spey sales.[103] This assessment was confirmed even in the intensive scrutiny by the DTI investigation:

> "the Spey found military applications and has been consistently uprated to achieve further sales. The Spey family of engines has been successful. Although initially the Spey imposed strains on Rolls-Royce it had broken even financially after eight years of life and was showing useful profits by the end of 1970."[104]

However, alongside these developments ran the mounting R and D commitments on the RB 211 — a counterpoint to the emergent profitability of the Spey. It was this escalation, coupled with a fixed-price contract with Lockheed (a consequence of the competitive pressure), a fixed percentage (70%) deal on launching aid from the Government, and heavy borrowings, which precipitated the bankruptcy of the company in 1971 (profitability and R and D costs are detailed in table 6).

The position of the Bristol-Siddeley component of the new company was less dramatic than that of the Rolls divisions, but reflected similar exigencies. Beset by the same competitive pressures, the company had been reliant upon very substantial profits on spares and repairs work in the late 1950s and early '60s, and by the time of the merger it had not only been hit by the cancellation of Government contracts in 1965 and Government claims for repayments on the overcharged spares and repairs work of earlier years, but also found its profit margins on commercial engines under pressure.[105] In summary the Bristol divisions were falling short of past and forecast profits, were suffering from overcapacity, and were dependant upon an increasing borrowing requirement at the time of the merger. In consequence the DTI investigation concluded that "not only was the profit forecast not being achieved, but Rolls-Royce was having to provide additional capital at a time when its own liquidity was under steadily mounting pressure".[106] Thus, while the marger did not precipitate the crisis which resulted in the 1971 bankruptcy and the state takeover, it did nothing to prevent it.

It is in this context, then, of intensifying international competition for civil orders associated with declining military orders, leading to declining profits and overcapacity on one side and massive technological gambles with enormous R and D costs on the other, that the progress of rationalisation of a disparate group of divisions and their associated factories has to be understood.

The most obvious feature of the process of rationalisation was the threat posed to the continuing existence of some factories. In May of 1968 it was announced that the Bristol Engine Division of Rolls Royce was to close factories in Cardiff and Bentham with a possible loss of 950 jobs, and in January 1969 more redundancies were declared with the closure of Stag Lane (Watford) and the proposed loss of 700 jobs at Bristol. The cancellation of projects and the declining importance of established products were blamed for the first closures, and on that occasion the Financial Times commented that "although Bristol Engines parent; Rolls Royce, is itself heavily committed on current orders, including the RB 211 for the US L 1011 trijet, it is believed that the difficulties of transferring some of this work into the two plants would not be sufficiently economic to justify such action".[107] In 1969 the problem was the delay of the Concorde engine programme, and on that occasion the press comment was that "Rolls Royce tried to cushion the blow by putting a brake on recruitment, and hoped that retirements would take care of the rest of the labour problem. But that has proved impossible".[108] Thus the Plowden perspective on slimming down the industry without regard to the social costs of redundancies, and that aspect of the rationalisation strategy of the merger which involved "the control of the total British capacity in the event of a contraction", were both reflected in the consequences of the merger. In this context the Bristol Engines outpost at Sunderland was clearly vulnerable, and in a sense 'fortunate' to begin to be given work associated with the 'bread and butter' Spey engine,shifted from Derby as the core of the Rolls empire geared up for RB 211 production; though both management and workers continued to feel peripheral and insecure.

Turning to the issue of internal rationalisation, in June 1969 the financial press were still reporting that "integration is continuing, and the ability provided thereby to concentrate greater engineering strength on any project which requires it is being exploited. At the same time economies are being achieved by avoiding duplication of resources".[109] However, the process of integration was by no means simple. In the first place it was mediated by the inevitable process of managerial micropolitics, not only involving rivalry between managements of the erstwhile rival companies but also, cross-cutting this, conflicts over, for example, priority of civil versus military projects.[110] Secondly, the two constituent companies bequeathed discrepant systems of organisation and control. The DTI investigation argued that in the face of such inter-divisional rivalries and divergent costing systems the management had been slow and hesitant in its implementation of rationalisation, and their assessment deserves extended quotation as a good indication of the changes actually occuring in the different divisions during the late 1960s. They

report that:

> "common accounting practises were established for depreciation, tooling expenditure and investment grants; a common profit planning basis, and rates for inter-divisional trading were laid down. Common personnel policies on labour relations and recruitment were investigated. In the commercial area the approach to contractual matters with HMG was standardised. In the production area various projects for coordination and standardisation of operations were embarked upon: for example a company review of machine tools led, by employing inter-divisional transfers of equipment, to an estimated saving of £1million in capital expenditure. However, it was not until almost the end of 1969 that, stemming from the worsening financial situation, real impetus was given to rationalisation of resources with the primary objective of reducing costs"..."A major stumbling block to rapid rationalisation was the existence of widely differing costing systems at BED and DED. Costing at DED was based on a standard hour whereas BED used a batch cost system. Several studies were done both internally and by outside consultants in an attempt to compare efficiencies and costs between the divisions. These were always inconclusive owing to the different costing treatments and principles in use. In the four years following the merger it is true to say that little or no progress was made towards resolving the problem"[111].

This was the context within which all the factories of Rolls Royce operated in the late 1960's, and as an ex-Bristol branch-factory increasingly involved in 'Derby work' the Pallion (Sunderland) works must have been particularly affected both by the efforts at rationalisation of production and control and by their confusions and failures.

Conclusions

Despite the complexities and difficulties confronting both state and corporate policies in each of the sectors I have discussed, and the real differences between the sectors, the above discussion should not only have furnished a background to the examination of workplace experience in Sunderland, but should also have documented some broad similarities in the patterns of state policy and corporate initiatives in the two sectors. In the first place both sectors have traditionally provided employment for considerable proportions of skilled engineering workers[112]. Secondly, the Wilsonian strategy of competitive efficiency via rationalisation and restructuring claimed to combine the preservation and enhancement of such skills with greater commercial success and profitability, but provided little real

evidence of the mutual compatibility of these aims, or the security of the position of skilled employees. Finally, the commercial positions and production strategies of both marine-engine and aero-engine firms during the late 1960s were less coherent or rationalising than implied in state-sponsored analyses and interventions in these industries, but nevertheless represented substantial threats to the job security of craft workers and implied significant changes in the social organisation of the production processes within which they exercised their skills.

In these ways, then, the empirical studies of workplace social relations and experience which follow in the remaining chapters provide the basis for comments on two distinctive areas of sociological debate which address the issues of homogeneity, heterogeneity and change in the experience of waged work in post-war Britain. Firstly they provide a basis for further comparisons between the situations of such 'affluent' manual workers as those studied by Goldthorpe et al - located in expanding mass production industries in the prosperous South - and other groupings within the working class - in this case some groups of relatively well-paid skilled workers in the rather different setting of declining or crisis-ridden batch production industries located in the much less prosperous North East. As such they offer further evidence, alongside that of the studies reviewed in chapter four, of the varied character of workers' experience of, and responses to, prosperity, affluence, restructuring and decline in Britain, during and towards the end of the post-war boom. These comparisons and their implications will be the subject of continuing comment in the chapters which follow.

Secondly my empirical research also represents a study of skilled workers at a <u>particular</u> juncture in the crises, rationalisation and uneven decline of two manufacturing sectors which typify those that have provided a continuing niche for skilled and craft workers in the context of twentieth century capitalist development in Britain. As such it furnishes specific evidence relevant to the appraisal of competing theoretical analyses of the continuities and changes in the experience of such workers in the post-war period, and this issue will be taken up particularly in chapter eight. I have emphasised in this connection that my research illuminates the experience of a particular juncture in processes of rationalisation and decline, in recognition of some of the disjunctions as well as continuities involved. As I have outlined in this chapter, during the 1960s and early '70s these sectors were centrally involved in a process of state-sponsored re-organisation which involved supportive/permissive state intervention and clearly depended upon

the autonomous decisions of private capitals. This form of re-organisation, though a recurrent feature of capitalist restructuring, was particularly characteristic of this period, and especially of Wilsonian Labourism in action. Since then this pattern has given way to further waves of rationalisation which, in both these sectors and under both Tory and Labour administrations, have been implemented through direct state take-over, following first the 'rescue nationalisation' of Rolls Royce under Heath and then the nationalisation of ship-building under Labour. My own fieldwork was conducted before these later phases of restructuring, and thus provides direct evidence only of the specific form and character of changes in craft work in the earlier phase; though it throws some indirect light on later developments and, I hope, has wider analytical relevance.

Finally it is appropriate at this juncture to note that further waves of state-organised restructuring in ship-building and marine engineering had brought about the final closure of the remnant of the smaller, ex-Clarks engine works, and the virtual closure of the larger Doxford engine plant by the early 1980's. British Shipbuilders cut its engineering workforce from 6,000 to just over 3,000 between 1977 and 1983, and, while high hopes continued to be expressed and disappointed regarding the new engine designs, spares and repairs work at Doxfords slowed to a trickle as old ships were laid up in a period of over-capacity[113]. In this context the engine plant at Sunderland lost 87 men in 1977, nearly 500 in 1979 and most of the remainder in 1980, to become a sub-contracting satellite comparable with the Clarks works in the late 1960's just as that works was completely shut down[114]. Meanwhile Rolls-Royce continued to rely on Spey and similar engines for its bread and butter throughout the 1970's, while production targets for the newer engines proved over-optimistic and development costs continued to escalate. In this context Rolls-Royce continued to 'slim' its workforce, destroying 5,000 jobs between 1971 and 1976 and another 10,000 between 1976 and 1982.[115] The Sunderland factory remains open, but has participated in the continuing process of rationalisation, both in terms of substantial job losses and in terms of shifts towards greater 'flexibility and inter-changeability' within the craft work process and the generalised use of n.c. machine tools[116].

chapter 6: footnotes

1 See particularly J.K. Galbraith The New Industrial State Harmondsworth 1969 and Economics and the Public Purpose Harmondsworth 1975; and P. Baran and P. Sweezy Monopoly Capital Harmondsworth 1968.

2 Baran and Sweezy Monopoly Capital esp chapter 3, where they note that "while price competition is normally taboo in oligopolistic situations, this does not mean that it is totally excluded or that it never plays an important role. Any company or group of companies that believes it can permanently benefit from aggressive price tactics will not hesitate to use them" (p 72) but they clearly see this as very much a transient or transitional phenomenon. For a broader critique of their work see A. Gamble and P. Walton Capitalism in Crisis London 1976 chapter 3, though this does not directly confront the theorisation of the market because they pursue a critique couched in terms of market relations being mere appearances.

3 See the neo-classical critique of Galbraith in M. Friedman From Galbraith to Economic Freedom London 1977, and the marxian view of the market in R. Blackburn "The New Capitalism" in his Ideology in Social Science 1972.

4 J.A. Clifton "Competition and the Evolution of the Capitalist Mode of Production" Cambridge Journal of Economics 1977 1 pp 137-151. See also Willi Semmler "Theories of Competition and Monopoly" Capital and Class 18, 1982.

5 Clifton "Competition" p 147.

6 See in particular S. Hymer and R. Rowthorne "Multinational Corporations and International Oligopoly: The Non-American Challenge" in C.P. Kindleberger (ed) The International Corporation Cambridge Mass 1970, R. Rowthorne with S. Hymer International Big Business 1957-1967 Cambridge 1971, and also V. Droucopoulos "The Non-American Challenge: A Report on the Size and Growth of the World's Largest Firms" Capital and Class 14, 1981. The quote is taken from Droucopoulos.

7 This is the critical point of the recent defences of the 'tendency of the rate of profit to fall' by A. Shaikh "Marxian Competition versus Perfect Competition: Further Comments on the so-called Choice of Technique" Cambridge Journal of Economics 1980 4 pp 75-83, and by J. Wecks "Equilibrium, Uneven Development and the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall" Capital and Class 16,1982.

8 The 'black-box' view is the common property of neo-classical economists and many functionalist analyses of management; the emphasis on strategic choice is exemplified by John Child "Organisational Structure, Environment and Performance: the role of strategic choice" Sociology 6, 1972.

9 This discussion represents an attempt to re-locate the approach to management strategy and micropolitics which I developed in Tony Elger "Industrial Organisations" in J. McKinlay (ed) Processing People London 1974, and also a cross-reference to themes of current discussion, such as those debated in David Knights et al (eds) Job Redesign Aldershot, 1985.

10 This might represent one way of reconciling the contradictory emphases in such studies as R.E. Pahl and J.T. Winkler "The Economic Elite: Theory and Practice" in P. Stanworth and A. Giddens (eds) Elites and Power in British Society London 1974.

11 These features have been emphasised in recent marxian debate by the contributers to John Holloway and Sol Picciotto (eds) State and Capital London 1978, especially the editors' introduction, and by John Urry The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies London 1981, while Colin Crouch "The State, Capital and Liberal Democracy" in Crouch (ed) State and Economy in Contemporary Capitalism London 1979 raises similar issues in a more critical vein.

12 I have in mind here the analysis of corporatism advanced by R.E. Pahl and J.T. Winkler "The Coming Corporatism" New Society 10 Oct 1978, and such neo-liberal analyses as that of Alan Budd The Politics of Economic Planning Glasgow 1978. See the discussion in Crouch "State, Capital and Liberal Democracy".

13 This is an issue posed by both Crouch "State, Capital and Liberal Democracy" and Urry Anatomy of Capitalist Societies, and addressed in analyses of 'corporatism' more modest than that of Pahl and Winkler, namely Leo Panitch Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy Cambridge 1976 and "Trade Unions and the Capitalist State" New Left Review 125 1981, and Colin Crouch The Politics of Industrial Relations Glasgow 1979.

14 Paul Foot The Politics of Harold Wilson Harmondsworth 1968 p 152.

15 Labour Party General Election Manifesto 1964, page 8, quoted in A. Graham "Industrial Policy" in W. Beckerman (ed) The Labour Government's Economic Record: 1964-70 London 1972 p 179.

16 This formulation draws on Foot and on Nigel Harris Competition and the Corporate Society London 1972, as well as the other theorists of the role of the state mentioned in footnotes 11 and 13.

17 See Harris Competition and Corporate Society esp chapter 14, and also Budd Politics of Economic Planning chapter 5.

18 Budd Politics of Economic Planning p 94.

19 See Ralph Miliband Parliamentary Socialism London 1964 and also Foot Harold Wilson chapters 2 and 4.

20 Foot Harold Wilson chapters 2-4.

21 Ibid chapters 4 and 5 esp pp 153 and 169.

22 Ibid pp 146-155, compared with Abrams et al Must Labour Lose? on the one hand, and Goldthorpe et al Affluent Worker pp 189-195 on the other.

23 Foot Harold Wilson chapters 5 and 6; Beckerman (ed) Economic Record esp chapters 1, 4 and 5; Panitch Social Democracy chapter 3; and Crouch Industrial Relations chapters 2 & 3.

24 For the details of the National Plan see Graham "Industrial Policy", and also Budd Politics of Economic Planning chapter 6.

25 The characterisation of the strategy in September 1967 is that of Wedgewood Benn, quoted in Stephen Young with A.V. Lowe Intervention in the Mixed Economy London 1974 p 36. The devaluation is discussed in Foot Harold Wilson and in Beckerman (ed) Economic Record; the incomes policy in Hugh Clegg How To Run An Incomes Policy London 1971 and in Panitch Social Democracy chapters 5 and 6.

26 The evidence for these features is contained in Clegg Incomes Policy, Panitch Social Democracy, and Dudley Jackson et al Do Trade Unions Cause Inflation? Cambridge 1972 chapter 3.

27 Panitch Social Democracy chapters 6 & 7, Crouch Industrial Relations chapter 3, and Richard Hyman "Industrial Conflict and the Political Economy" Socialist Register 1973.

28 The detection of upward trends in investment and productivity together with very guarded estimates of their significance is characteristic of the assessments offered by Graham "Industrial Policy" and Beckerman "Objectives and Performance: an overall view" in Beckerman (ed) Economic Record esp pp 54-57 and 200-209. A more positive view of the impact of state policy on manufacturing productivity and even, for a period, industrial investment, is offered by Robert Bacon and Walter Eltis Britain's Economic Problem: Too Few Producers (second edition) London 1978 pp 35-53; though

this assessment is, of course, accompanied by their controversial diagnosis of the impact of the 'non-market' sector in undermining the logic of the labour market and encouraging shedding of labour rather than increasing capacity among manufacturers. This more positive view is buttressed by evidence about the age structure of machine-tools in Britain, reported in R.W. Bacon and W.A. Eltis The Age of US and UK Machinery NEDO Monograph 3 London 1974, but again the evidence is contentious because it focusses on quantitative age differences rather than possible cualitative differences. Finally, the pattern of profitability in this period is discussed in A. Glyn and B. Sutcliffe British Capitalism, Workers and the Profits Squeeze Harmondsworth 1972, and in N.A. King "The UK Profits Crisis: Myth or Reality?" Economic Journal March 1975.

29 Harris Competition and Corporate Society p 217.

30 Ibid p 219. It is also noteworthy that these sectors continued to be singled out as appropriate targets of state intervention even when a non-interventionist stance was being extolled by Conservatives in 1970. Thus Sir Keith Joseph, addressing the Young Conservatives National Advisory Committee on March 7th 1970, noted "some industries such as aircraft, shipbuilding and parts of electronics, need special treatment. The US taxpayer pays for almost all American high technology research and development out of defence and space funds" (quoted in Young with Lowe Intervention p 128).

31 Committee of Inquiry into the Aircraft Industry 1964-1965 Report London 1965 Cmnd 2853 (Plowden Report), and Committee of Inquiry into the Shipbuilding Industry 1965-1966 London 1966 Cmnd 2937 (Geddes Report).

32 The National Plan Cmnd 2764, 1965 pp 28,,81, 109 and annexes 18 and 20.

33 The Geddes Report indicated that the UK share of world tonnage had declined almost continuously in the post-war period, from 50.2% in 1947, to 42.7% in 1950, to 26.6% in 1955, to 15.5% in 1960 and firally to 8.3% in 1964 (appendix K p 185).

34 Ibid esp. parts II, III and IV. A useful background account of the administrative politics surrounding Geddes is provided by Brian W. Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding Farnborough 1979 esp chapters 4 and 5.

35 Geddes Report paras. 205-211, p 66.

36 Ibid para. 186, p 63.

37 It is worth noting that the focus on engine costs was consistent with an explicit statement in the terms of reference of the Committee, clause (b) of which stated that they were "to establish what changes in organisation and methods of production would reduce costs of large main engines to the lowest level", House of Commons Debates 2 Feb 1965, written answers cols. 272-3, quoted in Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding p 66.

38 Geddes Report chapters 13 and 14.

39 Ibid paras. 201-203, p 65.

40 Ibid para. 193 p 64.

41 Ibid para. 216 p 67.

42 Ibid para. 192 p 64.

43 Ibid p. 10

44 On Fairfields see Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding pp 68-73 and K.J.W. Alexander and C.L. Jenkins Fairfields: A Study of Industrial Change London 1970; on Donovan, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations Report Cmnd 3623, 1968 (Donovan Report) and J.H. Goldthorpe "Industrial Relations in Great Britain: A Critique of Reformism" Politics and Society 1974

45 See page 37 above, and the critique of Donovan mounted by Goldthorpe in "Critique of Reformism". It is interesting to note that Hogwood pinpoints one source of labour resistance, large-scale local unemployment, as electorally inexpedient, and on this basis remarks on the political 'innocence' of the ommittee, though he does not discuss other, more parochial bases of dissatisfaction and opposition which are also glossed over: see Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding pp77-78.

46 While Hogwood attributes this to political innocence it should also be noted that such innocence appears to be grounded in a willingness to subsume the report to one political formula, that of Wilsonian technical planning, while loss of innocence would have compromised both the coherence of the report and its potential acceptability to all 'parties'.

47 This whole section relies heavily on Hogwood's narrative, in Government and Shipbuilding, though it departs from his emphasis on the rationalities of administration. The specific characterisation of "stringent conditions" occurs in Geddes Report p 150.

48 Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding pp 84-90.

49 Ibid p 87, p93 (grants increased from £5m to £20m, while removing the 'grouping criterion'; credits increased from £200m, already an increse on the Geddes proposal of £30m, to £400m and then £700m), p 111.

50 Ibid p 102 and related discussion.

51 Summarised in ibid pp 98-124.

52 SIB Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1970 p 8.

53 SIB Report and Accounts for the period ended 31 March 1968 p 11.

54 SIB Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 1969 p 13 and Report and Accounts for the period 1 April to 31 December 1971 p 14.

55 SIB Report 1969 p 11, and see also Report 1971 p 8.

56 Committee of Public Accounts Third Report and Minutes of Evidence HC 447 Session 1971-2 para 13, quoted in Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding p 135, and see also the discussion in Hogwood pp 124-142.

57 Hogwood Government and Shipbuilding p 136.

58 Compare ibid pp 140-142 together with pp 261-285. Clearly this conclusion would be amplified and qualified by a consideration of state intervention in the 1970-74 period and during the following Labour government, both of which are discussed by Hogwood.

59 The Plowden Report 1965.

60 Ibid para. 109 p 19.

61 Ibid paras. 23 and 24 p 3.

62 Ibid para. 53 p 9, where US production runs as a ratio of those of the UK are quoted as 530: 177 for military aircraft and 320: 78 for transport aircraft (1955-1961 averages).

63 Ibid para. 35 p 6.

64 Ibid appendix H. Though the report does not break down airframe and engine firm profitability, the figures quoted indicate the decline during the 1960s.

65 Ibid para. 84 p 15

66 Ibid para. 155 p 27

67 Ibid paras. 467-486

68 The 'reservation' was expressed by Aubrey Jones, later to become chairman of the Prices and Incomes Board, in ibid pp 98-101, while Arthur Reed

provides a sympathetic account of the industry's reaction in Britain's Aircraft Industry: What Went Right? What Went Wrong? London 1973 esp pp 72-82.

69 Reed Britain's Aircraft Industry esp chapters 4 and 5.

70 Plowden Report para. 442 p 77.

71 It is worth noting that in the wake of the Rolls-Royce crash a commentator reported that "the rising price of labour accounted for only about fifteen per cent of the RB. 211's increased costs, which by 1970 were more than double the original estimate" Robert Gray Rolls on the Rocks Salisbury 1971 p 88.

72 Plowden Report paras. 421-422 p 74.

73 Ibid Table IV p 117 for 1965 figures; Gray Rolls Table XI p 96.

74 The 'history' of the firm is sketched in J.W. Smith and T.S. Holden Where Ships Are Born Sunderland 1953 pp 154-157 and "Main Engines by Doxford" The Compass July/August 1965.

75 A.J. Marr reports that "the majority of these ['J' engines] are going into ships built by the group" in "The Doxford and Sunderland Group" in Britain's Marine Industries 1969 (supplement of Shipbuilding and Shipping Record June 13 1969). Marr was at this time the company's Chief Executive.

76 Figures for 1968 from "Propulsion Machinery - Completed Ships' Installations During 1968" Shipbuilding and Shipping Record Feb 7 1969.

77 "Doxford and Sunderland: Annual Statement" Financial Times 21 August 1967 p 3.

78 Financial Times July 25th 1969.

79 Booz-Allen Report British Shipbuilding 1972 London 1973 p 192.

80 Financial Times 27 July 1967 p 1.

81 The 'history' of the firm is outlined in Smith and Holden Where Ships Are Born pp 150-153. See also Sunderland Echo 20,4.67 p 1.

82 Geddes Report pp 176-177 reports a total output of 935,012 h.p. (19% of 1960-65 total) and a Sulzer output of 407,330 (nearly 28% of 1960-65 total).

83 Sunderland Echo 13.8.65 p 18.

84 "Marine Engine Works Closing" Sunderland Echo 20.4.67 p 1.

85 "Minister is to Probe Wear Engine Works Shutdown" Sunderland Echo 21.4.67 p 1.

86 Ibid.

87 SIB Report and Accounts April to December 1971 appendix C "Where the money went".

88 SIB Report and Accounts March 1971 p 8.

89 Financial Times 29 August 1967 p 10.

90 Financial Times 18 July 1968 p 18.

91 Financial Times 23 August 1968 p 16.

92 See Chairman's Statements for 1971 and 1972, reported by Extel (RI-RN 79) updated 19.8.71 and 17.8.72; and for the figure for capacity utilisation see Booz-Allen Report British Shipbuilding 1972 p 192.

93 Figures for the Richardsons Westgarth Group as a whole indicate that the number of workers they employed dropped from 7,497 in 1962 to a low of 3,754 in 1969, and remained at around 3,900-4,000 into the mid 1970s; data from Company Reports abstracted by Extel.

94 Department of Trade and Industry Report into the Financial Affairs of Rolls Royce Ltd (investigation under section 165 (a)(i) of the Companies Act 1948) HMSO London 1973. See also Rolls Royce and the RB 211 Aero-Engine Contract Cmnd 4860 London 1972.

95 Committee of Inquiry into Certain Contracts made with Bristol Siddeley Engines Ltd (Wilson Report) House of Commons Papers 1967-8 No. 129.

96 Ibid. See also Bristol Siddeley Engines Ltd A Reply to the Wilson Committee of Inquiry Rolls Royce Ltd: London (?) 1968.

97 DTI Rolls Royce Ltd paragraph 12 p 5.

98 Ibid paragraph 26 p 13.

99 Robert Gray Rolls on the Rocks Salisbury 1971 p 72.

100 DTI Rolls Royce Ltd paragraph 28 pp 15-17 and paragraph 34 p 20 quote internal documents of 1963 and 1965 which deplore the 'malapportionment' of state funding, given Rolls Royce's prior commitment of 'private venture' capital.

101 Ibid paragraph 36 pp 21-22 for a long list of 'advantages' of which these are two. The defensive character of the merger is underlined in paragraph 46 pp 29-30.

102 Ibid paragraph 28 p 16 quotes a company document of 1963 which claims "the burden on the company of carrying the Spey and other PV projects, including the financial losses on the Tyne, a hazard which is inseparable from this business, had in fact brought the company to its financial knees". Note also the change in accounting convenetions in 1961, outlined in note a to table 6.

103 Financial Times 4 Nov 1967 p 2. See also the Financial Times reports of 29 May 1968 p 1 and 26 July 1968 p 1; the list of Spey engined aircraft given in Gray Rolls p 73; and the evidence of continuing Spey sales through the decade after the merger and even into the 1980s, given in Michael Donne Leader of the Skies London 1981 pp 66, 81, 112 and 121-4.

104 DTI Rolls Royce Ltd paragraph 169 pp 100-101.

105 The Wilson Report and DTI Rolls Royce Ltd paragraphs 38-46 pp 24-30.

106 DTI Rolls Royce Ltd paragraphs 41-45 pp 27-29.

107 Financial Times 25 May 1968 p 19; see also Financial Times 24 June 1968 p 1.

108 Financial Times 9 Jan 1969 p 30.

109 Financial Times 20 June 1969 p 24.

110 A glimpse of the managerial rivalries, and particularly the tension between military and civil projects and teams, is provided in R.W. Harker Rolls Royce From the Wings Oxford 1976 pp 152-158.

111 DTI Rolls Royce Ltd paragraph 50 p 31.

112 Figures for May 1970 are provided in the Department of Employment British Labour Statistics Year Book 1970 HMSO London 1972:

	Marine Eng.		Aerospace Equip.	
Admin. technical and clerical	25.6% male	70.2% female	41.2% male	66.6% fem.
Skilled operatives	45.6%	1.2%	38.9%	1.3%
Mainly semi-skilled	10.8%	3.1%	10.3%	15.8%
Other	18.0%	25.5%	9.7%	16.5%
Total numbers	23,340	2,550	195,220	30,410

Source: British Labour Statistics Year Book 1970 table 100, p 256.

These figures confirm the centrality of craft labour in both sectors, even allowing for the problematical character of such statistics in terms of the variability of the meaning and content of s ill designations. They also show that both sectors were very predominantly the preserve of male workers, especially on the shop-floor, with most women being clerical workers within the administrative, technical and clerical grouping. This absence of women from the craft work-process and largely from the shop-floor helps to explain the invisibility of gender as an issue within my case-studies; though of course the very absence itself deserves analysis and explanation, as Cynthia Cockburn so convincingly demonstrates in her discussion of the print compositors in Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change London 1983. Figures provided by the Shipbuilding Industry Training Board give a more detailed breakdown of occupations within marine engineering which underlines the centrality of the engineering craftsmen:

Staff	25.6%	(with 8.6% technicians and 7.9% clerical)
Skilled workers	48.8%	(with 15.1% fitters and 13.1% turners)
Other workers	25.6%	

Source: Shipbuilding Industry Training Board Report 1973 appendix I pp 50-54.

113 British Shipbuilders Report and Accounts 1977-8 to 1982-3.

114 Reports in the Sunderland Echo: Doxford 7 April 1977; 19 July 1979; 2 June 1980; 1 December 1981 and 31 May 1983; Clarks 31 October 1981.

115 Rolls-Royce Ltd. Extel Unquoted Companies Reports Service 8/6/77 and 6/5/83.

116 Discussion with ex-workers.

Chapter 7

Working For Doxford

The Doxford Marine Engine Works had once been bounded on two sides by workers' houses, but by the mid 1960s it was clearly part of a distinct industrial zone in Low Pallion. Approached down the hill from Pallion itself, the boundary between community and work was clearly marked by the railway bridge while the old streets had been replaced by newer factories: Thorn-AEI Valves and Steel's Crane Works now stood across from the Engine Works. Coming from the town centre the boundary was drawn more ominously by a wasteland where houses had been cleared in West Millfield, leaving Jobling's Glass Works stark against the flat ground. Then there was a cluster of mainly engineering workshops before the entrance to Doxford's shipyard, which stretched along the river from Queen Alexander Bridge for nearly half a mile. The Engine Works was on the slope between road and river, next to the yard it largely served, on the last couple of hundred yards of the Doxford site. This had been the site of the works since the late nineteenth century, and by 1968 it employed around 700 workers having employed over twice that number in the late 1950s.[1] In common with other shipbuilding and marine engineering concerns, the vast majority of workers on the site were manual workers and half of them were skilled. As the more detailed breakdown by department in table 7 shows, the proportions were about 3 skilled workers to 2 semi-skilled to 1 unskilled, with a clear majority of workers working in machine shops and substantial minorities in construction and as cranemen and slingers.

The works itself consisted of a long high factory which housed both light and heavy machine shops and the erecting shop, dominated by its test beds, with additional adjoining workshops and work areas including another substantial machine shop (the sub-assembly shop) and the crankshaft shop. In the main works, viewed to best advantage from the flights of open metal stairs descending from the level of the road to the factory floor, the most striking impression was of the range and variety of machines involved in the process of marine engine building: ranging from massive planers and large horizontal and vertical borers to smaller lathes of various sorts, grinders and drills, grouped in clusters of similar machines but giving little impression of uniformity. Also visible were the cranes running the whole length of the main workshop, providing

Table 7 Composition of Doxford Engine Works Manual Labour Force

(January 1969)

Department or Shop	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled
Sub-assembly Shop	68	36	9
Heavy Machine Shop	15	21	12
Light Machine Shop	26	23	6
Turret Bay	27	3	4
Cylinder Liner Bay[a]	31	24	8
Crankshaft Shop	27	14	9
Machine Shops Subtotal	(194)	(121)	(48)
Erecting Shop	42	3	14
Fabrication Shop	8	18	3
Fitting Shop	13	1	2
Construction Subtotal	(63)	(22)	(19)
Toolroom	19	6	4
Pattern Shop	9	-	2
Electricians	9	-	6
Millwrights & Joiners	15	3	17
Inspection Department	15	-	4
Indirect Crafts Subtotal	(67)	(9)	(33)
Cranemen Pool	-	30	-
Slingers Pool	-	27	-
Internal Transport & Stores	-	20	4
Transport Subtotal	(-)	(77)	(4)
Labourers Pool	-	-	22
Works Total	324	229	126	679

Note: (a) includes Brass Shop and Whitemetal Shop.

Data: Works Records.

the essential basis for moving the larger pieces of work, eventually up to the far end of the works to the erecting area, where fitting, erection and the often noisy testing of the built engines took place. Beyond this led to the shipyard where many of the engines were installed.

Focussing in on the machining areas where I interviewed people, in the lathe section of the Sub-assembly Shop and in the Turret Bay, workers there were engaged on small and medium sized work on turret, centre and a few copy lathes. The parts being machined ranged from specialised nuts and bolts to piston heads and piston rings, fuel pump components and the like. The work done in these areas was characterised by considerable variety, though not all workers experienced that variety. Some of the work was for spares or repairs, coming in a variety of batch sizes from ones to hundreds (though mainly in the tens and twenties) and taking anything from an hour to a few weeks. Other work, usually in small batches, was 'contract' work destined for an engine in the process of being built, and might on occasion require consultation with the fitter directly engaged in construction. Some work recurred at frequent intervals while other jobs cropped up only occasionally, and the latter sometimes went to make up a whole lot of 'odds and ends' assigned to the same machine and worker. Such differences among jobs, together with differences in the capabilities of different machines and the varied experience of the workers themselves, served to sustain a subtle differentiation of tasks within the general framework of skilled turning. Such differentiation was to some extent organised and manipulated by the foremen, though the differences involved should not be exaggerated, and I will return to this point in later discussion. In general, though, despite variations in the extent to which workers were tied to their machines by the operations they were performing, these men could move about the works quite freely on such work related tasks as visiting the stores, checking details with a fitter or chasing up batches of work, and they could easily engage in intermittent sociability with those they passed, and more especially with those they worked near. In the characteristic manner of machine shops, the areas where the turners worked were intersected by gang ways dividing distinct clusters of machines, while inspection areas and foreman's offices were interspersed among the machines. During work time the environment was dominated by the smell of suds oil and swarf and the whine and burr of tools cutting metal, with most men standing at or bending over their machines while a few figures moved about. Management were generally inconspicuous, remaining for the most part in the small group of offices flanking the main building, while shop and section foremen represented their 'presence' on the shop floor.

My intention in this chapter is to explore the character of management-worker relations and particularly the experience of skilled workers in this setting. I will begin with an outline of some of the key episodes of collective bargaining in the engine works during the 1960s which indicate the manner in which the management was responding to the pressures of rationalisation outlined in the previous chapter. This review of works-wide developments will provide the backcloth for a more detailed account of the labour market and effort bargaining experience of my interviewees, which will in turn form the basis for an assessment of the situation, organisation and ideology of craft workers at Doxfords in the late 1960s. Having analysed the production relations surrounding craft work in one Sunderland engineering firm I will then turn, in the next chapter, to a comparison between Doxfords and the situation in the other two firms, Rolls Royce and Clarks. Thus this chapter will focus more upon the complexities of experience and internal variation characteristic of one craft milieu, while the following chapter will consider similarities and differences across several firms sharing a common labour market for skilled turners.

Attempts to 'rationalise' pay and production at Doxford

At the outset of the 1960s the dilemmas facing Doxford management, which were discussed in the previous chapter, were becoming increasingly evident. Both market shares and profitability began to decline and the company's reliance upon spares and repairs work (arising from engine sales of earlier decades rather than new engine orders) became obvious.[2] Meanwhile the workers at Doxfords had consolidated their workplace union organisation during the late 1950s, with management acceptance of the closed shop, increasingly effective steward intervention in shop-floor bargaining, and the election of a more 'activist' union convenor.[3] Indicative of this consolidation was the short-circuiting of the appeals process concerning piece-prices as stewards increasingly by-passed the section foremen; a development which was accompanied by the curtailment of opportunities for favouritism, such as covert deals between foremen and favoured workers allegedly based on the sharing of gains from cross booking.[4] It was in these circumstances, both of incipient commercial crisis and strengthened collective organisation, that Doxfords management began to seek to reform their established arrangements for the control of production and the negotiation and administration of piecework prices. As I have implied, these established arrangements centred upon the considerable autonomy of the foreman in routing work and setting piecework prices with workmen; they were an integral part of the decentralised jobbing shop

organisation of production then prevailing in the works. Their reform was likewise central to any strategy for the standardisation of production, cost cutting and tighter managerial control.

The first cycle of management initiatives designed to seek such rationalisation preceeded Geddes, but it focussed upon the introduction of standardised ratefixing procedures in a manner quite consistent with the perspectives of that report. However, the failure of that first strategy led eventually to the adoption of another approach to the rationalisation of pay and production in the form of a system modelled on 'measured day work'. Nevertheless, despite its ultimate collapse, that first lengthy cycle of negotiations deserves attention as it clearly underlines both the terms of management-worker conflict concerning rationalisation and, relatedly, the ways in which each side understood the problems of applying standardised production control systems to jobbing production. Consequently I will provide a brief outline of the first wave of management proposals and negotiations, and then turn to an examination of the origins of the system which was in operation by 1968. Before doing this, though, the are several features of the organisation of union and management activity during the 1960s which deserve highlighting because of the manner in which they conditioned the course of the pay structure negotiations which are the focus of my narrative presentation.

Turning first to the character of union organisation and strategy I want to highlight the centrality of traditional craft foci of union activity and the active but largely defensive cast of workplace union sanctions. These features emerge clearly from an inspection of the record of collective bargaining in the works between 1966 and 1968 and the pattern of workplace disputes throughout the 1960s. The range of bargaining issues which paralleled the negotiations about the pay structure clearly underline the distinctively craft character of the reflexes of shop floor organisation at Doxfords. Among the recurrent bargaining issues in the late 1960s were prohibitions on management "use of the tools"; regulation of the numbers and deployment of apprentices; pressure on management to improve the employment prospects of specific categories of unemployed workers, especially people earlier made redundant from the firm; and protection of the skilled manning of new machines despite management interest in the potential for semi-skilled manning.[5] Each of these issues, as well as pay structure and anomaly questions, elicited the deployment of sanctions such as blackings or overtime-bans during this period, indicating the active character of workplace organisation and the points at which management and workers were testing the terms of their relationship.

The active and defensive characteristics of craft trade unionism at Doxfords emerge clearly from further consideration of these sanctions. Thus overtime working was the norm at the engine works but was also a critical focus of union regulation. This involved the equitable distribution of overtime within sections and across the works; compliance with district rulings on overtime ceilings because of levels of unemployment in the trade (but also arrangements for exceptional dispensations to breach those limits); overtime bans in the face of impending redundancies in the later 1960s; and occasional resort to overtime bans as a sanction on other issues.[6] Nevertheless both 1967 and 1968 saw the run down of specific sections and departments, and though some redundancies were cancelled, delayed or limited, jobs were lost, underlining the limits within which union organisation operated.[7] In addition to overtime bans there were occasional sectional strikes during the 1960s together with three larger stoppages.[8] Two of the latter were one-day token stoppages aimed at management tactics in the pay negotiations, one embracing the whole manual workforce and the other all Engineering Union members, while the third was rather more substantial and of critical significance in confirming the balance of forces in shop-floor bargaining in the second half of the decade. This large strike occurred in March 1964, not long after the first token stoppage, and was precipitated by the sacking of the convenor following a dispute over machine manning. It lasted for over five weeks and resulted in the reinstatement of the convenor, thus confirming the consolidation of collective organisation achieved in the previous few years.[9] Since it punctuated the negotiations over the pay structure and appeared to represent a testing out of shop-floor commitment by a rather frustrated management, the demonstration of the defensive cohesion of union organisation during this dispute clearly coloured the course of the remaining pay negotiations.

Turning to the characterisation of management strategy, the contours of that strategy are less easy to discern in the broader conduct of industrial relations than is the pattern of trade unionism, not least because the rationalisation of the pay structure was the centrepiece of management initiatives. However, two features of management conduct do deserve preliminary remarks. The first is the other side of the pattern of trade unionism just outlined; namely that Doxfords management patrolled the boundaries of craft organisation and division of labour without any concerted attempt to attack those boundaries. The second point concerns an aspect of the managerial micropolitics of their rationalisation initiatives, namely the coincidence between successive rounds of new management appointments and new management initiatives in negotiations. Both manage-

ment and union informants, looking back over this period, remarked in similar terms on the manner in which "a succession of managers and technical people were brought into the company in an attempt to modernise methods on the shop floor". There was also some agreement that "this led to an extremely chaotic position because each had different policies for success" while "few were really acquainted with the industry".[10] This pattern may be seen as indicative of a realisation at top management level that they were facing something of a crisis, and also, perhaps, of their expectations of 'ready-made' solutions imported from other, more rationalised sectors. It also points towards the internal management rivalries which must have accompanied the formulation and reformulation of management proposals involved in the cycles of negotiations which are discussed below. Thus management strategy can be seen as a response to the pressures identified by the Geddes report, and also as informed by the diagnosis and prescriptions which came to be codified by the report, but it must also be seen as uncertain of the substance and ramifications of rationalisation, which were only explored through a process of contention with craft workers, and through management micropolitics and succession.

The character of the contestation between management and shop-floor organisation more or less within the parameters of craft production can now be explored in more detail but on a narrower front by turning to a more extended examination of the key bargaining episodes at Doxford during the 1960s. These were concerned with the rationalisation of the payment system and attendant features of production organisation, firstly in terms of standardised rate-fixing and product scheduling and later in terms of a so-called 'measured day work' system. The remainder of this part of the chapter will be concerned with an outline and analysis of these negotiations.

Turning first to the reforms mooted in the early 1960s, an outline of some of their central elements was summarised by management in the following terms:

> "the main difference between the Doxford practise and that in operation in most other engineering companies is that in these rate-fixing is the full time job of a section or individual in the Production Engineering Department, whereas at Doxford these functions are carried out by each foreman. The advantages of a separate section are:
> (i)...consistency between different departments is encouraged,
> (ii) the foreman is relieved of the rate-fixing duties, thus enabling

> him to allocate more time to the administration of his department, (iii) records of manufacturing processes and prices (or times) are more easily set up, and the preparation of cost estimates for new work is thereby simplified."[11]

Thus the formation of a specialist ratefixing department was seen as a key to the standardisation of components, to a more sophisticated approach to 'process planning', and to tighter costing. Alongside the proposals and negotiations about ratefixing, management therefore sought to introduce other 'reforms' in the control and planning of production, such as new 'job cards' and 'progress labourers', and also repeatedly promised such schemes as the pre-scheduling of machine loading and the reorganisation of inspection.

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Management were careful to mollify their foremen concerning their redefined and more circumscribed role in the proposed new scheme of things, by emphasising that "although ratefixing in the general engineering industry is frequently the duty of a separate section, the ratefixer always works in the closest cooperation with the individual foreman".[12] On the other hand they were adamant that the reform was necessary because of the anomalies which beset and undermined the traditional arrangements:

> "the need for ratefixers arose from the present wide disparities in the earnings of pieceworkers".

Or, rather less magnanimously:

> "the existing system provides for time being fixed in general terms, a system which, it is accepted by the Management, is inefficient and costly in relation to the output they are obtaining from the various shops. In the case of work which it is not possible to price, the workpeople receive their individual average which in many cases is a very high percentage because of the weakness in the existing price fixing and the known ability of the workpeople to indulge in 'cross booking', a position over which the Management admit they have little or no control."[13]

Thus the management strategy clearly pinpointed the rationalisation of the ratefixing process now that shop-floor organisation had proven capable of mitigating the features of the old system, which had been advantageous to management, by exploiting opportunities for limiting the discretion of foremen and increasing earnings. It was in this context that management proposals for centralised ratefixing set in motion a

protracted period of negotiations between them and the Shop Stewards in meetings which continued from 1961 until 1966 — being punctuated only by pauses when redundancies came to occupy the centre of the industrial relations stage. Without indulging in a blow by blow account of these negotiations and their outcomes I wish to outline the key features of the positions taken by management and stewards, and the manner in which they structured the outcome. In general the union representatives favoured reforms which would iron out anomalies and inequities, and were thus favourably disposed to some form of orderliness, as William Brown and others of the 'pluralist' school of industrial relations have insisted.[14] However, exactly what constituted an anomaly, what had to be standardised and what was to be left to the discretion of management was early a matter of dispute, underlining the inevitably 'partisan' character of managerial attempts to impose 'orderliness'.[15] Thus management underlined the point that "foremen will determine the machine to perform the operation ...the machine must be loaded in all cases according to the priority or urgency of production", while the convenor retorted that "machines should be loaded to enable certain individuals to benefit from having jobs on their machines with an adequate share of good prices, as opposed to always being given jobs not so well priced".[16] Such differences over the form to be taken by rationalisation reflected different estimates of the deficiencies of the decentralised system. While management viewed the discretion of foremen over piecerates as a source of anomalies and fiddles, which hindered both centralised costing and the exercise of informed discretion over part scheduling, the union, at least at steward committee level, was concerned to limit the discretion of the foreman over a wider area and in a manner which gave priority to equity.

The central issues in the discussions concerned the determination of procedures for ratefixing (especially the relation of estimating and observation, and the issue of mutuality); agreement over the target percentages to guide such ratefixing and their implications for earnings levels; and, linking these issues, the conditions and the rate to be applied prior to the rating of any job. The discussions of these issues trod the well worn ground of such controversies. For example, there was argument over the sharing of benefits from improved methods:

> "[convenor] asked if when a job was reassessed because of a change in method the operative be given some percentage of the saving introduced ... to benefit from any improvement in the method. [works manager] pointed out that if the men used more effort then he would attain a higher percentage, but if he used only the same amount of effort then

he would obtain the same percentage level."[17]

A central argument focussed upon who was to bear the peralties for waiting time: while management argued for a low percentage as an incentive for the men to reduce waiting time, the stewards argued for a higher percentage on the grounds that workers should not be penalised for events outside their control, while they also had a right to sustain their earnings levels. As implied above, behind these arguments there also lurked the question of the scope which waiting time afforded for compensating tight rates:

> "[the works manager] felt that there was a great incentive to fiddle, and he felt that [the convenor] knew this as well as he. [the convenor] replied that if they were to sit to try to eliminate a fiddle they would sit for a very long time."[18]

Finally management introduced the question of the control of tooling. Having broached the issue of "the exchange of tools, tool distribution from the tool store, the insufficiency of certain tools, and the cleaning out of all lockers of tools" quite early in the negotiations, management returned to the issue in connection with waiting time. While the stewards argued that the withdrawal of all tools to the stores and the introduction of a docket system would create more waiting time, management claimed it would "eliminate the two main causes of lost time, which are looking for tools and waiting for the grinding of tools".[19] On this basis they projected the virtual disappearance of waiting time once the whole panoply of rationalised production was in place, a projection regarded with frank disbelief by the stewards.

Running through these negotiations, then, from mid 1962 to late 1964 in particular, were three interrelated sets of issues. The first concerned the cash pay-offs involved in worker acceptance of some form of rationalisation: this was central to the discussions concerning the target percentages for skilled workers; was addressed in questions over the benefits accruing from methods changes; and underlay the core arguments about the procedure for ratefixing itself. The second theme concerned issues of equity and relativity. This was touched on in discussion of the allocation of jobs to machines but was addressed most directly in relation to the positions of semi-skilled and young workers. Finally there were a cluster of questions which directly involved the relationship between managerial prerogatives and worker autonomy, such as those of job allocation, waiting time and tooling. On the first count the stewards sought to increase the pay-off from management's initial minimal benchmark while remaining sceptical concerning management priorities in the ratefixing

procedure itself. On the second set of issues they faced the problem of responding to a codification of the wage structure which displaced a complex, overlapping and anomalous range of prices which nevertheless mitigated some differentials as it spawned others, with a putatively clear-cut pattern of relativities which would disadvantage some workers. In response to this dilemma they tended to argue for equity within grades but for no widening of differentials in the rationalisation process, while directing most critical attention at the ratefixing process itself. Finally, on the questions of job control and counter-control, which were also questions of the bargaining leverage afforded to workers by the structuring of different rates of payment, they argued hard for higher waiting-time and pre-timing payments. However, in those areas where they acknowledged the formal remit of managerial prerogatives, such as tooling, the stewards simply reiterated the need for 'realism' and 'practicality', meaning managerial accomodation to some degree of worker autonomy.

In the event management made some concessions on target percentages and their agreed implications for rates of pay, and a series of partial agreements were signed. These culminated, in late 1964, in an agreement on the introduction of ratefixing, which, however, still left unclear the status of the ratefixing process itself and the rates of pay for pre-timed or disputed jobs. These ambiguities in the agreements were rapidly exposed when the system was initiated on the shop-floor at the beginning of 1965, resulting in disputes over the issuance of job times, resort to stage one of the Engineering Procedure (a works conference) by the Engine Works management, and deadlock over the terms of a modified ratefixing agreement. The management's view of this deadlock was summarised in a letter to the A.E.U. District Secretary proposing a further works conference "to discuss the present position in relation to the Company's efforts to introduce ratefixing in accordance with the negotiations which have taken place over such a long period of time":"as we understand the present situation agreement has virtually been reached with the Shop Stewards and it was anticipated that the new arrangements would be implemented. The situation unfortunately is that the workpeople themselves have now indicated that they are not prepared to operate under arrangments entered into with the shop stewards, and the Company are virtually back to the beginning..".[20] The convenor's view, however, had been that:

> "I am of the opinion that no conclusive agreement exists regarding the application of ratefixing on the shop-floor. Even though no agreement has been finally concluded the company are still applying ratefixing in part, in a manner which has not yet been agreed."[21]

The minutes of negotiations and the drafts and texts of agreements provide only a rather partial and formalised indication of the development of management-worker relations in the workplace. However, the documentation for this cycle of management initiatives strongly suggests that management plans came to grief not only because of effective opposition from a quite well entrenched workplace union organisation, but also through inconsistencies in management's own strategy, the two being interlocked in complex ways. Looking first at the latter, management proposals and arguments embraced on the one hand grandiose plans for the radical restructuring and standardisation of the whole production process (epitomised by the pre-scheduling of machine loading and by the projected virtual elimination of waiting time), but on the other hand gave priority to tightening up piecerates in a piecemeal fashion within a largely unreconstructed production set-up; a pattern which would appear to match the continuing significance of jobbing and development work in Domford's commercial strategy. In relation to workplace organisation, a variant of the widespread pattern of the consolidation of shop-steward organisation was apparent. Thus full union membership at the Works only came about in the late 1950's, but substantial steward initiatives over anomalies and inequities within the old pay structure since then provided a solid basis for the evident resistance of the mid-'60s. In this context the arrival of rate fixers on the shop floor, and their rapid resort to the 'observation' of operators rather than the announced reliance on estimation, together with such indiscretions as negotiation of new prices with 'junior workers', were clearly experienced both as attempts at the intensification of effort and as sources of fresh anomalies between different 'jobs' and among workers. At the same time both stewards and workers remained sceptical about the practicality and the 'mutual benefit' implications of any wider process of standardisation and production planning; a scepticism reinforced by the limitations of any moves already made in that direction. Thus, given the reliance of management upon the cooperation of a skilled workforce, and the widespread opposition to the most threatening features of the new system (which implied levelling down of rates and intensification of effort), the shop-floor organisation was able to challenge the process of ratefixing and press for renegotiation. The resulting conflicts and deadlock were partially resolved by an interim agreement, which guaranteed individual floating average rates for those people working on pre-timed work and also reaffirmed mutuality. But by then management's confidence in the viability of a standardised ratefixing piecerate system had been undermined, and, while the attempted standardisation of ratefixing was being patched up in

the first few months of 1966, its link with pay was broken, at least as an interim measure, by an agreement scrapping all existing piecerates; setting wage levels in terms of frozen individual averages; and guaranteeing interim minima of £19 a week for skilled men and £17 a week for semi-skilled. When management tabled their new proposals for the reform of the pay structure, in May 1966, they took the rather different form of a 'measured day rate' system.

The resort to a 'measured day rate' system must have owed something to contemporary debate about pay systems, which had been reinforced by the development of incomes policy during the first two years of the Wilson government.[22] The earlier cycle of negotiations had continued through the succession of increasingly severe wage-controls which characterised those years, and the initial measured day work proposals at Doxfords came on the eve of the 'zero-norm', introduced by the Government in July 1966. Thus the national debate over productivity bargaining, set in motion by the publicity surrounding the Fawley Agreements and fueled by the activities of the National Board for Prices and Incomes, formed the backcloth to the proposals, while the conditions which might surround the relaxation of the freeze soon became an element in the negotiations which ensued.[23] However, the situation cannot simply be interpreted either as an instance of a national productivity bargaining offensive or as a merely cosmetic exercise in pseudo-productivity bargaining designed to negotiate the gate-ways of wage restraint, for the proposals had a more specific but limited rationale than such characterisations would imply. On the one hand, while management may have hoped that some slight increases in the mobility of labour within the works might be facilitated by the deal, the proposal was specifically concerned with the reform of the payment system, without reference to those questions of manning, labour mobility, overtime and shiftwork which had been part of the 'package' of the classic productivity deals. Such questions continued to be the subject of negotiation and marginal adjustment during the bargaining over the pay structure, but clearly remained separate in the minds of both workers and managers. On the other hand there appears to be a quite specific logic to the proposal in the Doxford context following the failure of the earlier cycle of initiatives: namely that it offered management the prospect of uncoupling the rationalisation of production scheduling and product costing from the reform of the payment system for an interim period, thus relaxing the linkage which, in the context of the established pattern of parochially coordinated small-batch production, had undermined their earlier efforts. Thus in some respects the Doxford proposals conform

to the pattern of second phase productivity deals documented by Nightingale, because they focus directly on the intensification of effort through the reform of the pay structure rather than more ambitious participative notions. Yet at the same time they appear rather more defensive than this might imply, tabled more as a means of escape from the demotivation and antagonisms arising from a simple freezing of the old anomalies and inequities and from the dilemmas arising from the earlier cycle of reform, than from a coherent alternative strategy.[24]

The launching of the new 'measured day rate' idea was accompanied by a catalogue of "problems to be overcome", including increased absenteeism poor time keeping and "time wasting activities". The underlying argument concerned the need to control costs (a new 'Cost Control Manager' was appointed about this time): "the marine engine's ... selling price is too high" and "with this in mind 'passengers' could not be carried and everyone must play their part in economic production methods".[25] It was also heralded with some rather flabby rhetoric: "for this to be successful it will be necessary for us to establish a renewed spirit of enthusiasm, confidence and cooperation in conjunction with an overall production policy of 'Think New'".[26] Following these preambles to the 'measured day rate' proposals the substance of the proposals concerned a reintroduction of incentives through the merit rating of workers within a 'fair and equitable structure' of skill levels, in place of the old tangle of piece prices. The initial scheme suggested a hierarchy of around ten 'skill bands', within each of which workers would receive merit payments according to their rating under the headings of 'efficiency', 'industry', 'accuracy' and 'time keeping'. The stewards expressed immediate reservations about the proposals: the convenor reported that "while they did not want to prejudge an alternative system of wage structure, as one would expect there was a certain air of scepticism".[27] Among the main areas of concern were the inclusion of timekeeping in the merit assessment, the proposal for so many 'skill bands', the overall structure of payments and finally the subjectivity of the process of assessment.

The issues raised by the stewards defined the main topics of the negotiations on the proposals, which began seriously early in 1967. Management conceded on the question of the skill hierarchy at the outset of the negotiations, so that discussion proceeded on the basis of only two bands of direct workers, the skilled and the semi-skilled; though later this doveloped into four bands to accomodate some anomalous groupings (and various provisions were also made for indirect workers). The debate about

the timekeeping element was more drawn out, but eventually management removed it from the proposals, on union insistence that penalties for poor timekeeping should be a seperate issue subject to established procedures. Finally, the stewards succeeded in moderating the incentive element of the proposals and improving the base wage. They did this by negotiating a reduction in the differentials between the top and bottom merit levels and a more equal progression of increases through the levels. For example, management's original proposals for skilled workers involved a differential of 2/3d between bottom and top merit levels, with widening steps of 5d, 8d and 1/2d (translated into a differential of £4 10/- and steps of 16/8d, £1 6/8d and £2 6/8d for a forty-hour week). Eventually this pattern was moderated through negotiations to an overall differential of 1/10d, made up of steps of 7d, 7d and 8d (translated into a differential of £3 13/4d and steps of £1 3/4d, £1 3/4d and £1 6/8d for a forty-hour week), while maintaining the value of the top rate.[28]

Nevertheless the bargaining left intact the core element in the proposals, the merit rating procedure based on the three remaining elements. These were defined in virtually identical terms in May 1967 and in the final draft of July 1968:

> "The merit awards will be based upon an assessment which will be carried out at two monthly intervals. When carrying out these assessments, three factors will be considered: (a) Efficiency, (b) Industry, and (c) Accuracy. In assessing the individual levels within the above factors, the following will be considered:
>
> (a) Efficiency This factor appraises the time in which the operator carries out his various duties, with regard to the speed and effort applied to his work.
>
> (b) Industry This factor appraises the degree of operators industry, and points considered here include interest in the job, times of commencing and finishing work after clocking on and prior to clocking off, periods taken for tea breaks, accuracy in recording times on job cards and general application to his work.
>
> (c) Accuracy This factor appraises the amount of scrap produced and parts produced requiring rework, provided that the cause is due to the operator.
>
> Each of the above factors will carry a maximum of 10 points, and operators will be awarded points within these ranges according to the assessments. The Efficiency factor is considered to be of prime importance and it is expected that a minimum of 7 points should be achieved by the operator, Therefore, an operator will not be eligible for a merit award unless he has been assessed at the minimum of 7 points in Efficiency. An operator achieving less than this minimum

...ill not be considered on the other two factors, the result being that payment will be made under M1 [the bottom merit level]."

There were, however, two significant additions which qualified the earlier proposals, for the July 1968 draft continued:

"subject to the concession stated in Section 7 [which indicated that a drop in merit rating would not effect payment until after the following assessment two months later]. When Standard times become available the Industry factor will not be considered for assessment purposes. At that time the points ranges will be adjusted in order that consideration can be given to Efficiency and Accuracy factors only."[29]

Each of these additions, obtained by the deployment of such sanctions as a ban on apprentice recruitment but also against the background of redundancy announcements, overtime bans, and some actual redundancies during the early months of 1968, was potentially very important.[30] The first set the scene for the appeals procedure and union representations concerning the assessment process, by providing a quasi-status-quo clause. The second promised to displace an informal process of subjective assessment by a public process of negotiation over standard times, which would serve to underpin the Efficiency rating and remove the nebulous Industry factor. The implications of the scheme as a whole, however, continued to depend crucially on just how the assessment process was worked. That process placed considerable potential power in the hands of the foreman since, though he was just one member of a management 'Assessments Committee' of five, he would clearly be the source of the 'recommendations' and judgements underlying their decisions. Thus in this respect it was a fresh variant of the decentralised rating system which had characterised the piecework pay structure of the early post-war period, before the stewards system had short-circuited the procedure by taking grievances direct to works management; and it remained an open question how far the stewards could remain effective in this way with the new (though interim) assessment process.

Overall the new wage structure which began operating in September 1968, following Ministry of Labour approval, could hardly be described as a 'measured day rate' system, both because of the absence of any work measurement process other than the foreman's informed judgement, and because of the centrality of the merit rating component rather than a standard premium rate.[31] The scheme could more properly be labelled an 'assessed man merit' system. In any case it embodied many of the ambiguities

and sources of conflict documented in the earlier cycle of negotiations, though in transformed form. For management it offered an escape from the anomalies and loss of control characteristic of the old 'demoralised' piecework system; a more readily legitimated structure of differentials; the reintroduction of incentives at some remove from the bargaining opportunities afforded under the earlier scheme; and, most remarkably, the apparent revival of the discretion of the shop foreman. Thus management's submission to the Ministry, couched in the following terms, cannot be regarded simply as a phoney claim motivated by concern to outflank incomes policy:

> "it is estimated that for a 6½ % increase in payment, we can expect a minimum of 15% increase of output per man. In addition, we will be able to eliminate to a very large extent, disputes and work stoppages which used to be prevalent, the majority of which emanated from anomalies of rate."[32]

For workers and stewards, too, it offered an escape from old anomalies; greater stability of earnings; a simplified and more equitable structure of differentials; and, crucially, a route to immediate wage increases in the context of incomes policy. On the firm's estimates only 27% of skilled workers were earning on or above the second merit level under the old pay system, only 10% were on a par with the third merit level, and only 3% bettered the top merit level.[33] However, the new scheme also threatened loss of leverage over both individual grievances and opportunities for collective advance, while the judgements of the foremen held fertile potentials for favouritism and new anomalies. Anxieties on these counts not only fueled the stewards' efforts to gain the concessions quoted above, but also motivated intensive efforts to service individual grievances and monitor the collective consequences of the system during its initial application.

It was in this context that I conducted my fieldwork interviews at Doxfords, and thus I will explore the shop-floor experience of these developments in more detail when I examine the views of the turners. However, before moving on to explore their labour market and then their effort bargaining experience, I must note a few more features of this phase of pay bargaining. These concern both the working of 'measured day-work' as such and the position of Doxford workers in the wages league. On the first of these I have evidence on the initial operation of the assessments, and also on stewards' views of the prospects for standard times. In relation to the initial operation of the assessments two features stand out: firstly they generated only a narrow range of total scores, clustered

towards the top of the range; and secondly, there was a noticable drift into the top merit level over the period. Thus in the two areas of the works for which I have detailed information the range of 'scores' after the first two assessments narrowed to between 26 and 28 (26 and 27 being in the third merit group and 28 in the top one), while between the first assessment in August 1968 and the fifth in April 1969 the percentage of those assessed who gained 28 points and joined the top merit level increased from thirty-six per cent to fifty-seven per cent.[34] These results appeared to be a consequence of both a reluctance on the part of the foremen to award scores below 8 or 9 for Efficiency and Industry (with 10 as the norm for Accuracy), and the willingness of management to revise scores upwards on appeal. Of course, it is possible that management had achieved the productivity increases for which they had been looking (though they were reluctant to quantify this for the stewards) but it also appears likely that, for the interim at least, shop-floor organisation had sustained some degree of mutuality and wage-push in the new conditions, thus exemplifying the point that changes in payment systems may modify the expression of conflict on the shop-floor but cannot simply suppress or transcend the bases of that conflict.[35]

The developments outlined above ramified into the prospects for the modification and consolidation of the payment structure after the initial period. Thus, by January 1969, and in the light of the pattern outlined above, the stewards were raising questions about the scope for further incentive payments by the addition of more merit levels, and buttressing their argument by asserting that the workforce had manifestly delivered on productivity. At the same time the negotiators voiced a characteristic mixture of scepticism about the rationalising capacities of management and criticism about the lack of reasonable progress in the reorganisation of production. Thus they queried the effectiveness and worth of both the Work Study and the Cost Control Departments, pointing in evidence to internal management debate and the shedding of labour; they noted that "there was a danger of reverting to stagnation since no standard times had been produced in the past two years and [they] would not like to see the situation develop to that which existed a year ago"; and finally the Convenor raised doubts about the reorganisation of product progressing:

> "[he] suggested that the Progress Chasers were not functioning efficiently and felt that this job could be better carried out by more knowledgable men in the skilled and semi-skilled categories. He quoted instances of excessive waiting time, waiting for job cards and the men doing their own progressing."[36]

In summary then, this latest phase of collective bargaining revealed fresh permutations on several established themes. Firstly management were pursuing a strategy which sought to rationalise and 'modernise' within the framework of craft production, both by reorganising the payment system and, more tentatively, by modifying the organisation of production itself. In this context the legitimating gloss of modernisation was undermined both by the effort bargaining implications of the pay system proposals, and the evident limitations of the production initiatives. The craft stewards continued to exploit these features of management strategy to mobilise their bargaining leverage and reaffirm the established features of craft organisation. In particular they were able to mount a critique of the 'ill-judged' and 'unrealistic' character of several aspects of management initiatives when set against the yardstick of established patterns of workmanship; and indeed the union representatives were on occasion able to invoke an image of real modernisation against the varied and piecemeal proposals and schemes of management, confident that managers had no coherent strategy which could by-pass their established place in the production process. In turn this allowed them to attack other aspects of the management strategy, in particular the more pretentious features of the pay system, as unjustified encroachments upon customary levels of effort, reward and autonomy. However, while workplace bargaining sustained an active and fairly effective defence of the main parameters of craft-based effort bargaining, the continuing commercial difficulties of the company guaranteed that this defence remained an unsettled arena of conflict. Furthermore, despite the inconsistencies and shifts in management strategies, the 'reform' of the piecework payment system had shifted the process of bargaining onto ground which was less familiar to both stewards and shop-floor workers.

I will discuss the manner in which these features of management initiative and craft unionism entered the personal experience of Doxford turners in the remaining sections of this chapter. I intend to complete this section, which has considered workplace industrial relations through the record of formal bargaining, by seeking to register the overall position of Doxford workers in regard to the most public outcome of such bargaining, namely wages. I have no neat and comparable sequence of wages data for these workers, not least because of the changes in the organisation of payment which arose from the negotiations I have documented above. However Table 8 does provide some indication of the movement of wages among skilled direct workers at the Engine Works and

Table 8

Wages of Skilled Workers at Doxford and Some Comparisons

	Doxford[1]	Marine Eng.[2]	Northern Eng.[3]
Jan. 1964			
Turners PbR av	£17/19/7	£18/ 2/4	£17/19/10
Fitters PbR av	£18/14/8	£17/11/6	£19/ 6/7
Jan. 1966			
Av. Direct Skilled	£20/ 3/4	Turners PbR £20/ 1/3	£20/ 4/1
		Fitters PbR £19/17/-	£21/ 7/6
June 1968			
Skilled Wage range	£20/ 7/8	Turners PbR £22/14/6[4]	£22/ 9/7
	to £24/10/-	" time £22/ 9/3	
		Fitters PbR £23/ 2/11	£25/ 4/1
		" time £19/ 3/-	

1. figures derived from company data.
2. Ministry of Labour Gazette May 1964 p 19; June 1966 p 302; Oct. 1968 p 814.
3. Ministry of Labour Gazette May 1964 p 194; June 1966 p 305; Oct. 1968 p 816.
4. Timeworkers are also quoted for June 1968 in recognition of the shift to MDW at Doxford.

All figures refer to weekly earnings excluding overtime premiums.

among similar grades of workers in the marine engineering industry at large and in the wider engineering industry in northern England. Making due allowance for the approximate character of the comparability between the different types of Doxford figures, this table suggests that over the period from 1964 to 1969 skilled workers remained close to the indusry average for piecework payment. This underlines the relative success of shop-floor organisation in more or less keeping pace with wage movements in the context of corporate crises and a persistent management concern with labour costs, but it also emphasises that their workplace bargaining and mobilisation served to sustain their average position in these circumstances rather than to mark any advance on that position.[37] This once more affirms the active but defensive character of workplace craft unionism at Doxfords over this period.

The Experience and Outlook of Doxfords Turners

In the previous section I focussed upon factory-wide bargaining to trace out the interplay between the rationalisation tactics of management and a shop-floor trade unionism dominated by skilled workers. In so doing I attempted to draw out some of the themes of craft organisation and consciousness at Doxfords, as they were articulated by leading stewards in the process of bargaining. I shall now turn to a more detailed consideration of the ways in which the two specific groupings of workers I interviewed saw their position at the engine works in the late 1960s. I will look first at their outlook on pay, then turn to their work careers, before finally discussing their day-to-day experience of the work process and effort bargaining. In considering each of these topics I will depend largely on interview responses to questions paralleling those utilised in the Affluent Worker study, and from time to time I will make broad comparisons with the responses and interpretations in that study though with due regard to the differing sampling procedures used.[38]

I have already noted that the workers in the groupings I studied had been able to 'ride' the merit-rating system in the new pay structure with a fair degree of success, and that of those I interviewed half had take-home pay of £25 or more, a percentage which compared favourably with those interviewed in the other Sunderland factories.[39] Thus it would appear that these workers had participated in the relatively successful bargaining activity, at both shop-floor and works level, that has been outlined above. Against this background those interviewed were asked both about the scope for wage increases in the future and about the adequacy of the interim pay system. When asked "do you think the firm could pay you more than it does without damaging its prospects for the future?" a large majority of these workers felt that it could (74%, with 14% saying 'could not' and 12% 'don't know').[40]

The majority view that wage increases were possible hinged on the themes of profitability and productivity. On one view they could be funded out of profits as such:

> "they definitely could; if they're not making a profit from a man they wouldn't employ him, so they could always afford to pay more";
> "the shares are doing alright, and if they don't shout too much when there's a rise they can afford it".

More often, and doubtless influenced in some part by the contemporary discussions of productivity and incomes policy, the argument was couched in terms of increased productivity, potential or achieved:

"they're getting the production now in contrast to three years ago when they were right on the bottom...because of bad management at the top, so..";
"I suppose to pay more they would want more production, but the present scheme has shown they could get more, so they could pay more".

Within this theme of productivity some gave a particular inflection to the argument by stressing the role of the direct producers as against administration:

"they could pay more if they cut out a lot of the deadweight: we're carrying a lot of office and progress staff";
"without doubt - such a terrific amount is wasted at the moment; since the war administration has tripled".

These were the most straightforward responses, but similar themes recurred in the comments of those who made more tentative or paradoxical assessments of the firms' ability to pay:

"they could pay me more if they had a more efficient production cum reward system: at present I can't see how they go on paying what they are paying";
"they probably could pay a bit more without damaging themselves; they paid good wages when there was little work - now they've got work and other places wages are rising too";
"I'd give them a chance with this fair wage now; but we havn't had it in long like. If productivity goes up we should get more - the workers are the people, it's only recent years it's been recognised".

Overall, then, these workers saw scope for increased wages, even when regarding themselves as relatively well paid, and they did not <u>simply</u> argue this in distributive terms but also in terms of the organisation of production.[41] In the latter context it was not unusual to express a scepticism about the ways in which management organised and administered production which was implicitly counterposed to the competence of the production worker.

It is worth registering here a comparison with the findings and interpretations of the Luton study. Goldthorpe et al found a similar distribution of 'could' and 'could not' responses in both their overall sample (74% to 20%) and their craft sub-sample (79% to 20%), and saw this as evidence of a consciousness of "a divergence of interest over the way in which the product of this cooperation [with management] is distributed; and further, that they would for the most part question...whether they are in fact receiving their proper due".[42] In regard to the Doxfords workers (and from the evidence of the reasoning of the Luton workers probably in regard to them too[43]) this represents an over-narrow emphasis on distributive conflict alone, for a scepticism about management's organisation of production coexists with and reinforces the

argument about distribution. This is not to deny that the critique of production, like that of distribution, was a qualified one,and also involved several divergent strands ranging from condemnation of the personal deficiencies of senior managers to the emphasis on top-heavy administration.

The interweaving of assessments of pay levels and management organisation emerges in a different form in the responses to the question "do you think the method of payment here gives people adequate rewards for their efforts?". As has been seen,the system of wage payment at Doxfords was an interim product of a long and tortuous process of negotiation, which had paradoxically formalised the central role of the subjective judgement of the foreman through his role in the merit-rating system. Assessments of the system tended to weigh the substantive outcomes in terms of pay levels alongside uncertainties about the fairness or favouritism of the procedure. Firstly there were those who simply emphasised the advantages:

> "it's adequate anyway; throughout the years it's the best we've ever been paid: willing to give us fair money for a fair days work, and I prefer it with the lessened disparities. Before, with piecework, the disparities were unreasonable";
> "it's a damn good wage, the assessment is pretty crude but it's fair in the sense that everyone gets to 12/- eventually";
> "definitely adequate, because you can go and ask, go and talk for it, and you need not be satisfied till you get it [the grade]".

Such comments were made by half of those I questioned, and they were evidently satisfied that the quasi-status-quo clause and the appeals procedure,insisted on by the stewards,were working to the workers' advantage. Among the other half of those interviewed the judgement was less straightforward and favouritism was seen as the main area of potential difficulty. However, for most of those who mentioned this possibility it was seen as a danger which had not vitiated the system:

> "it's adequate; the problem is of leaving the foreman to decide. It should be based on production and cut out favouritism, but this present new scheme does cut out fiddling times. So it's O.K. as long as you keep up a fair average for the top money for top work";
> "adequate, though it depends a lot on the foreman who must base it on looking around and on times, though foremen can get a wrong opinion of a man taking time for to do a job";
> "yes, it cuts out the haggling and fiddling but I daresay some blokes deserve more. But at present it stops the friction".

Such responses were made by a third of the men, but this left 17% for whom the

possibility and practice of favouritism entirely undermined the credibility of the system:

> "the majority get top money and it may look fair, but there's still favouritism. To me it's a bad system: if your face fits you'll get top money without getting production - you'll never stop favouritism"; "no, it's way out. Where you're assessed it's a man's opinion, favouritism is possible. And it's still based on the old piecework prices, but there is always this distrust that if you do a job fast they put them on the middle rate".

So at Doxfords the so-called 'measured daywork' scheme was viewed as a mixed blessing: the dominant view among these workers was that there were strengths and weaknesses in the scheme, but that for the time being it was delivering the goods.[44] It had done away with the hassles of cross-booking and the anomalies associated with piecework, and was providing relatively good wages, but it also amplified the scope for favouritism and there were doubts about the future scope for wage increases within the system. In this context some workers still harked back to the advantages of the incentive element of the old piecework system. The comments of other individuals pointed up other aspects of the overall assessment: they recognised that the unskilled workers remained low paid, hardly touched by the new system; and they acknowledged that government pay norms remained a background constraint. Standing behind many of these comments there was the clear implication that much depended upon the continuing effectiveness of workplace unionism; though this was rarely made as explicit as in the deviant opinion that "we're overpaid as a consequence of strong union organisation". More usually it was a background assumption, alongside a pragmatic appreciation of the problems and possibilities of the different schemes - an appreciation which involved individual as well as collective considerations.

Having outlined some basic features of the shop-floor view of effort bargaining at Doxfords I now want to consider the patterns of labour market experience and choice which characterised my sample, so as to set their views of their present employment against that wider background. This will then serve as an additional reference point for a more detailed discussion of work experience and effort bargaining in the following sections of this chapter:

In the course of each of my interviews I sought basic information about the previous jobs held by the person being interviewed as well as posing some of the hypothetical job choice questions adopted by the

Affluent Worker study. The information on jobs consisted of brief job descriptions and details of the employer and the duration of each employment, together with incidental information about working conditions and reasons for job moves. Such basic data can be coupled with the further information about job preferences and the rationale for potential job moves, collected in comparable form to that of the Luton study, to reconstruct some features of the labour market inhabited by these workers. I will begin by characterising the broad patterns of experience discernable among the sample, before breaking down the information by cohorts in such a way as to facilitate comparisons with the Luton craftsmen.

The dominant feature of the job history data from my Doxford interviewees is, perhaps, the evident existence of the 'Doxford man' — a person who has been employed for a considerable period by the firm and perhaps since being apprenticed there. If allowance is made for periods of national service and for the common pattern of a short period at sea as a ship's engineer servicing the firm's engines, 10% of the sample had between 10 and 20 years unbroken service with the company and 17% over 20 years such service since completing a Doxfords apprenticeship. In addition other workers who had 'served their time' elsewhere, but after one or two other employers had settled at Doxfords, had clocked up lengthy periods of service: 14% of the sample had more than 15 years continuous employment with the firm after starting elsewhere. Thus there was considerable evidence of attachment to employment at the firm. On the other hand, as a counterpoint to this pattern there was also a considerable reservoir of wider labour market experience within the Doxfords workforce, at least in regard to skilled jobs in engineering. Within the 70% of the sample with more than five years in their present job, 21% had previously made three or more job moves, three exceptionally mobile men having made eight, nine and thirteen moves respectively. Among the remaining workers with five years service or less another 21% had made three or more job moves.

The flesh which can be put on these bare bones of widespread job stability counterpointed by minority experience of job movement, suggests that wage levels, security and effort bargaining considerations all contributed to this pattern. Some of the critical features are exposed by the assessments made by those who had moved to the firm within the last five years. According to one 37 year old man, with experience of four other substantial local engineering companies, it is the wages which

matter:

> "One of the lads from Mathieson started here, and he got me a start. The job's as good as any I've worked - it's the money I'm thinking of, more money; the work's the same everywhere".

But this is qualified by another man, 39 years old, and with experience in five engineering firms, including one job as a foreman:

> "I liked Sunderland Forge, I was very happy there, there was variety, and the piecework was alright then when I was younger; but when I moved to Doxfords the money influenced me more than anything - £19 and no piecework was the best in Sunderland. I didn't worry about enjoying it, I was buying my own house. At Sunderland Forge I wanted to do the important jobs but now I'm reaching the age I'd rather go to easier work, if you're getting a good wage money doesn't matter that much, more the type of work"

So assessments change as commitments and abilities change through time, particularly in regard to the effort balancing the money on offer. Another aspect of this was brought out by a younger man who had worked at two other places:

> "I didn't like the work at Gresleys, I was after a job as a vertical borer but finished up as a turner. And I didn't like their attitude to the men. Doxfords seemed a better proposition with the chance for a vertical borer, but now I won't mind if I stay turning: they're a good firm to work for".

Settling for turning was encouraged by the conditions on offer. This same point was made, against the backdrop of insecurity of employment elsewhere, by a 22 year old man who was one of the few people I interviewed who had experience outside engineering:

> "I started off at Austin and Pickersgill, first in the office then on the shop-floor, was paid off there, then went back, then it was slack I was paid off again. I'd tried being an engineer at sea but didn't like it, then I had a job as a salesman for thirteen weeks. I heard about this job at the exchange, went down on the off-chance and had a right detailed interview. I haven't done a great deal of turning but it was a vacancy and good money - that's why you never hear them complaining here as a rule".

The common feature among these assessments was the feeling that Doxfords, at that time, offered rather better conditions than most other craft engineering employment in the area. Not only did they offer some of the best wages in the district, but management was less pressing than

elsewhere and the firm looked relatively secure.

Similar views were expressed by many of those who had moved around earlier in their work careers, but had been at Doxfords for more than five years. Thus an older worker could place a similar assessment against the backcloth of longer term shifts in the labour market conditions experienced by Sunderland engineers, recalling both the profound insecurity of the inter-war period and the recurrence of 'slack periods' in the '50s:

"I started at Doxfords on March 8th 1928 and did four years of an apprenticeship here, then a year at Linns to finish off the apprenticeship - Doxfords were one week on, four off at that time. In 1933 I was out of work for eighteen months, then Doxfords got busy again round 1934, and I was here till 1937. Then it was the merchant navy till 1943 when I was injured out with deafness. Then I was at Dickinsons till 1945, and then I went to Steels for six months, but there was too much overtime. I was at Pyrex from 1946 till 1951 and I tried to get onto the day shift but couldn't on lathes, so I went to Steels again for another eighteen months, then Pyrex for two years, that time on constant day shift. In 1953 I had two months at the Bristol and then from 1953 to 1959 I was at Austins Wear Dockyard: that was turning, fitting and machining. It was slack then in Sunderland. I had a year at Greenwells and then came to Doxfords, which was just picking up with the 'J' engine. It's the best place in town, interesting work, and you're treated like a workman, not like Joplings or Bristols. If you give a decent days work here they're quite satisfied. There's more interesting work at Greenwells (though there's variety here as well) and when things were slack about two years ago I thought about millwrights at A and P. But it's better pay here, and I'm glad I stayed now the job's picking up".

Thus in the later 1960s, Doxfords offered a 'good deal' on wages and conditions compared with similar jobs elsewhere, despite the more tedious aspects of the work involved and the recurrent tinge of insecurity. Yet, as with the more recently arrived workers, those who had been longer turning at Doxfords were apt still to voice a preference for fitting. In the words of one man of 38 who had been back at Doxfords for six years:

"I served my time here, worked here for six years, then had a year in Doncaster as a fitter in the pits. After two years in the army I came back to Doxfords: a fitter was what I wanted but I finished up turning. In 1956 I went to sea for 11 months, then another two years

here. I went down south for three months but the wages were no better. Anyway I tried it out. Then I had two years at Steels, turning again on more modern machines, then back here. At that time Steels were trying to stop you getting more money, their ratefixers were very active. Mind you, the men at Steels idea was to equal up, here it's equal down. You can't really better the money anywhere around here, but I'd prefer fitting, I'd consider working anywhere if it was fitting...but the pit was dangerous, more than for my liking".

Fitting offered more interest, variety and mobility than turning, but there were fewer jobs available: this was the context for such a feeling that the option of turning was for a more secure or available "second best".

This view of the position of Doxford turners in the local and wider labour market, communicated by those who at one time or another had explored some of the possibilities of alternative employment, coloured the views of those who had worked in the firm more or less all their lives. Not only were the contours of the local engineering labour market well known, but the significance of the return of such mobile workers was not lost on those who never left. As one such 'Doxford man' succinctly put it: "it's worse elsewhere; any amount of people have went and come back". As a final twist to this interplay between wider experience and parochial observation, it's worth noting how one particularly travelled man remained aloof from the parochialism of his workmates. Having served his time at Doxfords he had since had quite a wide range of jobs, including colliery fitter, enquiry agent, merchant seaman, shop storeman, press operator (at Pressed Steel, Oxford) and turning at a variety of Sunderland engineering firms, including three spells back at Doxfords. For him "it's the spice of life, moving around, though some are happy to stay put"; but in disparaging the parochialism of some of his workmates it is noteworthy that he implicitly accepts the broad consensus which has emerged from the other job histories:

"there's more to working than money, you know. In the south you can go to work better dressed than this, there's better facilities for washing and seperate lockers etc. But lots of men at Doxfords don't know what other places are like: having travelled around I've got some idea of how it could be".

Against the background of this qualitative indication of the possibilities and constraints, choices and compromises, which represent the personal and collective labour market experience of my sample, I

will now provide a brief quantitative indication of these workers' experience in the labour market and their grounds for job choice, before turning to their experience of work and effort bargaining within the workplace.

Firstly it is possible to compare the labour market experience of the Doxfords turners and the craftsmen interviewed for the Affluent Worker study. The data summarised in table 9 compares the spread of occupational 'levels' experienced by the two groups. It confirms the impression, from the job histories quoted earlier, that the range of jobs experienced by my sample is very strongly concentrated within the band of apprenticed skilled manual work. At the same time it suggests that in this regard their previous experience is only slightly narrower than that of the Luton craftsmen. The data in table 10 compares the experience of unemployment in the two samples, and indicates that, while the large majority of my Doxford sample had not experienced any significant period of unemployment, more had been unemployed than was the case for the Luton craft sub-sample and this remained true when older and unmarried workers were excluded from my group, to make it more comparable to the Luton sampling frame. This

Table 9: Previous Work Experience

	Luton Craftsmen (n=56)		Doxford Turners (n=42)	
	majority	highest*	majority	highest
Professional Managerial & White-collar	0%	7%	0%	0%
Self-employed	0%	5%	0%	0%
Supervisory, Inspectional, service etc.	2%	7%	0%	14%
Skilled Manual (apprenticed)	79%	64%	81%	69%
Other Skilled Manual	11%	9%	4%	5%
Semi-skilled & Unskilled manual	6%	5%	5%	2%
Unclassifiable	4%	0%	10%	10%

Luton data: Goldthorpe et al Industrial tables 15 and 16.

* 'highest' defined as in Goldthorpe et al, in terms of their occupational classification, and in terms of the job in the highest occuoational grouping for each man.

Table 10: Experience of Unemployment

	Luton	Doxford Turners	
	Craftsmen[1] (n=56)	All (n=42)	Married men 21-46 (n=26)
Never unemployed[2]	98%	86%	88%
Up to three months	2%	7%	8%
3-12 months	0%	5%	4%
Over twelve months	0%	2%	0%

1. Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 51
2. 'Other than transitionally'

latter point strengthens the suggestion in the job histories, that the experience of unemployment among the Doxfords workers is marked by the impact of 'slack periods' as well as by the residue of inter-war experience.[45] Of course these skilled workers were in a more advantaged position than semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the same area, and indeed their experience compared favourably with that of the machinists and assemblers in the Luton study.[46] For those who wanted or were forced to move jobs, the predominant experience had clearly been of a search for comparable or better wages and conditions, rather than simply a search for a job. As a final note, though, it needs to be said that labour market conditions were deteriorating at the very time that I was conducting my fieldwork. The rapid rise in overall unemployment in 1967 and 1968, which had been disproportionately severe in such areas as Wearside, had not left the engineering crafts unscathed, so that the Doxford turners faced increased prospects of unemployment rather than simply job transfer.[47]

However, when my respondents came to judge their contemporary job security, these patterns of past labour market experience and current conditions were overshadowed by assessments of the prospects of their own employer. At Doxfords the immediate order book engendered a degree of confidence in the immediate future, though the time period involved was rarely more than a couple of years: "for the next two years you can say secure then it all depends on these engines, if they are a success". This linkage of a qualified optimism to market

prospects was a commonplace among a workforce that was not only quite well informed about the long-term trends in marine-engine installations, but also forcibly reminded of the crucial role of the new engine design in the company's corporate strategy by the obtrusive din of the engines under test on the test-bed in the main workshops. Against this background 71% of my interviewees judged their jobs to be "fairly safe" (generally meaning quite explicitly 'for the next couple of years'), as against 14% claiming "dead safe" and 7% reckoning "rather insecure", figures comparable with those for the overall Luton sample but more pessimistic than the Luton craftsmen.[48]

Having established these parameters of the market situation of the Doxford turners I will now examine the criteria of job choice reported by these workers. In the course of my interviews I asked several questions about job choice, designed to explore the terms in which these workers experienced and operated within this market situation. These included the question which was perhaps most central to the Goldthorpian interpretation of instrumentalism: 'have you ever thought of leaving your job at Doxfords?'...'why was this?'...'have you done anything about it?!...'why did you decide to stay?'. However, I also asked a more direct question about the reasons for joining the firm in the first place ('what made you decide to take it?'), and a more hypothetical question about alternatives ('if you were offered a job in another firm doing the same work for more pay, how would you consider it?'), in the hope of gaining a fairly rounded view of these workers' perceptions of job choice.

The responses to the query about the initial reasons for taking a job at Doxfords are indicated in table 11. Certainly the 'cash nexus'

Table 11: Reasons for Taking a Job at Doxfords

(stated as percentage of number of mentions, n=70)

Money/better money	34%
Lack of choice	25%
Apprenticeship	7%
Security	7%
Just a job/available	9%
Familar/local/conditions	16%
Just a change	2%

was sometimes registered quite baldly; on the one hand in terms of money wages - 'more money, that's all', 'it was the best money on the river' - and on the other in terms of a job - 'it was the only job available at that time'. More often, though, these features were elaborated and contextualised, without qualifying their fundamental character. There was a spectrum of emphases on wage levels compared with job availability, ranging from:

> "I wanted to leave the place I was at and the money at Doxfords was right, so I made the move", through
> "It was the increase in wages. I couldn't manage on the wages I was getting before", and
> "At the time I was finished at Wear Winch and I wanted to avoid nightshift. I went to Greenwells but was paid off...then I had to come to Doxfords as I was getting married then" to
> "I was made redundant from my previous firm. Then I tried to get out of the trade, into service engineering, but it was a slack time, so I finished up here".

A comparable spectrum was reported by those who had started as apprentices at Doxfords:

> "It was the place that took most engineering apprentices, the money was good for a young lad and I knew I could always fall back on a trade", was counterpointed by
> "at the time it was my first choice, but I regretted it for the first few years of my apprenticeship because it was poor money, and it wasn't really that good for doing an apprenticeship then, you got left on your own".

Thus, just as in Luton, but with a rather greater inflection towards security considerations, the cash nexus was experienced in terms of a search for better wages and job security within the broad parameters of a craft labour market. This meant reconciliation to the unavailability of alternative, somewhat more attractive jobs, such as fitting or service engineer, even within this labour market. It meant a capacity to avoid some constraints - nightshifts were often mentioned - at the expense of acceptance of others - such as systematic overtime.[49] It was within this framework that choices could be made:

> "The money was good, it was close at hand, cleaner and less dangerous. While there was a shorter working day in the pit, it was taking ten-and-a-half hours out of my day."

Indeed it was from within this tacit framework that less explicitly money-oriented comments could highlight the other side of the cash

nexus ('it was an easy going place from what I had heard'), though, as table 11 suggests, absence of explicit reference to wages or job security was rare.

A more clear-cut comparison with the Luton material can be made with reference to the question about consideration of a move from the firm, the responses to which are tabulated in tables 12, 13 and 14.

Table 12: Possibility of Leaving

	Luton craftsmen (n=56)	Luton setters (n=23)	Doxford turners (n=42)	Doxford turners sub-sample (n=26)
Have never thought of leaving	30%	52%	48%	46%
Have thought but taken no action	20%	22%	36%	29%
Thought of leaving and taken action	50%	26%	17%	25%

Table 13: Reasons for Having Thought of Leaving

	Luton craftsmen (n=54 mentions)	Doxford turners (n=34 mentions)
Level of pay	9%	29%
Job security	2%	14%
Nature of work	14%	33%
Unsatisfactory management etc.	24%	5%
Other reasons	46%	19%

The first table indicates a more settled workforce at Doxfords than among the Luton craftsmen, with a pattern more comparable to that of the Luton setters. This can perhaps be interpreted as some indication that the Doxfords workers were relatively 'locked into' their comparatively advantaged position within their craft labour market, as were the setters by their promotion hierarchy. Certainly the Doxford pattern corresponds with that visible in the earlier labour market histories of these workers, with stability counterpointed by minority consideration of practical possibilities of leaving for a job elsewhere.

Table 14: Reasons for Staying

	Luton Craftsmen (n=56)	Luton Setters (n=23)	Doxford Turners (n=29)	Doxford turners Sub-sample (n=20)
Level of pay only	7%	9%	47%	46%
Level of pay as one reason (with at least one other)	61%	48%	21%	23%
Level of pay not mentioned	32%	44%	32%	31%
Security	41%	61%	26%	31%
Fair employer	14%	17%	5%	8%
Nature of work	27%	35%	5%	8%

The evidence in tables 13 and 14 underlines the reported centrality of pay in considerations of leaving and staying. For these workers, unlike the Luton craftsmen, Doxfords had been associated with lower pay in the relatively recent past,as well as comparatively high wages in the last few years. So pay figured in <u>both</u> leaving and staying for many workers:

> "I did think of leaving a while back, when the money was poor. But now it's O.K. then that's it. After all you only work for the money";
>
> "The money was bad when I left for Steels...I've not considered it since";
>
> "I did think about it, but when the new rates came out that decided us. They're as good as anywhere now".

Though this was the dominant understanding of this period another worker reported being unsettled by the very actions which helped to secure the improved wages, though he too underlined the constraints within which the better wages were valued:

> "When there was trouble, what with strikes and overtime bans, I fancied a change. I did apply, that was for a fitting job at the Gas Works, but the job didn't come off. I heard no further word of it. Still I'd have lost that job now because they're closing that place down".

Thus,between the limited alternatives on offer and the pay and security

for the time being at Doxfords, the minority of workers who continued to entertain the active possibility of a move generally found Doxfords the best option for the present. Some workers continued to hope for a move to a more interesting job as a fitter, but were reconciled to turning at Doxfords:

> "I've tried quite a few times at several places, but I couldn't get a fitting job anywhere in the town. Doxfords was paying alright so I've stuck at it".

There was the occasional worker whose plans appeared to cut across considerations of wages and security:

> "After a couple of years I'll be looking around again. I plan to go firm hopping for five years or so to gain some wider experience".

But, for almost all, the over-riding and explicit considerations were pay levels, security, and the realities of limited job alternatives:

> "I applied for a few jobs but stayed because it's fairly secure. And as we're buying a house I need to be in a secure job";

> "I've been thinking a lot about a move. You get unsettled looking at these blokes who've been here thirty years. What keeps me here is the wages - you can't better them around here".

These responses indicate the centrality of the wage and relative job security in attachment to work as a turner at Doxfords. Both in taking a job with the firm and staying there, having a secure and relatively well paid job bulks large.[50] However, this does not preclude a concern among these workers with work, working conditions and workmates; it simply underlines the premises upon which such concerns operate. This emerges clearly from the responses of my interviewees to the hypothetical question about a move for higher wages <u>given</u> similar work and conditions, tabulated below. Many of the responses challenged the naive assumptions built into the question, by querying

<u>Table 15: 'Would you move to a similar job for more pay?'</u>

	(n=42)
Broad acceptance	17%
For <u>significantly</u> more, yes	15%
Only if not too much travel	11%
Only if no greater work pressure	7%
Only if conditions really comparable	15%
Only if fairly secure	4%
Sceptical about availability of option	15%
Outright no	15%

the presumption of similar conditions or expressing substantial scepticism about the existence of such an option:

"Financially you can't really improve on the wage here. I'm not saying it's particularly good but...";

"It would have to be exceptionally good as regards what it involves in working conditions and the set up at the firm to be comparable".

Against this background some people clearly opted for the improved pay:

"I'd definitely go straight away...so long as I could avoid the nightshift";

"I'd want to know if I could do the job, then as long as the conditions were reasonable O.K. Mind, I'd consider working anywhere if it was a fitting job".

Others clearly rejected the possibility on several different grounds:

"I wouldn't accept it for more money - the thing that attracts me is working conditions and the type of work";

"If I leave now I'd loose £400 redundancy, so it would take a lot to shift us. I've seen people leave supposedly for better jobs, but come back";

"I don't think I'd consider it now - maybe ten years ago as a younger man".

But more responses explored the different aspects of the relatively advantaged position of workers at Doxfords, drawing together at this point considerations of wages, conditions and workplace sociability as they were perceived to operate in the labour market for engineering craftsmen:

"No, you'd not really better it. And you would loose friends, which you can't guarantee: if you are beat on a job here you get fantastic help. Elsewhere they might say 'you learn the hard way'";

"Only a substantial increase from here would justify a move. If you are getting a good wage the money doesn't matter that much, more the type of work and the type of machine";

"Similar work wouldn't be as easy going as Doxfords is. I'm not lazy but little things make a difference. Even now Dobb comes around and people have got to pretend to be working".

At this point, then, more than in the other responses, many of these workers drew out the 'other side' of the cash nexus - work effort, autonomy and comradeship - as central considerations within the broad parameters of their craft labour market, and judged Doxfords very

favourably in these terms. A final example exemplifies such an assessment, and underlines some of the features which need to be followed up in considering the dynamics of effort bargaining on the shop-floor at Doxfords:

> "The money's that good. We had to fight for it but we've got what we wanted. We're getting canny money now, as good as Steels. You get a bit more at Steels, but here you havn't got to work so hard for it. Steels have better facilities, a canteen, it's warmer; but the times are a bit faster. You're watching the clock all the time, that's why people there often stop off work. And you also get moved around from machine to machine".

On the Shop-floor at Doxfords

As I have already noted, most of the men I interviewed at Doxfords worked on turret or centre lathes, with a few on copy lathes and a couple on an automatic. They did a variety of small batch turning for spares, repairs and specific contracts, in batches taking from several hours to a few weeks to complete, and there were intermittent 'one-off' and 'rush' jobs. In some respects the variations among jobs were quite superficial, but in others they represented quite distinctive patterns with significant contrasts: between relatively large jobs with a fair amount of 'self-act' on a reliable machine, and small jobs requiring continuous adjustments on a rather old machine, for example. Turners at Doxfords also spent a significant amount of time finding, organising and setting up jigs and tools. The few copy-lathes and the automatic represented distinctive patterns of work - larger batches, proportionately less setting-up time - but since they were still experimenting with the possibilities of these machines, little pressure and some opportunity to be involved in working out the different operations.

Against this background some initial bearings on the work experiemce of my sample are provided by their responses to questions about 'work-pace', 'monotony', 'day-dreaming', 'trying out ideas' and 'freedom of movement'. The pattern of responses is set out in table 16, together with some fairly comparable data on the experience of the Luton craftsmen.[51] With due allowance for the differently

Table 16: Aspects of the Experience of Work Tasks

Doxfords Turners (n=42)		Luton Craftsmen (n=56)[1]	
Work Pace[2]		**Work Pace**	
Faster than most jobs	21%	Too fast	11%
Average	40%	Not too fast	84%
Less than most	38%	Other	5%
Trying out ideas[2]			
More than most	43%		
Average	31%		
Less than most	26%		
Monotony[2]		**Monotony**	
More than most	50%	Find job monotonous	14%
Average	17%	Not monotonous	70%
Less than most	33%	Other	16%
Day Dreaming[2]		**Day Dreaming**	
Yes, think about other things	52%	Yes, think about other things	55%
A bit	24%	No	39%
No	24%	Other	5%
Freedom of Movement[2]			
Can't leave easily	2%		
For short periods O.K.	49%		
For longer periods O.K.	49%		

1. Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 8 p. 18.
2. Note should be taken of the different forms taken by the relevant questions in the two studies. The Luton study asked rather direct questions, of the form 'Do you find your present job monotonous?', while I asked my respondents such questions about their present job "in comparison with other jobs you have had, or know of". One consequence of this formulation was that I had a middle category - about average - while Goldthorpe et al gained 'yes/no' responses. At the same time my questions about trying out ideas and about day dreaming had a more absolute sense than the more obviously relative and comparative queries about pace and monotony.

phrased questions, the patterns for work-pace and day dreaming are somewhat similar in each setting, but the pattern for monotony represents a sharp contrast. The large majority of Luton craftsmen said their job was not monotonous, but half the Doxford men reckoned that their work was more monotonous than most. While the reference points for these assessments may have been different it is interesting to note that one of the more travelled Doxfords workers compared his present job unfavourably with one he had had in the motor industry:

> "I do things to break it, but it grows on you, more so than in the car factory, though concentration relieves the monotony a bit".[52]

This pattern of widespread monotony must be qualified by a recognition of the significance of some of the variations in the details of work, alluded to above, for the balance of monotony and day dreaming reported by specific workers. One man summarised the position from his own experience:

> "it does get monotonous if you've got large batches, but one-offs or new jobs mean then it's quite interesting. Then again you can day dream on repetition work, but on the likes of the grinder you've got to concentrate".

Such differences are confirmed and elaborated by other comments. For some workers, the majority, there was considerable monotomy but there was some compensation to be found in room for a bit of day dreaming:

> "ours is a monotonous type of job in contrast to fitting or millwrights, the bugbear is knowing you'll be doing the same in six weeks time";
>
> "more monotonous than toolroom work, but you can think about other things when there's self-act on: I think that's an advantage of the work";
>
> "average monotony, the same kind of work all through. There's not much movement, that causes the boredom. You can day dream a bit - when it's still the same type of work a bit mind wander helps you through the day".

For others, predominantly those on smaller work, the monotony was not relieved in this way:

> "monotonous, yes, you do the same thing, and there's not much day-dreaming. There's very little self-act on these centres (the jobs on my machine should really go on to the turrets) so there's a lot of 'pushing' and hard work on mine. I get the small, poor work; they keep

that work on this machine, see";

"the smaller the machine, the more patience you need. It's slow and monotonous, but you can't day dream on a lathe";

"the machine has to be watched, you dare not trust the öld machine".

For a few workers, though, there was more interest because they had more varied work, sometimes involving one-off or 'problem' jobs:

"it's not monotonous. The small batches, the slight changes and complex work keeps your mind on the job. I try to keep on the work, not day dream; after all I'm getting 12/- an hour";

"no, on this small lathe you get more variety; you can think about other things, that's an advantage, but you've got to keep your mind on the job on small lathes".

No doubt some of these variations reflected the different outlooks and strategies of different workers, but there is considerable consistency in the significance attributed to different types of machine and different sorts of work, registering the subtle variations of experience even within such a relatively homogenous grouping.

Similar variations emerged in assessments of the scope for trying out ideas, though they were expressed in several different contrasts. Overall the responses were skewed somewhat towards the view that they, themselves, had more scope than most to try out their ideas, though significant numbers demurred from this judgement. A common formulation of the predominant view simply presented it as inherent in the very nature of craft work:

"'workshop practice' is a tradesmans' to improve";

"any person who's served his time may have his own ideas about a job. You just have to use your own discretion".

Others, though, pinpointed the aptitudes or the opportunities which facilitated the display of such craftsmanship. There were virtuosi in figuring methods and angles:

"you can try out your own ideas; but Derek <u>he's</u> the expert on jobs".

And there were favourable circumstances:

"there's more scope for ideas because our machines haven't had many of these jobs before".

The other side of this last remark was often cited as the main restraint on trying out your own ideas:

"you can't really try out ideas because men have done it for years and years";

"it's less a question of making decisions, though you can make a

few changes. You can't improve things on the old machines, the jobs have been done that long, the best method's been found".

However, the limitations on ideas were also formulated in more general terms, the counterpoint to the general evocations of craftsmanship:

"jigs and tooling come via the toolroom, so it's not encouraged, not at the present day";

"you haven't got time to think about ideas, and there's blokes to think about that";

or more sharply:

"you've got to know nothing. It's got to come from the top".[53]

The earlier discussion of management attempts to rationalise pay and production exposed the uneasy relationship between managerial reliance upon craft skills and attempts to standardise and intensify production. This tension is clearly evident on the shop floor in the containment of a real though variable scope for craft initiative within confines defined by a combination of shop practice and engineering planning. In this context 'method' represented a way of making life easier on the shop floor in the face of tighter payment and production planning, but informal observation also suggests that foremen cultivated the appropriate craft skills of some of their workers as a resource for coping with difficult and rush jobs.

Another aspect of the dynamics of craft autonomy at Doxfords concerns freedom of movement and its limits. On this count it was generally agreed that you were not tightly tied to your machine. Indeed a few people simply emphasised the scope afforded them:

"you could do practically anything in here, it would take management two hours to notice";

"you can go as you please, it's easy that way, though officially you shouldn't".

But most comments mapped out the understandings within which such movement operated, and in particular their sensitivity to the constraints implicit in the supervisory and payment system:

"you could move off the machine but I prefer to stay. You're just wasting time unless you're looking for tools and that; like I'm always having to hunt for a micrometer";

"you're not really missed but you've still got to keep up the same time as you've done before";

"I don't think it's done really. You do wander around for ten minutes or so, but you know how far you've got to go. They're

quite satisfied if you get out what's expected";

"if you could speed up your job you could go elsewhere for a little time, so long as it's in the scope of the work".

Within this framework several people registered the limitations on the direct power of management:

"I don't do that, you should be on your machine; they're probably too easy on that side of things", or from a more usual point of view:

"yes, I've found it alright. You can't compare these foremen with the old foremen: they haven't the power, it makes the foremen weak".

However these limits were tested more by some workers than by others:

"it's pretty free, but I'd feel guilty if I just went over to talk to another bloke. The older blokes do it though; they don't care".

But within this ethos of variable self restraint there was also evidence that the recently bargained 'measured-man-work' system was operating to reinforce, if not tighten, those limits:

"leave the work? A lot do it but I'm more concerned about my merit money I'm going to get";

"you can't leave, not now, because you're watched under the new scheme. Production's increased; that proves men are stopping on the machine more".

Underlying these comments is an awareness and documentation of the mediation of managerial controls through the craft organisation of the work process. Thus the new payment system, based loosely on earlier piecework work rates and implemented primarily through supervisory assessments, defines the boundaries of work discipline. At the same time the foreman is part of, rather than apart from, the craft milieu; and the exigencies of the work themselves legitimate being off the machine. This affords significant scope for movement compared with many other types of work, especially for those workers able to manipulate the organisation of their work and their relations with their foremen most advantageously.

This discussion has brought the operation of the payment system and effort-bargaining back into focus, and the review of responses to these standard questions can be rounded out by looking at the judgements most directly concerned with that system, namely

those concerned with work pace. As can be seen from table 16, the predominant judgement at Doxfords was of an average or below average pace, though nevertheless a minority somewhat larger than that among the Luton craftsmen reported a fast pace. The spectrum of experience is indicated by the following views:

> "if you don't work at a fast pace you don't feel you're doing your bit. The foreman's aware of it, and anyway you don't get bored";
> "the pace is about average. If you do a fair day's work you can keep up pretty well";
> "the pace is steady, it's easily achieved, slower than average"; and
> "slow pace; as long as it comes out at a steady rate and is somewhere near".

To some extent these differences of view were related to variations in the work process. While one man reported "a faster pace on the copy lathes, but it doesn't take the effort", others reported a slower pace "as the steel may tear, you see; its the machine that sets the pace", or "simply because you haven't got the equipment on hand". However, other comments pinpointed the norms established under piecework as the crucial reference points, both for the prevailing pace of work and for the common view that it was relatively slow:

> "I don't hurry myself, but I set my times from piecework. Mind, when Coates was ill he knackered himself on them";
> "now it's not piecework you can think about other things more, but it gets a bit monotonous because you're not fighting the clock. I stick it for the money".

Such statements also underline the limits within which these men judge their workpace 'moderate'. On the one hand slower pace on routine work threatens tedium; on the other even a moderate pace can take its toll if you are unwell.

Shop-floor Effort Bargaining

With these features in mind, my discussion of shop-floor experience at Doxfords will now focus on the manner in which the changes in the payment system and effort bargaining were understood by the turners I interviewed, while in the following section I will look at their wider views of management. I will start by considering their accounts of the development and dynamics of the old incentive system, then turn to assessments of the working of 'measured day-work' in its first few months of operation.

Though the late 1960s had seen the negotiated abandonment of the old piecework system at Doxfords, the workings of that system were both a matter of recent memory and a central point of reference in assessments of contemporary management and effort bargaining. This meant that I was offered fairly extensive accounts of the history and dynamics of the earlier payment system, alongside comments on the contemporary situation.[54] It is clear from these accounts that piecework at Doxfords was characterised by the same features as have been widely documented in other studies of piecework: loose and tight rates; cross-booking and other fiddles; wage 'drift'; and conflicting interpretations of the legitimacy of particular levels of effort and payment.[55] Characteristic comments which document these features included:

> "the times were varied, but you were more or less to blame yourself as the foremen were generally liberal about the price and you could cross-book a bit: six hours, say. Treble-time was the norm, and that gave you time in hand for odd jobs and returned work. There were no special limits as long as you were inside the time allowed, but the gaffer would question the time if it went above: 'do you want the job retimed or what?'. You could get a job retimed yourself if it was bad; but if you did that, then you had to bear the consequences of modern tooling and machines";
>
> "under the old system we got up to quadruple time but it involved robbing Peter to pay Paul. It made men dishonest, fiddling the cards. You know, they had piececards going back twenty to thirty years: it was $1\frac{2}{3}$ time till the early 1950s and after that it crept up. There was a fear of putting a card in too thick, fear of rate-cutting. If you queried a time they brought a card down where someone had made it pay: that was basically the fault of the men who accepted tight prices".

So there were variations which prompted fiddles, and such fiddles were a routine part of the stabilisation and improvement of earnings. They were tolerated within uncertain but real limits by the foremen, while more formalised and systematic adjustment of job times risked the exposure of existing leeway. Thus there was the characteristic process of covert drift.[56]

One important aspect of peoples' understanding of the development of the old payment system concerned a loosening of times as the fear of dismissal and unemployment receeded. This was buttressed by accounts

of the historical shifts involved:

> "they were <u>all</u> bad jobs when I first came back from demob [in 1946]. At that time unionism wasn't very strong, and you could be threatened with dismissal. By 1956 there were loose and tight rates, and between 1956 and 1963 there was some attempt to reassess them and even them out, and if there were bad jobs we tried to demonstrate that".

However, while this comment highlights the broad impact of changing labour market conditions and trade unionism, others emphasised that this impact generally operated through more piecemeal and sectional initiatives:

> "we always used to cross-book, but about five years ago some people took advantage of management initiatives during a period of rush work to renegotiate the tight times while leaving the looser ones alone. This opportunity wasn't taken by everybody, and then management, not having heard any complaints, tightened up again. That was when the 'mafia' broke away from the established practice to earn more; but the majority of the men didn't follow it up".

This account begins to reveal some of the complexities of the fiddle and output control in the craft milieu at Doxfords. Certainly, in the relatively favourable conditions of the late '50s and early '60s, output limitation did not operate in some simply traditionalistic form to preclude sectional and individual advance.[57] Rather, some shift in the balance of power between management and workers was reflected in changes in the willingness of workers to contest established times or adopt more flagrant fiddles, and in the propensity of management to indulge in rate-cutting or supervisory sanctions. In this context the relationship between factory-wide and sectional advances was complex and contradictory. On one hand workplace organisation was strengthened through its championing of equity in the face of the anomalies and uncertainties spawned within the piecework system.[58] On the other hand, though, advances often took the more parochial form recounted in the above quotation, and were accompanied by renewed anomalies. Such paradoxes were underlined by the claim that the breakthrough made by the 'mafia' occurred during an overtime ban.[59] If this was so, it meant that the pressures for production which had been exploited to gain factory-wide leverage were to some extent relaxed to gain concessions at section level.

Certainly the advances made within the fiddle could remain both

hidden and uneven. This is made clear in the following account of the discovery and development of looser rates:

> "some people made poor prices when they feared they might loose their jobs, and some of those times weren't altered. On the other hand some methods were altered and old prices kept, so they became good prices, but fiddling hid these anomalies. Quad time did become a possibility. When I moved [to this section] I found a chap in front of me making treble time, so I did the same. I didn't even know you could do it before. We had a bit of trouble with the shop-steward who complained we would spoil the jobs, but it gradually became standard practice. But there were limits; some cards got sent back because the foreman thought you were too greedy, or if he thought there would be trouble from others. I'm always accused of having the easy jobs, but it's really because I try new methods".

Several features of this process deserve attention, not least because of their contrast with stereotypical views of output limitation among 'traditional' workers. Firstly it is evident that such workers were engaged, at this time, in an uncertain and risky process of conversion of some of their resources for cross-booking into more overt claims for looser rates. Secondly it is clear that, as individuals and cliques edged up their earnings in this way, their actions were sometimes regarded by other workers as both foolhardy and grounded in unfairly advantageous job allocations. Accusations of 'favouritism' clashed with claims to superior innovative expertise. Finally, in the context of the ambiguous and contested legitimacy of such moves, the foreman appears to have acted to regulate the relaxation of job times in a manner which protected the process from any backlash, rather than to contest it on clearly managerial or solidaristic grounds; an indication, perhaps, of the patterns of mutuality involved.

Before looking further at the issue of favouritism it would be helpful to consider more fully the theme of innovations in 'methods', to which the worker quoted above appealed. There can be little doubt that expertise in working out new tooling and new angles was central to the self-regard of many of the skilled turners, though as has been seen there were differences of opinion about the scope for exercising such skills at Doxfords.[60] The importance of 'method' was given exemplary expression when a discussion of the technicalities of a particular job sparked off these reflections:

"you have to learn the different ways of doing the job: how to use the tools, possible feeds and speeds, and how to set up to get the work out. Nowadays lads aren't the same in their attitudes; they don't try to improve the job as much. The old piecework system encouraged you to seek the best methods. When you got a time you thought about the job, figured the best way, but even then you generally discovered a better way of doing it after a while, sometimes even by accident. Generally you could develop new methods to shift the time up from double time to quadruple time if you were a good turner. When you first came out of your time, mind, you couldn't do that. You had to be willing to learn, to ask others how they did the job, and gain experience; and some didn't ever do that. But if you did you should be able to improve your times. If you really got a good time, mind, you didn't spoil it, like, by going over quadruple: then people would want to know what was going on, especially the foreman who had signed the time in the first place. But in general 'necessity was the mother of invention'. Management might try to redesign a job to retime it too, of course. There were loose and tight times in the first place, and you didn't spoil them. What you did was gain a few hours on a good job and use that to offset bad times or setting-up or waiting time. But nonetheless the piecework system encouraged inventiveness which came through in production. One snag was when there were workmates on the same machine.....if one treated the gear differently, or one used different methods to the other, conflict would arise. That's a reason why I don't think there should be shiftwork: each man should have his own machine".

In these terms, then, piecework (but not shiftwork) could, in the relatively benign conditions of the post-war labour market, articulate well with the creative exercise of craft skills. It could afford scope not only for sophisticated fiddles and cross-booking,but also for earnings levels related to individual differences of capability and experience. The heavy reliance of management upon craft skills for the production of numerous small batches of gradually changing components provided some real, though unevenly distributed, scope for progressive work-bench 'improvements', and hence for the loosening of job times and earnings drift. However, this also meant a rather uneasy relation between individual, sectional and broader wage gains. It was this which was pinpointed by references to favouritism as a major cause of differentials and anomalies (on a par with the fear of dismissal among older workers).

Complex differentials, and associated accusations of favouritism, are regular features of piecework payment systems, though they clearly take specific and historically changing forms.[61] According to one authoritative account of the development of workplace trade-unionism at Doxfords, the advance of collective organisation could be measured in part by the limitation of such favouritism. On the one hand the role of the shop-steward in processing appeals against tight times had reduced the discretion of the foreman, and on the other management and union had acted in concert to outlaw fixes whereby worker and foreman shared the fruits of loose jobs.[62] Against this background the charges of favouritism made by my respondents were relatively modest, though still significant:

> "there were quite big differences between jobs; the more you thought about it the more ridiculous it appeared. The origin of it was in twisting in the past, and trust and favouritism. The foreman would accept a false time quoted by one of his favourites, then the job would get improved and become a good time. Other times a truer time is given by a conscientious worker, it's accepted by the foreman, and it's a difficult job; you've got to work like hell and get a few hours [in hand]. That's a more or less standard practice unless you're a very conscientious bloke. I'm afraid I used to cross-book quite a lot. I was making 2/- rather than about 3/6 when I came here. I was working some bad prices and the other blokes showed me the 'piece-balancer'. They said 'you should be earning twice as much as that', and when I asked 'what rate?' they said treble time. Occasionally others went up to quadruple time, even quintuple time. The foreman pulled me up when I was paid quintuple time near the holidays; but a few others <u>could</u> get away with that time, people who had the attitude that they were really worth that amount".

This morally rather self-conscious account nevertheless reveals the untidy complexity of output regulation and wage drift in this setting. In particular it documents the coexistence of (i) mutuality and social support in attaining average earnings with (ii) differential scope for pushing above the norm. The fact that the higher earners <u>claim</u> superior skills and productivity is acknowledged, but the suspicion persists that differentials owe as much to favouritism as anything else. It seems most likely that the foreman oriented himself to both reliability and craft competences as resources in dealing with such production exigencies as rush jobs or difficult 'one-offs': he would gain by cultivating those workers who were willing and able to cope

with such problems, while they would gain from favourable consideration in job allocation and piece prices. In this way friendships between workers and foremen (with their roots in kinship, shared apprenticeship or long acquaintance) could become consolidated through mutual trust and opportunities to display superior craft competences, when coping with engineering problems posed by difficult jobs and often archaic equipment. Thus the craft ethos, of which the foremen were a part, could accomodate, and even legitimise to some degree, some of the differentials arising within the piecework system. On the other hand, those workers who were on the margins of such mutuality, but who considered themselves to be competent craftsmen - but not, perhaps, Doxfords men or workmates of the foreman - were particularly conscious of the self-fulfilling character of such 'craft' rationales when the foreman made critical job allocation and job-time decisions. Thus the craft ethos not only contained, but was susceptible to, conflicting interpretations; and the very pattern of management dependence upon craft skills invited those patterns of selective mutuality and favouritism which modified any straight-forward craft solidarity.

The above discussion has tended to highlight divisions or tensions among workers in the sections I studied, but such tensions were generally subordinated to wider solidarities when the shop-floor faced the rationalising initiatives of higher management. As has been seen, management continued to rely upon the knowledge, skill and experience of their production workers throughout the post-war period - for example they depended upon experienced 'hands' to nurse along some of the old war-time 'counterpart fund' machinery. This provided the material basis for the powerful craft ethos in the factory, some of the complexities of which have just been explored. However, even during the 1950s management were experiencing some of the limitations of this mode of operation, as international competition began to intensify and as the workforce discovered possibilities for wage drift and the mitigation of labour discipline. As was noted in the earlier discussion of management attempts to rationalise pay and production, the late 1950s and the early 1960's saw a succession of managers and technical experts who attempted to institute orthodox production control and work measurement systems of various sorts, though with little success as each new scheme succeeded the last failure (and the departure of its originators). The effective scepticism of the workplace bargainers when faced with these initiatives emerged clearly from the history of the negotiations on the payment system, but now I want to consider the

reactions of those on the shop-floor. The tone of those reactions is well illustrated in accounts of an 'exemplary' case of management intervention, personified by the activities of one Scott. I term it exemplary because it was in such terms that the tale was told; on various occasions and with minor variations, not only addressed to me directly but also retailed to apprentices and other novices. It was clearly a part of shop-floor folk-lore, designed to point a moral about the relationships between workshop experience and craft on one hand and management incompetence and rivalry on the other. Here is a condensed and composite version:

> "Scott was good on the tools and such, and got a lot of new stuff, like new tipped tools, in. He had the power to get it done; that's still needed in here. But with Scott there was a conflict between his notion of getting stuff out, when he tried all angles of feeds and speeds, and inspection. They were constantly in conflict, though inspection over-emphasised accuracy too much: lacking knowledge on the job they demanded tolerances that were unnecessarily fine. But while he was O.K. on tooling he was like a bull in a china shop when it came to feeds and speeds: he broke two or three machines. An example was Robby, he was on a machine which had lasted twenty years; and it was wrecked inside a week using Scott's feeds and speeds. Both him and the boss went as a result of their failures on the shop-floor. They said they would be in the office, but they came down on the shop-floor and bust up the machinery".[63]

Two interlocking themes emerged from this tale. The first was the disjunction between theory and practice. Management are all theory, they don't appreciate the realities of practical engineering work, so they demand unnecessarily fine tolerances where work is to be fitted on site anyway, or where tolerances of that order have no value in the functioning of the part, and they wreck machines because they ignore the quirks and temperament of aged machines which have been nursed along by their operators for years. However, the account doesn't just resolve into this dualism. It is recognised, indeed emphasised, that Scott brought certain valued skills to bear on work organisation, particularly through his championing and introduction of new sorts of tooling. Thus the second, less explicit, theme of the tale concerns different criteria of practicality. On the one hand there were those of the shop-floor, welcoming new equipment which facilitated craft labour; on the other were those of management, which subordinated new

techniques to their concern with pace and discipline, thus debasing their commitment to modernisation. Management were caught in a double-bind when they faced such craft consciousness. They could stay up in the office and be condemned as mere theorists, supernumeraries being 'carried' by the production workers; or they could invade the shop-floor, risking the revelation of the real rationale of their 'modernisation', and often defeat in the face of continuing dependence upon workshop skills and experience. Thus the view of these workers was not merely defensive, against new techniques. It was, rather, one which tended to discriminate in a practical way between modern forms of coordination and craft production and the contradictory, unrealistic and destructive initiatives of management. There was little sign that for these workers modern forms of coordination were seen to entail modern forms of coercion within a rationalised labour process, even when their personal experience was of a fairly monotonous and routine job. For management strategies had never succeeded in posing the problem for these workers in anything like those terms. Thus for them craft labour was still seen, and to varying degrees experienced, as the progressive force, while the role of management tended to be seen as somewhat anachronistic[64]. Even when craftsmanship was confined within the limitations of turning, rather than being afforded the apparently wider scope of fitting, such encounters as those retailed in the Scott story appear to have revitalised such a craft outlook.

The ethos within which such sentiments were crystallised into exemplary tales can be mapped out in a different way by considering the pattern of responses among the Doxfords turners to questions about the role of work-study men. This pattern is compared with that for several Luton sub-samples in table 17, which shows a roughly comparable tendency for all the groups to see work study as more concerned with a fast pace than with making things go smoothly for everyone, though there are also significant variations. For Goldthorpe and his colleagues responses to this question revealed a fundamental locus of conflict between employers and 'instrumental' wage workers, though it could be more or less overt:

> "its implications were most immediate in the case of the machinists, since 'standard times' formed the basis for the calculation of their piece rates; while on the other hand it was probably of least consequence for the craftsmen, who were, of course, on time rates and had relatively high autonomy in

Table 17: Attitudes to Work Study

Work study men are more concerned with:	Luton Craftsmen[1] n=56	Luton Setters n=23	Luton Machinists n=41	Doxfords Turners n=33
making things go smoothly	32%	35%	15%	10%
both[2]	—	—	—	19%
a fast pace	50%	57%	73%	61%
don't know/other	18%	9%	12%	10%

1. The Luton data is derived from Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 33 p 85
2. The option of electing for 'both' go smoothly and a fast pace was one I allowed in the light of the form taken by some of my responses, but it was not available to the Luton workers.

performing their work-tasks. But, for all groups in the sample, work study was of some significance in influencing, directly or indirectly, their intensity of work, and was thus generally of relevance to the 'effort bargain'."[65]

Making due allowance for the intermediate response which I allowed my respondents, the pattern of their responses fell between those of the Luton craftsmen and machinists. More significant, though, were the terms in which these responses were made; for they underlined the themes of 'theory versus experience' and the domestication of managerial attempts to intensify production, sketched out above. Thus, among the clear majority who chose 'a fast pace', characteristic responses were:

> "pace definitely, they're not willing to improve your lot, but they want a better pace. If you take your problem to them to solve you become a 'delinquent', not a competent tradesman. They're in the capitalist field, trying to cut the costs; it's better to rely on informal cooperation on the shop-floor rather than the firms 'experts'";
>
> "pace primarily - that's their job, slide-rule boys saying 'do this, do that', but you can do it for one or two, not all day or all week. It's all very well for the biro-pen, slide-rule, stop-watch men, but not for the operator. Whenever a new system's coming out everybody's dubious".

Others were more blunt: "I hate the buggers, they expect a human being to work like a machine"; but across the pattern of responses there

was something of a consensus that the schemes of the 'experts' came to grief on the shop-floor:

> "they're amateurs"; "they went on one or two machines and they caused trouble straight away, probably the lack of experience"; "pace, to make a bit of a name for himself; but it's only as far as the unions will allow, the men have to catch him there!"; "you can put that as fifty/fifty, it's no good them making the job ridiculous, they'd not get it out".

On the basis of the several waves of work-study experienced during management's search for effective rationalisation and intensification (and other experiences of rate-fixing elsewhere), these workers were generally in little doubt about the conflict of interest between them and the logic of work study, but they were usually fairly confidant that, at Doxfords, that 'logic' had been able to gain little leverage, given established conditions of work organisation and trade unionism. This was neatly summed up in the view that:

> "if I were looking for another job I'd want to know whether there were any 'time-study' merchants, but here we've found them pretty reasonable".

This, then, was the background of experience and expectations which formed the context for the implementation of the finally agreed 'measured day work' system during the period of my observation and interviewing. In outlining the course of the negotiations which preceeded the introduction of the new scheme I pinpointed continuing conflict over levels of effort as one element of the bargaining over grading which resulted.[66] I have also noted the conditional welcome extended to the new scheme: in general my respondents regarded the wage levels which they had secured as fairly good (while continuing to believe that the firm could pay more); they were relieved that they no longer had to depend on cross-booking and other fiddles to gain a decent wage; but there remained some anxiety about pressure for more effort, especially in the light of continuing scope for favouritism in work allocation and grading.[67] I will now look more closely at the conceptions of effort and work pace which carried over from the old piecework system to structure shop-floor relations under the new system.

At one point in my interview I asked "Do you think there is generally agreement about what is 'a fair days work' among your workmates, or do you think people have different ideas?", and I

followed this up with "What about between workers and foremen, do they have similar or different ideas?".[68] These questions generated some fairly extensive comments on the texture of expectations and relationships which regulated work effort at the time, and are the main source for the material which follows. It should be remembered that, though management had envisaged that the new system would eventually be founded upon a completely revamped structure of standard times, no real agreement had been reached on the issues raised by such a plan, and little had happened apart from a few desultory exercises on that front. It was in that context that workers continued to treat the old job times as both rough guides to established work practise and the basis on which management (and especially foremen) were likely to be making some of their judgements of 'merit'. One man defined the position in fairly precise terms:

> "I have a target to work on. The older ones work within the guidance of the prices, not the same as the old prices but somewhat similar. The majority of workers here all have a good idea of the amount of work, you have the odd one who doesn't, you do anywhere. I don't know about the foreman, nowadays they don't seem to take much notice. They don't know what's coming off until it's done; they don't appear to keep an eye on the work, whether they keep it to themselves I don't know. But it's slackened off when they scrapped the piecework prices, though I think they're begining to keep up records again now I think".

So the piecework prices remained a guide,but did not have quite the coercive force which (allowing for the fiddle) they tended to assume before. At the same time, while there may have been some relaxation of effort during the transition, it was evident that fresh pressures were operating under the new conditions:

> "it depends on your rate really: you've got a fair idea how long it took last time, so you may speed up a bit to gain the extra points. I've never known supervision tell anyone they're not working fast enough; that's based on the old piecework prices as per bonus. If they don't agree it doesn't show. You see him about 4 O'Clock or just after you've left, going round counting up - it may be progressing or checking up, I don't know".

These comments clearly indicate the main features of the 'negotiated' understandings of a 'fair days work' which prevailed on the shop-floor after the demise of the piecework system: some sense of a shared conception of the method and effort appropriate to this sort of skilled work, indicated more or less clearly by reference to the old times and

prices; a fairly relaxed regime of supervision geared to similar conceptions; but also a little uncertainty about precisely how this was being translated into the new grades.

As under piecework, the understandings characteristic of this craft ethos accomodated subtle variations of performance and differing relations between workers and foreman:

> "you've got to keep up the rate, all the blokes know all the times, but management also has an eye on the piece cards. There's fair agreement among the workers here: Samuelson's a grafter, then Coates, then Robinson, Hall, Kincaid more or less the same as me - more like the old school. Our ideas and those of the foreman match up pretty well, especially as he was on these jobs in our corner. So he has a look, that's all. Some used to count the work, but the blokes would hide them";
>
> "people have varied ideas on account of when there was piece-work some went for double time, others pushed for triple time or even quadruple, and now generally their ideas are based on their previous piecework. On average the foreman's ideas are the same: he lets you get on with it, but he knows what's going out".

Thus it is evident that the processes of differentiation and tension, discussed earlier, were carried forward into the new pay structure, with significant variations in the targets adopted by different workers and uneven relations between men and foremen. One way in which such variations were understood was in the familiar terms of favouritism: "some do an honest days work, others do as little as possible; someone knows somebody and can afford to do it". Occasionally an alternative rationale was offered, harking back to harder times:

> "a fair days work for some is only about two hours work, for the younger ones. It's not the same nowadays, they're mainly in the job for the money...I still do work at the piece-rates, but others, young lads, complain the job can't be done at the times I signed (they can tell from the time cards who signed them). One bloke did it at my speed for a time but he said it was killing".

This was more than simply the routine disparagement of inexperienced youngsters by a more experienced craftsman. Evidently there remained a small minority of workers who measured the conditions of the 1960s against their own adaptation to more stringent circumstances, and judged the current norms as unduly easy! A more widely shared view remained that which appreciated what had been gained over the years:

> "usually if you work steadily that's O.K. You can easily get

conscience stricken in this place after having sweated at Gresley's, but except for the odd ten percent they work steadily here".

These accounts suggest that so far as the foreman was concerned there was a fairly close correspondence between the expectations of workers and supervisors, marked by a shared reference to the old rates and cemented by a shared craft experience.[69] However, it should also be apparent that the foreman worked <u>through</u> that craft ethos to monitor and edge up both effort and productivity:

"the foreman's ideas are very similar; our foreman knows the work, though, being the firm's man, he'll want a bit more", or "the foreman thinks we should do more, he jokes about it but he says we could do more".

Sometimes the activities this involved were seen as more or less legitimate, especially when they were pursued discretely. Occasionally they were simply seen as part of the chasing around required of the foreman, rather undignified for a craftsman:

"if they're waiting for a job I bash on and get it done, otherwise I just work at an even pace. Nobody kills themselves in this factory to be quiet honest. There's a pretty similar standard throughout the factory about what the work rate is. But there's no coordination between management and the shop-floor: the foremen are pretty reasonable, they're time-served men, but they have a bad job in this firm, too much like errand boys. They do keep an eye on out-put, they have to, but they have too much running about to do. They generally appreciate you for getting out the rush jobs".

It is notable that this assessment was embedded within an account of the reciprocity between workman and foreman in dealing with rush jobs. For those less central to such reciprocities, though, the pressures were more overt: "no matter what you do he wants more out - he tries to cram sixteen hours into eight" and "he expects a bit more than he gets, he just tends to ask 'when will it be done', pestering". Often, though, such pressures remained indirect, even when oppressively so:

"I work to a target, I like to try and get them all in pretty similar times, it's just a case of getting through the day and keeping your assessment right. Opinions vary because the majority work to the piece prices of the old days. I never worked on piece-work here so I just work to what I think....The foreman, his view has got to be different, because he'll never say you've done a fair days work, he'll call you lazy, he's unfair. He lets you get

> on with it, but he keeps an eye on what you've done, specially when you're not there or on night shift. He rarely comes up to you asks you when he would have to justify himself. I don't like that, going behind your back".

Thus it was the newer or younger workers, less experienced in exploiting 'method' to ease the job and less advantaged by reciprocities with foremen, who remained most conscious of the pressures inherent even in the relatively unpressured craft ethos and administration at Doxfords in the late 1960's.

The analysis of the social relations of the immediate production process conducted in the last few pages has emphasised the relative autonomy and coherence of the craft ethos on the shop-floor, but also the subtle variations of experience and orientation contained within that ethos. Two further features remain to be discussed before drawing out the more general implications of my overall discussion of effort bargaining and the cash nexus. The first concerns the somewhat distinctive forms taken by these social relations in different sections or workshops, and the second concerns the shop-floor view of the different relations of the foremen and factory management to craft administration.

The first theme can be illustrated by reference to the differences in the internal texture of social relations in the two workshops where I conducted my interviews with Doxford turners; though, despite the slight variations in interview responses in the two settings, my comments on such differences remain somewhat speculative. With that qualification in mind the comparisons to be drawn did receive some confirmation from the stereotypes current in the workplace.

In the first location, the 'oily bay', a core group of about a third of the workers on the section appeared crucial definers of an understanding of craft work which they were also fairly well placed to implement. Their shared conception of craft involved on the one hand the practice and appreciation of the skills required to cope with difficult or rush jobs, and to produce more routine work with the minimum of effort and the maximum of neatness, using fairly old and temperamental equipment. On the other it involved expectations of decent wages and substantial work autonomy, the latter being both to get on with their work in their own way and to engage in workplace sociability.

An indication of this understanding of craft work was provided in the course of yet another discussion of 'method':

> "you've got to have'method' on the job, Coates /now retired/ used to be all method, it was fantastic. Chalk marks here, there and everywhere; lining up on other machines and such, to give him a good lift for the hoist; everything worked out. He could really work. Mind you, he didn't get much for it, he was paid buttons, but he was the sort of bloke you needed for a mate on shifts. And he'd always give a hand if someone couldn't get on. When I came I always used to be going over to him to ask, and one day I said to him 'Don't you get sick of me asking questions all the time'. 'Not if you do as you're told' he said. But the foreman used to take advantage of him, lean on him to help the new-comers, so much so that it interfered with the job. Other good 'method' men were generally the older men, including the present foreman - of course they tend to forget, but Lane's pretty good. The youngsters have to gain the experience, like these two /on nearby machines and in their early thirties/ they came from the brass shop to this different sort of work and they were lost at first; or that lad with Flanders now, he's just out of his time and he's got hardly anything done though he's probably been flogging it all night".[70]

For such core workers the technical expertise of Coates was exemplary, but <u>they</u> were not going to be paid 'buttons' for it, and neither were they going to be 'used' by the foreman except as part of a process of reciprocity which secured their relative autonomy. Such reciprocity did indeed provide the basis for substantial agreement between the foreman and these core workers on the theme of a fair days work, but also sustained some differentiation between them and others, such as the younger inexperienced workers mentioned in the quote (though they too, in their turn, were in the process of induction) and a scatter of other peripheral figures.

In comparison with the 'oily bay' the pattern of social relations in 'sub-assembly' was less coherent. Similar reciprocities did not seem to sustain such a coherent core of workers, but tended to operate on a more individualised basis; possibly because older workers had been more compliant and had sought less concessions from supervision than had the men in the 'oily bay'. At the same time, and possibly as a result of being less able to mobilise production through the craft ethos, the 'sub-assembly' foreman continued to adopt more visible

pressure tactics in relation to some of his workers.

The contrasts between the two sections should not be overstated. In both cases the majority of workers reported broad agreement among themselves concerning a fair day's work, and many attributed similar views to their foremen; but in the sub-assembly shop more men complained of pressure from the foreman, and in turn several were critical of what they saw as the low level of effort among their fellow workers.[71] Thus the two sides of the craft ethos, methodical production and sociable autonomy, which were more or less fused in the outlook and practice of workers in the 'oily bay', remained somewhat at odds in sub-assembly. It also seems likely that such differences were the parochial corollaries of the reputed roles of these sections in factory-wide industrial relations: while the 'oily bay' was widely regarded as a strategic centre of workplace trade unionism, sub-assembly was reputed to have been, for a long time after the war, a continuing bastion of supervisory power.[72]

Shop-floor Views of Management

Such were some of the horizontal variations in the workings of craft administration and the craft ethos in effort bargaining at Doxfords. It should already be apparent that the vertical relation between workers and management was also differentiated in a significant fashion, as indicated by the different regard in which foremen and higher management were held by my interviewees. In this final section of the discussion of shop-floor relations at Doxfords I will review some more systematic interview evidence about this difference, and compare it once more with some of the findings from the Affluent Worker research. One point of reference is provided by responses to a question which I asked in identical form to that in the Luton study, namely "how do you get on with your foreman...very well, pretty well, not so well, or very badly?".[73] The resulting assessments, presented in table 18, indicate comparably high levels of satisfaction among the Doxford turners and several of the Luton sub-samples, with the Luton craftsmen least clearly conforming to the pattern. Before looking more closely at the Doxford responses, it is worth pausing to consider the Cambridge interpretation of the Luton data.

The main thrust of the Goldthorpian interpretation of the Luton findings at this point concerned the salience of non-interference rather than sociability in underpinning satisfactions with supervision. This interpretation was used to point-up the inappropriateness of a 'human

relations' analysis, and the applicability of the notion of 'instrumentalism', even in explaining satisfaction with the foreman, ostensibly the focus of 'human relations' theorising. In the context of these arguments the reactions of the craftsmen appear rather paradoxical; on the one hand several craftsmen were critical of close and/or inept supervision, and on the other some of them criticised foremen for being aloof and uncommunicative.[74] However, despite fleeting references to the distinctive terms of craft-based effort bargaining, the general thrust of Goldthorpe's argument leads him to collapse such complexities into a location on some linear scale of relative instrumentalism. Thus the divergent position of the craftsmen within the Luton sample is presented in terms of a less thorough-going instrumentalism and <u>hence</u> a greater salience of 'human relations':

> "one is dealing with workers whose expectations from work are not so concentrated, as with the bulk of the manual sample, on economic returns....such a situation is one in which a 'human relations' approach might be said to have some relevance".[75]

Though this allows some recognition of the distinctive position of craft workers, it precludes any real exploration of the specific terms in which these craft workers inhabited and modified their cash nexus. It also misses an opportunity to consider the texture of social relations which could sustain both clear majority satisfaction <u>among craftsmen</u> with infrequent interaction with foremen, and significant minority dissatisfaction with various combinations of aloofness, interference and ineptitude.[76]

Against this backcloth the pattern of responses among Doxfords turners suggests <u>levels</u> of satisfaction slightly higher than among the Luton craftsmen, and very much on a par with the responses of the Luton

<u>Table 18: Assessment of Relationship with Foreman</u>

Respondent gets on with foreman:	Luton Craftsmen (n=56)	Luton Setters (n=23)	Luton Machinists (n=41)	Doxfords Turners (n=42)	
'Very well'	23%	44%	32%	38%	
'Pretty well'	52%	48%	49%	48%	
'Not so well' / 'Very badly'	25%	9%	15%	14%	14% / 0%
Other/d.k.	0%	0%	5%	0%	

machinists; while the supporting comments reveal a similar mix of assessments to that reported for the Luton craftsmen, embedded within the network of social relations of craft administration sketched above. Thus a dominant theme concerns the manner in which a 'live and let live' relationship between workers and foremen is structured by a combination of shared craft work experience, the parochial bargaining leverage and reciprocities arising from craft skills, and effective workplace union organisation:

> "I get on very well with him, I've known him since I've been here [nearly thirty years]. A good foreman needs to give fair warning and make allowances, he shouldn't be hasty on discipline because we've got a strong union now";
>
> "Very well, I've worked with all the foremen at Doxfords, I know them personally, and for all I don't have much to do with them, I'd say very well";
>
> "We don't bother one another. If a foreman's fair the men can carry him while he gets to know the job, but you can always pay him back if he's not reasonable by taking time with the rush jobs".

However, if such assessments indicate the ways in which the foreman tends to be 'contained' at one remove within the craft ethos, the tasks undertaken by the foreman are not unequivocally accorded the regard of the men. Rather, the foreman's time tends to be seen as being absorbed by routine, even demeaning, administrative tasks:

> "He's O.K. in his own way, but he won't say what he thinks. He seems to have too much on his plate to think about things";
>
> "No doubt foremen do have some influence, but not a lot. Foremen at our place aren't foremen at all, they're only progress chasers. It suits the men, they try and help the foreman, but there's that tendency to take liberties, like spending a long time talking. In the past men did tight times to get into the foreman's good books, but now he leaves you alone as long as he knows you're getting it done".

Overall the half-regretful judgement that "he's a glorified progress chaser really" was almost as common as the generally favourable recognition that "we're left alone". Not that such features evacuated all tension from the relations between foremen and workers, given both the continuing pressure for reduced production costs and the dynamics of reciprocity and favouritism analysed earlier:

> "I'm just not bothered by him but I don't get on with him so well. They should treat you fairly but it doesn't work out like that though";

"It's very difficult with foremen, they tend to romanticise about how much they did, so their ideas are more than you're prepared to do. They look for industrious looking people on the job, rather than actually industrious people. Still I get on pretty well".

This, then, serves to underline the terms on which the attentions of the foreman were welcomed or resented, and the central importance of a specific, union-buttressed, craft job autonomy, rather than any simple impulse to sociability in 'human relations', among the Doxford turners.

While relations with the foreman were predominantly easy, workers views of Doxfords management were much more sceptical, in line with the views on management changes and productivity initiatives detailed earlier. In quantitative terms the assessments clustered neatly around average, in contrast to a systematic bias towards an assessment of 'better than average' across the relevant Luton sub-samples (see table

Table 19: Assessment of Present Firm as Firm to Work For

Assessment:	Luton Craftsmen (n=56)	Luton Setters (n=23)	Luton Machinists (n=41)	Doxfords Turners (n=42)
'Better than most'	61%	78%	59%	28%
'About average'	20%	22%	34%	44%
'Worse than most'	13%	0%	5%	28%
Other, D.K., D.N.A.	7%	0%	2%	0%

19).[77] This 'average' judgement seems to have involved on the one hand an appreciation of the presently conciliatory stance of management, but on the other quite widespread criticism of management's attitude to both the workers themselves and the organisation of production.

Thus the relatively advantageous circumstances of employment at the marine engine works were cited by several of those interviewed, though rarely without critical reservations:

"this has been an easy place to work, and I've no complaints, it's fair enough for a man who'se been here a long time, fair to average really. Lots of middle management seem superfluous";

"pretty easy, better than average. They try to push the job along, but they let it go as it goes. They don't want any trouble now as

they've got orders just now. Mind, the supervision haven't got the brains to let the men get on with the job - the men who are actually doing the work!"

"very well, it's not so easy going elsewhere. Here they're pretty fair, they don't deliver ultimatums. Mind, I don't think mamagement can do no wrong. If work were slack of course they'd be more heavy-handed".

Thus there was considerable appreciation of the conditions achieved and enjoyed by the shop-floor, in comparison with the situation at other firms and earlier at Doxfords. However, such an appreciation co-existed with quite sharp criticism of the incompetence of management in the organisation of production and of their unconcern for the welfare of the workforce. On the issue of competence it was said that:

"from a social point of view they're easy but from a work point of view they're hopeless. The supervision should stick in the office, and then the initiative for the tools, etcetera, should come from the shop floor. This applies to the whole 'system'";

"a right cock-up, all of them, making all sorts of blunders, for example on ordering materials. It goes right back to the war years when nothing needed organising, it all ran itself";

"at the moment it's alright, except for personnel, but the whole problem with management today is they haven't a clue, like the 'sweep clean' manager who smashes the place up. Production is O.K. at the moment, but the higher ups don't give a damn".[78]

Other comments pinpointed the unconcern of management for the interests of the shop-floor:

"they're about average, but it leaves a lot to be desired, especially in their attitude to the men on the shop-floor";

"very, very poor, stinking. The main thing which disgusted us over the strike was that nobody would make a decision or keep his word. The manager is just an overgrown foreman, and the top management seem to have no interest, live down in London".

In this respect it was a common view that senior management bore the main responsibility: "lower management don't have much to do with it, they just pass the message on".[79]

All in all, then, the view of management emerging from these comments was that, in the conditions prevailing in the late 1960s, management were as much of an encumbrance upon craft labour as they were direct antagonists. Though management had adopted a more conciliatory posture

on wages and conditions over recent years, their intervention in production organisation and industrial relations appeared, from the vantage point of these craft workers, as a mixture of indifference and incompetence, tinged with the continuing possibility of a more determined managerial offensive should circumstances change. This was nicely pinpointed by one man who, having reflected upon the interview, wanted to emphasise next day that the key points were "the conflict with the office staff; we carry them", and "how conditions had improved over the years; that's union influence and more work, so there's not ten men waiting outside the gate for every job".[80]

My earlier discussion of the 'tale of Scott' suggests that the diagnoses of management ineptitude which figure in these assessments were very much rooted in and reaffirmed by the details of shop-floor experience. This was also implied by several recurrent themes of my encounters during casual participant observation: there were the 'rush jobs' which involved time-consuming stripping down and re-setting up though "they'll probably just lie about the floor for months after"; the parts which had been progressed through, but were recognised by the machinist as obsolete; a frequent refrain that the inspection department's preoccupation with fine finishes was often misplaced; numerous instances of the problems created by inadequate tooling; and complaints about lack of planning and consultation concerning the jobs which would be appropriate for such new equipment as the automatics.[81] On this latter topic, for example, it was said that:

> "of course some jobs don't suit this machine, the problem is that we get no say in what jobs come on to the machine. This is the main reason why everyone's dissatisfied with the work. That applies to the foreman and shop-manager as well, until you get to the top, where decisions are made by those who aren't in touch with what's going on. A typical example is managers purchasing these machines or tools with no specific knowledge of the jobs they want to do with them".

Such experiences, together with the interdepartmental rivalries and turnover of specialist staff discussed earlier, underpinned the view that production workers were 'carrying' a superfluity of managers and office staff, and tended to affirm craft knowledge as superior to management decision-making.

Two final points should be made about this rather sceptical assessment of the 'average' character of Doxfords management. The first

concerns the imputation of incompetence, where managers were not alone in being regarded in such terms. This was very much the commonplace craft view of the labourers, as instanced by the manner in which they became the butt of jibes about their stupidity whenever mishaps occurred.[83] In some respects management initiatives concerning production planning were assimilated to this understanding of the position of the labourer: progress chasers were widely dismissed as 'glorified labourers', "just made up from labourers, craftsmen wouldn't do that job", while of course foremen "are just glorified progess chasers", a feature demeaning their craft status. At the same time the craftsmens' view of the labourer, unlike their view of management, was also coloured by some sympathy for the low wages and long hours which accompanied their subordinate position. Thus one craftsman expressed the view that it was usually the underpaid, the apprentices and the labourers, who went in for pilfering company property, and that on that basis it was accepted and hidden from management and their informants.[84]

The other point concerns the continuing active vigilance through which workplace and section organisation sustained the relatively favourable circumstances at Doxfords in this period. The scepticism about management capacities tended to sustain rather than displace a low key, defensive but effective guarding of craft prerogatives, exemplified at one level by the deployment of sanctions in the long negotiations over the pay structure, and at another by the circumspection with which some of my naive enquiries were received.[85]

Conclusion: Rationalisation, Craft Experience and Consciousness

This chapter has investigated the experience of one grouping of skilled engineering workers in a firm and sector beset by increasing competitive pressures, where both the state and management were exploring strategies for rationalisation to increase productivity and reduce costs. It has explored the character of these workers' attachment to their work, and the social processes of effort bargaining central to the dynamics of management-worker relations on the shop floor. It is now possible to summarise some of the implications of this material for the notions of instrumentalism and traditionalism which were central to the Affluent Worker analysis, and to comment on some critical features of the encounter between craft workers and an ostensibly rationalising management in one of the industries designated for 'Wilsonian' modernisation.

The experience and responses of the Doxford turners certainly expose some of the inadequacies of any simple contrast between the economic calculation of the 'instrumental' worker and the settled social attachments of the 'traditional' worker, both in terms of the complex dynamics of the cash nexus and in relation to the interplay of individual and collective responses. Firstly it is evident that these workers shared with those in the Luton sample a fundamental concern with both comparative wage levels and relative job security. These priorities were clearly signalled by the decisions of the minority of workers who had actively considered job moves, and explicitly formed an important background to the deliberations of many other workers, including those who had been with the firm over a long period. Of course, individual labour market decisions informed by these concerns were coloured by such considerations as potential redundancy payments and the ways in which age or experience altered labour market chances, and they interplayed with the results of sectional and factory bargaining in which earnings levels were the central issue. Nevertheless the cash aspect of the cash nexus was obviously fundamental for these workers.

Secondly, however, the economic calculations of both individuals and collectivities were also concerned with the other side of the cash nexus, and in particular the levels of effort involved. Such a concern with the effort bargain was evidenced most directly in comments on the intensity of work in other factories in the district, but also in such features as the widely expressed wish to avoid the worst rigours of shift-work. In this context concerns with interesting work and scope for exercising skills were not irrelevant, but neither did they displace more mundane considerations of work pace and pressure. Thus turning was commonly seen as something of a second best in terms of fulfilling craft work, but the regime at Doxfords was relatively relaxed, and within its limits evinced some appreciation of craft skills. It was from within these parameters that some of the characteristic dilemmas of work at Doxfords arose, when on one side an easier pace on relatively routine work produced widespread feelings of monotony, while on the other the ingenuities of 'method' were deployed as much to ease the pressure as for any more intrinsic fulfillment.

Thirdly, then, both individual and collective responses to the cash nexus assessed and contested earnings and effort on the basis, amd within the limits, of practical alternatives characterising a craft labour market and craft production. This was particularly evident in the

widespread hankering after working as a fitter, combined with a realistic assessment of the greater security of turning and also documentation of some of the problems associated with fitting in such potentially available settings as the pits. On the other side it was manifested in the unwillingness of some of the younger craft workers to opt for lower paying and less skilled work when faced with short spells of unemployment, as well as in the already noted avoidance of shift work and especially night work by job moves on the part of several of those interviewed. Thus the relatively buoyant labour market for skilled labour, albeit punctuated by redundancies and spells of slack demand, framed the specific terms of labour market calculation and workplace bargaining among the Doxfords turners. At the same time, the limited scope for choice and bargaining afforded by that buoyancy was underlined, by the modest content given to the predominant judgement that jobs at Doxfords were 'fairly safe', and also by the failure of factory organisation to stop the trickle of redundancies.

Forthly, the fact that the positive evaluation of both wages and work effort at Doxfords was combined with a sceptical assessment of management and the firm underlines some of the complexity of the dynamics of the cash nexus in this setting. Clearly the relation between relatively good wages and attitudes to the firm was mediated in a more complex manner than that claimed for the Luton sample in the Affluent Worker, and two facets of that mediation have been particularly evident in the discussion. Firstly, many workers attributed both their earnings levels and the conditions of work at Doxfords more to the concessions won by their own collective organisation and sectional activity than to any management benevolence, thus absolving the company from much of the responsibility for the improvements of the 1960s. Alongside this reluctance to credit management for such gains, the established form of production and the disruptive interventions of a 'rationalising' management also sustained a quite deeply rooted scepticism about the role of management in the process of production itself. Rather than simply seeing management as unfair in its distribution of returns from a co-operative venture of production, the craft worker at Doxfords was apt to see management as parasitic upon the shop-floor, at least in so far as the organisation of production was concerned.

These comments have once more underlined the specific form taken by the encounter between one section of a craft workforce and a management concerned to restructure a specialist small batch production

process. However, it should be emphasised that neither the craftism of the workforce nor the rationalising initiatives of management were as straightforward as those designations might imply. In particular the experience and activity of the turners could not be summarised simply in terms of a coherent and oppositional solidarity.[86] Throughout the account of shop-floor social relations it has been apparent that the workforce at Doxfords was not only marked by those divisions - between non-skilled workers, craftsmen and office workers - which commonly define the boundaries of craft work, but was also characterised by more subtle tensions and stratifications within particular craft groupings (of a sort which have been given only very brief consideration in most of the academic literature[87]).

These differentiations emerged most clearly in the variable patterns of reciprocity characteristic of foreman-worker relations, which were pin-pointed most sharply in accusations of favouritism and the like. As I suggested earlier, such patterns of selective mutuality and 'favouritism' themselves developed in the context of management dependence on craft-based production, but they certainly meant that the craft ethos not only contained variations on craftist themes but was also susceptible to conflicting interpretations of those themes.[88] It should also be evident that the dynamics of effort bargaining in such a context allowed scope for sectional and clique advances which, without contradicting some version of the craft ethos, were only loosely coupled to wider craft and factory organisation. Conversely, workplace unionism oriented to that broader terrain operated in some tension with such sectional and individual tactics, as it sought to limit the prerogatives of lower management, tidy up anomalies, and hold together the whole manual workforce. Against this background the differing opportunities of different individuals to gain an entrenched position on a particular section, or to make an advantageous move in the wider labour market, also served to differentiate the situations of various craftsmen in subtle but sometimes significant ways. These features do not contradict the many unifying features of the experience of craft work and the labour market for skilled labour, but they do represent significant aspects of the experience and the consciousness of these workers, with significant ramifications for the broader dynamic of class relations in the workplace.

Finally it should be evident that management initiatives, during the decade of the 'sixties and into the 'seventies, accomplished only modest

changes in the structure of craft administration and production. In particular, and rather paradoxically, the measured man-work system of wage payment entrenched a version of the pivotal role of the foreman, rather than displacing him by groupings of specialists in rationalising production. Thus the control of production by management continued to be mediated through the rather precarious mobilisation of elements of the craft ethos by the foremen, and this continued to be the basis of any attempted intensification of work. Indeed I have emphasised the facility with which shop-floor workers mounted critiques both of this aspect of management and of any attempts to move away from it, though it should also be acknowledged that the piecemeal and often personalised form taken by such critiques generally fell well short of any thoroughgoing repudiation of the functions of management. In a sense the actions of management, exploiting as best they could the opportunities for intensification which were available within the broad parameters of craft production, served to nourish craftism, without forcing a deepening of that scepticism into outright hostility and challenge.

In this chapter I have explored the terms of the encounter between an ostensibly rationalising management in an engineering sector beset by worsening crisis and one section of their craft workforce in one of their main production facilities. In the next chapter I will compare the experience of those workers with that of other turners in the same labour market but in the subsidiary sites of their firms, one operating in the same 'traditional' marine engineering sector and the other in the modern and rapidly changing aero-space sector. In the conclusion to that chapter I will return to the issues I have just discussed, particularly the partial and uneven impact of rationalisation upon skilled workers and the distinctive views of production and management among such workers, to comment on the relevance of my findings for some of the more general arguments about skilled workers and changes in the capitalist labour process.

chapter 7: footnotes

1 Both in 1968 and earlier some workers were employed at the fitting out quay, and the numbers working there had declined steeply during the 1960's, so the loss of jobs on the main Engine Works site was rather less than this implies.

2 See table 2 and table 3 chapter 6.

3 Information derived from both management and union informants.

4 The latter was pinpointed as symptomatic by the new convenor during this period though the details were not independantly documented (fieldnotes 9.6.69).

5 The following table summarises the issues and sanctions associated with negotiating 'incidents' recorded in the management minute book between January 1966 and October 1968, excluding special pay structure negotiations.

Sanctions / Issues	Negotiation	Further Procedure	Overtime Ban	Work to Rule	Black on Work	Downer	Total
Pay Structure	16	1	-	1	1	1	20
Other Pay Issues	30	2	2	2	1	8	45
Overtime Equity	10	-	2	-	-	1	13
Redundancy and re-employment	23	3	14	4	2	2	48
Skilled machine manning	11	2	-	-	4	-	17
Rate-fixing and work methods	5	1	-	-	2	1	9
Discipline and dismissal	5	-	1	-	1	-	7
Apprentice ratio /deployment	2	-	-	-	1	-	3
Management use of tools	1	-	-	-	2	-	3
District overtime limit action	20	1	-	-	1	-	22
Other	-	-	-	1	1	-	2

Notes: 'other pay issues' includes anomalies and sectional claims; 'redundancy and re-employment' includes transfers as a consequence of run-down; and 'other' includes a ban on subcontract work and dispute over DATA union shop. Action on district overtime limits includes both enforcement and 15 dispensations for exceptional additional overtime.

6 Workers joked that two Russians worked at Doxfords, Banonsky and Banoffsky.

7 Between July 1967 and June 1968 336 redundancies were announced in nine phases and 71 were cancelled while a few men were taken back later.

8 Disputes at Doxford Engine Works reported to the Ministry of Labour are tabulated below:

	No. of disputes	Strikers	Striker/days	Issues
1960	2	18	15	pay; dangerous conditions
1962	1	20	120	redundancy
1964	3	1,400+	18,200+	piecework prices; dismissal of convenor
1966	1	16	32	working conditions
1968	3	547	1,455	pay negotiations; sectional pay claims

9 Account based on interviews with stewards and management.

10 Quotes taken from interviews with ex-convenor and personnel manager, who talked in very similar terms. Fieldnotes 9.6.69.

11 Much of the documentation for this discussion comes from confidential company documents recording the development of industrial relations between 1961 and 1969. For this reason full references cannot be given but relevant dates can be indicated in the form c.d. 6.1.60.

12 c.d. 6.1.60.

13 c.d. memorandum on meeting of 15.12.64.

14 See William Brown Piecework Bargaining London 1973 esp chapter 5 and other authors associated with the Oxford/Warwick school of industrial relations.

15 A point argued convincingly by Goldthorpe "Industrial Relations in Great Britain: Critique of Reformism".

16 c.d. 4.6.62.

17 c.d. 5.2.63.

18 c.d. 2.4.63.

19 c.d. 26.4.63.

20 c.d. 21.5.65.

21 c.d. 8.4.65.

22 Summary indications of the arguments are provided by Hugh Clegg How To Run An Incomes Policy London 1971, and Martyn Nightingale "UK Productivity Dealing in the 1960s" in Theo Nichols (ed) Capital and Labour Glasgow 1980.

23 The Fawley deal is celebrated in Allan Flanders The Fawley Productivity Agreements London 1964, and criticised in Tony Topham "New Types of Bargaining" in Blackburn and Cockburn The Incompatibles and, more generally, Tony Cliff The Employers' Offensive London 1970; though see Nightingale for a more complex assessment, especially of the ensuing scramble for deals.

24 Nightingale "UK Productivity Dealing" esp p 326: see c.d. for Ministry of Labour 12.9.67.

25 c.d. 27.2.67.

26 c.d. 23.5.66.

27 c.d. 1.6.66.

28 comparing c.d. memorandum on meeting of 11.4.67 and final draft of wage structure to be implemented on 10.7.68.

29 Ibid.

30 Industrial relations minutes.

31 Compared with the standard characterisations given in Anne Shaw "Measured Daywork" and Tom Lupton "Methods of Wage Payment, Organisational Change and Motivation", both in Tom Lupton (ed) Payment Systems Harmondsworth 1972. Incidentally Doxford Marine Engine Works would match the structural conditions described as appropriate for measured day work in another piece in his compilation, Tom Lupton and Dan Gowler "Selecting a Wage Payment System", first published in 1969.

32 c.d. 12.9.67.

33 c.d. memorandum on meeting of 11.4.67.

34 Assessment Record data summarised in anonomous form on request.

35 See for example Richard Hyman "Industrial Conflict and the Political Economy" Socialist Register 1973.

36 c.d. memorandum on meeting of 23.1.69.

37 It should also be noted that there is some slight indication that the standardisation of skilled wages involved in the MDW system may have improved the relative position of the turners in relation to the fitters both in comparison with the mid-1960s position at Doxfords and with northern engineering at large, though not, it would seem, in comparison with the wider marine engineering pattern. This may be of some relevance in interpreting the reactions of my sample, since these were all turners.

38 see chapter 5 for methodological discussion.

39 see discussion in previous section, page 107, and chapter 5 table 1.

40 it should be noted that the question implied that the relevance of the firms prospects was obvious. Few of the respondents refused to offer a rationale in response to this presumption, though one man did reply bluntly "I'd be a poor workman who said no, with the cost of living going up as it is".

41 Those with relatively higher pay were more likely to take the view that the firm could pay more, as indicated in the following table:

	Higher earnings (n=20)	Lower earnings (n=16)
Could pay	95%	69%
Couldn't pay	5%	14%

42 Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 87.

43 Ibid table 35 p 88.

44 It is worth noting that there was no significant relationship between level of take-home pay and judgement of fairness.

45 This is reinforced by noting that those excluded in the more delimited sub-sample include not only older workers who had been unemployed but also a younger unmarried man.

46 Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 51, p 117.

47 Data collected from Pallion, Southwick and Sunderland Employment Exchanges bi-monthly between March 1967 and March 1969.

Total adult male unemployment

3548 3883 4169 4627 5063 4976 5008 5267 5278

Total for 'engineering trades'

246 440 511 566 585 638 475 516 407

Precision fitters, maintenance fitters, erectors, fitters, mechanics

74 142 163 183 192 190 166 150 119

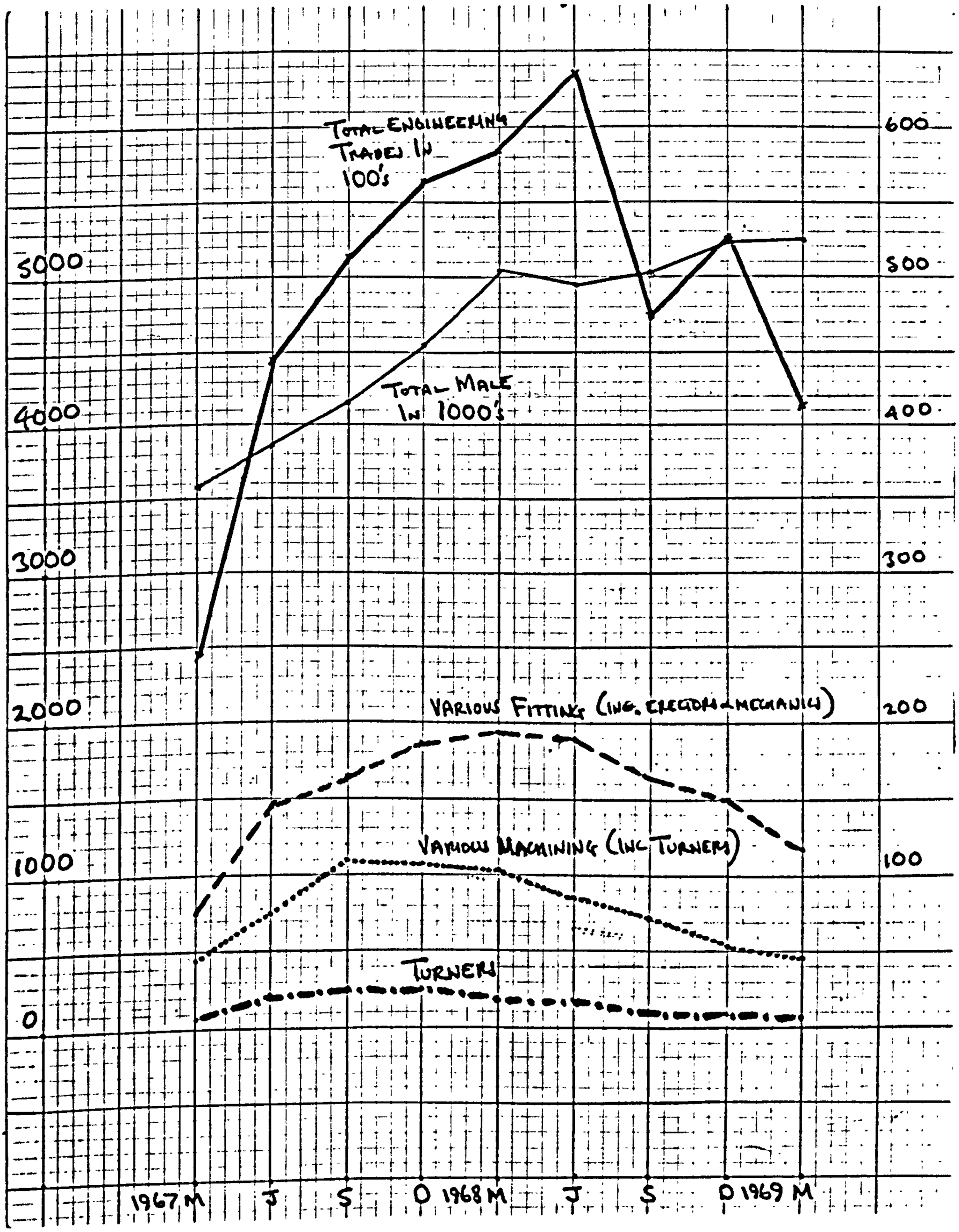
Turners, machine-tool setters, setter-operators, machine-tool operators

41 74 110 107 103 86 71 52 45

(of which turners numbered:

9 21 26 24 18 17 11 7 5)

Male Unemployment on Wearside and Numbers Registered as Unemployed in Various Engineering Trades, 1967-1969



Data derived from Pallion, Southwick and Sunderland Employment Exchange Records for 'totally unemployed men over 18', with fitters defined as E.D. 526 classifications 054 other, 055 and 056, and machinists as 059 (turners), 060 and 061-2.

48 Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 52 p 118. Of course Goldthorpe et al point out that the figures for the overall sample have no independent significance. They are cited in this context to indicate that the craft sub-sample in Luton saw themselves as significantly more secure than did several of the other sub-samples of workers.

49 The almost universal pattern of overtime was two half-shifts on week-day evenings, plus Saturday mornings, and this was widely seen as the necessary concomitant of reasonable take-home pay.

50 In this sense it could be said of the Doxfords workers, as of the Luton sample, that "the economic aspects of their employment are of primary importance; and, as well as binding them to their present jobs, also play a quite significant part in creating the quite widespread feeling of having particularly advantageous employment" within the limits of the given labour market (Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 84).

51 See the indication of the exact question in the footnote to table 16.

52 It should be emphasised that the motor industry work experience of this interviewee was not of track work, but of turning. Thus the comparison he was making should be seen in terms of the pattern of monotony reported by the Luton craftsmen rather than the Vauxhall assemblers. Goldthorpe et al Industrial, table 8 p 18, report 14% of the former but 67% of the latter judging their work monotonous.

53 Similar sentiments to those indicated in these final quotations are evident among the Luton craftsmen. See especially the opinions quoted in Goldthorpe et al Industrial pp 20-21.

54 Such accounts were elicited in part by the questions and additional probes in my interview schedule, starting with question 25 ('do you generally have a target in mind for the days work or not?') and finishing with question 30 ('what level of bonus is normally expected on a fair job do you think?'). However I also gathered several substantial comments during my periods of observation, though as I noted in my discussion of research methods I was unable to draw on evidence from several collections of job cards which were produced from lockers during such discussions (see chapter 5 p 34). This was because the variety of unknown jobs involved, and their diverse characteristics, made it impossible for me to translate the information on the cards into any pattern of earnings, and I was reluctant to press this task upon my informants as I felt that by doing so I would appear to be impugning the interpretations they had already offered me, while it was still doubtful whether the information so gleaned would take the analysis any further.

55 In particular in the studies by Roy; "Efficiency and the 'Fix" A.J.S. 1955 and "Work Satisfaction and Social Reward in Quota Achievement" A.S.R. 1953; Lupton On the Shop Floor; S. Lerner et al Workshop Wage Determination Oxford 1969; Klein Multiproducts Ltd; and Brown Piecework Bargaining. A preliminary codification of this material was offered in Elger "Industrial Organisations" in J.B. McKinlay (ed) Processing People London 1975 pp 122-123.

56 See especially Brown Piecework Bargaining.

57 In contradistinction to the characterisation of the 'solidaristic orientation' in Goldthorpe et al Industrial: "economic returns from work are thus likely to be sacrificed where 'maximising' behaviour would offend group norms and threaten group solidarity: for example, workers may limit earnings under a financial incentive scheme in accordance with group output norms" p 40.

58 This view was particularly championed by the union official who had been convenor during the relevant period, but it was also recognised more widely.

59 According to one interviewee "the percentage built up when there was an overtime ban, then it snowballed, then all the prices went haywire and men were getting very different earnings for similar work"

60 See the earlier discussion of 'trying out ideas' pp 129-130.

61 These possibilities are neatly reviewed in B. Conboy Pay At Work London 1976, esp. pp 26-29.

62 Looking back to the 1950s the one-time convenor at Doxfords saw the curbing of such favouritism as one of the achievements of workplace organisation:

> "there was both favouritism and high differentials. Those who feared, feared because of being given poor jobs or most overtime. Those who did well were either those willing to push for it or those favoured, through kinship or favours [sic!] or 'waistcoater money'. This was where the gains made on the 'good' jobs were shared between the man and the foreman: some of the money got back to the foreman in drinking partnerships and other ways. The case that broke that was in 1959 or 1960, over two men who had been given fake overtime by a foreman. No enquiry was held, because it would have turned up lots of similar cases, but the determination of the then manager and myself pretty well brought it to an end".

63 Fieldnotes, pp 25 and 28-29.

64 It is worth noting here the specific inflection which the factory-wide negotiators gave to this perspective. The convenor was apt to pose the contrast between craft and management particularly sharply by appropriating 'management techniques and production engineering' from management as the shared prerogative of isolated technical people and the craft negotiators; a particularly self-confident elaboration and modification of themes dominant among the rank-and-file, with both rhetorical and alliance-building potentials.

65 Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 85.

66 see discussion on pp 105-107, above.

67 see discussion on pp 110-113, above.

68 Questions 26 and 26a.

69 On a strict categorisation of responses 44% indicated some 'diversity of opinion', 27% stressed agreement among workers, and 27% indicated agreement between both workers and foremen, but many of those indicating diversity indicated 'variations on a theme' so that such percentages have to be treated with some reserve. Accordingly I have focussed on the qualitative content of the responses at this juncture.

70 Fieldnotes, pp 31-32. This comment also underlines the central role of these core workers in the process of transmission of craft skills and values.

71 I have formulated these contrasts in qualitative terms for the reasons indicated in footnote 69.

72 Such reputations were confirmed by shop-floor workers, stewards and managers alike, but I was unable to test them against any independant historical evidence.

73 Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 64, and question 41 of my interview schedule.

74 Compare the quotes in ibid pp 20-21 and 66-67.

75 Ibid p 67, and also the statement on p 66 that "in two special cases our data are highly consistent with the 'human relations' position". The other case, alongside "the (quite sizable) minority of craftsmen", concerned the white-collar workers.

76 The grounds for majority satisfaction are tabulated in ibid table 27, p 66, though note that the inclusion of both Skefko and Laporte craftsmen in the same sub-sample makes it difficult to gain a sense of the texture of relations in either firm.

77 Note that the process workers deviated most significantly from the overall

78 pattern of satisfaction in the Luton manual sample, though they were still more satisfied than the Doxfords workers. While they were most satisfied with relations with their foremen they were least satisfied with the firm as a firm to work for, and Goldthorpe et al note that "the relative dissatisfaction with Laporte as an employer appears to stem in some large part from dissatisfaction with the level of pay which was offered", Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 89, and pp 65 (table 26) and 72 (table 28) for figures.

78 Not that the apportioning of failings among managers followed a uniform pattern; another assessment reversed the judgement of the quotation in the text, to suggest "they're not very go ahead for a start, they don't show any interest, they're out of touch with the shop-floor; though the personnel manager is well in touch".

79 The significance of the conduct of disputes for conclusions about the roles of lower and upper management also emerges from the views of workers at Rolls Royce examined in the next chapter, and I also discuss workers' views of their strike experience more fully in chapter 9.

80 fieldnotes p 46.

81 fieldnotes: progressing of urgent jobs, pp 30-32; obsolete parts, p 24; fine finishes, pp 28-9, 33 and 77; inadequate tooling, pp 21, 34, 40 and 64; planning for work on the automatics, pp 51-53. It should be noted that on the issue of finishes many experienced craftsmen showed considerable knowledge about the practicalities of fitting the components they machined.

82 Ibid pp 51-53.

83 Thus an occasion when a barrow got jammed in one of the machines caused much repetitive banter along the lines of 'just what you'd expect from a labourer'. Fieldnotes p 45, and similar incidents on pp 44 and 48.

84 Ibid pp 38-9.

85 On workplace sanctions see above pp 94-95, and on the circumspect reactions to my fieldwork queries see above, chapter 5, pp 23-24. The relatively taciturn responses of both workers and stewards at Doxfords can be seen as aspects of this low key guarding of craft prerogatives, especially when compared with the research experience at Rolls-Royce, which will be commented on in the following chapter.

86 A paradigm treatment of such solidarity is provided in A.J.M. Sykes "The Cohesion of a Trade Union Workshop Organisation" Sociology 1 1967.

87 There are, however, brief discussions of such differentiation in Jim Cousins and Richard Brown "Patterns of Paradox" in Bulmer (ed) Working-class Images, and in Howard Davis Beyond Class Images chapter 5, both discussed in my chapter 4; while the path-breaking analysis of crises and contradictions in the experience and consciousness of print workers, developed by Cynthia Cockburn Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change London 1983 includes many relevant observations alongside her wider treatment of craft exclusion and sectionalism, and particularly its gendered character.

88 See above pp 137-138.

Chapter 8

Variations in the Experience of Rationalisation: Clarks and Rolls-Royce

The factories of the three firms which I studied were located fairly close to one another in the central industrial area of Sunderland, on the Pallion and Southwick banks of the Wear, but in other respects they differed in symptomatic ways. I have already described the old-established and at that time fully occupied Doxfords works. The Clarks works on the opposite side of the river was of similar vintage, with several large workshops on the slope down to the water and the fitting-out quay landmarked by a big turret crane, but its most notable feature was the absence of men and machines from much of the working area. A site which had employed over eight hundred workers in the mid-1960s had been cut down to just over a hundred in 1967, and by 1969 employed around 170. These men worked in a machine shop and a plumbers' department, and occupied various bits and corners of the site, while the offices were almost empty with only a skeleton staff of works manager, section foremen, time-keeper, storeman and clerk.[1] The empty spaciousness of the place was underlined both by the remaining foci of activity and by the waste space bordering the factory in Low Southwick. In contrast Rolls-Royce occupied several units of an early 1950s industrial estate, each long lowish building seperated by a delivery way but fronted by offices. Most of the floor space was occupied by orderly banks of machines, though there were a few bays where there was more space and machines were being moved in, around or out (including some numerically controlled machine tools which were then still a novelty). A notable feature of the layout was the substantial space occupied by numerous inspection areas, a concomitant of the tight quality standards in the aero-engine industry.

I focussed my attention on the experience of those working on conventional lathes in the machine shops of the different factories. This meant that in addition to the Doxfords turners I interviewed time-served turners and lathe operators on skilled rates in both Clarks and Rolls-Royce, representing virtually all of the workers in those categories in each factory.[2] In the next few pages I will provide an outline of the labour market and work experience of the workers in the

latter firms, together with some comparisons with the pattern at Doxfords discussed in the previous chapter. I will then provide a more detailed account of the dynamics of effort bargaining in the different firms and draw out some of the implications for the varied ways in which rationalisation was pursued by management and experienced by workers in the marine engineering and aero-engineering firms in Sunderland.

Workers in the Firm and the Labour Market

A first but fundamental indication of the position of these workers is provided by a comparison of their wage levels. While all of the workers I interviewed were on some form of skilled rate and were doing fairly similar work, the patterns of pay differed significantly between the three firms. These are shown in table 20, which reports take-home pay levels including earnings for shiftwork and overtime.[3] At the time of my interviews the usual pattern of overtime was similar in all three firms and involved two 'half-shifts' and Sunday morning, but it was only at Rolls-Royce that shift-work was the norm.[4] My interview evidence confirms that the Doxford turners tended to earn the highest wages, and, though there was considerable overlap, the earnings at Clarks clustered around a lower average, while those reported by the Rolls workers were a shade lower again. Of course the significance of this hierarchy can only be understood by locating it in the context of management strategies of recruitment and organisation, and workers responses in both the labour market and the workplace, and I shall now explore interview and documentary evidence about these matters.

Table 20

Distribution of Take-home Pay

	Doxfords (n=42)	Clarks (n=19)	Rolls-Royce (n=27)
Under £20	10%	21%	26%
Between £20-25	40%	53%	67%
Above £25	50%	26%	7%

The outstanding feature of the job histories reported by the workers at Clarks was the predominance of long-service workers. 42% of the group reported twenty years or more of continuous service and another 37% had between ten and twenty years at Clarks, while even among the few reporting less than five years current employment two had earlier clocked up nineteen and thirty years respectively with the company.[5] This pattern reflected the virtual closure of the works in 1967, when the company retained a small core of experienced long-service workers (and even re-hired a few) to carry on the small-batch work which was left on the site. Not that such workers had no experience of employment elsewhere. Though a few had stayed with Clarks since doing their apprenticeship with the firm, and a couple of dilutees had only had the odd other job, 74% of the group had experienced three or more job moves, and of these a significant minority had had six or more moves. Nevertheless, for the bulk of these men their experience in the wider labour market dated from during or even before the 1950s, since when they had worked continuously at Clarks, or at the NEM South Docks factory which was closed (with the work being shifted to the Southwick site) in the early 1950s.

In contrast the more recent establishment of the Rolls (or as it then was, Bristol) works was reflected in shorter periods of service among the Rolls sample. Just under 50% had less than five years with the firm and another 37% had worked there for between five and ten years. Within this overall picture three patterns of labour market experience were discernable. Firstly there was a grouping of Rolls-apprenticed workers who had stayed with the company and had no other employment experience; secondly there were time-served turners who had had several other jobs before arriving at Rolls; and thirdly there were workers without an engineering apprenticeship (though sometimes apprenticed in another trade or trained at a government training centre) who again had usually had several jobs before joining Rolls and by 1969 were classified as skilled within the company. Each of these patterns was represented by roughly equal numbers of workers, and together they reflected the policy of the company of supplementing the existing supply of skilled engineers in the district, first by their own apprentice training scheme but also increasingly by recruitment of 'suitable' non time-served workers. The majority of those with less then five years with the company and working on the turning sections fell into this latter category, though they were themselves a diverse grouping - ranging from an apprenticed watch-maker who had previously worked only

in his father's business; to a plumber who had recently moved into engineering to escape the frantic series of job changes which had meant over twenty jobs all over the North East during his ten-year stint as a time-served member of his trade; to a man who had worked as a hotel barman, bus conductor and driver, and in the merchant navy before moving into engineering. Four men (15% of the sample) had earlier been miners before tranferring into engineering, two of them directly into Rolls-Royce.

Before considering the views of these workers about their moves into their respective firms and the possibilities for moving elsewhere, I want to make brief comments on two further aspects of their earlier work experience. The first concerns the range of occupations covered in their various job moves, and the second concerns experience of unemployment. So far as the first is concerned table 21 provides a summary. It shows that, like Doxfords and the Luton craftsmen, there

Table 21: Previous Work Experience

	Clarks workers (n=17)		Rolls workers (n=21)	
	majority	highest	majority	highest
Professional Managerial & White-collar	0%	6%	0%	5%
Self-employed	0%	0%	0%	0%
Supervisory, Inspectional, Service etc.	6%	12%	0%	10%
Skilled Manual (apprenticed)[1]	53%	47%	60%	60%
Other skilled[2] Manual	12%	23%	10%	20%
Semi-skilled & Unskilled manual	29%	12%	30%	5%

1 Note that in each case those workers who had not worked elsewhere were time-served craftsmen, and they are excluded from this table.

2 This category includes experienced faceworkers in mining.

is little experience of white-collar, supervisory and service work; and indeed that indicated was restricted to routine clerical and shop work. However, both at Rolls and Clarks, there was more experience

of semi-skilled and non-apprenticed skilled work than was the case among the Doxfords workers. This slight qualification of the dominance of the specifically craft work career corresponds to the presence of long-serving dilutees at Clarks and the more recent recruitment of non-apprenticed machinists to perform skilled work at Rolls. In regard to the experience of unemployment (shown in table 22) the contrast is between the pattern among the workers at Clarks and that among both Doxfords and Rolls men. The markedly greater experience of unemployment among the former group was almost entirely concentrated among those older workers whose 'working life' had included significant spells out of work during the 1930s. One man who had had his apprenticeship as a moulder cut short by his firm's closure in 1932 was then unemployed for more than three years, and his experience was only the most extreme case of a broader pattern. What this underlines is the manner in which the run down of an old-established factory in the 1960s could leave a residual workforce of older men with rather more experience of unemployment than was the norm among the skilled workforces in other factories in the area. In this way the near closure of such a firm not only generated a wave of job moves and potential insecurity among those displaced, but also compounded the earlier experience of insecurity among an ageing workforce.

Table 22: Experience of Unemployment

	Doxfords (n=42)	Clarks (n=19)	Rolls (n=27)
Never unemployed	86%	53%	85%
Up to three months	7%	21%	11%
3-12 months	5%	5%	4%
Over twelve months	2%	21%	0%

These contrasting patterns of experience, arising primarily from the distinctive patterns of recruitment, expansion and contraction of the different firms within a more or less common labour market, constitute an important background to the interpretation of workers' reported assessments of their positions in the labour market and in effort bargaining with their employers. I will now turn to an examination of recent and potential labour market choices as they were reported by my respondents, before a more detailed discussion of effort bargaining in the next section.

Table 23 summarises the criteria which my interviewees reported to be most important in their decisions to take their present jobs.

Table 23: Reasons for Taking Their Current Job

Number of mentions	Doxfords n=70	Clarks n=22	Rolls n=40
Money/better money	34%	14%	16%
Lack of choice	25%	29%	16%
Apprenticeship	7%	10%	23%
Security	7%	14%	39%
Just a job/available	9%	5%	3%
Familiar/local/conditions	16%	14%	3%
Just a change	2%	14%	0%

In comparison with Doxfords, the workers at Clarks appear to have experienced the imperatives of the cash nexus more in terms of insecurity and lack of choice and less in terms of scope for improvements in wages. Especially among the long service workers who had started at Clarks before the 1950s this was the dominant note. Thus one reported that he had moved just before the war "for security and more work, the colliery was on slack time"; while another who had moved at the end of the war said "I took it because things had slackened off; as they were turning over to peacetime production there was more regular employment here". This emphasis on security did not exclude other concerns among those who joined Clarks at that time. For instance one man recalled that "it was a better set-up here than at Laings, and they were paying people off there too". But it was among those who had arrived later, during the 1950s, that there was a more positive emphasis on the scope afforded by the labour market:

> "I had a bit of a row with the gaffer at Steels and gave in me notice. I can't stand 'blue eyes'. So I decided to take the job at Clarks - it was just the wage packet and the opening";
>
> "we were locked out at Wighams so I shifted to Clarks. For the wages that's all";
>
> "It was better money and better working conditions with the diesel work".

Two other workers who joined the firm in the mid-1950s underlined the main parameters of their labour market. On the one hand a craft apprenticeship represented a relatively accessible relative security when compared with some of the uncertainties of routine white-collar and technical work:

> "I had a chance of a lab technician but the immediate prospects were poor and there were the costs of travel to Jarrow so I took the apprenticeship at Clarks".

On the other, the expansion in that period opened the way for some non-apprenticed machinists to gain skilled rates:

> "well, I always wanted a bash in a place where there is an opportunity for promotion. I hate 'time served', I appreciate skilled work".

Nevertheless insecurity remained a background reality. At the beginning of the 1960s one man who had been apprenticed at Doxfords took a job at Clarks simply because it was "a chance of a job" in the trade; while by the late 1960s there had, of course, been large scale redundancies.

Turning to the responses of the Rolls workers, security together with apprenticeship opportunities dominated the pattern of responses. For those who had taken an apprenticeship with the firm it was usually a question of taking up the only offer available:

> "I tried for a draftsmans job. I tried Doxfords, Steels, Bristols, but jobs were short so I took this straight off. I've got a flair for metal work";
>
> "I was looking for an engineering apprenticeship and this was the only interview with an offer";
>
> "I started an apprenticeship at Thorns in the toolroom, but due to lack of work it was transferred to Bristols. They were the only place available to keep up the apprenticeship".

The establishment and expansion of the Bristol works, and the recruitment policies of management, also created opportunities for non-apprenticed workers against a background of quite limited alternatives.[6] An ex-miner reported that "Ryhope was finishing. It was the job which was available and there was an opportunity for training. I wanted to get out of the pits, for security and from the health point of view, and otherwise I would have had to travel". And for a man who had worked at a variety of jobs and had finished up as a clerk "the wages were poor there so I went to a government retraining centre, and when I finished I wasn't offered any other job". Not that the constraints were equally tight for all such workers. Thus a more experienced machinist reflected that:

> "the money was better in a way down at David Browns, but now I've worked up to the skilled rate here so it's the same money. I moved here partly for more experience, and because of the lack of security at Browns".

However, it was among those who were already time-served craftsmen when they moved to Bristols that there was more of a sense of choice: a sense of gaining more security, decent wages and better work, all underpinned by a feeling that prospects would be better in a modern sector of engineering. This was especially the case among those who had arrived in the mid-1950s:

> "the money was about the best paid in town at the time, and I fancied the idea of this type of work";
>
> "NEM were changing to the Clark-Sulzer engines and Bristols were the place at the time. It looked like jobs for the future with more modern work".

This emphasis on "a new industry with good prospects", often compared with earlier experience in marine engineering, was also expressed, though in more muted form, by those who had arrived in the early 1960s:

> "more money was the thing. I enjoyed it down at the Moor but the money was poor";
>
> "at the time turning seemed more in demand though fitting was more interesting, and this <u>was</u> a good firm to work for".

For these people, then, there had been definite gains in the move to Bristols; though in retrospect there was also a feeling that some of those comparative advantages had been eroded since then, as indeed would appear to have been the case from the wages data reported earlier.

At both Clarks and Bristols/Rolls, then, the post-war period had seen some scope for craft workers to gain improved wages and job security within the local engineering labour market, while Rolls, especially, had provided openings for both apprentices and non time-served machinists to gain entry to that market. At the same time job security remained a more central concern in both cases than at Doxfords, which had taken over as about the best paying firm on the river; though security had a different resonance in the two places. At Clarks it was more a question of having gained secure employment in comparison with the pre-war experience, while at Rolls it rested more on involvement in a high-technology firm with a future. This contrast was neatly symbolised by the young craftsman who "took redundancy at Clarks in 1967, and moved to Rolls to get more secure work, and because my father praised it up as a place to work".

The contemporary significance of these contrasts emerges more sharply from data on potential job moves and preferences among the men I talked to. Table 24 shows that the workers at Rolls were markedly more

likely than the other groups to have actively sought to move to another firm, while those at Clarks were rather less likely than the Doxfords men to have considered leaving.

Table 24: Possibility of Leaving

	Doxfords (n=42)	Clarks (n=19)	Rolls (n=27)
Have not thought of leaving	48%	58%	32%
Have thought but taken no action	36%	32%	18%
Thought of leaving and taken action	17%	11%	50%

The widespread pursuit of alternative job opportunities among the Rolls workers arose largely from a concern to gain better wages while sustaining or improving their situation at work. However, despite the loss of wage leadership in the district, this was a difficult objective. On the one hand "there's easier jobs outside engineering, but they don't pay so well", while on the other "in this area it's very difficult to get anywhere else like this anyway". Such judgements were based on considerable experience, as is implied by the numbers <u>actively</u> seeking alternatives:

> "I've tried a thousand places (sic). I've been accepted for a few, but I rejected them for various reasons, mainly money. I got accepted for a foreman's job, but then the factory didn't move up from the South eventually, so that fell through".

In many ways this exemplified the experience of those workers who had considered moving. On the one hand the jobs which were available, even within engineering, offered lower take-home pay and/or a worse effort bargain:

> "I think of leaving every day. I applied to Matheisons, but it wasn't as good a bonus though, and it was a three shift system";
>
> "I gave in my notice two weeks ago, then withdrew it. I had a grinding job at Timex. The basic wage was £21, permanent day shift, but the problem was there were no Sundays or guaranteed overtime".

On the other, both time-served and non-apprenticed workers found that, in different ways, it was difficult to improve on their positions at Rolls:

> "I wouldn't move for the same sort of work. I'd loose my merit and ability money, and in other firms you have to be time-served to get

> the top rate";
>
> "I applied to Steels and to David Browns for inspector - more interesting jobs and less pressure. But the jobs were not available".

While there were few jobs in the district which represented a good move for these men, there were also obstacles to moving away. Among my sample, workers reported problems with job opportunities ("employers seemed to give preference to unemployed tradesmen in their own areas") housing ("I had a job in Worcester, but it proved difficult to get a house") and family commitments ("I went for a job at Rolls Derby, but family circumstances precluded a move at that time"). This did not rule out consideration of moving away - several people mentioned emigration to Canada as a possibility - but it tended to return attention to the Sunderland area. There the broad constraints of the labour market were well known:

> "I'd like to be back at Clarks really. It's dirty and scruffy but the atmosphere is good, but all the new factories have the mass production. What I want is the atmosphere, and good machinery and interesting work, but you can never get them together".

So instead of any such craft ideal most of the workers at Rolls found themselves engaged in more mundane, but still uncertain, trade-offs of money and effort:

> "I've been thinking very much about moving recently. I accepted a job at Sutters, but there was a bit of strife at Rolls-Royce and we thought we'd be better off and I refused the job at Sutters. But we were led up the garden path on that actually".

Against this background most of those who had never thought of leaving appeared to reflect the limited scope available. Being too old was seldom a consideration among the predominantly younger workforce, while the worker who reported "it's a very good combine, Rolls-Royce...I would like to get experience on the tape controlled machines they've got", showed a rare commitment to the firm.

This assessment of the experience and outlook of the workers at Rolls is supported not only by the crudely quantified pattern of responses to the question about leaving and staying, given in table 25, but also by the pattern of responses to my question about a move for better pay with comparable conditions, intended to test any independent commitment to the firm or workmates and reported in table 26. In this latter context nearly half of those interviewed expressed more or less unqualified acceptance:

Table 25: Reasons for Leaving and Staying

Reasons for having thought of leaving (percentage of times mentioned)

	Rolls-Royce (n=28)	Clarks (n=18)	Doxfords (n=34)
Levels of pay	47%	55%	29%
Job Security	-	18%	14%
Nature of Work	32%	-	33%
Unsatisfactory Management	5%	-	5%
Other Reasons	16%	27%	19%

Reasons for deciding to stay (percentage of workers mentioning reason)

	Rolls-Royce (n=22)	Clarks (n=14)	Doxfords (n=29)
Level of pay only	37%	37%	47%
Level of pay as one reason (with at least one other)	19%	13%	21%
Level of pay not mentioned	43%	50%	32%
Security	-	-	26%
Fair Employer	-	-	5%
Nature of work	13%	13%	5%
Unavailable/ "Fell through"	31%	25%	-
Redundancy money	-	25%	-
Other	19%	-	17%

Table 26: 'Would you move to a similar job for more pay?'

	Rolls-Royce (n=27)	Clarks (n=19)	Doxfords (n=42)
Broad acceptance	41%	8%	17%
For <u>significantly</u> more	7%	13%	15%
Only if not too much travel	-	8%	11%
Only if no greater pressure	7%	8%	7%
Only if really comparable	11%	4%	15%
Only if fairly secure	-	25%	4%
Sceptical about the options	4%	8%	15%
Outright no	22%	17%	15%
Other	7%	8%	-

" 'course I would. I'd grab all I could get in the district";

"I'd take it. The work is pretty much the same throughout the trade, and I think I would find the work easy in comparison with here, on tolerances and so on".

Certainly other people qualified their acceptance by spelling out the sorts of conditions which must have been in most workers' minds, given the characteristics of the local labour market. These included work pace ("I'd consider it as long as the pace wasn't too ridiculous"); avoidance of nightshift ("definitely consider it, especially if there was no nightshift"); and compensation or continuation of merit payments. But less than a quarter rejected the possibility entirely, either in terms of the overall character of the firm ("the extra money doesn't interest me overmuch, and it's a good firm to work for overall, both for welfare and on the new machinery") or established work mates ("the men I work with would be a consideration - to start afresh takes some doing").

Evidently many of the Rolls workers, faced with the stagnation of their wages, were experiencing a rather frustrating search for better wages with equivalent or improved conditions. In comparison, only a small number of the Clarks workers had thought of leaving, so that any quantitative analysis of their responses is inappropriate. Nevertheless a fairly coherent picture emerges from the range of responses to the question about moving, namely that for these men the fairly good wages and relaxed regime at Clarks combined with limited alternatives and the tie of possible redundancy money to encourage workers to stay, even though for some it was rather a case of hanging on. For some of the older workers there seemed little scope or point in moving. On the one hand "you're too old at forty these days for moving around", while on the other "I'm getting to the age when I don't want to move about". This feeling was no doubt strengthened by the positive features of work at Clarks, features which were also recognised by younger workers, such as the thirty year old who had not thought of moving because "I don't think I'd find a better place anywhere, I'd have to work much harder for little more and I'm happier here".

However, it was among those who <u>had</u> considered leaving that the constraints surrounding such accomodations were made explicit:

"I've thought about it quite a few times from the financial point of view. I was offered a job at Olin Mathieson, but they were vague about the money";

"I thought about moving two or three times during the period up to

the closure, and I tried to get a job at Ericsons, but it was no go". On top of this there was the thought of the redundancy money which would be due if the place closed completely, but which would be sacrificed by a move:

> "I've often thought of leaving, but what really stayed me was the close down and the redundancy money";
>
> "the redundancy money keeps us here; but otherwise I'd go".

The dilemma which this set up was more clearly spelt out when people responded to the hypothetical option of more money. There was a fairly even spread of answers across more or less direct acceptance, a requirement of 'significantly more' money, qualifications in terms of conditions or pace, and outright rejection, but despite this spread two themes stood out. The first was the significance of job security, which was emphasised by a quarter of the men:

> "I'd weigh it up. If there were better prospects for the future I'd be bound to take it";
>
> "It all depends on the prospects they could offer: the security of work".

The second was the significance of the redundancy money, especially following the experience of the large scale redundancies in 1967:

> "I don't think I could better it really. That's one of the things which keeps me here. If the money was offered I might go, but there is also the £100 redundancy money to consider";
>
> "now, with the present set up here, I wouldn't move because I would lose the redundancy money. And about 45 I'm getting a bit old to change around".

All in all, most of the workers at Clarks experienced it as a fairly benign work environment, but one in which they were trapped and which remained pervaded by the uncertainties of potential closure. These workers, and especially the older ones, were extremely unlikely to find a clearly more advantageous and at the same time more secure job:

> "I'm 54 but I would not want to be unemployed, it's degrading. And I wish we had a better prospect - but the management won't come and tell us".

What has emerged from the discussion so far is the manner in which the expansion and contraction of employment in the different firms, and associated changes in internal employment relations, have generated subtle but significant differences in the experiences of different groups of workers within a shared labour market. Though the local labour market for skilled engineering workers would appear to have been less

opaque than that for semi-skilled and unskilled workers charted by Blackburn and Mann, it nevertheless confronted workers with considerable uncertainties and palpable constraints.[7] Firstly the vagaries of management policies (on such issues as plant reorganisation or closure and pay rates and structures), flowing from some of the pressures for rationalisation discussed in chapter 6, could alter quite markedly the relative wages and the security of employment enjoyed by particular workforces. Clearly such developments did not preclude the possibility of some individual 'advancement' within this labour market. Some non time-served men had been able to escape from the deteriorating conditions in such other sectors as mining, into the relative advantages of skilled grade engineering; while some time-served turners had recently moved from Clarks to Rolls, thus increasing their job security (though not their work satisfaction), or into Doxfords, thus improving their earnings potential (at least for the time being and so long as they were not confined to the margins in the worst paying sections). Nevertheless, it appears quite appropriate to understand such moves as involving quite modest trade-offs in the wage-effort bargain which defines the basic parameters of wage-workers' experience of the cash nexus, rather than involving any <u>over-riding</u> concern with solidarity or craft fulfilment. However, set against such job moves were the limits not only of the immediate unavailability of better jobs, compounded by increasing unemployment in the area and industry and by decreasing opportunities as men get older, but also of the immediate sacrificing of redundancy payments, merit awards or the informal advantages enjoyed by 'core' workers. Without any systematic and extensive internal job-ladders this skilled labour market was still characterised, in haphazard fashion, by a variety of such ties discouraging moves by long-service workers.

The features of the labour market for skilled turners which have been outlined above turn our attention to the character and dynamics of the social relations of production and particularly the bargaining relations between management and workers. The last chapter showed the extent to which the wages and conditions at Doxfords were improved or protected by the capacity of the workforce to exploit some of the contradictions and limitations of the rationalisation strategy pursued by their management. For the workers at Clarks and Rolls, too, developments within the workplace were central to their immediate fate, particularly since, as we have just seen, there was very limited scope for more individualistic labour market oriented responses, even when people continued to seek them out. This provides the context within which I

will shortly turn to a discussion of effort bargaining in the two firms.

Before plunging into such a detailed discussion of day-to-day bargaining over effort and pay I want to set the scene, by considering the ways in which both wider labour market circumstances and specific corporate initiatives impinged upon the outlooks of the workers in my samples, and particularly upon their views of bargaining possibilities. These can be explored by considering their responses to questions about their job security and about the scope for wage increases. On both topics there was a sharp contrast between the workers at Clarks and those at Rolls, with the Doxford men occupying something of an intermediate position (see tables 27 and 28).

Table 27: Estimates of Job Security

	Rolls-Royce (n=27)	Clarks (n=19)	Doxfords (n=42)
'Dead safe'	4%	0%	14%
'Fairly safe'	81%	11%	71%
'Rather insecure'	7%	47%	7%
'Very insecure'	4%	42%	0%
Don't know/n.a.	4%	0%	7%

Clearly, the experience of large-scale redundancy, followed by continuing uncertainty about the fate of the remnant of the workforce who were kept on, had led to a widespread feeling of insecurity among the workers at Clarks. Almost all judged their position to be fairly or very insecure, and typical comments were:

> "it just takes a little thing to happen to set the rumours going - like the rumour of a workshop opening at Wallsend. We're just optimists",[8] and
>
> "they've got us hanging in suspense, you would be a lot more mentally settled if you knew how you were going on".

In this context the most positive assessment was that "we're talked of as the poor relation, but contracts keep coming. With the last five contracts we should be clear for the next twelve months". Thus there seemed to be a possibility of continuing existence on a jobbing basis, within, but in some ways despite, Richardson-Westgarth's strategy of regional rationalisation (which involved the concentration of work at Wallsend). Nevertheless, the dominant mood at Clarks was that of pervasive insecurity and uncertainty; a mood clearly captured by the view that "we don't

really know how we stand, management keeps us ignorant: I foresee it closing but I can't say when - it's not run like a place which is going to stay open". In line with this general uncertainty, people at Clarks were markedly less likely than those in the other firms to believe that they could be paid more. This reflected not only their

Table 28: 'Could the firm pay you more...?'

	Rolls-Royce (n=27)	Clarks (n=19)	Doxfords (n=42)
Could pay more	90%	42%	74%
Could not pay more	0%	32%	14%
Other/don't know	11%	27%	12%

doubts about plans for the factory but also a feeling that they were enjoying a relatively advantageous effort bargain, with less pressure for the wages, in their particular backwater:

> "well, at present, given the way it's being run, I don't think so really, not unless they get more work out";
>
> "in the present situation I doubt it, but if the situation were different nothing would deter me from demanding more";
>
> "in my opinion we're getting more for it than they can afford".

Despite this feeling among many that they were doing as well as could be expected in the circumstances, others continued to challenge such a constraining interpretation of those circumstances and to express views closer to those dominant in the other factories:

> "from what I hear they are supposed to be getting more money at Newcastle and they can still make the work pay. There could be a little more recompense or appreciation".

But this was very much a minority view: for most the shadow of insecurity, coupled with a relatively unpressured working environment, had undermined confidence that wages could be improved.

In comparison with those at Clarks, the Rolls workers, like the Doxfords men, judged themselves more secure. However very few at Rolls were prepared to judge their situation 'dead safe'. While the Doxford turners were acutely aware of the way in which their job security hinged upon the market for the goods they produced, those at Rolls had the same awareness with the additional twist of seeing themselves as particularly vulnerable because they were in a branch factory of a large enterprise in the process of substantial rationalisation. The apparent recent buoyancy of orders for aero-engines from Rolls overlaid, but did

not destroy this feeling of vulnerability. Opinions ranged from "this one's next on the Rolls list for closure, though it will probably survive this year", through "it's unstable from the point of view of rumours and changes in the company, but it's more secure now than it has been, with the Spey work", to "it's difficult to tell, it's a subsidiary factory but the work seems to be coming in". Comparing all three factories, the workers at both Doxfords and Rolls faced uncertain futures, but on the evidence of the work going through they saw themselves as comparatively secure. By contrast those at Clarks had already been through a personal experience of insecurity and worked in a situation which served as a constant reminder of that experience.

Clearly this contrast underlay the greater willingness of both Rolls and Doxfords workers to expect better pay from their employers. However, at Rolls it was the unfavourable comparisons with pay elsewhere which fueled a near unanimous view that the firm could and should pay more. There were only very few exceptions to this view, and they generally involved doubts about the position of the company and the amount of money needed, especially in the aftermath of the takeover, rather than a lesser awareness of differential pay levels. Some workers commented on the company's profit levels and productivity in a similar vein to those at Doxfords:

> "they should give a better wage, they must make a hell of a profit on the knocked down times on the disks";
>
> "of course they can [pay more], 'cause they can afford to rip out machines only installed a few months ago".

But the dominant theme concerned comparative wage rates, both in the district and the group, as well as profit levels:

> "you only have to compare factories in other parts of the country, and their profit levels";
>
> "on hearsay I feel I know that at other factories they're getting much more; they could offer more and we would make it worth it",
>
> "since they fleeced the government on contracts I should think so, and also in comparison with the rates at Derby".

The most strongly formulated arguments along these lines also emphasised the skills involved in aero-engine work, as when one man argued "it's the outstanding class of work on the river" and another suggested that "they will have to [increase pay] to get enough skilled men in".

In summary, then, the workers at Clarks were hesitant in their assessment of possibilities for increased pay, and were aware of their

position of precarious relative prosperity; workers at Doxfords tended to the view that productivity and profitability provided leeway for increases, and had evidently sought to exploit that leeway in the recent past; and those at Rolls, with the lowest average take-home pay, were adamant that the company could and should increase wages to bring them into line with other workers in the combine and in the area. In the following sections I intend to explore the character of effort bargaining in these firms more directly; firstly by sketching in the way the payment systems have developed at Rolls and Clarks; then by looking briefly at workers' experiences of work pace and the like; before finally considering the social relations and expectations of effort bargaining as such.

Developments in Effort Bargaining at Rolls and Clarks

At Doxfords the pressures on the piecework payment system, arising from management concern with increased productivity and from workers' efforts to increase earnings and limit favouritism, had eventually led to an unorthodox but fairly systematic transformation of the pay structure. At both Rolls-Royce and Clarks similar pressures had been felt, but had resulted in different forms of interim suspension of individual piecework rather than any more systematic reform. At Rolls a substantial group of jobs had been retained on 'shop average bonus', which had in turn been 'frozen' at an agreed rate for three months soon after I began interviewing there; while at Clarks a temporary freeze on individual piece-rates, at the time of the large-scale redundancies in 1967, had remained in force ever since, so that individuals earned wages in line with their relative positions at that time. Without providing the sort of extended treatment which I provided for Doxfords in chapter 7 I will now outline the background to these developments, so as to set my later discussion in context.[9]

When the Bristol Aeroplane Company set up its factories in Sunderland its management were responding to pleas to take advantage of the availability of skilled labour in the district, but as the old-established sectors of engineering were buoyed up by the post-war boom they apparently experienced "a certain amount of competition for available local labour".[10] This encouraged them to recruit semi-skilled men at skilled rates, under the terms of the national Relaxation Agreement between the Engineering Union and the EEF, as well as time-served men, when their factories were engaged mainly on development work in the

early 1950s.[11] At that time they operated a group bonus system and such features as 'generous' waiting time allowances on their development work. However, despite the relatively tight labour market during the 1950s, the Bristol management appear to have succeeded in imposing a more stringent individual piece-work system across the production areas when most of the development work was phased out in 1958. The stewards succeeded only in negotiating better transitional arrangements than those proposed by management; but lost the group bonus, established waiting time percentages and protection of established earnings through levelling up.[12] It appears that shop-floor organisation at that time remained preoccupied with "job security in a depression area; the Convenor at that time didn't want to take a chance so he went for agreements with the least disruption and trouble".[13] Such 'settled' bargaining relationships persisted through the early 1960s, lubricated by the "paternalistic lone diplomacy" of a Convenor who was later to become Personnel Manager, and allowed a steady but gradual increase in expected bonus levels together with some improvements in waiting time percentages and 'plus-up' arrangements.[14] By the mid '60s, however, there were signs of a less settled relationship. Stewards at the Sunderland works had been in contact with the Convenor at the main Bristol factory about the wage structure and bonus levels, and there was greater pressure for management concessions on all aspects of the piecework scheme.[15] Under a new Convenor the shop-floor extracted some concessions, especially on waiting time and plus-ups, after threats to repudiate the whole piecework system, refusals to work certain jobs with poor times, and several consequential overtime bans and brief strikes.[16]

These developments took place in the context of both increasingly stringent government incomes policies and the announcement and implementation of the take-over of Bristol-Siddeley by Rolls-Royce. While the framework of incomes policy encouraged both the management and the stewards to consider some restructuring of the payment system (the shop-stewards passed a motion of support for incomes policy in March, 1967), this had got little beyond a preliminary consideration of a deal based on scrap reduction when the repercussions of the merger brought the crisis of the existing pay structure to a head.[17] The gains made on waiting time and plus-ups in the previous few years had not been consistently matched by improvements in the earnings potential of timed jobs, while incomes policies had limited the scope for straight wage increases. In these circumstances more and more workers pushed to be 'plussed-up' to the recently negotiated 80% of Shop Average Bonus when

confronted by unsatisfactory job times. In the words of the Convenor "at this point there was an upward spiral: people just got more by going on plus-ups and the incidence of signing for job times dropped sharply. Everyone wanted to be on a plus up".[18] This immediately put pressure on management, as the Shop Average Bonus threatened to become increasingly based on the best paying jobs, but this threat was cross-cut by the whole process of transfering to Rolls-Royce work and the times and standards promulgated by Derby. This removed some of the jobs which were jacking up the Shop Average Bonus and left in their place jobs which were generally deemed to be tight, and this put the skids under the earlier upward trend. It was at this point, in mid-1969, that management and union agreed a 'Temporary freezing of the bonus levels for non rate-fixed work at the Sunderland factory':

> "in view of the strong downward trend in the Shop Average Bonus over the last eight weeks and the fact that work is progressing on proposals for a new structure for productivity and earnings for hourly paid personnel, it is agreed between the above parties that the bonus levels for non rate-fixed work be 'frozen'...for a period of three months".[19]

It was in this context, with some workers on rate-fixed work with relatively 'good' times, some with times they reckoned to be bad, and others again who were on a frozen Shop Average Bonus, that I conducted my interviews in the factory. As a final point to round out this background it should also be noted that by the mid-1960s the district had refused a couple of applications to employ semi-skilled labour under the relaxation agreement, as inspectors and as copy-lathe machinists, because "owing to the heavy redundancies in the area sufficient skilled labour is available", though the 1969 agreement on the manning of numerically-controlled machine tools allowed semi-skilled men onto two of the seven machines for the Sunderland site.[20] In 1968 Rolls-Royce made its own modest contribution to the pool of available labour by announcing 8 redundancies in the machine shop and 30 in the toolroom, while other workers were offered the prospect of transfer to other factories within the Rolls empire.[21]

At Clarks the run-down of the factory in 1967 had left only fragmentary records and recollections about the development of the pay system in the post-war period.[22] Like Rolls, but rather earlier, there had been a shift from group to individual bonuses as the predominant form of wage payment. Like both Rolls and Doxfords there had been some attenuation of the discretion and power of the foreman in deciding times

and job allocations, though this did not extinguish greviances among the lower paid. And like Rolls, though again rather earlier, the negotiation of a shop-average element in payment on non-piece jobs had allowed a significant upward movement in levels of pay. According to the recollections of several participants, this scheme, though it arose as part of a company counter-move to a general wage claim, shifted the emphasis of workshop bargaining towards more overtly collective advance, at least for a time. This emerged in the mobilisation of tooling and materials for the minority of men who did mainly piece-work, and who thus set the base for the shop-average element. This facilitated a gradual rise in the percentages expected on piecework jobs between 1965 and 1967; a rise which occurred through the testing of possibilities by different individuals and the generalisation of the new level once it had become accepted, though not all workers participated in the rise to the same extent. However, in 1967 the rapid move towards closure and anxieties about redundancy pay prompted a scramble for higher earnings, as those able to gain higher percentages on the piecework system in the remaining weeks sought to consolidate their positions. This tended to widen the spread of earnings in comparison with the previous years and it was this spread which was then frozen and became the continuing basis for individual earnings levels among those who survived the closure.

With this background in mind I can now provide a brief indication of some key aspects of the immediate experience of work in the different factories, before turning to the social processes of effort bargaining as such. As I have already remarked, the workers in each factory worked on similar sorts of machines and performed broadly similar operations, but there were nevertheless some significant differences. At Clarks the work was rather similar to that done at Doxfords, but as very much a jobbing shop there were rather more odds and ends and awkward jobs to do. At the same time there was a definite pattern of specialisation in which a few of the skilled men did many of the 'one-off' and small batch jobs which required particular machining skills. At Rolls-Royce, however, the pattern was a little different, and was in some ways more like the mass production mentioned by one of the men I quoted earlier.[23] Much of the work was in standard batches of tens, though quite often the jobs came through in multiples to give batches of twenty or thirty, and the jobs went through a series of discrete operations on separate machines for 'roughing', 'semi-finishing' and 'finishing'. The work on the 'finishing' phases was distinguished by

the requirement to work to very fine tolerances; but for all the processes the setting-up, the machining operations and the inspection procedures were closely specified, and parts were subjected to notably more inspections than in the marine engine workshops. At the same time the run-down of the toolroom had meant that some 'development' and 'toolroom' work was being done on the shop floor, alongside the standard production of small batches.

With these features in mind, together with those arising from the uneven negotiation and modification of the piecework system, it is possible to analyse those variations in work effort and autonomy which were indicated in the views of 'pace', 'monotony', 'day-dreaming', 'scope for ideas', and 'movement off the machine' among the workers in the different factories. The basic statistical material is summarised in table 29, while a more qualitative analysis is provided in the following paragraphs. The discussion will focus on the patterns at Rolls and at Clarks, with the occasional cross-reference to the situation at Doxfords which was discussed in the previous chapter.

When compared with the other factories, the workers at Rolls reported a fairly clear cut picture. In particular they were far more likely to see themselves as having to work at a fast pace, with half of those interviewed making that judgement against only twenty-one percent at Doxfords and five percent at Clarks. Not only was this perception stated in vigorous terms ("previously I've never been on production work, and I hate paced work against the clock"; "it's the fastest of the places I've been in"; "we're fighting the clock with the fine tolerances") but it was often emphasised that the pressure had recently increased - "they're cutting down the times, that's what makes it fast"; "they want a little bit more, then a little bit more again"; "the times on these jobs are ridiculous". Furthermore, for many of those who reported a medium or slower pace this was seen as an even more recent development, the result of the battles over rates and the deals over 'plus-ups':

> "it's a slow pace, leisurely at present because of the bonus situation: we were stretched on the times so the bonus suffered"; "slow at present simply because there is no bonus incentive on the frozen rate".

Thus the view was widely shared that the rates being promulgated had meant a higher pace than elsewhere, whether or not workers reported that they themselves were working that pace. Only a few workers, using a different yardstick ("it's easier in the way of manual effort than the buildings, a slower pace") or doing specific operations ("it's slow,

Table 29: Aspects of the Experience of Work Tasks

	Rolls-Royce (n=27)	Clarks (n=19)	Doxfords (n=42)
Work pace			
Faster than most jobs	50%	5%	21%
Average	19%	26%	40%
Less than most	31%	70%	38%
Trying out ideas			
More than most	31%	74%	43%
Average	15%	5%	31%
Less than most	54%	21%	26%
Monotony			
More than most	35%	42%	50%
Average	28%	26%	17%
Less than most	38%	32%	33%
Day dreaming			
Yes, think of other things	31%	48%	52%
A bit	19%	32%	24%
No, not really	46%	21%	24%
Freedom of movement			
Can't leave easily	27%	-	2%
For short periods O.K.	58%	53%	49%
For longer periods O.K.	15%	47%	49%

very much slower on the bigger machinery"), thought otherwise.

Just as the majority of workers at Rolls saw pace as an outstanding feature of their work, so they also experienced relatively little scope for trying out their own ideas on the job, or for day dreaming, and they saw their freedom of movement as more limited than did workers in the other factories.[24] At the same time the attention required by the work and the succession of small batches limited their experience of monotony. A large group of workers saw little scope for innovation given the detailed specification of procedures by the planning office. Typical comments were:

> "there's not much scope for ideas; you've got the job and the drawings and you can vary the method only slightly", and
>
> "you get the set tools and you are supposed to use proved methods".

Thus, with the exception of a few on toolroom work, most workers appeared to have little opportunity to adopt their own ideas, though it should also be noted that some found this unimportant:

> "you've got to stick to the methods they tell you, but it doesn't worry us though".

While managerial controls over work methods accompanied pressures towards a fast pace, these workers also reported significant constraints on their freedom to move off their machines; but the situation was complicated, not least by the conflicts, negotiations and compromises over job times. A significant group of workers emphasised the constraints inherent in the tight times:

> "you're quite tied to the machine through the tight times, over the machine all day";
>
> "always on the go here, you can't leave easily".

Not that this meant that all jobs were the same: "you are less tied on the longer cuts" and "it just depends on the component, the good times are freer". At the same time the manoeuvring around the bonus issue was altering the situation, as was made explicit by the following comments:

> "at the moment things are rather slack, but on the previous set-up you were tied to the machine by the clock and the bonus scheme: that does away with some of the supervisory responsibility because you're earning for yourself", and
>
> "at the moment we're not on bonus, which means we can wander about and nothing's said, but when you are on bonus and have a tight time you've got to go all day, though on loose jobs you have time to spare".

Again, though, this was not a universal experience, and other workers

emphasised that supervision tended to fill the gap. "It's less free than other places, the foreman snoops around to check on you", so "they allow you the odd instance, but it's getting tighter". It was in this situation of conflict and uncertainty that individuals tested out the limits of managerial control and surveillance, as indicated by the insistance that "I don't feel tied to the machine; they'd like it like that, but it's not necessary", and by the report that "in fact you are tied to the machine, but they call me the Italian. I've been pulled up, but I get my work done". Despite their apparently contrasting judgements these two men emphasised the limits to any successful managerial legitimation of constraints over movement off the job.

Thus the majority of workers at Rolls saw their normal situation as quite constrained, though for some this had been mitigated by the negotiation of frozen bonuses. However, within this pattern of pace and constraint other features of the aero-engine work contributed to the distinctive pattern of monotony and day-dreaming reported by the Rolls men. In particular the fine tolerances and finishes required on much of the work tended to demand surface attention, hence minimising the scope for day-dreaming; while this, together with the small batches, also mitigated any feeling of monotony. Typical comments were:

> "I don't think it's monotonous, we change different operations which gives some variety. I might day-dream if I'm on self-act, but there's not much opportunity at present. I don't have time to think";
>
> "No, I've never had a monotonous job. Here the tolerance limits don't allow monotony. You can day-dream a bit, but scrapping is the danger. The pressure is in the attention which must be paid to the job".

Once more, however, the assessments were not entirely uniform. Some Rolls workers still emphasised the basic monotony of the job, or high-lighted tendencies for the monotony to increase with larger batches:

> "it's more interesting now doing more finishing (before I was on roughing), but it's also more monotonous now with the large batches".

Indeed beyond this one man looked forward pessimistically, to suggest that "with the profile work and tape machinery it's definitely going to get more monotonous and repetitious".[25] On the other hand workers on the roughing operations seemed to discover more scope for day-dreaming than those on finishing, at least "sometimes, on the big jobs with the self-act, and on the night shift". These differences, as well as those arising from the uneven impact of the skirmishes and deals

over job times, meant that there were subtle variations in the immediate experience of work among the Rolls machinists. They also gave a distinctive texture to the experience of these workers when compared with those at Doxfords and Clarks. Nevertheless, the outstanding features, which were broadly shared by the Rolls men and differentiated their experience from that of my other interviewees, were the pace and pressure associated with the tightened job times and lower wages, and the tighter regulation of the technical features of the work process itself by management. In terms of both coordination and control the situation at Rolls appeared to involve a greater intensity of labour than was the case in the other factories.

In several key respects Clarks represents the sharpest contrast with Rolls, and might be seen as representing an extreme variant of the pattern at Doxfords. Where at Rolls a fast pace predominated, and was accompanied by limited opportunities to move off the machine or to try out ideas, at Clarks the pace was relatively slack while it was easy to move away from your machine and there was some real scope to try out methods. The lack of pressure at Clarks was registered both in terms of comparisons with other firms ("oh aye, at Laings it was just the opposite, you were tied to your work"; "slower, there was more supervision at Doxfords") and by harking back to earlier days at Clarks itself ("slow now, before the closure we were faster than comparable firms"; "yes, you can leave your machine, no questions asked, at present. Before you used to get a dirty look"). One man even reported that "management make you aware that you mustn't do jobs too quick as there's only a small range of work coming along", thus underlining the fact that lack of work pressure was the reciprocal of an insecure existence on the margins of a rationalising enterprise. In this context the one worker who reported a fast work pace made it clear that he was referring to his personal work strategy, rather than anything enforced by the firm:

> "I work fast as a youger person, the older men are more cautious. Then I can work some and laze some. Conscientiousness doesn't necessarily produce so much, anyway"

As at Doxfords the main limitation to trying out ideas on the machine was the repetition of old-established jobs, the methods for which had been refined over the years. So "there's no advice from the foreman, I continually try out new methods", and "he won't interfere if you want to try out ideas"; on the other hand "most of the jobs are so old, done that way through long experience", so "there's not much scope for ideas, you just carry on the set practice, and just try out small ideas, not official". Finally, and symptomatically, the main constraint on freedom

of movement was neither the payment system nor close supervision, but appeared to be established notions of appropriate work habits:

> "it's pretty easy, always has been here. As long as you do a fair days work it depends a bit on your conscience";
> "it depends on the man. I keep a lot to my machine, I don't go talking around as some blokes do. But it's more or less easy here from that point of view".

Of course these men were talking of a little bit of autonomy in comparison with other workplaces, rather than any very substantial control over their labour, and in part their work habits involved strategems for getting through the work, rather than any 'work moralism'; points implicit in the comment of one man that "you're not tied down, you can go off for a few minutes, but if you're settled into a job you want to keep the rhythm of it". For, like the workers at Doxfords, those at Clarks found that lessened pressure did not relieve the monotony of their work. While those who were involved in the one-off 'problem' jobs found the work interesting ("it's not monotonous, it changes too soon for that: you can day-dream a bit on self act, though") most of the men confronted a more mundane routine:

> "setting up is interesting, but it gets monotonous on a long run";
> "yes, all the batch work on machines does get like that, especially the larger batches of the simple work".

There was less pressure at Clarks, then, but the work remained largely routine, while the limited autonomy was a counterpoint to chronic insecurity. In part the contrast between this situation and that at Rolls reflects the differences between the closely controlled precision production of aero-engine components at Rolls and the jobbing batch production of marine engine parts at Clarks. However, the specific forms taken by these differences cannot simply be understood in technical terms, but must be seen in terms of the parts these outposts were coming to play in the reorganisations of their parent companies. While Clarks had become a small and marginal outpost surviving on the crumbs from the restructured Richardson, Westgarth grouping, the Rolls works remained a substantial branch factory which for the time being was being integrated, albeit in a subordinate role, into the nation-wide rationalisation of aero-engine production. In many ways their distinctive patterns of pace, constraint and tedium related closely to these different forms of peripheral production.[26]

Having sketched in the background to the social relations of day-

to-day effort bargaining, I can now turn to a more direct treatment of that topic, focussing particularly upon the experience and expectations surrounding the payment system and on attitudes towards foremen, rate-fixers and management at large. I will consider the experience of the Rolls workers first, and then look at the situation at Clarks, in each case seeking to trace out more fully the particular forms in which rationalisation on the periphery conditioned the experience of my informants.

The Contemporary Dynamics of Pay and Effort at Rolls and Clarks

I have already indicated that there had been conflicts over the tightness of job times at Bristol/Rolls in the period before I began my interviewing there. In fact my informants reported all the well known ingredients of the classic pattern of subterfuges and antagonisms over piecework prices.[27] In the first place there were significant variations in the times being issued, with the usual consequences:

> "there were loose and tight jobs, it used to cause competition between people. There was a gentleman's agreement not to spoil good jobs, to keep them from being observed. On the bad jobs you just did it slow and got the ticket stamped".

In this context the usual subterfuges to improve times were resorted to:

> "we only had four jobs. They were reasonable: we got all the jobs timed and then put the speeds up one, that was our fiddle";
> "the ratefixer cuts you to the bone, so you must try to pull the wool over their eyes".

Alongside this, there was some cross-booking, but this was generally regarded as a short-sighted expedient:

> "some people would 'cross-book' a bit, but that often spoiled the job by signing a bad time. You've got to fight for fair times";
> "to balance them off was not really a good policy; a bad job should be shown up to be as bad as possible".

This relatively combative stance was the reciprocal of management's willingness to cut good times:

> "after about 350-400 percent there would be an inquest. It showed them up in a bad light. There's been quite a few good jobs juggled about to give them a second bite of the cherry";
> "what would happen is that they would replan the job or move it to another section of someone was mad enough to spoil it".

Not that such actions entirely ruled out moves towards higher percentages. Both the interviews and evidence from negotiations suggest

that during the mid-1960s the percentages crept up, just as they had done at Doxfords and Clarks, though the somewhat uneven exploitation of these possibilities was also punctuated by management moves to limit their scope:

> "I've never been one for being greedy. Some did book on to 500 to 600%, then people queried them. The rate-fixer gets wrong if his jobs work up to that rate. In fact they went mad with them and they got the time slashed from seven hours to fifty-three minutes! Many of them don't think of others when they are bashing on".

Despite this evidence of differences in approach among workers, as well as the activities of anxious rate-fixers, there was clearly some orderliness in the pattern. Retiming on the one hand and cross-booking on the other appear to have bounded a fairly broad band of 'workable' times allowing significant variations in individual earnings:

> "if you make too much both union and management object....and you don't kill the job against the threat of modification. But they accept people who do always make a high bonus; it's when someone makes an exceptional amount it's queried".

However, the limited and scrappy conflicts which had characterised the evolution of job times and wages during the 1960s had evidently been deepened by the general tightening of the times on offer on the newer Derby work. It was this which formed the basis of the most recent conflicts, and had consolidated the combative mood together with a broader resort to systematic output limitation:

> "the times are varied, but they've taken the good jobs away. The new jobs are poor, there's only a few jobs you can make pay";
> "at the moment they're all bad, they're just sticking any sort of time on just to get things moving";
> "recently, on the Derby disks, we couldn't make the times with the fixtures; there wasn't enough planning to allow fair times, where you could take care of the job <u>and</u> make the bonus. Now I'm on plus-ups, but now there's no incentive".

These developments are clearly reflected in the views of Rolls workers about the adequacy of the payment scheme in rewarding effort. Even a superficial comparison of their responses with those of the workers at Clarks and Doxfords (summarised, together with other related responses in table 30) shows that they were far more likely to judge their pay inadequate for the effort.[28] This becomes even more evident when their qualitative judgements are considered. Apart from the usual criticisms of piecework - "too big a difference between men's wages at

Table 30: Views on the Effort Bargain and on Management

	Rolls-Royce (n=27)	Clarks (n=19)	Doxfords (n=42)
Does the method of payment give adequate rewards for effort?			
Adequate	41%	79%	50%
Qualified adequacy	11%	16%	33%
Inadequate	48%	5%	17%
Similar or varied ideas about 'a fair day's work' on the shop-floor			
Diversity of opinion	48%	58%	44%
Agreement among workers	44%	5%	27%
Agreement between workers and foremen	0%	21%	27%
Other	7%	16%	2%
How well do you get on with your foreman?			
Very well	16%	47%	38%
Pretty well	68%	53%	48%
Not so well	12%	0%	14%
Badly	4%	0%	0%
Attitudes to work study	(n=27)	(n=18)	(n=33)
More concerned to make things go smoothly	4%	24%	10%
Both 'go smoothly' and 'fast pace'	33%	24%	19%
More concerned with a fast pace	57%	48%	61%
Other	7%	6%	10%
Opinion about management	(n=19)	(n=15)	(n=39)
Good	5%	13%	8%
Better than average	0%	27%	20%
Average	16%	40%	44%
Worse than average	74%	20%	20%
Bad	5%	0%	8%

the end of the week"; "you can never rely on stable earnings"; "on piecework problems cost you money" - voiced by those who judged the position 'adequate' as well as those who disagreed, there was substantial dissatisfaction with the level of earnings in relation to the work being done:

> "to me you still don't get the money you should be getting given the tolerances and that";
>
> "it's not adequate for the class of work".

And many other workers judged their situation 'adequate' only in a paradoxical sense which reaffirmed dissatisfaction with the system itself. Some deemed their rewards adequate for their efforts only because they had deliberately slowed down to match the money and times on offer:

> "it does at the moment, because they're only getting the work they are paying for";
>
> "we pulled the effort down to suit".

Others had gained the same result by being moved off disputed times on to Shop average:

> "to me for the work we do we're getting reasonable, because we're not on bonus; you just do a fair day's work".

Only a small minority, fifteen per cent of those interviewed, saw the system as operating adequately in any full sense, as reflected in the judgement that "I think the wages are very decent for the work I'm doing", or even "some people are getting away with murder, but in my case I'm getting fairly paid for what I do".

Some of the texture of the views and relationships involved in the operation and contestation of the piecework system can be traced in the responses to other questions, again in comparison with those in the other factories. Not surprisingly, the evidence about perceived patterns of agreement and disagreement over effort on the shop-floor at Rolls shows that nobody would simply endorse the view that there was a consensus on the shop-floor, in which workmates and the foremen shared similar notions of a 'fair day's work' (see table 30, which shows that a significant minority of workers in the other two firms supported this view). However, even in the context of overt conflict over job times, there was evidently no simple agreement among workers themselves either. More detailed consideration of workers' views reveals more clearly the complex contours of shop-floor opinion on this issue. Many workers, though not a clear majority, emphasised substantial tacit or explicit agreement among themselves, and contrasted this with management expectations as evidenced by the actions of foremen, rate-fixers or

progress chasers. Thus a typical comment was:

> "we work it out between ourselves - if you get a job previously done by another bloke, you ask them what they did first. The foreman thinks we should turn more out".

Another put the point more directly in the context of the controversy over job times:

> "presently you have a target at less than management want, to give us leverage; on the other set up, piecework times, again we generally work it out among ourselves, 300-400, whatever seems fair. At present I'm doing less than I'm capable of, slowing down on a poor job".

For such workers, then, the conflict between men and management, dramatised by the struggles over piecework prices, highlighted the broad agreement of the shop-floor on issues of a 'fair day's work'. Furthermore, their testimony underlines the active, collective, rather than merely passive form of such agreement. However, the pattern was more complex than a simple identity of views. For one thing, other men endorsed this view of broad agreement amongst workmates, but also made the point that under favourable conditions piecework allowed some significant variation in effort, so that "a few of the younger ones do break away a bit sometimes, one or two have different ideas, but on the whole most people maintain a steady pace"; or conversely "in the majority they would see it my way, they bash on, though a few would just do the basic amount".[29] Others again went further in charting differences among their workmates, while still emphasising the divergence with management:

> "it varies, slow, plodding, fast; but the foremen, it doesn't matter how hard you work they want that bit more";
>
> "all various opinions, it stands out from the amount of money [earned], but foremen invariably consider you could do more".

Finally, some men noted as an additional complication differences in the attitudes among different 'agents of management'. Not only did foremen vary, but because piecework facilitated unobtrusive supervision ("when you're on piece, you've got to work to make money, then they leave you alone"), ratefixers rather than foremen tended to be the focus of conflicting assessments of effort.

Despite these variations of view, however, it was only rarely that differences among workers were pointed up and linked to supervisory attitudes in a form which implied fairly full endorsement of the individualist logic of piecework, as when it was said that "opinions are

all various, but I would say the majority have the idea of making as much bonus as they can", or "I'd say in general the foreman's ideas are similar to the average man - on bonus they don't bother, then you're loosing money". Nevertheless, such views, together with the earlier qualifications to any simply dichotomous view of pay and effort, suggest that the structure and mode of operation of the piecework system generates, simultaneously, the experiential basis of contrasting conceptions of the social relations flowing from the wage form. On the one hand piecework exemplifies the 'naked cash nexus', as management initiatives, to intensify effort on new work and to circumvent 'good' times on established jobs, confront workers' experiences of better effort bargains and related conceptions of reasonable effort (as Baldamus argues in his discussion of 'marginal wage disparity'), with the result that a sense of basic conflict between management and workers is sustained or amplified.[30] On the other hand (and in the words of a famous author) "the wider scope that piece-work gives to individuality, tends to develop ....that individuality, and with it the sense of liberty, independence and self-control of the labourers [and]...their competition one with another", so that the limited but real scope to improve earnings, and the divergent assessments and tactics among workers in response to 'reasonable' job times, focus attention on the game of making out and on individual performance within a potentially workable system (even, as Burawoy notes, if workability depends on a degree of subterfuge).[31] The spectrum of views outlined above involves variations on both of these themes, but, as might be expected at Rolls, when the exigencies of rationalisation and profitability had evidently involved recent efforts to intensify production, and this was an overt feature of management policy, the former features tended to dominate, without by any means entirely displacing the latter.

It is evident from this account that the supervisors at Rolls played a much less pivotal role than the foremen at Doxfords, neither operating through a shared craft ethos nor remaining central to management attempts to intensify effort (both were features at the Marine Engine works). Thus, despite the common perception that supervisors were looking for increased output, they were not only seen to vary in the pressure they brought to bear (for instance in their willingness to concede 'plus-ups'), but they were also seen as in some respects less central to the conflicts over effort than the rate-fixers, and beyond them middle management. These features are brought out more fully in the specific assessments of the various 'agents of management' made by my informants.

There were fairly few who viewed their relationship with their foremen as poor, but also few, at least in comparison with workers in the other factories, who said they got on'very well'. The vast majority opted for 'pretty well', and the very brevity of many of their comments might also be regarded as symptomatic of the relative neutrality of the relationship. This appears to reflect a fairly impersonal mode of supervision, reinforced, as several workers emphasised, by the management policy of rotating supervisors among shifts. As one man said:

> "I take them or leave them; supervision are 'strangers' here, I never chat with them, just about work; they keep themselves to themselves, the firm's shift system helps that".

Such distance was not simply a question of the way in which the piece-work system allowed unobtrusive supervision, of the sort registered by the view that "if you've got the type of job with an adequate time with good bonuses you don't see the supervision, it's only if you hit a snag or progress pushes it forward you see them". For there were also hints that supervisors remained marginal even in such circumstances: "they try to keep out of the road in fact, as they're often unable to help when it comes to ironing out the snags".[32] Against such a background of impersonal supervision there was clearly some scope for varied supervisory tactics:

> "we get on pretty well really, some are pretty hot headed but the better ones listen to you if you've got any trouble on the job".

And particular circumstances or relationships could still generate sharp antagonism, as this exception to the bland assessments makes clear:

> "badly, you're treated like peasants, they hold grudges, get the knife in your back. The golden rule is they somehow expect you not to earn good money. You're always to blame, like when we had warped rings: 'you should know about stresses and strains'".

But relatively impersonal and unobtrusive supervision generally provided the basis for a live-and-let-live relationship <u>within</u> defined limits:

> "pretty well. The best just leave you alone, though there's little things they don't like you doing, like grouping up when you get your tea".

Not that even this was an <u>automatic</u> feature, as another man indicated:

> "pretty well. It's best to stick up to them then they're O.K.".

Thus, even in the midst of overt conflict over pay and effort, supervisors were seen as relatively minor figures in the overall drama, widely disparaged but rarely evoking strong feelings of personal antagonism.

By comparison the shop-floor view of rate-fixers was more sharply antagonistic, though as a comparison with Doxfords suggests by no means extraordinarily so, since a third of those interviewed conceded functions of coordination as well as intensification to time-study men (though hardly any saw them simply in benign terms). Among the large majority who stressed their role in work intensification some simply explained that this was a consequence of management policy:

> "the rate-fixers idea is to get as much work for as little as possible, that's their job, and they're only doing their job";
>
> "pace; it's company policy to get most for least, though it fluctuates from time to time".

Others, though, argued that rate-fixers were enthusiastic in their search for speed-up:

> "the majority want to get medals for themselves by getting observed times down closest to estimated times";
>
> "they've picked the right people for the job - but that's no compliment".

Among those who were willing to concede a dual function to the rate-fixers this was seen partly as a result of differing outlooks among the practitioners, so "you get both types - Dinotrix is reasonable at the moment, grinders is a shit-house" (though only very rarely were the tight times attributed to a small minority); but it was also seen as the outcome of the pressure, skills and subterfuges exercised by the men:

> "they're after both - they go for the individual, you've got to 'hum and bug' them to get a fair time, and you've got to <u>persuade</u> them to get observation".

Thus, in the context of the timing and rating battles, and especially since the introduction of the Spey work following the takeover, the rate-fixers were firmly identified as key agents of management strategy; though even then the uneven stringency and contested form of implementation kept alive some feeling of varied practice alongside general hostility.

As these comments on foremen and ratefixers suggest, Rolls workers generally saw these agents of management very much as the transmitters of policies decided from above. One man put it particularly sharply, though the sentiment was widely shared:

> "management - stinking. They don't even consider the men. It starts at the top, <u>they</u> make the foremen what they are".

There were several interrelated, though variously emphasised strands in this hostility to management. A central theme was the unresponsiveness

and unconcern of local management in relation to shop-floor grievances. This was sometimes given a similar resonance to the comments of many Doxfords workers, as when it was said that:

> "they're worse [than most managements], they fall down on their job. Planning work, they don't know how the shop-floor works and they aren't interested; they're not qualified for their positions either, though there are exceptions".

At other points in the interview Rolls workers occasionally made other familiar and related points, such as "basically the whole organisation is top heavy, carrying too much staff" or "heavy numbers of non-producers". But more often the view that "they don't become familiar with the shop-floor" placed less emphasis on the absence of technical capabilities and more on a general disregard for the situation of the shop-floor worker. This indifference was certainly seen as manifest in the day-to-day conduct of production which has been outlined above, but several men also emphasised that it was a feature of the negotiating posture of management:

> "worse, there's been a lot of trouble, we cannot get any co-operation in negotiations, they take you for a ride";
> "we were out on strike, the District Secretary arranged a meeting, and he [works manager] didn't turn up".

All in all, nearly eighty per cent of those Rolls workers who answered this question judged their management 'bad' or 'worse than average', in contrast with the neutral or even slightly positive assessments by the other groups of men (see table 30).[33]

Such features were sometimes seen as symptomatic of the deficiencies of local plant management. Thus on one hand "they're worse; the previous manager was a good manager, around the shop-floor, paid attention to what was going on, but the present managers don't appear to manage"; While on the other hand, since "top management, the men upstairs have got no ideas, I expect changes there when Rolls gets in, unless they bluff their way through". More often, though, there was little expectation of such change through a change in personnel. Instead the pattern of management was seen as characteristic of the larger framework within which local managers operated; of a large, and now even larger, company in which the Sunderland works was only a small, distant branch factory. A few men simply saw this as the norm:

> "average; distant, all the same really. I've only worked for big firms, that's all the same with them".

The more usual judgement, though, involved a more clearly negative

assessment:

> "Clarks managers would give you a decision, but Royce...being a branch firm they can't make snap decisions";
>
> "they don't act like a management, they take their orders from the main factories; and they keep aloof, think themselves too good for the men".

Underlying these assessments, then, there was much more emphasis at Rolls than at Doxfords on the failure of managers to make decisions which considered the interests of the shop-floor, and rather less on the apparent irrelevance of management to much of the activity of production itself given the autonomous initiative of craftsmen. There were, indeed, mentions of the quality of the work required at Rolls - 'the best on the river' - and the limited technical competence of many of the foremen, as well as the standard references to the 'non-producers', but there appeared to be a wide-spread feeling that working in a minor branch factory of a massive, technically advanced company had meant strict limits to the development of workers' skills and initiatives.[34] This was made explicit when one worker recounted what he considered to be a symptomatic instance of management policy, related to training on new machines:

> "they wouldn't send the operator down for training by the operator down at Derby. Just a few men looked round, mainly supervision, then they were plonked back here with them [supervision] telling you what to do. They won't give an operator the responsibility or power it would entail to train him properly".

More generally, the Convenor lamented the manner in which the exercise of managerial prerogatives deliberately ignored what he termed "the wide variety of skills and talents on the shop-floor", for instance when they 'shouted managerial prerogatives' at the notion that the men might have ideas about the machines needed on the shop-floor.[35]

It is difficult to disentangle the various features of corporate policy and worker experience which must have contributed to these differences in the extent and character of the hostility to management at Rolls and at Doxfords. Clearly the recent experiences, of pressure on job times and the resulting conflicts,were the most immediate features which influenced the views of the Rolls workers. The salience of this issue at the time of my interviews was brought home very forcibly in one of my first encounters on the shop-floor, when, my notebook records, I "hit the Spey-line men's grievances today when I talked to four people, each one involving another to corroborate a point and elaborate further

in a blow by blow account of the battle over job times on their section". (it is worth adding that such enthusiasm to put their case to an outsider contrasted markedly with the circumspection which greeted me at Doxfords).[36] However, this recent conflict has to be seen against a broader background. One aspect of this was the long-term decline of the standing of the firm in the local pay league, a feature clearly emphasised in the views men expressed about possible job moves; while another was the increased uncertainty accompanying the recent take-over. One can only speculate on the manner in which workers' views might develop in the context of changes in one or another of these conditions, but at the time of my study they reinforced one another to produce very substantial dissatisfaction.

So far as the qualitative emphases of that dissatisfaction are concerned, it would seem that these workers, in a satellite plant of a rationalising high-technology enterprise, had a more defensive and ambiguous sense of their own active role and competence in the organisation of production than had the Doxfords craftsmen. That this was not simply the result of the technical differences between marine and aero-engine production is, perhaps, suggested by the manner in which the Convenor at another plant in the company has articulated a classic version of the craftsman's sense of his own competence in and over production:

> "to anyone on the shop floor it is evident that the greater part of responsibility in production depends on the workers themselves. This is one reason why controlling the work environment is fundamental to me....Running a firm is not a matter of a few brilliant minds at the top; it is a total process in which the workers play a vital role. While management takes decisions on what to produce on the basis of the orders they get, the method of production is modified many times before the final product is made. First of all, management's global decisions are modified by the feed-back from studies that determine how these decisions can in practice be carried out; secondly, but by no means of lesser importance, these decisions are again modified on the shop floor by the workers themselves to enable production to be carried out. It is a myth that management manages on the shop floor. When it comes down to details they don't, they give instructions and hope somehow they will be implemented. The skilled worker has to work out, from drawings, the best method of doing the particular job; he has to set his own machine, he has to get the necessary tools out of the stores, he has to grind his own tools and so on. Using his

ingenuity and his skill, the worker is constantly made aware of his active and valuable role in the productive process".[37]

This view is admittedly that of an experienced and articulate activist, rather than any direct indication of wider sentiment among the workforce, but it was expressed against a background of a well developed and successful tradition of workplace union organisation in the context of regional prosperity and a scarcity of skilled labour, and for a factory which had often been involved in some of the more complex of the repair and production work dealt with by the parent company.[38] As such it does at least suggest some of the features which may have conditioned the balance of shop-floor attitudes to management in the rather different circumstances of Sunderland. For by comparison with Coventry, Sunderland management faced a rather weaker workforce well aware of limited alternative job opportunities, and in that context they had sought to organise the production of comparatively standard components with a limited reliance on experienced craftsmen, first through training their own apprentices but increasingly through the recruitment of dilutees. To the extent that this interpretation is correct, any attempt to develop the rather defensive tone of the critique of management into a more confident assertion of competence is likely to be quite a struggle.

A final theme concerning views of management at Rolls is the complex counterpoint of personalised and structural explanations of management conduct among the workforce. In some ways there is a parallel with the experience of piecework, which engendered sharp antagonisms towards management but also some sense of individual competition and control, for the experience of a shifting and uneven implementation of management policies (for instance on local negotiations or tightening job times) could be comprehended not only in terms of management strategies but also in a more personalised way. This was true both at supervisory and at more senior management level. Thus, against the structural location of supervision, in which management "made the foremen what they are", there was the differentiation of the 'hot headed' from "the better ones who listen"; and against the emphasis on the logic of being a branch factory and part of a big firm, there was the argument that "the previous manager was a good manager" unlike the present lot. Such features were also characteristic of the views of Doxford workers, of course, so that when they expressed scepticism about management this often took the selective and partial form in which the performance of one or another individual was highlighted.[39] Such personalisation of both blame and praise no doubt reflected the messy micro-politics and different styles through which management policies were developed and

implemented: they are by no means simply illusory, since management is never simply monolithic. Indeed, by highlighting differences in rhetoric and practice, personalised judgements could identify scope, and prompt demands, for improvements in management-worker relations, while structural diagnoses could take on an implication of sheer inevitability ('big firms, they're all the same'). Almost by definition, though, the scope for change which is identified within such personalised perspectives is pretty modest and self-limiting, especially when compared with some of the critical and mobilising potentials implicit in more structural arguments. Certainly this contrast appears justified by the yardstick of the more developed structural analyses of the rationalisation strategies of corporate management elaborated by both academics and theorists within the labour movement, even when due regard is given to the micro-political processes through which such strategies must operate.[40] On this basis the counterpoint of structural and personalised elements in shop-floor critiques of management may be seen as a counterpoint of 'penetrating' and 'limiting' aspects of the consciousness of these workers, as these terms are defined by Paul Willis.[41]

In summary, then, the reorganisation and rationalisation of the British aircraft industry, discussed in chapter six, had had two sorts of impact on the experience of these skilled workers in the Rolls/Bristol Sunderland factory. Firstly there had been a modest long term decline in the position of the works, as it lost its initial development activities, became less reliant on the recruitment of experienced craftsmen, and lost ground in the local wages; as it became, increasingly, a standard production satellite unit. Secondly, and overlaying this trend, there was the more conspicuous recent development of sharper conflicts over wages and work intensity in the period following the Rolls take-over. As was seen in chapter six, this was a period of confused, halting and uneven attempts to consolidate the different accounting and control procedures of the merged companies. In the context of the gearing up of some of the core factories for the novel and expensive development and production work for the RB 211, it was also a period when 'bread and butter' production, the profitability of which was vital to corporate strategy, was transferred to such peripheral sites as Sunderland. This meant pressures both to mesh together control and costing procedures from the two firms, and to ensure the tightest possible times and prices, especially as Spey work moved to Sunderland. For the workers at the Sunderland works this was clearly experienced as both a period of frustrating uncertainty and

insecurity, and, more directly, as a major attempt to push up the pace of work without remedying the already existing grievances over pay. Such were the developments which sustained the pattern of conflict consciousness which, with many of its complexities and qualifications, has been analysed above.

At Rolls the conflict over job times was central to current experience, and the minority of men who were on frozen rates clearly saw themselves as part of that conflict. At Clarks, however, bonuses had been frozen across the board at the time of the closure, so that any active contestation of rates as such was a thing of the past. Nevertheless, the dynamics of the piecework system were well remembered, not least because the rates set remained critical benchmarks for work pace and effort at the time of my interviews, more than two years later. Looking back in response to my questions a characteristic view of the old rates and times was that there were:

> "loose and tight, for some people easy, but for others they were poor - time and motion study doesn't work out really. Two or three of us, working was heavy to get to twice or three times; it was three for us, though some got up to four and a half. There may have been a limit but for me you couldn't do it, the limit was unattainable. On piece we didn't kill ourselves, but we kept on the job all day".

As for the variation in job times, "on some of the early jobs it was pure favouritism", while some ratefixers "didn't allow for the oddities of the old machines".[42] As a consequence some jobs were worked slow, there was some cross booking (though, as at Rolls, this wasn't always seen as an adequate remedy), and the foreman sometimes evened out the times. It was in this context that there was a collective, though uneven, consolidation of targets:

> "three hundred was target, try to get the majority to get three hundred, but some did get to four hundred: that produced remarks that they were spoiling the job, never even time to go to the bog. You couldn't really query our jobs because they had been done at that time before. I asked Smithy what was reasonable: 'three hundred to three-fifty, make the job suit yourself' he reckoned".

This was the pattern, punctuated by very occasional upward revision of old times and the modification and reduction of jobs which were visibly over the norm, until the last few months before the closure, when:

> "three hundred, went up to five hundred, then five hundred plus and a free for all prior to the redundancy. At first a limit was

> applied, but less and less. Many times were ridiculous [bad], these were rejected, but they weren't rectified, just recorded in a book and the job was given an open card. Six hundred to seven hundred was the limit towards the end, but those who weren't on piece jobs had a bonus of eighty per cent of the piecework average so we had an understanding for us few [on good piecework prices] to have priority on tooling and so on".

So this wasn't just a free for all, but something of a collectively improvised strategy for gaining advantage in crisis circumstances, even though it did not advantage all equally. Making the connection with their current situation one man summed it up in these terms:

> "I got to five-twentyfive before the redundancy. I never heard of any limit, the times weren't that good to allow it. It's that pace that I keep in mind now".

The views of these men, about the adequacy of reward for effort and about ideas of a fair day's work, provide an indication of what such benchmarks actually meant in the climate of uncertainty and marginality in which they found themselves. So far as adequate reward for effort was concerned, the predominant view was that it was "adequate at the moment, because of the way it is run"; given, that is, the lack of work pressure. Such lack of pressure even induced a certain unease on the part of some men:

> "we all know we could do better. The men would work harder for the same amount of money with better supervision showing more interest in the work".

Indeed a couple of men even turned this unease into a criticism of some of their workmates: "some men get some more than what they earn". In comparison with Rolls or Doxfords, then, rewards were clearly seen as adequate in relation to the effort, though some workers entered the important caveat that other features than work pressure meant they remained unsufficiently rewarded: "no, we're not rewarded for the other things we do beside machine minding", such as foraging for tools.

Some of the differences in emphasis hinted at in these remarks emerged more clearly in the comments on ideas of a 'fair day's work'. Some people simply saw their situation as a somewhat relaxed version of established shop-practice, as it was set by the more reasonable of the piecework times of old: "you have an idea of how you should do in a day, given on the experience of doing the job in the past", and "this sometimes means its more steady than pushing yourself, but we get out similar amounts of work to two or three years back". This gave a little

more leeway than with definite piecework targets:

> "under piecework you had to have a target but you just do a day's work now, just go ahead, you never know what snags you might come up against. To me now there's not a great deal of supervision but they are getting the work out; the foreman must be satisfied with the output, and he gets his rush jobs done".

On the other hand the old times usually remained an ambiguous point of reference, as the following reflections, shot through with some anxiety, suggest:

> "yes, I know the times which were on piece and I try to maintain it at that level, but I prefer this to piecework (older blokes could never make the bonus now on piece). Everybody knows what's fair, it's just putting it into practice with no administration. You tend to get talking and time goes, sometimes you feel ashamed and generally try to catch up next day. The foreman, he'd like more steady production, but when he's here he's as bad as the others, talking about anything else. He's a bit overloaded mind, many times I just go and tell him what I want to do; he probably comes round if it's a rush job, but he hasn't got much idea about how long jobs take, you can kid him up".

While these accounts often suggested that both men and foreman shared similar notions - "everybody tends to muck in and the foreman's quite satisfied" - there was also scope for varied practice, while the foreman's knowledge was uneven:

> "I personally generally have a target, though people's ideas vary. It's rather awkward with our foreman, as a Heavy Machine Shop foreman he's got little experience [of small work] so he relies on us, though he keeps an eye on output".

For most men such variation took place within some broad agreement - "I think they vary, some stand around, others don't, but they all get stuck in on rush jobs" - and indeed, an individual might not always work to the same rhythm - "some days I bash on, others I do next to nothing".

However, for a substantial minority of the men at Clarks, the regime since the redundancies had come to be seen as one which allowed some workers to slack, while it depended on others working skillfully and conscientiously. Typical comments about work pace, from this point of view, were:

> "I time myself on each part of each job and what I should get done. Other workers' ideas vary: sixty per cent are under effort, forty per cent have a good idea";
>
> "I have a reasonable target in mind, as I bear in mind the piece-

> work times we used to work to, but workers' ideas vary: some don't work at all".

The same two men then spelt out what they saw as the implications of limited supervision. On the one hand:

> "management don't really know what's what, they allow slackness. The foreman, he's a 'heavy' man, he really depends on the charge-hand, and he knows what's fair but doesn't do much about it because of the situation".

On the other hand:

> "honestly the foreman doesn't have much idea, he relies on the men, among the time-served men anyway. From a personal point of view he doesn't keep an eye on me, not at all, I'm more likely to keep an eye on him, put him right. We do all our own foraging and planning".

Thus for themselves the absence of detailed management control was not regretted, and indeed satisfaction was gained from 'foraging for ourselves', while at the same time management was urged to improve <u>its</u> contribution to the coordination of production. However, managerial control seemed to be seen as a necessity for some of the other workers, in the absence of an appropriately diligent approach to the work. Not that critical judgements of other workers necessarily implied a straight-forward acceptance of managerial norms; thus one man who said bluntly that "some've got the idea that nowt's a good day's work" also reflected that:

> "if snags crop up you perhaps won't make your target, it's a waste of time trying to catch up then, you only make another balls up....The foreman doesn't bother me, I rarely see him, only with the rush jobs at present. Unless they wander round, then you do speed up even if you tell yourself not to".

One way of reading these comments is in terms of a craft outlook, implying that while limited supervision allowed craftsmen to exercise their initiative and responsibility, it encouraged a slackness among other workers which offended their craft pride. Certainly there was some evidence of the salience of such craft consciousness elsewhere in my Clarks survey. In particular it was one of the few themes commented on when I asked people if they had any points they felt I had missed. Thus one of the men quoted above insisted that:

> "the skilled/semi-skilled question is the thing. The artisan's on his way out in the old craft industries, superseded by the semi-skilled. The planners can't seem to see the thing but the

> difficult jobs can't be replaced, and there'll be no one to do them properly".

This theme was reiterated by his mate:

> "my opinion of industry in general is that a backward step has been the introduction of semi-skilled men. The decline in the prestige of the skilled man is emphasised by that; the differentials between the skilled and the semi-skilled are too small".

However, such comments, though they probably drew some sustenance from the subtle differentiations among the men I interviewed, clearly took in a broader panorama of changes than those represented by the uneven involvement of these men in 'problem' and 'rush' jobs at Clarks. So far as opinions of 'fair effort' were concerned, it was true that the minority of workers who made critical remarks about their workmates included a nucleus of older time-served men, but it was also the case that opinion was divided among both apprenticed and dilutee members of this predominantly craft group.[43] Indeed, it was one of the dilutees, the man quoted earlier as saying that "I hate 'time served', I appreciate skilled work", who provided one of the clearer statements of the critical view quoted above.[44] Thus there were differing conceptions of the implications of the conditions at Clarks for skilled workers, and these played on some central themes of craft pride and autonomy; but they did <u>not</u> coincide with any clear-cut or coherent division between younger and older workers, time-served and non-time-served men, or those on skilled rates and those who were not. Nevertheless, there remained real differences of perspective and conduct among these workers, and these were related in some part to tensions between those doing the most complex work and those on the more routine jobs. Thus for some time there had been no shop steward among the turners, in part because of the sensitivity of these workers to their internal differentiation, and a corresponding lack of confidence in common representation; though again it was emphasised that the cliques involved bore no simple correspondence to "skill groups or divisions".[45]

Of course, the very unpressured conditions at Clarks made the need for steward representation less pressing, and it was in that context, almost a vacuum so far as strict managerial surveillance was concerned, that these divisions assumed a disproportionate significance, compared, for example, with Doxfords. At the same time, even though the space between informal craft sociability and formal union membership had become virtually vacant in this marginalised backwater of skilled work, this did not mean that some of the basic protective reflexes of the shop-floor had been abandoned. Rather, they had remained

informal and perhaps more personalised. For example, the men had an efficient system of whistled warnings to signal the presence of the manager, so they were at their machines when they were in his gaze.[46] Similarly, I fell foul of the active suspicion of one of the men outside the group I was interviewing when I showed too much interest in the job cards being distributed by the chargehand, and was met with the rebuke "you have no right to look at them, they are <u>our</u> property".[47] If, as one of the men said, "there are enough 'reds' in the department to make the steward's job a hot seat, so no one will take it up", there were also enough to make sure management were not up to something.[48]

Turning now to the way management were talked of in the interview, I will look first at views of the foreman then at attitudes to rate-fixers, before finally looking at judgements of management more generally. Not surprisingly in view of some of the comments already recorded, the Clarks turners all felt they got on well with their foreman, with a pattern of approval somewhat stronger than at Doxfords and much more positive than at Rolls. Measured against the criteria set out by one of their number - "a bad 'un is: standing over you all the time, being sarcastic about the job, not sharing work out fairly; avoid these and you've got a good 'un" - the pattern of relaxed supervision was generally approved. There was presumably little need or scope for favouritism given frozen bonuses and limited work pressure, and its absence in comparison with the pre-closure days was often remarked, most strikingly by the man who commented:

> "he's pretty fair in comparison with previous ones. I was one of the 'blue eyes' under the others, but I didn't like them much".

While the present foreman was judged against such unsatisfactory features of the old piecework system, my question about time-and-motion study tended to evoke more direct judgements about the earlier regime. Despite the absence of any recent battle over piecework times, of the sort experienced at Rolls, and the fairly favourable outcome of the operation of the final months of the piecework system prior to the closure, nearly half of the Clarks workers remained categorical in their identification of rate-fixing with attempts to intensify pace. Typical comments and caveats were:

> "pace was their only concern, to give as little as possible...there was <u>one</u> man who tried to improve things";
>
> "pace: at the time they were here it was absolutely ridiculous, but they eventually gave up making use of them".

There were, however, more men at Clarks than at either Rolls or Doxfords

who saw time-and-motion study as more benign, and though there was the occasional more or less outright endorsement of this view - "keeps production as high as possible, keeps work flowing, and keeps men happy to some extent" - most of these comments were firmly linked to features of the pre-closure regime which inhibited the pressure for pace:

"both are involved; with a settled man they can't buck him";

"smoothly, because if you did a job they would take <u>your</u> time".

Thus the leverage for gaining decent times was an important basis for these judgements, though other comments recognised that this leverage was not always dependable:

"I don't know, it varies from individual to individual. One fellow used to make ridiculous times, but others could be brain-washed".

The Clarks workers not only judged their foreman, and even their ratefixers, more favourably than did the Rolls or even the Doxfords men; they were also more positive in their opinions of management, though still the predominant judgement was that they were about average. However, across the range of overall assessments, a recurrant theme was the remote and unfathomable character of off-site management:

"from their industrial relations record they're better, certainly lower management. Top and middle management are too distant, there's lack of communication";

"average, as good as any, but now we're a small corner of the concern; that's the rub really, there's really too many managers, they have to go up the line before decisions, we're only a cog. But before that they were always pretty fair";

"We only see the buffer here, don't know the people at Wallsend. Many times we can't puzzle out their logic though".

Thus the uncertainty and insecurity of working in a small and marginal outpost of a large and rationalising firm, a keynote of these workers' comments on many aspects of their work experience, was also central to their general judgement of management. A more specific indication of what this might mean in terms of the experience of insecurity was provided by an incident which occurred while I was visiting the Clarks works, and was reconstructed for me by some of the men in the following outline terms:

'Early in the day some foremen from Wallsend arrived to check some work which was going through, and in conversation one apparently mentioned that management were going to pull some of the work back to Wallsend, and that this was a result of a Board decision to finally run down the Sunderland factory in favour of the larger

> Wallsend and Hartlepool works. "When they heard this everyone was down and slackened off work, you know how it is". However, the Wallsend Machine Shop foreman was also there and someone tackled him about this rumour, and he denied it. They had more than enough work as it was, and he knew of no such decision'.[49]

Thus there was a well developed informal sensitivity to signs and rumours of management intent, but this incident suggests that the potential return of closure was more likely to deepen pessimism than to galvanise opposition. In such a context several workers gave a further twist to their assessments of management by being more critical of the local manager. Some simply focussed on his inexperience:

> "there is no management really, he's only a draftsman, not fully experienced".

However, though such comments could be interpreted as extensions of the criticism of top management, a few men went further to lament the loss of effective management control and thus to add a rather different dimension to their views:

> "they treated us well I think. Not the present one, he's not like the old manager, he tends to be too much one of the lads";
> "I find them slack, they tend to give in to the men; middle management don't know what's going on".

Such views were only expressed by a few men, but alongside the criticisms of shop-floor ideas of a fair day's work, also voiced by a minority of men they suggest that for these men the autonomy of precarious marginality was perceived in terms of a failure of both management and men, and as a spurious substitute for the responsible autonomy of the skilled worker in a properly managed works. At least for these workers, a scepticism about management expertise, in the face of the experience of the skilled man, was counterpointed by a feeling that they were vulnerable in part because of a <u>failure</u> of management to manage.[50]

For the Clarks workers, then, being on the margins of rationalisation had meant increased autonomy coupled with pervasive insecurity, and this combination had exposed some of the tensions in the outlooks of skilled workers concerning the relationships between management and worker interests and expertise. While at both Rolls and Doxfords there was the odd worker who criticised the effort and commitment of some of his fellow workers from the perspective of a 'responsible workman', such views became somewhat more widespread, though neither dominant nor always consistent, at Clarks. As such they cross-cut both the satisfactions gained by many workers from the limited space which was

afforded by the organisation of the works, and the informal solidarities and scepticism about management intentions which remained the dominant reflexes of the Clarks workforce.

Conclusion: Variations in Rationalisation, Craft Experience and Consciousness

In this conclusion I intend to summarise the variations in experience and outlook documented in this chapter, leaving to the final section further consideration of some of the broader implications of this material for debates about the capitalist labour process, and especially about skilled workers and rationalisation.

The rationalisation policies of the Rolls and Clarks managements had clearly had a significant impact on the experiences of the workers I interviewed. In one respect that impact was similar in both of these firms, contrasted with the situation at Doxfords. This was because broader corporate policies impinged on the Sunderland factories, as a consequence of more general reorganisations which recast the role of each branch factory in its respective group. This meant that, to a far greater extent than at Doxfords, workers felt that their fate was the outcome of remote, inaccessible and unexplained decisions. Beyond this, though, the experiences of the workers in the two factories were very different, primarily because of the contrasting roles which they were given as satellite works.

In relation to Rolls it was evident that recent developments had overlaid a longer term shift in the role of the branch factory. As a Bristol outpost there had been gradual changes over the previous decade. The factory had moved away from development work and had sunk somewhat in the wages league; but the workforce had remained relatively quiescent, despite intermittent shortages of skilled workers. The increasing recruitment of dilutee machinists must have facilitated this process, but it was also conditioned by the scarcity of comparable job opportunities in the area and the attraction of the relative security of work in a 'modern' firm. These features tied workers to the firm, but appear to have become less effective in limiting dissatisfaction by the mid-1960s. It was in this context that the takeover of Bristols by Rolls precipitated a reorganisation of activities across the whole aero-engine building empire. This involved both job-loss in some satellite plants, and the clearing of much 'bread and butter' production to peripheral sites; the latter the result of gearing up the centre

for the new high-technology development and production work on the RB 211. At Sunderland this meant both a general increase in pressure on costs, as the accounting and control systems of the two firms were reassessed, and, more particularly, pressure to tighten the costing of the new work being allocated to the factory. Thus, for the Rolls workers in Sunderland, rationalisation meant intensification and a fight over job times, in the context of increased insecurity as the firm shed labour, and against the background of a more gradual long term erosion of district pay relativities and a shift towards more standardised work. In the context of this latter feature, as well as the continuing reliance on piecework, the foremen at Rolls clearly played a less pivotal role in the attempted intensification of work than did their counterparts at Doxfords.

It was the issue of job times and speed up which dominated the pattern of recounted experience and consciousness at Rolls: the conflict over the pay system involved more overt antagonism than at Doxfords, and fueled a stronger and more focussed conflict consciousness concerned primarily with effort bargaining. This meant that there was a well developed sense of the disparity between the job times and levels of pay on offer and the pace and quality of work expected by management. However, the contrast with Doxfords was not just one of intensity of feeling about pay and effort, for there were important qualitative differences in the tone of the response to attempts to intensify work. In particular, the sense of the capability of the skilled man, which was so evident as a critical reference point among Doxfords workers, was a less central and more qualified feature of the perspectives shared by Rolls workers. Perhaps this was because such capabilities were more rarely exercised as practical accomplishments in the more tightly planned and standardised production schedules of the aero-engine factory, where there was less scope for virtuoso performances with rush or odd jobs. At the same time the different administrative role of the foremen meant that arguments about favouritism, of the sort which accompanied the distribution of jobs at Doxfords, figured little at Rolls. However, a less developed sense of craft control and the marginality of issues of favouritism did not mean that the outlooks of the Rolls men were simply solidaristic. Many of them looked to alternative job opportunities to escape from the unsatisfactory situation they found themselves in, so that there was a complex interplay between individual assessments of labour market opportunities and shared shop-floor responses to developments in the factory, though the limited opportunities outside clearly reinforced the commitment to parochial collective action. Even

within the workplace, and in the context of an active conflict over the whole tendency of job times, there remained a residue of positive references to the individual and competitive aspects of piecework experience. Nevertheless, for all the interplay of these different aspects and currents of experience, it was the conflict over the tightening of piecework times, coupled with the renewed insecurities arising from the takeover, which was clearly the dominant motif of these workers' experience of rationalisation. For them the pressure involved was more insistent and less easily scorned and domesticated than the attempts at intensification at Doxfords.

At Clarks rationalisation was experienced, paradoxically, in terms of a relaxation of pressure and enhanced autonomy within the workplace, but this was accompanied by, and in a real sense underlined, an intense feeling of insecurity. For at Clarks rationalisation had left the residue of the workforce in a small outpost, touched only indirectly by any reorganisation of the labour process or intensification of production attempted by group management. Though there had been the usual manoeuvres over wages and effort in earlier years, the reorganisation of the Richardsons, Westgarth group had meant massive and precipitate job loss among the Sunderland workforce, but then the virtual suspension of management pressure for more effort from the remaining workers. Those workers, disproportionately older men, felt caught in a situation which daily emphasised the precariousness of their employment, but displayed an uneasy and somewhat bewildered appreciation of the relatively easy work regime which was its accompaniment. Management surveillance was not entirely absent, and in turn neither was worker vigilance entirely moribund; but both had lost their edge and assumed the status of occasional, almost ritual, performances. Thus the rationalisation policies of the parent had left intact a sheltered enclave of skilled work on what had once been the site of a substantial works employing a majority of skilled workers; though in this small enclave, as in the larger Doxfords works, a mixture of turning tasks sustained some differentiation in the opportunities to exercise machining skills. In terms of patterns of consciousness there appear to have been two concomitants of this combination of insecurity and relaxed job shop work, particularly in comparison with Doxfords. Firstly there were hints that the strong sense of craft competence and skill, and the related dependence of management on shop-floor expertise, was accompanied by a sense that such relationships had largely been by-passed or repudiated in the wider industrial world.[51] Secondly the modest differentiation of skilled workers, according to involvement in

special or rush jobs, interplayed with differences of style and moralism in the face of an unforced work pace; and, in the absence of any management offensive apart from the relentless sense of insecurity, the awareness of such differences among these workers assumed a stronger salience than it had at Doxfords, to the extent that it potentially compromised collective action. In combination such features imply that for some workers at Clarks, craft as an active collective force was experienced more as a feature of their past than of their present, even as they continued to exercise their own skills in this backwater of the marine engineering industry.

Rationalisation, then, had different implications and was variously implemented in the different sectors, firms and factories which I have examined; at least during the 1960s when much of the exhortation to change and initial reorganisation in shipbuilding and engineering was undertaken. At Doxfords it was mainly a question of attempts to impose tighter management control over batch production and work pace, while at Clarks and Rolls a wider reorganisation, involving closures and job loss, accompanied a varied pattern of changes in the work process. At one level intensification of work, redundancies and marginal shifts away from reliance on skilled workers were common denominators within the experience of turners in all three firms and factories, so that the specificity of the experience of each group should not be exaggerated. However the tempo and centrality of these processes varied quite markedly, and clearly sustained important variations in the outlooks of the different workforces. Thus groups of workers who inhabited a more or less common labour market experienced the impact of these corporate rationalisations in rather specific ways; though, by the very nature of a common labour market, some moved between factories and thus types of impact, while in a less personal and direct sense the varied impacts constituted a common orbit of experiences. At Doxfords the productivity initiatives of management were contained by a fairly resilient craftism, which was thereby reinforced. However, in each of the settings which I have examined in this chapter skilled workers had a less self confident response to management policies, not only because of their vulnerability in satellite plants but also because of the specific character and changes in patterns of shop floor work. Thus at Rolls the intensification of work against a background of relative standardisation had deepened conflict consciousness but not craft assertiveness; while at Clarks skilled workers appeared uncertain and somewhat demoralised by the insecure 'time-warp' in which they had been caught.

Implications: Some Reflections in Relation to Recent Labour Process Debates

Having summarised the analysis of my specific case studies I now wish to provide a brief discussion of the relationship between my account and contemporary debate about the character of the capitalist labour process, and in particular some of the arguments which have developed following Braverman's now classic statement of the deskilling thesis in Labour and Monopoly Capital.[52] So far as general arguments about trends in the transformation of skilled work are concerned, it is obvious that there are severe limits to the conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of such specific case studies as those discussed in the last few chapters, restricted as they are to just two sectors and also to one fairly short time period, one occupational grouping and one locality. The studies can, of course, be located in terms of a period characterised by deepening crisis, when both state sponsorship and corporate strategies were directed at the 'modernisation' through rationalisation of these sectors, but I cannot claim that they provide any definitive testing of broader claims about the trend of development of skilled work in capitalist production.

However, while recognising the limits and specificity of my material, I also wish to argue that the character and complexity of developments revealed in the case studies does not simply stand as specific empirical detail with which to confront broader statements about trends and tendencies. Beyond this it can also constitute a challenge to the accounts of mechanisms and processes embodied in more general arguments, and thus contribute towards more adequate conceptualisation of the bases of any broader trends[53]. In this context it is clear that the continued survival of skilled workers in these firms during the period covered by my case-studies (and indeed beyond) cannot simply be understood in terms of the bargaining processes acknowledged by Braverman, whereby a 'red circle' is drawn around such jobs irrespective of their increasingly unskilled character.[54] However at the same time I wish to argue, against such authors as Penn and Lee, that the persistence and transformation of craft work does not simply vindicate a neo-weberian labour-market based analysis[55]. Rather it may invite the further development of marxian analyses of the transformation of production relations, in ways which go beyond the classic statement provided by Braverman.

Certainly Braverman himself was right to underline the extent to which much of the labour of craft workers, in Britain as elsewhere, is itself routinised and monotonous[56]. This is a feature which was testified to in several ways by the men in my study - by the recognition among the Doxford men of the widespread monotony of their work, coupled with only limited scope for the creative exercise of craft skills; by the experience among the Rolls workers of a combination of work pressure and routine; and by the feeling even among the most skilled of the Clarks workers that their own craft competences were increasingly anomalous in the wider world of work. However, in each of the factories such features co-existed with continuing opportunities to exercise craft competences; and this was often combined with some real leverage for craft trade unionism, arising not merely from collective organisation as such but also from management's awareness of their real dependency on some aspects of such competences[57].

Indeed the patterns of reciprocity and conflict between capital and craft which I have explored in my case studies not only involve such an interplay of routinisation and continuing reliance on craft skills, but also appear to sustain quite complex internal differentiations among these skilled workers in their exercise of craft competences. In practice key features of the skills celebrated in the craft ethos were exercised by only some of these skilled workers, and then for many only at certain junctures. On this basis it may be appropriate to suggest that the notion of 'surplus skills', which Sabel deploys to analyse the position of skilled workers in largely deskilled work settings (where, he argues, they tend to be selectively retained to help cope with occasional problems in the production process), may have a wider relevance for understanding the relations of capital and labour in the context of continuing craft production[58].

Furthermore, my studies suggest that the resultant unevenness and limitation of the scope for exercising craft competences <u>within</u> craft settings has substantial implications, both for the internal differentiation of craft labour and for the character and dynamics of the consciousness of craft workers - implications which most analyses of skilled workers, properly concerned to underline the relative cohesion and shared circumstances of craftsmen when compared with other groupings of wage workers, have been rather slow to explore[59]. In addition to the subtle heterogeneity and internal conflicts which may

characterise particular workforces, patterns of routinisation and active craftsmanship differed significantly from factory to factory. Such variations, alongside the distinctive levels of insecurity characteristic of the different workplaces, meant that the skilled turners in the locality experienced the impact of rationalisation in a variety of different ways, with different mixes of insecurity, routinisation, autonomy, intensification and craftsmanship. Thus my studies suggest that such complex patterns of insecurity, struggle and craftism are likely to represent the raw materials of craft consciousness of the meanings of 'modernisation' and rationalisation. Such patterns of experience, rather than any simple sense of uniform transformation through deskilling, may be regarded as the craft analogue of the more opaque and uncertain patterns of experience among non-skilled workers documented by Blackburn and Mann and discussed in chapter four.[60]

In relation to such arguments it is necessary to register some of the qualifications in Braverman's own analysis. While he suggests that the dominant dynamic of transformation of the capitalist labour process involves the degradation of skilled work, he not only notes the process of 'red circling' but also recognises the unevenness with which the practical degradation of work occurs. In particular he acknowledges the interplay between specific technical and market exigencies and the unevenness of deskilling, especially when the "very application /of technical transformation/ brings into being new crafts and skills and technical specialties which are at first the province of labour rather than management".[61] Nevertheless, the pattern I have traced in my case-studies suggests that both the unevenness of deskilling and any processes of reskilling need more careful attention than they are accorded by Braverman. They do not represent merely frictional perturbances in the underlying impulsion towards work degradation, but rather arise out of some of the contradictory requirements of effective capital accumulation facing specific units of capital in particular sectors. A central and unresolved issue then becomes how these contradictory requirements may be analysed.[62] In the next few paragraphs I will look first at some of the wider commentaries on this issue, before turning to an examination of the specific studies of craft workers provided by Penn and Lee.

One widespread response to the issue of variations in the transformation of the labour process has been simply to emphasise the diversity of market and technical features which are involved, in a

manner quite reminiscent of much industrial sociology of the 1950s and early '60s, but beyond this there have also been some attempts to provide an underlying rationale for such analyses, most notably by Littler and Salaman[63]. For this reason it will be useful to look briefly at the arguments which they advance in their critique of 'labour process' approaches. They build their critique upon two key claims, which together represent not only an explicit challenge to the most abstract theorising about tendencies of development of the capitalist production process, but also an argument against more specific analyses which focus upon the relationship between capital accumulation and the reorganisation of the labour process. The first of these claims concerns the centrality of cooperation and consent in the labour process, while the second concerns the primacy of market exigencies of supply and marketing in the calculations of management.

The crucial point of departure for the first claim is the recent argument of Cressey and MacInnes, who emphasise that while the extraction and realisation of surplus value dominates the specific exigencies of the production and distribution of use values, it does not suppress those exigencies; and thus the control and intensification of labour necessarily interplays with the organisation of some form of co-operative collective labour[64]. However the argument advanced by Cressey and MacInnes is somewhat ambiguous. It appears to suggest that there is a <u>symmetry</u> between command and cooperation in production, arising from the dualism of exchange-value and use-value production, so that against the functionalism of the emphasis on total management control is counterposed the anti-functionalism of an open terrain of conflict and cooperation. It is upon this basis that Littler and Salaman are able to build their typology of consent in the workplace.

However, this symmetry and equivalence is belied in some of the argument developed by Cressey and MacInnes themselves, especially when they note that:

> "just as much as before, the workers themselves actually control the detail of the performance of their tasks, and the importance of this, though it varies with the production process, never disappears altogether. Even the smallest degree of subjectivity and detailed control of the direction of the process of labour can be used as a weapon against capital in the workplace and is so used whether consciously or not"[65].

Such an observation relates the initiative of workers to the practical

intractability of real production processes, having emphasised that profitable production must involve the working up of use values, but it also has to register the very limited parameters within which such initiative usually operates in an overall environment structured for profitable production rather than use-value production as such. The intractability of particular phases of production, and the contradictory potentials and limitations of alternative routes to enhanced accumulation, create spaces for worker initiative and define a terrain of managerial policy disagreements and micro-politics, but these must surely be conceived in terms of spaces within an overall coordination and control for capital, rather than in terms of any symmetry of command and consent. Certainly my studies of skilled workers make clear the significant forms of dependency of management in such settings upon the capacities and cooperation of such workers, and thus the attractions for management of strategies which sustain such capacities and cooperation. However, they also emphasise the boundaries of such dependency, boundaries underlined both by the pressure for intensified production within the framework of skilled work and by the wider rationalisation, job losses and insecurity characteristic of each sector.

The second strand of the underlying argument developed by Littler and Salaman concerns the centrality for capital accumulation of materials and product market considerations, rather than transformations of the labour process. On the basis of an appeal to Baran and Sweezy inspired analyses of the dynamics of 'monopoly capital' they suggest that changes in the work process are likely to be unimportant beside more pressing management concerns with such matters as product design and the monopolisation of supplies[66]. However, critiques of the Baran and Sweezy analysis have emphasised the manner in which contemporary capitalism is characterised by forms of inter-corporate rivalry which, though they involve attempts to regulate resource and product markets and gain design advantages, cannot simply be reduced to such processes as product differentiation, for they mediate and ultimately compel a crisis ridden reorganisation of class relations at the point of production[67].

Certainly issues of product design and the relocation of particular product lines had significant ramifications for the workers at Doxfords, Clarks and Rolls: at Doxfords a major objective of management was to design a new engine which would replace that which had served as the mainstay of the order-books for forty years, while at Rolls the

corporate rationalisation involved gearing up core plants for the new generation of aero-engines which were central to survival in international competition. However, such processes were not a substitute for attempts to reorganise the immediate production process, and the character of class relations in these factories certainly cannot be attributed to any lack of management concern with the labour process arising from a preoccupation with product development and marketing.[68] At both Doxford and Rolls the relationship between management and skilled workers can, rather, be understood in terms of two features. Firstly the attractions to management, for the time being, of attempting to reproduce the relations between production and realisation, and in particular between the craft organisation of production on the one hand and the design and marketing of specialist small batch products on the other, which had been the basis of earlier corporate profitability; and secondly the possibility of pursuing improved profitability through the intensification of labour in that context[69]. At Doxfords the first aspect predominated as management sought to streamline their design and batch production at their main factory, while at Rolls, as a satellite works of a multi-plant firm, the second feature was more central with product innovation focussed elsewhere in the group. Only at Clarks could it plausibly be argued that a craft work process was sustained as an outcome of management unconcern with the specifics of the labour process, but even there the relaxed regime was only sustained as an insecure outrider to a more substantially reorganised main production site.

These points and examples from my specific case studies tell against the agnosticism advocated by Salaman and Littler, and the related drift into eclecticism of those accounts which locate patterns of wage work in terms of technical and market typologies. Rather, they suggest the need to develop further an analysis of the relationship between the contradictory and contested character of strategies of accumulation and the specific dynamics of production relations in particular sectors and firms. In this regard it is true that most marxian case studies, such as those of Beynon et al reviewed in chapter four, have sought to exemplify general trends and dynamics rather directly in specific firms and workplaces, without much attention to sectoral specificities.[70] However, there have been several recent examples of studies which have explicitly attempted to analyse the specificity and range of variation of accumulation strategies characteristic of particular enterprises and

sectors, and in so doing offer further hints concerning the location of my case studies in such terms[71].

One example of such an approach is the discussion by Massey and Meegan of the varied underlying strategies of accumulation which contributed to job loss in British manufacturing during the period 1968 to 1973, a similar period to that covered by my case studies. They compare sectors in which intensification, capacity contraction and capital investment respectively were central to both the pursuit of renewed profitability and the destruction of jobs. This analysis leads them to argue that:

> "the different kinds of production change leading to job loss are therefore linked; all are integral to the wider system of competitive production for profit. But to say that is not to say that they are inexorably determined by some abstract 'logic of capitalist development', or by the demands of the macro-economy. The production process is a social process involving relations between different companies, between different groupings of workers, and, above all, between management and workforce. The external pressures of, say, the changing international economic situation, do not of themselves determine what will happen in the office or factory"[72].

They then go on to discuss the significance of variations and unevenness of corporate policies, not only between and within sectors but even within specific companies and production processes, though the main focus of their own work is upon variations between sectors which are characterised by different dominant strategies of accumulation[73].

In particular they document and compare the distinctive forms of reorganisation of the labour process characteristic of those sectors where large scale capital investment and technical transformation generated job losses; those where the destruction of jobs was a product of run down of capacity and closures; and those where jobs went as a result of intensification of labour. In this context my analysis of developments at Doxfords, Clarks and Rolls can be located as an account of some of the ramifications at workplace level of two mixed accumulation strategies; in the case of marine engineering the companies I studied were engaged in a combination of intensification and run-down, while at Rolls intensification accompanied substantial investment in technical change.

On the basis of their sectoral analysis Massey and Meegan suggest that intensification was most likely in those sectors characterised by relatively weak shop-floor unionism, where low-level conflict could serve as an incentive to management while effective resistance would be limited; whereas highly organised workforces were more likely to face attempts by rationalising managements to circumvent their opposition through plant closures.[74] However, my case studies, by documenting management attempts to intensify the work of relatively well organised skilled workers, serve to qualify any simple contrast between strongly organised workforces and weak disorganised ones in this respect. For they suggest that even with a craft workforce the attractions to management of enhanced profitability through the intensification of labour may be considerable, at least for a significant period, especially when other options are also costly and there is apparent scope to capitalise upon uncertainties and divisions (for example between sections or sites) among such workers.

Such possibilities for enhanced accumulation through the intensification of labour, with only incremental changes in the technical and social organisation of production, form the focus of Lazonick's exemplary study of transformations in the social relations of the immediate production process in the British cotton industry[75]. He takes as his critical points of departure the argument that Marx was insufficiently critical of claims that mechanisation would suppress workplace organisation, and a recognition of the centrality of gender in the social division of labour in cotton. On this basis he seeks to analyse the manner in which both hierarchy and skills were utilised and transformed in successive waves of reorganisation of the labour process in the industry (involving subtle transmutations of combinations of supervisory duties and technical expertise as bases for the privileged position of the male spinners) while intensification of the work of the piecers became a recurrant resort in pursuit of enhanced profitability and competitive viability.

An important part of Lazonick's argument is that individual cotton firms were reluctant to mount an all-out assault on the position of the well-organised spinners, because of the immediate risks of loss of markets in an industry characterised by competition among many small firms. However, it needs to be emphasised that this is only one side of his argument: he also notes that the availability and attractions of

incremental change based on intensification made such confrontation less pressing, whilst more sustained opposition by workers (as in Scotland) ultimately faced major management offensives. Thus the power of the spinners was lodged within, but also confined by, the relations of effective accumulation on the basis of piecemeal technical changes and continuing marginal intensification, and the policies of the Spinners Union reflected these realities. My case-studies are much more limited in time, space and occupational grouping than Lazonick's meticulous discussion of the rise and fall of the British cotton industry, but also suggest that the logic of competitive accumulation will not always force the pace of mechanisation and technical change when the continued utilisation of a residue of craft skills and expertise is combined with apparent opportunities for the intensification of labour. Furthermore, these glimpses of class relations in the immediate production process in mid-twentieth century engineering suggest that the persistence of craft-based labour processes in this period was sustained by forms of vulnerability and leverage on the part of both labour and capital somewhat similar to those explored by Lazonick.

Having given some consideration to the relevance of my case study material to general arguments about the transformation of the capitalist labour process, I now wish to comment briefly upon two specific arguments about the survival of skilled workers as a significant section of the British workforce through into the 1970s. The arguments concerned are those of Roger Penn and David Lee, and, since both have explicitly espoused weberian analytical positions in opposition to what they regard as the central tenets of marxian analyses, my comments will address their basic claims in this regard as well as commenting on their studies in relation to my own empirical material[76].

Penn develops his analysis of the position of skilled workers in the British class structure through a study of some aspects of the situation of such workers in cotton and in engineering since the mid-nineteenth century. His underlying arguments are, firstly, that there has been considerable continuity in the privileged position of skilled men in these sectors since that time, underlining the persistent heterogeneity of the manual working class in Britain; and secondly, that such heterogeneity has crucially been sustained by the craft organisation of social closure in the labour market. Thus he argues that his study vindicates a neo-weberian approach to the agnostic empirical investigation of patterns of social closure in the sphere of distribution, which he

contrasts with an entirely teleological and schematic marxian pre-occupation with deskilling, class homogeneity and false consciousness.

It has to be said at the outset that this polemical contrast is beset by some major deficiencies which arise from the schematism of his comparison of sociological and marxian analyses. In particular he is apt to set up and then dismiss 'straw man' positions, while glossing over or appropriating for his own approach any subtle empirically grounded investigations of the issues involved. One central example of this is his juxtaposition and then dismissal of analyses of a conservative labour aristocracy on the one hand and accounts of militant craft traditions on the other. He claims that this contrast is symptomatic of an inconsistency of diagnosis inherent in the marxian teleology, but at the same time appropriates for his own argument those substantive studies of craftsmen which have sought to provide some temporal and sectoral specificity in understanding such contradictory features[77]. Another example of his approach concerns his critique of 'tendency of the rate of profit to fall' arguments, where he fails to recognise how far critical debate within marxism has sought to specify and investigate the changing sources and dynamics of accumulation and crisis, conceptualised in terms of tendencies and counter-tendencies to the falling rate of profit[78].

In each of these areas of debate it is also noteworthy that his critique and selective appropriation of positions focusses positive empirical attention upon the organisation of the labour market, while neglecting class relations in the labour process. Thus his critique of 'falling rate of profit' arguments leads directly to a contrast between the inadequacies of a technically determinist marxism and the virtues of an empirically based investigation of "relative power in the processes of distribution", while his appraisal of the labour aristocracy case-studies focusses almost entirely upon the labour market and patterns of sociability while dismissing arguments about changes in the labour process (and also entirely ignoring some of the more subtle investigations of political accomodation and incorporation involved in the political organisation and representation of skilled workers)[79]. The implication of much of Penn's polemic is that such selectivity of focus in his analytical interventions is itself vindicated by his own empirical work: in this sense his argument not only seeks to be empirically grounded but is determindly empiricist in tone. However, having expressed major

reservations about the manner in which he construes the parameters of analytical debate about class relations, I also wish to raise major questions about the relationship between his own empirical material and his broader analytical claims.

Though Penn presents his work primarily as a detailed local study of skilled workers in Rochdale, his specifically local evidence is largely confined to two topics, namely patterns of marital endogamy among skilled workers in the town and rather more patchy evidence on wages. The evidence on marriage patterns appears to suggest little social closure in the community, at least insofar as intermarriage may be regarded as an index of broader patterns of communal sociability, so that the case for social divisions of this sort between skilled and non-skilled remains unsupported (though Penn does not explore the analytical implications of this finding in any detail)[80]. Thus, despite the ingenuity of his collection and analysis of such data, Penn's central argument about the persistence of divisions between these groups rests almost entirely on his wages data, together with secondary commentary on more general studies of union organisation in cotton and engineering.

Penn marshalls his Rochdale wages data to document the persistence of significant wages differentials in both sectors over a long period of time, from the 1840s through to the 1960s, and it is from this that he deduces the continuing capacity of craft unionism to impose skill divisions and privileges upon management[81]. Thus his central organising argument in explaining the salience of skill divisions concerns the manner in which craft organisation predated large-scale factory mechanisation and was therefore able to impose the contours of craftism upon the factory division of labour. Furthermore he emphasises the continued vitality of such unionism at the local level even in the face of twentieth century changes in the organisation of work. Thus he emphasises the capacity of skilled activists in the localities to sustain their position through parochial bargaining over piecework and bonuses, despite the growth of semi-skilled work and mass trade unionism in engineering which led to the compression of time-rate differentials, and so misled other commentators on the trend of skilled wages[82].

However, the character of the social processes involved in such local craft defences remains rather unclear in Penn's account. The dominant thrust of his argument is that craft organisation and labour

market controls operate despite any process of deskilling, so that processes of social closure are sharply counterposed to the 'logic' of capitalist management, while the operation of that 'logic' is reduced to a crude technical determinism[83]. At a couple of points in his discussion of trade union strategies Penn recognises that the leverage gained by skilled workers is buttressed both by their performance of specific technical tasks and by management assessments of their reliability and responsibility, and notes that it is around such features that craftsmen have been able to organise and pressure employers, but such complexities are soon dissolved into an argument about autonomous labour market leverag and are rarely recognised in his more general argument.[84]

Some of the issues involved can be pinpointed by a comparison of the analyses offered by Penn and Lazonick, for at one point Penn castigates Lazonick for suggesting that employers might have anything to gain from the continuation of craft privileges: "it would seem reasonable to believe that the continuity of exclusive structures was imposed on capitalists rather than being welcomed with open arms"[85]. Once more, though, his tendency to pose sharp but misleading contrasts involves glossing over important issues, for, as I have already indicated, Lazonick's analysis seeks to trace out the ways in which the strengths and weaknesses of both employers and workers interplayed in the incremental modification of the bases of accumulation and the division of labour in British cotton. In this context Lazonick (i) recognises the manner in which inter-firm competition may discourage an all-out offensive on strong worker organisation so long as other avenues of accumulation remain open, but also notes that when these avenues appear closed off employers are likely to go on the offensive; (ii) links this to the significant advantages as well as costs to employers arising from the existence of a distinct supervisory and technically experienced stratum of workers; and (iii) sees the bargaining leverage of skilled workers as central but conditional, underpinned in the case of cotton by their capacity to make concessions on the intensification of labour, the costs of which were primarily borne by other workers[86].

In these terms Lazonick's analysis does more than Penn's characterisation suggests by exploring the complex relations of conflict and interdependence arising within and conditioning the development of a specific strategy of accumulation in the cotton industry. In a more preliminary fashion I have sought to indicate similar features in my own

case-studies in engineering, by suggesting that at both Doxfords and Rolls the pattern of production did not arise out of any overwhelming veto power exercised by workplace trade unionism, but out of a specific pattern of antagonism and mutual dependency. Certainly the limited capacity of craft unionism to limit management actions was underlined by the job losses which were sustained at Doxfords and by the insistent pressure for faster work at Rolls. Furthermore, the situation at Clarks owed very little to the power of collective organisation, given that management had succeeded in inflicting large-scale redundancies on the workforce. As such it underlines the manner in which small backwaters of craft production may remain useful to management for a period, even in the context of a broader process of centralisation and rationalisation.

Returning to Penn's own analysis, there are several features of his data on wages and occupational structure in Rochdale which suggest that a fuller account of capital-labour relations in the immediate production process is required as a basis for a proper interpretation of the wage differentials on which he places so much weight. In particular his documentation of the persistence of differentials gives little attention to the changing proportions of workers defined as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, though the proportion of skilled engineers appears to have fallen from over seventy to fifty-seven per cent during the early 1930s with a much more gradual decline to just over half by the mid '60s.[87] Similarly he glosses over several apparent fluctuations in the proportion of workers on piecework since 1918, with the turners, for example, showing substantial successive rises and falls according to his data sequence[88]. Both the changes in the proportion of skilled workers, and the fluctuations in piecework, suggest that significant changes were occuring in the pattern of class relations in the workplace; changes which represent important counterpoints to the relative stability of skill differentials and which need further discussion if we are to understand the continuities and changes in skill divisions within the working class in the twentieth century[89].

In large part the ambiguity, and at times crudity, of Penn's treatment of such issues arises from the lack of any empirical evidence of the social relations and processes involved in the locality he studied, to put alongside his wages data. This is a problem which is often alluded to by Penn himself:

"without detailed evidence, which is lacking for Rochdale, it is

> not possible to investigate the precise workshop tactics empirically"..."again, however, there is a lack of concrete evidence and the investigator is forced to infer the likely forces at work"..."what is lacking is precise data on the strategies conducted at the point of production"..."the evidence for these arguments is fragmentary...indeed the lack of overt conflict has led to a derth of empirical data"[90].

Clearly such problems are not readily overcome, and any criticisms of these aspects of Penn's research must be tempered by a recognition that the historical dynamics of class relations within the production process are often particularly difficult to reconstruct. However Penn fails to recognise the way in which these limitations severely weaken the central thrust of his analysis, for without any fuller investigation of class relations in the workplace his assertions about the centrality of social closure in the labour market become tautological. Certainly there is no basis for adjudicating the competing claims of explanations which privilege the organising activities of those with skilled status in the labour market and stress the independent momentum of market closure, and those which regard the interplay between workers' possession of specific competences and the requirements of management within production as critical bases of the division of labour within both the labour process and the labour market. Given the lack of any real exploration of management strategies and workers' responses within the labour process it is hardly surprising that Penn's putative explanation of his wages data focusses upon social exclusion in the 'distributive sphere', but his work cannot be regarded as a firm basis for such a neo-weberian argument.

Such substantial criticisms clearly undermine the <u>explanatory</u> value of Penn's arguments about the social processes involved in sustaining skill divisions, and raise further questions about the precise character of those divisions. As such they also suggest that his arguments about 'social closure' should not simply be appropriated by marxists to save the deskilling thesis by stressing the gulf between spurious status distinctions (which have been maintained) and underlying work simplification (which has continued), though this tends to be the response of Thompson in his recent overview of labour process debate[91]. However Penn's work does strongly underline the need for a more subtle analysis of the persistence of craft work and skill divisions in twentieth century capitalism than has generally been provided within the marxian tradition.

Whilst Penn elaborates a neo-weberian approach by focussing on the capacity of skilled workers to control the labour market and thus defend socially constructed divisions between skilled and non-skilled workers, Lee emphasises that it is the persistence of complex and specialist technical tasks in certain sectors which provides the basis for the survival of niches for skilled workers within the manual labour market[92]. Consequently, while Penn's argument about the efficacy of craft closure throughout the period since factory mechanisation leads him to suggest that only the collapse of such sectors would undermine their position, Lee places a much more sustained emphasis upon the role of sectoral shifts as against the direct transformation of production processes in explaining the survival or decline of skilled workers[93]. Lee develops his discussion by drawing the important distinction between what have been variously termed systemic, structural or sectoral effects on the one hand, and what he terms occupational effects on the other hand. He then provides a powerful case for the significance of the expansion and decline of sectors for the structure of employment opportunities for skilled workers, and this is not a point which I would wish to contest. Indeed, my own case study material supports the view that the rationalisation of both aerospace and shipbuilding sectors, and particularly the decline of the latter, clearly involved the loss of skilled jobs through contraction. Furthermore, such contraction, certainly in districts like Sunderland, contributed to a more general deterioration in the labour market position of skilled turners (and other craft groups).

However, Lee's argument goes beyond the exploration of sectoral and cyclical shifts in craft employment as they condition skilled labour markets, to challenge marxian accounts in two related respects. First he seeks to identify deskilling arguments, and particularly that advanced by Braverman, entirely with the internal transformation of labour processes and occupational tasks, and secondly he then seeks to counterpose such processes to those changes which occur through shifts between sectors. Thus he argues, on the basis of secondary data analysis, for "the significance for workers in apprenticed trades of systematic modes of deskilling as against the narrow range of occupational effects considered by Braverman", and suggests in regard to the declining percentage of skilled workers in engineering that "it is a tempting but false conclusion to take this as an indication of the decline of engineering skills as a result of the direct introduction of semi-skilled machining; in fact, most of the apparent trend may, in the author's view, be ascribed to relative industry shifts, the growth of new spheres and

modes of employment"[94]. Indeed he argues that "taking the period as a whole, my investigations have led me to the conclusion that cyclical deskilling had a far greater effect on the availability of craft employment than did any moves towards the internal redesign of the job structure of craft industries"[95]. This leads him to focus on the manner in which shifts in demand for skilled workers arise when "new enterprise bypasses ossified sectors of the economy", so that in this context redundancy may propel skilled workers into less skilled jobs or into unemployment, especially when associated with recession or regional relocation[96]. As a corollary he stresses the relative rather than absolute deskilling of the workforce since there remains some market for quality products alongside mass production. Thus, in regard to engineering, he notes that "most statistical sources and many discussions treat what is a large, amorphous and evolving agglomeration of firms as if it possessed an essential unity"; and he adds that "a surprising number of craft jobs have simply remained resistant to mechanisation because of such factors as the small size and 'marginal' nature of the employing organisation and the variability of production"[97]. Overall then, Lee argues that "market factors have slowed down the pace of innovation in this country by comparison with that of the USA and the technical, strategic and social position of craft labour has thus been less liable to change"[98].

As a preliminary point in commenting on these arguments, it should be noted that, though Braverman placed central emphasis upon deskilling of craft and clerical labour through the implementation of 'scientific management', his analysis in Labour and Monopoly Capital also embraces a concern with sectoral shifts (indeed, this was his initial point of departure). Thus he gives specific attention to the displacement of workers from capital intensive manufacturing into labour intensive production and services, and he also seeks to trace out the labour market ramifications of changes in the organisation of family domestic labour and mass commodity consumption[99]. Whatever criticisms may be directed at his analysis of these changes, recognition of this aspect of his discussion underlines the extent to which Braverman, working within the classical marxian tradition, sought to conceptualise the totality of economic relations including major sectoral shifts, and was not only concerned with changes in the immediate process of production[100]. In fact, in the context of his discussion of technical transformation of the labour process, Braverman emphasises that the degradation of wage

labour is accomplished not only through changes within specific labour processes but, crucially, through the "displacement of labour to other occupations and industries"[101].

As I have noted, job loss was a significant feature of the experience and outlook of the workers I studied, characterised as they were by a widespread though uneven sense of insecurity of employment related to the crises in specific sectors of engineering and the rationalising moves of multi-plant firms, and also by some awareness of the limitations of their individual and collective responses to such insecurity. There was an unevenness of experience in these respects, arising from the distinctive work careers of those moving between different firms, and sometimes between different sectors (though a limitation of my research is that those who moved out of the firms studied disappear from view, so this unevenness is likely to be understated). Thus the experiences of the small number of non-apprenticed machinists and ex-mine workers who had been able to gain access to skilled jobs in engineering during the 1960s, even in the depressed North East, represent a limited counterpoint within the general pattern, while the older Clarks workers have felt insecurity in a particularly acute form. However, both of these forms of experience are properly seen as variants within the broader occupational pattern of heightened insecurity in this period.

In regard to sectoral shifts, then, and also their wider labour market ramifications, Lee's intervention is useful in underlining their importance, but quite misleading in the suggestion that marxian analyses ignore such processes. Turning to his discussion of the persistence of skilled work within specific sectors I have already noted the contrast between Penn, who tends towards a social closure reductionism, and Lee, who repudiates arguments from social definition of status and argues quite strongly that "the apprenticeship system survives, in fact, not because of trade union pressure but because of the tacit support of employers over the years"[102]. My studies suggest some of the bases for such tacit support in specific forms of dependency on workers' skills, but they also underline two points which appear to be missing from Lee's labour-market based approach. Firstly the implications and character of such dependencies are the subject of continuing contention within the labour process, resting neither on simple technical necessities nor on pure collective organisation. Secondly, a central feature of such contention, which cross-cuts the issue of craft skills and deskilling,

concerns the intensity of production. This suggests that the survival of skilled work should not simply be regarded as an outcome of given market and technical exigencies, and neither should it generally be construed in terms of stable and uncontested craft labour processes. To this extent Penn and Thompson are right to emphasise the social organisation and transformation of skills, though they develop the point in a crude and overstated fashion by limiting their attention to the retention of skilled status despite deskilling[103]. However my case studies strongly suggest the inadequacy of any stark contrast between spurious skilled status and real skills, since the intensification of work and shifts in the balance between 'surplus skills' and routinised tasks may represent substantial transformations within the ambit of a craft labour process. Furthermore such changes in several major firms may significantly alter the character of the wider labour market, and thus the dominant patterns of individual work careers within a locality. In these ways my studies suggest that the interplay between transformations of the immediate production process and sectoral shifts in the survival and transformation of skilled labour is rather more complex than Lee allows. For though he does acknowledge the interaction of labour market and labour process he does so in a fashion which treats the latter largely as a matter of technical exigencies.

It is worth noting at this point that, though my case-studies are of a small number of individual workplaces, the crude aggregate indicators that are available hint at broader sectoral developments which involved more than a simple run-down of capacity, at least during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Thus figures for output, productivity and employment trends for the shipbuilding sector as a whole suggest that, while earlier and later periods showed a pattern of stable productivity, and output and employment decline, 1964-74 showed a pattern of slightly increased productivity and stable output together with employment decline[104]. Meanwhile in aerospace equipment productivity increased slowly throughout the 1960s and early '70s, while output remained more or less stable and employment declined[105]. It seems reasonable to suggest that increased work pressure made some contribution to the increased productivity in each case.

In summary, then, both Penn and Lee have highlighted the continuing role of craft workers in British manufacturing during the twentieth century; a point about which it would be difficult to disagree. However, such commentators have used this fact to contest both Braverman's

analysis of deskilling and wider marxian arguments about the labour process (they are often treated as identical), in ways which often do an injustice to Braverman and certainly misconstrue the general marxian tradition. These writers advance two rather different lines of criticism which represent alternative developments of market-based weberian class analysis. Penn emphasises the extent of employer accomodation to craft unionism as a result of the labour market controls exercised by craftsmen, and thus develops his analysis in terms of processes of social closure rather than technically given market capacities. Lee, on the other hand, focusses on the centrality of sectoral shifts and their labour market mediations while regarding such mediations as firmly grounded in given market capacities. I wish to suggest not only that these different emphases relate back to central ambiguities and tensions in weberian class analysis which I discussed earlier in this thesis, but also that their neo-weberian 'refutations' of marxian approaches develop these arguments into a crude and unsustainable counterposition of market and labour processes. By contrast my case studies certainly suggest a more complex interplay between transformations in the labour process and the labour market. This interplay needs to be explored and conceptualised more carefully whether within a marxian or a neo-weberian framework, but cannot be used, as these authors seek to do, to dismiss the marxian analysis of class relations in the immediate production process in favour of a focus on labour market dynamics. Indeed my case studies also suggest that any adequate account of the survival and transformation of skills must seek to analyse the manner in which such features are lodged within distinctive strategies of accumulation in the workplace and the associated contradictions and foci of shopfloor conflict.

This leads me to a final comment, on a rather different aspect of labour process debate, namely the argument of Burawoy about the manner in which parochial workplace conflicts themselves contribute to a broader manufacture of consent[106]. In relation to such an argument I would accept that neither the disdain for management competences exemplified by the outlooks of many of the men at Doxfords, nor the conflict consciousness of the Rolls workers, sharpened as it was by their piecework conflict, in themselves represented radical challenges to their respective managements (certainly no more than was the case for the factory consciousness of the bulk of the assembly-line workers at Ford Halewood, for example)[107]. Furthermore, the craftist viewpoint, though it embodied a substantial critique of management, was in

significant ways self-limiting, in that its engagement with corporate rationalisation strategies "served to nourish craftist scepticism without forcing a deepening of that scepticism into outright hostility"[108]. My case-studies also document further features of shop-floor experience similar to those highlighted in Burawoy's study, such as the significance of lateral conflicts among workers and the individualisation of criticisms of specific managers. The existence of real, though varied, internal divisions and lateral tensions, even <u>within</u> the craft milieu, is underlined by such features as the quite widespread accusations of favouritism and the sometimes quite developed sense of differences of craft competence; while the tendency to focus on differences between 'good' and 'bad' managers is very common in these factories, and appears to feed off internal management micropolitical rivalries and the visible splits and differences of conduct they involve, rather more than off the formalised and individualising grievance procedures emphasised by Burawoy and other commentators (though there was also some evidence of such effects)[109].

Nevertheless, despite such features, the contradictory consciousness of these workers is closely related to specific but persistent forms of contestation of the logic of capitalist managements, which cannot simply be conceptualised, as Burawoy seems to propose, as 'games' which conceal and enhance the dominance of capital. Though workers in these factories were, in Burawoy's terms, engaged in fairly elaborate 'games' around pay, effort and the deployment of skills, and such 'games', interwoven with aspects of workplace sociability, engaged the 'players' in a complex web of interactions which were not simply reducible to a confrontation between workers and management, these activities sustained both a well-developed scepticism about the role of management in organising production, and capacities to limit and challenge the play of management initiatives. Thus an interpretation in terms of the manufacture of consent would involve an unwarranted functionalism which fails to do justice to the particular forms of struggle and contestation which, albeit only in minor and even sometimes marginal ways, limit the freedom of manoeuvre and sharpen the contradictory character of management strategies[110].

In this context it should be said that, despite such criticisms, Burawoy is right to point out that the intensification of production, and its associated conflicts, do not develop in a unilinear fashion.

There are ebbs as well as flows in this process, as the experiences of the Doxford workers as well as those at Clarks would certainly testify. At the same time, however, much of his own analysis depends rather uncritically upon a 'monopoly capital' argument which implies almost unrestricted room for management manoeuvre in relaxing work pressure, creating job ladders, and otherwise institutionalising conflict, whereas my case studies suggest that the interplay and counterpoint between intensification and other major strategies for enhanced accumulation need to be much more closely specified. Certainly the Doxford management had discovered that the established forms of manipulation of the craft ethos by craft foremen had, by the 1960s, both nourished considerable shop-floor resentments and limited management control and organisation of the production process. In the face of tightening competition in the areas of pricing and product design they were then pushed into the contradictory tasks of on the one hand seeking to intensify work pressures, and on the other attempting to refurbish the power of craft supervision. Meanwhile Rolls provides an example of a massive multi-site enterprise mounting something of a classic intensification offensive against some of its workers, as a part of a broader strategy of corporate rationalisation to meet major international competition.

Having recognised the contradictory elements of workplace consciousness and the characteristic features of limited contestation of managerial prerogatives which I have outlined above, one of the issues which then becomes central, especially in the context of Labour's 'corporatist' state sponsorship of the rationalisation of the sectors I studied during this period, concerns the relationship between these features and any broader patterns of class consciousness and politics. As the critics of Braverman have emphasised, his focus on the capitalist transformation of the labour process gives very limited attention to processes of contestation and the contours of class consciousness; though here, as elsewhere, his discussion is more sophisticated than many of the critics are prepared to recognise[111]. On the other hand Burawoy's sophisticated discussion of workplace consciousness veers towards a labour-process reductionism, though his more recent work begins to give more systematic attention to the complex relationship between the 'politics' of the immediate production process and class organisation in the state and civil society[112]. In the remainder of this thesis I cannot fully confront the wider analytical issues posed by these arguments, but can only register some features of the interplay between workplace experience and consciousness and the wider politics of Labourism, in a way which parallels some of

analysis reviewed in chapter four. Accordingly the next (and final) chapter considers some limited evidence drawn from my interviews with Sunderland engineers, concerned particularly with their experience of, and attitudes towards, trade unionism; and as such it represents a modest postscript to the analyses of rationalisation in this and earlier chapters.

chapter 8: footnotes

1 Manager's interview, summer 1969

2 See chapter 5 table one for further details

3 Of course personal allowances varied with marital status and numbers of dependants, though there are only limited variations between the different groupings in these respects. The pattern of gross pay for those workers at Clarks and Rolls for whom I have full information is shown below:

	Clarks (n=17)	Rolls-Royce (n=22)
£35 plus	6%	9%
£30-£34/19	29%	14%
£25-£29/19	52%	55%
£20-£24/19	12%	23%

4 Two half-shifts plus Sundays was the normal maximum of overtime allowed in the district at the time. While there were a few individuals in the other factories who worked permanent night shifts Rolls worked a regular fortnightly shift rotation.

5 A summary indication of the job history patterns of workers at Clarks and Rolls-Royce is provided in the following tables, which cross-tabulate years of service with their present firm against numbers of job changes made by each worker:

Clarks Workers

Job Changes \ Years of Service		Up to 5 (3)	5-9 (1)	10-14 (4)	15-19 (3)	20+ (8)
none	(3)	-	-	1	-	2
1 or 2	(2)	-	-	-	1	1
3 to 5	(10)	2	1	3	-	4
6 to 10	(3)	1	-	-	1	1
11 or more	(1)	-	-	-	1	-

Rolls Workers

Job Changes \ Years of Service		Up to 5 (13)	5-9 (10)	10-14 (3)	15-19 (1)	20+ (-)
none	(6)	-	5	1	-	-
1 or 2	(4)	2	2	-	-	-
3 to 5	(11)	6	3	1	1	-
6 to 10	(4)	4	-	-	-	-
11 or more	(2)	1	-	1	-	-

6 See footnote 11 below for a discussion of the relaxation agreement under which this recruitment policy operated.

7 R.M. Blackburn and Michael Mann The Working Class in the Labour Market London 1979, esp. chapters 5 and 9, and the discussion of this book in volume 1, chapter 4 above.

8 For further discussion of the way rumours of closure circulated on the site see pp 212-213 below.

9 In part this reflects the differential accessability of materials on which I have been able to draw to provide such an outline. At Rolls my main sources of material were interviews with stewards and a file of notes and agreements made available by the union representatives in the factory (indicated as the source of material in later footnotes by t.u.f.). At Clarks there were few extant records kept on the Sunderland site, and I relied for my information on interviews, supplemented by the odd document or record card kept by workers.

10 C.H.G. Hopkins Pallion, 1874 to 1954 Sunderland 1954, p 130; and for an indication of a similar managerial assessment towards the end of the post-war boom see the quotation from the Sunderland Echo of 13.8.65, quoted in chapter 6, p 62, above.

11 Dilution agreement in accord with the national agreement, t.u.f. 10.6.5 . The reference to the national agreement in A. Marsh, Industrial Relations in Engineering. Oxford 1965, pp 106-108, aptly summarises the situation at Rolls, especially the remark that:

> "registrations are now much less numerous than they were in war-time, but they are still significantly large.../and/ show no signs of falling off. Registrations are not evenly spread over the country. Their incidence is highest where craft traditions are most strong. In less craft conscious districts, up-grading to skilled rates has commonly taken place without recourse to Relaxation Procedures".

12 t.u.f. notes on bargaining for 1958, describe the stewards' objectives and results, and summarise the management strategy as a "wish to impose the conditions of no. 1 factory on nos. 2 and 3".

13 This is the characterisation provided by the Convenor who took over after this, and who remained Convenor in 1969 (interview 2.9.69).

14 Convenor's interview (2.9.69), together with documentation in t.u.f. for example 21.9.61 and autumn 1964.

15 t.u.f. 6.4.64.

16 Convenor's interview and t.u.f. documentation.

17 t.u.f. letter of support for incomes policy sent to Gordon Bagier M.P. 1.3.67.

18 Convenor's interview and t.u.f. 9.6.66.

19 t.u.f. documentation 9.7.69.

20 t.u.f. documentation. Quote from document 18.11.66, and see also 1.3.65, 8.12.66, and the n.c. manning agreement dated May 1969.

21 t.u.f. January and February 1968 for the redundancies; May 1969 for the job transfers. I interviewed one of those made redundant, in his new job at Doxford.

22 See remarks in footnote 9. Details of job-times negotiated over the 1960's, documented in surviving job cards, lent credence to the chronology of the relaxation of timing and the increase in percentages which I outline below.

23 See the quotation on p. 164 beginning "I'd like to be back at Clarks really...".

24 It is worth noting that several workers at Rolls interpreted this question to refer to suggestions schemes rather than initiative on the job, but that they were invariably scathing about the pointlessness of such schemes.

25 As has been seen, n.c. machines were in the course of being introduced, and it was agreed that most of the new machines, though not the ones already in the shop, would be manned only by time-served men.

26 This characterisation is in line with the assessments in several of the quotes given in the preceeding few pages, as well as the overall pattern.

27 As documented in various terms in a whole series of studies from the Hawthorne investigations onwards, and especially in Donald Roy "Efficiency and the 'Fix': Informal Intergroup Relations in a Piecework Machine Shop" A.J.S. 1954; "Quota Restriction and Goldbricking in a Machine Shop" A.J.S. 1952; and "Work Satisfaction and Social Reward in Quota Achievement" A.S.R. 1953.

28 This question clearly attracted responses concerned with the adequacy of the payment system in terms of the 'effort bargain', rather than a more general expression of choice between payment systems. At another point I asked about piecework versus time-wages versus salary, and the pattern of responses was as follows:

	Rolls-Royce(n=27)	Clarks(n=19)	Doxfords(n=42)
Salary	11%	11%	14%
Hourly	52%	68%	52%
Piecework	37%	16%	29%
Don't know	0%	5%	5%

This indicates only minority support for piecework in all of the workshops, but also more enthusiasm for it at Rolls in the midst of the dispute about job times than in the other factories where some form of hourly rate was in operation. However, interpretation of these assessments is not unproblematical, for, while the incentive often figured in postive views of piecework, this was not to the exclusion of the issue of the level of wages obtainable; assessments of hourly pay sometimes involved a recognition of the penalties involved in terms of supervision and limited opportunities for wage gains; and there was a widespread assumption that salaries meant low take-home pay for manual workers.

29 See also the material outlined on page 183.

30 As has been seen, the 'cash nexus' was a central preoccupation of many of protagonists in the Affluent Worker debate, but it has been especially emphasised by John Westergaard. The discussion of 'marginal wage disparity' is in W. Baldamus Efficiency and Effort London 1961, chapter 10.

31 Karl Marx Capital vol 1 London 1954, p 520; Michael Burawoy Manufacturing Consent Chicago 1979, esp. chapters 5 and 10.

32 These last two comments are drawn from responses to the earlier question about ideas about a 'fair day's work' and the role of the foreman.

33 It should be noted that nearly 30 per cent of my Rolls interviewees did not answer this question, but most of the men involved were Rolls apprentices who declined to answer because they had no direct experience of other companies to serve as a basis for comparison.

34 It is, perhaps, significant that it was craftsmen with experience beyond

Rolls, rather than dilutees or Rolls-apprenticed workers, who made reference to 'non-producers'.

35 Fieldnotes pp 107-108.

36 Fieldnotes pp 100-102.

37 Phillip Higgs "The Convenor" in R. Fraser (ed) Work 2 Harmondsworth 1969, pp 115-6.

38 Ibid; and see also Committee of Inquiry into Certain Contracts made with Bristol Siddeley Engines Ltd Report (Wilson Report) HCP 1967-68 No. 129, London 1968.

39 See the discussion above, chapter 7, pp 141-147.

40 I have in mind here the analyses developed by shop-floor activists and articulated and extended by sympathetic academics, to be found in such work as Huw Beynon and Hilary Wainwright The Workers' Report on Vickers London 1979, Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott The Lucas Plan: A New Trade Unionism in the Making? London 1982 and some of the Counter Information Services reports on specific companies.

41 Paul Willis Learning to Labour Farnborough 1977, esp. pp 119-159, though his analysis is highly sophisticated in ways which I cannot follow up with my material, not least because he emphasises that 'penetrations' take the form of "lived demonstration, direct involvement and practical mastery" often against spoken forms (see esp. pp 124-126).

42 These accounts indicate many parallels with the history of the Doxfords piecework system, discussed in chapter 7.

43 Cross-tabulation of these features yielded no clear patterning of responses according to these divisions.

44 See p 161 above.

45 Fieldnotes p 99.

46 Ibid p 90.

47 Ibid pp 93-94.

48 Ibid p 83.

49 Ibid p 86.

50 In their moral criticism of some of their fellow workers, against a yard-stick of the hardships and pride of an established and 'responsible' section of the working class, the outlook of such men has some parallels with the 'ideology' of some 'northern foremen' discussed by Theo Nichols in "Labourism and Class Consciousness: the 'class ideology' of some Northern Foremen" Sociological Review 1974. See chapter 9 for some further facets of this outlook.

51 See particularly the statements quoted on pp 198-199.

52 Harry Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital New York 1974. In this section I will draw on some of the points in my broader assessment of Braverman in Tony Elger "Valorisation and Deskilling: a critique of Braverman" Capital and Class 7, 1979 pp 58-99, but I will not seek to provide a general assessment of his work. For contrasting assessments see Craig Littler and Graeme Salaman "Braverman and Beyond: Recent Theories of the Labour Process" Sociology 1982 pp 251-269; Paul Thompson The Nature of Work London 1983, chapters 3 and 4; and Peter Armstrong "Labour and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Debate" Unpublished paper, Industrial Relations Research Unit, University of Warwick, 1986.

53 The discussion provided by Doreen Massey and Richard Meegan in The Anatomy of Job Loss London 1982 draws out the argument about mechanisms and processes in a particularly clear way.

54 Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital p 203 footnote.

55 Roger Penn "Skilled Manual Workers in the Labour Process" in Wood (ed) Degradation of Work?, "Trade Union Organisation and Skill in the Cotton and Engineering Industries in Britain, 1850-1960" Social History 1983 pp 37-55, and Skilled Workers in the Class Structure Cambridge 1984; David Lee "Skill, Craft and Class: A Theoretical Critique and Critical Case" Sociology 1981 pp 56-78, and "Beyond Deskilling" in Wood (ed) Degradation of Work?

56 Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital, see esp. p 427 footnote.

57 It is worth noting here that Beynon, in Working For Ford, several times draws on apposite contrast between the leverage afforded to skilled workers by such features of their labour process and the situation of assembly line workers. See in particular pp 157 and 189-90. This is also a feature which is evident in recent studies of the impact of numerically controlled machine tools, such as David Noble "Social Choice in Machine Design" Politics and Society 1978 pp 313-347, Bryn Jones "Destruction or Redistribution of Engineering Skills?" in Wood (ed) Degradation of Work?, and Barry Wilkinson The Shopfloor Politics of New Technology London 1983 chapters 7 and 8 - though Noble overstates the clawback involved, while Jones tends to treat the outcomes as purely contingent.

58 Charles Sabel Work and Politics: the Division of Labor in Industry Cambridge 1982 esp. pp 89-90.

59 See the discussion in chapter 7 above, and the references in chapter 7 footnote 87, together with Thompson Nature of Work chapter 4, especially his observation that "for craft and technical workers, their extensive theoretical knowledge can counteract degradation, even if there is a disjuncture with its actual usage in the work situation" (p 120).

60 R.M. Blackburn and Michael Mann The Working Class in the Labour Market London 1979. As I suggest in chapter 4 this pattern would lend support to Richard Hyman's overall emphasis on recurrant but varied episodes of insecurity and struggle as the common denominators of waged work, developed in his commentary on competing analyses of occupational change in "Occupational Structure, Collective Organisation and Industrial Militancy" in Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno (eds) The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe vol. 2, London 1978

61 Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital p 172, also quoted in Elger "Valorisation and Deskilling".

62 As Thompson notes, "like other critics, Elger and Coombs do little more than indicate the need for an analysis of the labour process that would locate transformations in relation to phases of valorisation and accumulation and their contradictions" Nature of Work p 104.

63 Thompson notes the limitations of the resultant eclecticism and agnosticism, illustrated, for example, by several essays in the Wood collection, Degradation of Work?, in Nature of Work p 118. The rationale for such eclecticism and agnosticism is developed in Littler and Salaman "Bravermania and Beyond".

64 Peter Cressey and John MacInnes "Voting For Ford: Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour" Capital and Class 1980 no. 11, pp 5-33, discussed in Littler and Salaman "Bravermania and Beyond" esp. pp 253-4.

65 Cressey and MacInnes "Voting For Ford" p 14.

66 Littler and Salaman "Bravermania and Beyond" p 257. I have discussed the analysis of 'monopoly capital' in slightly more detail in chapter 6 above.

67 See in particular Andrew Gamble and Paul Walton Capitalism in Crisis London 1976 and the discussion in chapter 6.

68 Of course the marine engine works were dependent on orders from British yards, and those yards were competing to gain orders from customers for new types of ship-design, but this theme is over-emphasised in Dennis Thomas "Shipbuilding - demand linkage and industrial decline" in Karel Williams et al Why Are the British So Bad at Manufacturing? London 1983. It should be evident from my case studies that such considerations intermeshed with the social reorganisation of production relations, rather than substituting for such reorganisation. For more balanced accounts of the intermeshing of market competition and the reorganisation of production in particular firms and sectors, see especially William Lazonick "Industrial Relations and Technical Change: the Case of the Self-acting Mule" Cambridge Journal of Economics 1979 pp 231-262 and A.F. Rannie "Combined and Uneven Development in the Clothing Industry; the Effects of Competition on Accumulation" Capital and Class 1984 no 22 pp 141-156.

69 In this regard there are interesting parallels with the analysis developed by Lazonick "Self-acting Mule", and these are considered further below.

70 I think this is a fair characterisation of Huw Beynon Working For Ford London 1973; Theo Nichols and Huw Beynon Living With Capitalism London 1977; Michael Burawoy Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism Chicago 1979; and some case studies in Andrew Zimbalist (ed) Case Studies on the Labor Process New York 1979.

71 In particular Massey and Meegan Anatomy of Job Loss and Lazonick "Self-acting Mule".

72 Massey and Meegan Anatomy of Job Loss p 183. They recognise that their focus on enterprises and sectors does not exhaust the task of analysis of patterns of accumulation, especially in regard to the role of the state in sustaining the conditions for effective accumulation.

73 Ibid p 21, where they note that "there will also be variations in behaviour between different firms in a given sector".

74 Ibid p 186. See also Paul Edwards and Hugh Scullion The Social Organisation of Industrial Conflict Oxford 1982, especially chapter 10, and the debate surrounding Tony Lane's article "The Unions: Caught on the Ebb Tide" Marxism Today vol. 26 no. 9, 1982, for further consideration of the relationship between workplace organisation and plant re-location and closure.

75 Lazonick "Self-acting Mule".

76 Penn Skilled Workers and the articles cited in footnote 55 above; Lee "Skill, Craft and Class" and "Beyond Deskilling"; and the discussion of these authors in Thompson Nature of Work pp 98-106.

77 Penn Skilled Workers pp 8-9 and chapter 3

78 Ibid pp 40-45. See the discussion in Ben Fine and Lawrence Harris Rereading Capital London 1979, chapter 4, for some indication of the recent marxian debate; and the references mentioned in chapter 6 footnote 7.

79 Penn Skilled Workers pp 43-44 for the declaration in favour of a distributive focus; and compare his discussion with that of Robert Gray The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-century Britain London 1981 on the labour aristocracy. It is also worth noting that Penn is sometimes rather cavalier in his characterisation of non-marxian analyses, for example in such statements about the Affluent Worker study as (i) that they entirely ignored skilled workers (going beyond MacKenzie's argument that they looked at the wrong sort of skilled workers), and (ii) that they endorsed the argument that the Labour Party had played a de-radicalising role within the working class (see Penn Skilled Workers p 36 and p 7 respectively).

80 Penn Skilled Workers chapters 11 and 12, summarised on p 182.

81 Ibid chapter 7.

82 Ibid pp 129-136.

83 Ibid p 123.

84 Ibid pp 86-7, and pp 132-133, though in the latter discussion he seems to lapse into a technological determinism of the sort he elsewhere castigates.

85 Ibid p 121.

86 Lazonick "Self-acting Mule": the discussion of Scottish experience is on pp 243-244, and the accomodation of the minders to some aspects of management pressure is documented on pp 249, 253 and esp. 256. These features receive inadequate attention in the overview of contributions to the "labour process" symposium provided by Bernard Elbaum et al "The Labour Process, Market Structure and Marxist Theory" Cambridge Journal of Economics vol 3, 1979, pp 227-230.

87 Penn "Trade Union Organisation" p 51.

88 Penn Skilled Workers p 108 table 7.6, which shows a rise of 22% between 1925 and 1930, a fall of 8% from 1930 to 1935, another rise of 18% over the longer time span from 1935 to 1955, and then a further drop of 9% from 1955 to 1964.

89 Similarly Penn ibid p 3 treats the 'skilled revolt' at BL as illustrative of his paradigm, without discussing how far and in what ways the labour process for such workers has changed in recent years.

90 Ibid p 78, p 86, p 107 and p 134 respectively.

91 Thompson Nature of Work pp 98 and 106.

92 Lee "Beyond Deskilling".

93 This is the central theme in Lee Ibid, but receives brief note in Penn Skilled Workers p 116.

94 Lee "Beyond Deskilling" pp 152-3 and 153-4.

95 Ibid p 157.

96 Ibid p 153.

97 Ibid p 160.

98 Ibid p 161.

99 Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital especially chapters 8 and 17.

100 Constructive criticisms of Braverman's analysis are provided by Veronica Beechey "The Sexual Division of Labour and the Labour Process: a Critical Assessment of Braverman" in Stephen Wood (ed) Degradation of Work? and by Jill Rubery "Structured Labour Markets, Worker Organisation and Low Pay" Cambridge Journal of Economics 1978 pp 17-36.

101 Braverman Labour and Monopoly Capital p 172.

102 Lee "Beyond Deskilling" p 159.

103 Thompson and Penn both qualify this emphasis, but it remains their dominant theme.

104 This pattern is indicated by the figures in J.D. Whitley, R.A. Wilson and D.J.E. Smith "Industrial and Occupational Change", chapter 4 of Robert M. Lindley (ed) Economic Change and Employment Policy London 1980, especially tables 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12.

105 Ibid.

106 Michael Burawoy Manufacturing Consent Chicago 1979.

107 See the discussion in chapter 4 above, especially of Beynon Working For Ford.

108 See chapter 7 p 158.

109 Burawoy's analysis of 'games' is very much embedded within the broader argument about internal labour markets and institutionalised bargaining characteristic of dual labour market analysis. For a British study which explores the individualising effects of institutionalised grading and grievance procedures see Nichols and Beynon Living With Capitalism, discussed in chapter 4 above.

110 In these respects my study is consistent with the criticisms of Burawoy mounted by David Gartman "Structuralist Marxism and the Labor Process: Where have the Dialectics Gone?" Theory and Society 1983 pp 659-669; by Dan Clawson and Richard Fantasia "Beyond Burawoy: the Dialectics of Conflict and Consent on the Shop Floor" Theory and Society 1983 pp 671-680; and by Thompson in Nature of Work chapter 6.

111 Littler and Salaman "Bravermania and Beyond" reiterate this argument. While Braverman undoubtedly registers the subordination and passivity of labour he also notes that "'labour' continuously attempts to subvert capitalist work arrangements" (Labor and Monopoly Capital p 256). Rather than seeing this as evidence of Braverman's adherence to a 'philosophical anthropology' of labour resistance, as Littler and Salaman, following Cutler, suggest, I would argue that it reflects his concern to capture the manner in which workers within contemporary capitalist societies generally resist, bargain and survive on a terrain largely defined for them by capital. It is also worth noting that, alongside his famous disclaimer about consciousness and organisation, Braverman offers several very interesting comments concerning the contours and dynamics of class consciousness (Labor and Monopoly Capital pp 30-36, p 151 and p 378), which clearly indicate his considerable divergence from neo-marcusian views of one-dimensional consciousness as well as his scepticism about sociological treatments of consciousness based on attitude and opinion surveys. My appreciation of the strengths of Braverman's analysis, in these and other respects, has benefited from discussions with Sheila Cochrane.

112 See the critiques of Burawoy referenced in footnote 110 above, especially Thompson Nature of Work pp 170-179. Burawoy's own shift pf emphasis is evident in Michael Burawoy The Politics of Production London 1985, esp. pp 137-148 and pp 253-268. In some respects John Urry provides a valuable counterpoint to discussions of class relations and mobilisation which focus too narrowly on the immediate process of production, but his own analysis, in The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies, risks abstracting from the immediate production process by treating classes as being constituted only within the sphere of civil society.

Chapter 9

Perspectives on Trade Unionism among Sunderland Engineers

In the last three chapters I have explored in some detail the uneven impact of rationalisation on the experience of several groupings of Sunderland engineering workers, turners in the marine engineering and aero-engineering establishments in the town. For both analytical and methodological reasons I have focussed particularly upon the patterns of social relations characteristic of the immediate production process and the details of workplace effort bargaining. In analytical terms I have wanted to explore as fully as possible the day-to-day character of work experience, and thus the direct, and yet subtle, consequences of attempts at rationalisation. In terms of research strategy this meant placing most emphasis in my interviews on these features of work, so that my other questions about trade unionism, 'social imagery' and patterns of sociability, though they paralleled some of those in the Luton study, provided rather more limited evidence on these topics.[1] Nevertheless, despite such limitations, my material on the experience and assessment of trade unionism among these workers, and to a lesser extent on other aspects of their 'social imagery', usefully complements the material I have already presented. In particular it serves to locate, develop and qualify such conclusions about class struggle and class consciousness as might be derived from the empirical material reported in the previous two chapters. It will also allow some further direct comparisons with the arguments and findings of the Luton research and related studies.

In the major part of this chapter I will consider the character of union membership and participation among these engineering workers, together with some of the attitudes which they expressed about trade unionism. All the workers I interviewed in each of the three factories were members of a trade union, and indeed each factory operated a closed shop for manual workers. Almost all of my informants were members of what is now (1.1.86) the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (Engineering Section), though at the time of my interviews - and more or less only for that brief period, between 1967 and 1970, which coincided with a pause between two amalgamations - it was called the Amalgamated Engineering and Foundry Workers Union.[2] The exceptions were two dilutees at Doxfords and one at Clarks who had retained their TGWU membership, while the workers at Rolls, rather more mixed in terms of apprenticeship and training, were all in the AEF. So far as trade union office was concerned there was one current steward in the Doxford sample, together with one former office holder (former chairman of a Lodge of the

Durham Mechanics); at Rolls there was an active steward together with the incumbent Convenor; but at Clarks, where there was no current steward representation, no less than six of the nineteen men I interviewed had at some time been a shop steward (one had also been a Convenor)[3]. Thus experience of office was present but not widespread among the workgroups at Doxfords and Rolls, but the processes which had led to a small group of older, experienced but insecure workers being left at the remnant of the Clarks Engine Works had evidently also concentrated some experience of stewardship; though, as was apparent from the last chapter, the implications of such concentration were not straightforward in the context of informal representation, individual complaints and deputations, rather than active collectivity.

Turning now to the significance of such union membership, I have information from my interviews on when and why people joined; on their reported participation in branch and workplace unionism; on attitudes expressed in response to a few standard questions about aspects of trade unionism (such as union power and the political levy), and finally on their experience and assessment of strike action at their workplace. Together this material allows a useful but necessarily partial characterisation of the meaning of trade union experience and trade unionism for these workers. As with the earlier chapters I will begin by reviewing the situation at Doxfords, then make comparisons with the views of workers at Clarks and at Rolls. Tables 31 and 32 report the distribution of answers to these queries about trade unionism among workers in each of the workplaces.

The Experience and Meaning of Trade Unionism at Doxford

Almost all of the men at Doxfords joined the union during or immediately after their apprenticeship, the exceptions being the dilutees.[4] As table 31 indicates, many men mentioned that after apprenticeship there was no alternative, or put more positively union membership provided a ticket for a job. In this context the decision to join before the end of the apprenticeship was partly a question of gaining benefits:

> "I joined at eighteen so that I could come into benefit as soon as I was twenty-one".

Sometimes it arose out of the experience of vulnerability:

> "an apprentice was paid off and he had no protection so we joined".

It could also reflect family influence:

> "it wasn't really my decision. An uncle was chairman of the branch, he persuaded me. I would have had to join at twenty-one mind, to get a job".

Table 31: Union Membership and Participation

	Doxfords	Clarks	Rolls
Joined union	n=42	n=19	n=27
during/just after apprenticeship	90%	63%	67%
later	10%	37%	33%
Reasons for joining (responses)	n=49	n=23	n=30
compelled to/no alternative	18%	22%	17%
ticket to a job	16%	22%	17%
to gain benefits	8%	9%	7%
persuasion and advice/union kin	29%	39%	20%
need union strength/protect jobs, wages, conditions	22%	4%	40%
no answer	6%	4%	-
Attendance at branch meetings	n=42	n=19	n=27
regularly	7%	11%	7%
occasionally	17%	32%	19%
rarely	33%	32%	30%
never	43%	26%	44%
Votes at branch meetings	n=42	n=19	n=27
regularly	17%	16%	7%
occasionally	38%	37%	19%
rarely	26%	21%	22%
never	19%	26%	52%
Votes for steward	n=41	n=18	n=27
regularly	51%	67%	81%
occasionally	17%	11%	7%
rarely	10%	-	-
never	2%	-	4%
no opportunity	20%	22%	7%
Talks to workmates of t.u. affairs	n=42	n=18	n=26
very often	2%	6%	15%
a good deal	17%	6%	35%
now and then	62%	44%	30%
hardly ever	19%	44%	19%
Talks to steward of union affairs	n=42	n=18	n=26
very often	5%	-	4%
a good deal	17%	5%	19%
now and then	47%	-	46%
hardly ever	31%	5%	27%
not applicable	-	90%	4%

However, as this comment makes clear, the underlying reality was that membership had become virtually a prerequisite for work in the trade once you were out of your time:

"just if I didn't I wouldn't get a job: Sunderland is a closed shop".

This reality was reported simply as a compulsive 'fait accompli' by some people. Typical of such comments were "to make sure I could get a job", and "so that I could get a job when I came back from sea - it's a passport to a job". Those who emphasised advice and conformity - "I fell in line, listened to the advice of the older men" - perhaps reflected a similar pattern. More often, though, the rationale of union organisation for job protection gained explicit endorsement:

> "you've got to join to get a job; mind, I believed in it too";
>
> "for tradesmen it's automatic to protect a job, they look after work conditions and so on";
>
> "a policy for any person to be in the union to give some sort of protection, it's essential to be a member for security. Also, if you were in a non-union shop but moved away, you may go to a closed shop".

This last comment not only captures a typical mix of commitment to collective organisation and recognition of its compulsive implications. It also notes the limits of union organisation even in the late 1960s. The same point was also made by others:

> "you had to join to get into a union shop. The small places were less than a hundred per cent organised, but they had very low wages".

Finally it should be noted that several of the older workers reflected that an effective closed shop was a comparatively recent development - "1942, Doxford's wasn't a closed shop then" - and not always one with straightforward consequences:

> "in those days I wouldn't say you had to join, but the oldsters put you forward. It was more important in those days, they were for the workers. Now they've got fingers in too many places".

On this evidence the situation at Doxfords was not dissimilar from that of the engineering craftsmen and machinists studied by Goldthorpe and his colleagues:

> "workers in these two groups had been mostly employed in firms or shops with strong union traditions and were thus likely either to have internalised these traditions - and have become 'committed' trade unionists - or to have experienced them as a constraining force"[5].

My only qualification of such a picture would be that at Doxfords workers responses suggested a complex spectrum and mixture of commitment and constraint rather than any simple contrast between these two modes of experience.

In discussions of orientations towards trade unionism the character of participation in branch and workplace unionism, rather than membership as such, has often been regarded as fundamental. In this context it has been argued that a sharp contrast between low participation in the branch and active involvement at the workplace is characteristic of the 'new working class', though in this regard the Cambridge team were rather guarded in their conclusions:

> "the argument that participation in unionism at the level of the workplace is of generally greater significance than more formal participation via the branch is one that has been increasingly emphasised...We would not, therefore, regard our affluent workers as being very exceptional in showing greater concern with union affairs in the context of their shop and factory than in the context of union bureaucracy.../though/ with the semi-skilled men in our sample, the disjunction between the unionism of the branch and the unionism of the workplace is carried to an extreme point".[6]

There was certainly evidence of greater involvement in workplace than in branch unionism among my Doxford informants too, and indeed the statistical data would suggest a lower level of branch involvement than among the Luton craftsmen (only twenty-four percent regular or occasional attenders, as against forty-seven percent in Luton)[7]. However, more needs to be said about the qualitative character of participation before interpreting these figures.

So far as participation in the branch was concerned the crucial qualitative point is that attendance to pay union dues, but to do little else, forms a common denominator among responses across a wide spread of reported participation:

> "regular, once a fortnight, to pay dues mainly";
>
> "rarely, generally to pay dues, about once a month - a lot of the meetings are cut out now";
>
> "I never go to meetings, I just pay subs fortnightly at the branch".

For the bulk of those who reported that they attended occasionally, rarely or <u>never</u> (since they did not see themselves as attending the <u>meeting</u>) it was this which was their main rationale for calling in. Only a small minority of my informants sent their dues by post or via a workmate or collector, but for the rest paying their dues was their main contact with their union branch. This did not always mean total non-involvement:

> "I rarely stay. I pay every fortnight, take in about a dozen cards from lads on the outskirts of town. I stay a while if there's an interesting talk, but five times out of six I leave before";

"occasionally, if there's anything I regard as important I stay and listen".

More often people reported being drawn into participation in a ballot when there was one on, a feature which helps to explain the higher level of reported involvement in branch ballots than in attendance at meetings:

"I go in every month to six weeks to pay dues. Sometimes there is a vote on, as you go in they hand you a ballot. You have to use your discretion, say go on age, or length of service in the union".[8]

As this implies,voting in such circumstances is not straightforward, and these men tended to draw on the knowledge of other members ("if you don't know 'who is who' you go on advice") or else restricted themselves to those they knew ("I rarely vote, I don't know him from Adam unless he's a local bloke"). There was, then, a pattern of irregular involvement in branch affairs among some of those who generally went along just to pay their dues, but there were only a few men who reported that they regularly took part in the meetings themselves:

"regular, as I'm a teller, and branch rep. on the District Committee";

"regularly, every fortnight. I generally listen to about half an hour's business, see what's going on. I vote on whatever comes up".

Unlike Goldthorpe and his colleagues I did not ask for a specific evaluation of the branch, but the pattern which I have outlined is consistent with giving a fairly low priority to branch business. As one man who did venture some judgement reflected:

"I go to pay the money once a month, like. I'm like the rest, apathetic, we should take more interest".

Nevèrtheless, on the more minimal level of dues payment the engineers at Doxfords remained more in touch with their branch than was reportedly the case elsewhere in the engineering industry, for McCarthy reports that according to a survey of Engineering Union branch secretaries "on average a mere twenty per cent of dues were paid in by members personally attending the branch", while branch attendance itself averaged nine per cent.[9]

In comparison with the branch the workers at Doxfords reported much more involvement in voting at shop steward elections. Furthermore, in this case the qualitative evidence suggests a higher level of involvement than that indicated by the voting figures, because most of those who did not vote gave 'non-contest' as their reason. Thus characteristic reasons for participation were:

"regularly, more likely [than at branch] you've got to have your means of discussion, but you're not interested in other factories, more concerned with your own";

"regularly, oh yes, you know what sort of chap you're going to get".

At the same time those who reported participating, as well as those who did not, registered the fact that the common pattern was 'no contest', even though, as one man noted, "every year the steward must be re-elected". Thus typical comments were:

"regular, but the last few years it's been unopposed";

"I would if I could, but here he was the only one who would have the job";

"never been a vote yet, but meetings in the factory do concern the men, if only for the information you get";

"regularly, when it happens, if someone's opposed".

Thus there was considerable evidence of commitment to participation in workplace trade unionism, but the settled character of representation on the one hand and the reluctance of people to become stewards on the other meant that this sentiment was embodied as much in expectations about information and discussion as in voting in contested elections. This is the probable explanation for the significantly lower levels of regular participation in voting for stewards reported at Doxfords (fifty-one per cent) compared with the Luton survey (which <u>averaged</u> eighty-three per cent).[10]

The character of such talk and discussion as part of the culture of the workplace can be explored a little further by considering the responses of Doxfords workers to questions about their discussion of union affairs with stewards and with workmates. Again in each case they reported a <u>lower</u> level of frequent talk on union topics than did any of the Luton sub-samples, with 'now and then' clearly the dominant pattern.[11] However, the qualitative evidence of workers' comments suggests that such low-key involvement reflected the relatively settled accomodation of management to craft trade unionism, rather than any simple lack of interest among the workforce. Thus several comments spelt out the parameters of concern and contact with stewards in relation to limited management initiatives ("the way things are at the moment very little arises") and the continuing scope for informal craft control ("hardly ever, because at Doxfords you adopt your own working conditions, but if we had complaints about heating or something, then we would talk to the steward"). As this suggests, discussions with stewards tended to focus on specific greviances which disturbed this pattern, such as conditions which fell outside the ambit of work-group regulation ("a good deal just now, all the time, about the heating on the nightshift") or the continuing pressure points of management strategy ("just sometimes, when the assessment comes up"). Nevertheless there was also a more diffuse exchange of information, not only among the minority of enthusiasts ("very often, asking him <u>and</u> telling him"; "a good deal, pretty regular to keep

informed"), but also with those who only talked to the steward 'now and then' ("he keeps you in the picture with everything that's afoot, just in passing the time of day we have occasion to keep in touch"; "only now and then, but I do talk to him about what's going on, just to keep informed").

The pattern of low-key awareness and vigilance implicit in these comments was also evident in the reports of talk with workmates. There the dominant refrain was that union affairs were discussed 'now and then', or in the usual phrase "when things crop up". This meant reacting to incidents which disturbed the settled pattern of accomodation:

"if you've been treated badly, or if you think someone's got a bad deal";

"when anything crops up, any trouble crops up".

Sometimes this was defined in very narrow terms ("hardly ever, when a main issue crops up, only if it effects you is it thrashed out"), sometimes more widely ("a good deal, about everyday issues and about what's happening in other firms like"), but most often it was regarded as one element in the flow of repartee and sociability on the shop floor:

"now and then; locally there's always a lot of talk";

"now and then; the bay is notorious for standing round talking".

Such responses seemed to characterise the more cohesive work group rather more than the other section at Doxfords, but the dominant pattern was clearly that of an explicit discussion of trade union matters as such only when this was focussed by an incident, only when "something dropped up".[12] The very effectiveness of craft unionism appeared to mean that while many aspects of craft and union practice were part of everyday discourse, systematic talk about union matters was a fairly infrequent 'problem oriented' affair.

A further indication of the character of shop-floor unionism at Doxfords at the end of the 1960s is provided by workers' views of the qualities needed to make a good shop-steward.[13] The results reported in table 32 indicate the wide spread of qualities which gained a mention, many of which were combined in a variety of specifications. The four major themes were: being able to see both sides; listens to the men; being a skillful and knowledgable negotiator; and being firm with management. The need to 'see both sides' figured in many comments, and appeared to represent more than simply a pragmatic commitment, but it rarely figured as an overriding virtue. One man did say that a good steward was:

"one that can see both sides of the story, for his men and also

Table 32: Attitudes to Aspects of Trade Unionism

	Doxfords	Clarks	Rolls
Qualities of good steward	n=88 (responses)	n=41	n=68
knows the work/jobs/industry	5%	2%	7%
knows rules/unions/procedure	10%	12%	12%
good negotiator/puts case well	15%	17%	22%
discusses with/listens to men	17%	12%	9%
fairness/sees both sides	18%	10%	7%
firm/all for the men	13%	5%	12%
level-headed/straightforward	6%	10%	10%
dedicated/resilient	2%	10%	7%
independant/honest	9%	20%	9%
leadership/gets results	6%	2%	4%
Role of union mainly to get	n=42	n=19	n=26
higher pay	38%	79%	42%
say in management	52%	16%	50%
other	10%	5%	8%
Attitude to the union/Labour link	n=42	n=19	n=27
approve	38%	42%	26%
disapprove/separate	57%	53%	63%
other	5%	5%	11%
Pay the political levy	n=42	n=19	n=27
do	43%	42%	63%
do not	50%	53%	26%
don't know	7%	5%	11%
Are unions too powerful?	n=41	n=18	n=26
agree	37%	50%	27%
disagree	59%	44%	73%
other	5%	6%	-
Is big business too powerful?	n=41	n=19	n=27
agree	73%	58%	44%
disagree	22%	32%	44%
other	5%	11%	11%
Experience of strikes	n=28	n=18	n=24
worthwhile/necessary	56%	39%	54%
not worthwhile/other	44%	50%	46%
don't know	-	11%	-
(no. of workers with no strike experience)	n=11	n= 1	n= 3

listen to the management view and represent that to the workers without distortion",

to which he added the criticism that:

"that's rare, stewards tend to dictate where they are going".[14]

More often, though, 'seeing both sides' was seen as a more subsidiary virtue, alongside representation of workers' interests:

"straightforward, level-headed, sees both sides, but is on the side of the men";

"not to be frightened, be able to say his piece to managers, see both sides but not drop his members in it";

"has to be for the men, see both sides but not be a 'yes' man".

Other men took up the themes of negotiating knowledge and skills, hinted at in some of these remarks, and gave them a stronger emphasis. As with 'seeing both sides', such qualities could be given a conciliatory gloss:

"some take it on without any idea about it. First and foremost he must be conversant with union procedure, and be able to approach them right, be discreet and see both sides of the problem".

Again, though, it was much more common for these workers to see such skills as resources in pursuing their interests against management:

"a man who can talk and can use it, and one who knows his rule book, knows the management and the way they work so that he can tackle them effectively";

"knowing all the rules and being a good negotiator, takes care not to be hoodwinked";

"a man that can speak and know what he's talking about; he's got to take men into consideration rather than his own views, and be capable of a bit of bluff";

"know his job, know how to talk, know when to argue and when not. For example, if we had rate-study then we would need a steward for turners separately, he'd know how much to fiddle and so on".

Thus there was a widespread emphasis upon firm and effective representation of workers' interests against management, but for many of these men this was compatible with 'seeing both sides', and for some it was only reinforced by a celebration of knowledge of rules and procedures.

This pattern of attitudes suggests that in the Doxfords milieu some of the elements of 'social democratic' trade unionism depicted by Nichols and Beynon (an emphasis on the 'rule book', the need to see management's view point, negotiating skills) were endorsed by many shop-floor workers.[15] In a situation where skilled workers could still feel that rules and procedures were rightly theirs as much as, perhaps more than, management's

it was rare to find a strong endorsement of militancy. There were one or two forthright statements, such as:

> "they're very necessary [stewards]; must be all for the men; true, not edging both ways; they've got to be a bit agressive".

But a more common blend of themes, and one echoing many of the earlier quotes, was:

> "they've got to be good union reps. - attend meetings, have a fair knowledge of the shop floor; they've got to see both sides, but they also need to be militant at times".

In this context evaluations which stressed the difficulties or dangers involved in steward representation also owed much to 'social democratic' themes. Thus some of the difficulties were characterised in terms of balance and fairness:

> "the best description is 'it's the worst job in the world', because you can't satisfy everyone all the time";
>
> "he's got to be level-headed, he can't afford to blow his top".

On the other hand the dangers were associated with self-seeking and careerism:

> "you must do it for the job's sake, not for your own ends, or prestige";
>
> "nerve, trustworthy, workers' interests at heart, because some places they could make some sort of secret agreement. I've lost count of the number of Convenors who have become Personnel Managers".[16]

As such comments imply, this perspective was not devoid of a critical vocabulary with which to appraise steward performance, while the whole range of statements suggest that the moralism of rules and procedures was not free-floating but was generally harnessed to an emphasis on the accountability and efficacy of steward actions. In these senses the vocabulary of steward qualities deployed by the Doxford workers suggests that senior stewards and convenors were by no means the sole custodians of notions of union principles in that milieu.[17] In conjunction with the evidence about collective bargaining presented in an earlier chapter they may also imply that these elements of 'social democratic' trade unionism may resonate strongly with a defensive craft unionism without being as immediately disabling as they were at Chemco.[18]

The more general questions which I asked about trade unionism provide further evidence about the thinking of my informants concerning the role of trade unions, both within the workplace and more generally. Firstly I posed the same alternatives as had Goldthorpe: 'unions should just be concerned with getting higher pay and better conditions' versus 'unions should also try to get workers a say in management'. In outline the pattern of responses among the Doxfords craftsmen was rather similar to the pattern

among the Luton craftsmen and contrasted with the emphasis among the other groups of Luton workers, for a majority endorsed the second alternative.[19] Against the background of my earlier evidence of the value which many of these workers placed on craft skills, and their scepticism about management, such an endorsement of 'a say for workers in management' may, then, be seen as a characteristic aspect of craft unionism (and this is one point where Goldthorpe does recognise the specificity of craft responses among his sample).[20] Furthermore it can clearly be seen as growing out of the specific forms of work organisation and production politics experienced by the Doxfords turners. However, against the background of this craft ethos, the modesty of the role defined for trade unions, and the range of qualifications to their pursuit of a say in management, should also be emphasised.

Among those who agreed that unions should try to get workers a say in management the dominant emphasis was upon the scope for cooperation:

> "it would be better if they cooperated. If they had a hand in decisions it would also help. Both sides would get a better view of advantages and disadvantages";
>
> "they should talk as men, not stewards versus managers. We would benefit by the honesty. Joint consultation proved an asset in the NCB".

Such an emphasis on consultation was quite common. For instance:

> "yes, a say in management, in general like. Monthly meetings with management to talk over each others problems".

The other major emphasis was upon the inter-connections between pay and conditions and management:

> "a say in management because better management means better productivity and that means better conditions";
>
> "they should work hand in hand in everything. If they knew about orders and work coming in, they'd be in a better position to know when to ask for more money".

Occasionally this was given a clearly adversarial emphasis, as when one man remarked that "you're selling yourself to them, so I think unions should go further than pay and conditions, they must safeguard you, that's an obvious necessity". However, even the clearest declaration of the importance of shop-floor skills was harnessed to a fairly modest perspective on participation:

> "you've got to have a say in management because the shop-floor is a mine of untapped information. That's what the trouble is in the South, no consultation. If they had a shop-floor man on the Board, or something like the ICI share-scheme, there'd be less distrust and trouble".

Similarly 'having a say in management' was sometimes seen as a way of combating bad management:

> "it all depends on what management are like. If you've got bad management they've got to come in."

More often, though, the implication was that involvement would involve concessions on both sides:

> "union and management in a good firm go together, but in this firm it used to be the opposite. Recently it's been a lot better. They should get together for the good running of the firm";
>
> "a say in management, then Doxfords would be a bit better, some sort of agreement to work hand in hand, covering long period guarantees on both sides".

And in this context some scepticism about union representation sometimes surfaced:

> "some sort of a say in management provided they represent the workers rather than themselves, for the majority of men are not strictly union men".

Thus the workers who opted for a say in management did draw on their sense of their own knowledge and competence in the production process, but, despite conflicts with management and the currents of scepticism about management competences, this generally fuelled a vision of more productive cooperation far more than any sense of encroachment on managerial prerogatives.[21]

Some of those who opted for 'just pay and conditions' did not differ markedly in their views on consultation, but included it under the more limited heading:

> "pay and conditions, but there's more meetings with management now which is a good thing. They keep the Convenor more informed nowadays";
>
> "better pay and conditions. Conditions automatically come into management, but if the conditions are good then you don't need to have a say in management".

However, more often there was a feeling that cooperation could not subsume the differing functions of unions and management. Sometimes this was formulated very much in terms of the dangers of incorporation:

> "not keen on having a say, if you've got too much say you're too involved, though you must keep discussions";
>
> "stay out of management, because there's a danger of sympathy, individuals develop too much of a management consciousness about management problems".

More usually there was a more straightforward emphasis on different functions:

> "just pay and conditions, I don't think they should be on the management side. Either for or against, can't be a master and servant as well, like".

"If they got on management's side then there's the possibility of favouritism. Stick to pay and conditions, leave unions to unions and visa versa";

"I can't see them having any say in management. Managers should manage but unions should make sure they keep their heads about workers, managers shouldn't push it".

Thus many of those who rejected a 'say in management' did so because they were sceptical of any clear reconciliation of management and union objectives, and, in a perspective characteristic of much British trade unionism, preferred to endorse both management prerogatives and effective union vigilance.[22] And just as the experience of participation elsewhere was sometimes cited by advocates of a 'say in management' it was also drawn on to underpin the more sceptical view: "it's a good idea in theory, but in practice, like at the colliery, it didn't work out". The endorsements of management's right to manage embodied in these views remained clearly conditional, and they should be distinguished from the views of a minority of those who rejected a 'say in management', who accorded a deeper legitimacy to the claims of management:

"pay and conditions, that covers enough. Management should be able to manage. Unions haven't got the correct knowledge to manage", or even more clearly:

"as regards management, no I wouldn't like an ordinary worker to have a say in management, because managers have been brought up to be managers and, nine times out of ten, they're shareholders, it's their money. I think it's wrong for workers to interfere in management decisions".

Such outright endorsements of management prerogatives were rare indeed, though they serve as reminders of the quite wide spectrum of attitudes to the role of unions among the Doxfords men.[23] More significant is the way in which the dominant strands of opinion focussed on the one hand on having a say in management through joint discussions undertaken in a spirit of cooperation, and on the other on retaining independent roles for unions and management. This pattern underlines the way in which any aspirations for a say in management, however nurtured by the craft ethos and experience, were generally formulated in quite modest fashion and were also tempered by differing responses to the dilemmas which such a role poses for trade unions.

My final questions about trade unions shifted attention from the workplace to the wider role of the unions, their political links with the Labour Party and their power in Britain. Only a minority of my informants endorsed the link between Labour and the unions, while half claimed to have contracted out of paying the political levy. At the same

time a clear majority of these workers disagreed with the view that unions had too much power.[24] This pattern resembles that of the machinists and assemblers in the Luton sample, which Goldthorpe et al interpreted as "entirely consistent with the idea of 'instrumental collectivism", rather more than that of the Luton craftsmen who "alone largely approved of the historic alliance" of Labour and the unions.[25] However, to gauge the significance of such comparisons it is necessary to consider the qualitative evidence about the views of the Doxfords workers.

So far as the political levy and links with Labour were concerned, there was some confusion and uncertainty over the former, but most workers had fairly clear and well formulated views on the latter, evidently reflecting considerable concern about the relationship between union politics and government policies since the election of a Labour Government in 1964. There were certainly some workers for whom the separation of trade unionism and Labour politics had been a long-held view. These included both Conservatives ("I'm a long-standing Conservative and I contracted out long ago") and those generally cynical about politics ("separate: the working man hasn't got a chance, they kick us both ways. I don't pay the political levy, a long-standing decision") as well as several who simply emphasised that:

> "unions should be kept separate from politics, unions and Labour politics don't mix, even though Labour depends on unions as regards catching votes".

However it was much more common to make reference to recent government policy, especially incomes policy, as the basis for the erosion or the absence of support for links with Labour. For some this was reflected in some agonising about the relationship between industrial and political wings of the labour movement:

> "I approve of the connection, for unions to have an influence on Labour Party policy. When they first came in I thought great. But...there's no particular party which supports the working man. As for the levy I just forget about it";
>
> "I'm very dogmatic for Labour, it's more the attitude than anything more down to earth. I pay the political levy, but I don't think they are supporting them in policy now. If it comes to the push they should go their own way, otherwise you've got a government dictatorship within industry";
>
> "that's an awkward question, if I'd been asked two or three years ago I'd have said 'yes' [to support for Labour] but now I'm not so clear";
>
> "I do pay the levy but I think there are problems with cooperation, as they are hitting workers and expecting to be financed. I'm thinking about contracting out in a year or two".

For others the implications seemed to be more clear cut:

> "they're separate camps already, especially about wages: the government interfered in the money we were going to get you know";
> "it was O.K. once, but now with their [government's] meddling we should break apart unless their ideas change";
> "separate, especially with this government after the last two years; their interests don't match and there could be conflict";
> "they shouldn't give themselves all that money, and then freeze wages but not prices. I stopped paying the political levy eight months ago".

Thus, though one man did argue that the tensions of the late 1960s did not vitiate the linkage between Labour and the unions ("they differ at times, but they don't dominate one another"), much the more widespread view was that those links were increasingly problematical and precarious. The implication of many of these comments, then, was that the predominant note of disapproval of the union connection with Labour owed much to the recent experience of incomes policy. Of course, since the implied erosion of support reflected a major concern about wages, this pattern might be regarded as quite compatible with the notion of instrumental collectivism. At the same time, since an earlier higher level of support is clearly implied, it suggests that the connections between 'bread and butter' issues and Labourism in trade union politics are more complex than Goldthorpe et al acknowledge. Nevertheless, it was also notable that those who explicitly drew political lessons from the conflicts between the Labour Government and the unions were apt to recommend the dilution of Labourist politics rather than the revitalisation of a political trade unionism:

> "the Labour Party is the party of the working man <u>supposedly</u>. This Labour Party isn't, mind. What we need is a more liberal minded Labour Party";
> "I've been loyal to Labour, though I'm loosing confidence in them. They havn't got the right amount of brainy men. When I was a strong Labour man then I thought it [the levy] was good, but it's not really fair, the others who are Tory etc. they are blackmailed like. I do pay, but I'm going to drop it next year".

Thus the comments of this small grouping of skilled engineering workers are consistent with the wider pattern of declining support for the link between Labour and the unions during the 1960s, documented by, for example, Butler and Stokes; but they also underline the central role of Government industrial and economic policies, especially incomes policy, in this manifestation of that decline.[26] In this respect they can be neatly placed within the diagnosis of the role and contradictions of Labourism developed by such analysts as Panitch, so long as it is recognised that

for these workers, and at this juncture, widespread disillusionment with the Labour government involved no clear break with Labourist trade unionism, but rather an increasing uncertainty and diversity of opinion about the political affiliations of such unionism[27].

Turning now to the wider role of trade unions as such, it should be noted that psephological discussions of British politics have identified the late 1960's as a critical period in the erosion of support for trade union power. This argument has been based largely on the pattern of responses to a survey question asking 'Do you think that the trade unions have too much power or not?', which indicates a marked increase in those holding that unions were too powerful and a marked decrease in those who rejected this view. For example, the percentage of the electorate who rejected this view fell from thirty-two to twenty-four between 1964 and 1970, while among so-called 'Labour identifiers' the drop was from fifty-nine to forty per cent (though union members were somewhat more likely to reject this view no trend data is reported for them).[28] In this context Goldthorpe et al found in 1964 that the majority of their sample, and especially their craftsmen, disagreed with the view that trade unions had too much power; while I found in 1969 that fifty-nine per cent of my Doxfords interviewees similarly rejected that view[29]. Against the background of the apparent general trend this suggests continuing widespread support for union organisation and power in such craft milieux as that at Doxfords, but again it is the comments and asides elicited by this question which indicate something of the texture of opinion on this topic (and thus qualify the stark percentages reported in the psephological studies).

Among the majority of Doxfords men who rejected the 'too powerful' label a common theme was that the unions needed the power they had:

> "I wouldn't say they've got too much, they need a lot of power to protect the interests of the working man on issues like unemployment";
> "they've got to have a certain amount to make progress".

On one flank of this argument there was a significant group of workers who argued that unions needed <u>more</u> power, whatever power they already had:

> "they represent the working man, but they've got no power really";
> "they haven't got enough power, but they'll get stronger";
> "they've got quite a lot of power but they could do with more".

More often, though, the emphasis was on the proper exercise of power, perhaps despite the odd abuses:

> "I wouldn't say they have too much power, they have a fairly moderate influence in the country and on the issues at stake";

"disagree. They have a lot, but it's mainly humdrum. There's a little bit of dictatorship on a small scale, but I don't think it's the trade unions, it's more the shop-floor or the wrong people";

"They have quite a lot of power of persuasion, but not too much. It's the top who control, though: Cannon was too soft, Scanlon is the other way".

Thus there was scope for some differentiation between leaders and members, and between different groupings of members, within perspectives which endorsed union powers. However, such differentiations played a more central role for those who said that unions <u>did</u> have too much power. Among the minority who took this view there were a few who made a blanket judgement ("I agree, it's generally true, from top to bottom"), but much more commonly specific sections of the unions were identified and blamed. Sometimes they were shop-floor 'militants' as such:

"I agree, I can't disagree. You've got to have a union to get what you want, <u>but</u> I don't agree with wildcat strikes; a lot of them are caused by hot-headed shop stewards - personal feuds come in here";

"at the present day they have too much say via strikes, where the minority causes trouble".

However, this well rehearsed theme was often given a more specific occupational and geographical twist:

"it depends on the union. Some unions, like the Dockers, strike too easy for me";

"I agree. I don't know about our union, but isolated cases they are too ready to down tools. It might be a trait of people who work down south. The top men might have a bit too much power too";

"I agree in the Country, yes, there's too many daft strikes, like at Fords. They're getting greedier and greedier. It's certain localities";

"I can only go on the press and it could be anti-union admittedly, but down south they have far too much power. Up north they are more tolerant".

It should be recognised that such regional and occupational contrasts could occasionally be turned another way. Thus one man argued that:

"unions don't have too much power, though they have a lot. That was the general thing that got me into the union: they could push for much more, the unions fight much more for them down south".

Nevertheless the dominant usage, very general among those who judged that unions had come to have too much power, was one which located this feature not with workers like themselves but with other groups - car-workers or dockers - and generally in the south. Something akin to the ideology of the northern foremen discussed by Nichols could be glimpsed in this

vocabulary - the product of an interplay between the sectional and parochial features of much British trade unionism and the media portrayals of that unionism - which facilitated a separation of their own experience and practice of trade unionism from their endorsement of the dominant ideological theme of unions as 'overmighty subjects'[30]. Since these condemnations of union power by Doxfords workers tended to exempt their own unionism from that charge by locating such power elsewhere, this strengthens the argument that there was widespread support for union organisation and leverage in this milieu. At the same time the distinctions between moderation and militancy and between north and south, which were shared with a proportion of those who rejected the notion that unions were too powerful, indicate some of the potential limits of that support.

Before moving to the final area of workers' comments on trade unionism, that concerning their experience of strike action, it is worth noting how they responded to the question on big business equivalent to that on union power. Nearly three-quarters of Doxfords workers agreed that 'big business men have too much power in the country', an impressive figure compared with the sixty per cent reported for Goldthorpe's sample (including non-unionists) and the forty-eight per cent reported for a sample of the electorate in 1969-70.[31] This widespread view was buttressed by arguments about the power of money, the capacity of business to influence governments, and the priorities of profitability:

> "money gives them power, money speaks";
>
> "naturally they've got power through money, to make more profit. They'll do anything for money";
>
> "they've got a bit of power behind the scenes: where does the Conservative Party get its funds?";
>
> "I agree they've got too much. They do as they want, they control the country - control incomes not prices, and they can always get round legislation";
>
> "there's a lot that have a lot of power, and the average man won't know until it's too late".

Such views were shared by some who had thought the unions too powerful as well. Thus one man who had argued that the unions "are maybe getting a bit too much power at present, the big unions are beginning to" said of big business:

> "I suppose they have /got too much power/ and I think that's why the unions are getting more militant, to overcome the employer dominance of the past".

Thus there was quite broad agreement that big business exercised too much

power. The theme of hidden power was even echoed by some of those who could not say whether business was too powerful:

"that's the trouble, I don't know whether they have [the power] or not".

However, beyond the observations about the power of money and hidden influence, these judgements were rarely organised into any explicit 'theory' of power. The man who argued that:

"they're too powerful because of the monopolies and mergers; it amounts to nationalisation under private enterprise",

was almost as idiosyncratic as the one who claimed:

"yes, it's all owned by Jews isn't it, and Yankees own the country. There's not many British business men in this country".

In such a context the few workers who judged that business was <u>not</u> too powerful seemed to find a niche by embracing some variant of the distinction between inherited wealth and meritocracy:

"I disagree, they've got the money to back it up, they can afford to have some power in this country. Lets face it, everyone's after power. If a man has made money through his <u>own</u> endeavours he deserves it"

"It depends on how they got it. Inherited wealth is dangerous. If they've built up the business that's O.K., because people know what they're doing. Mind you, managers and such, though they may be proving their ability, should be watched by the Government".

However, such justifications of the power of 'money', whether expressed provisionally or cynically, remained very much in the minority beside the general, though often inchoate, suspicion and critique of business power. It was that suspicion and critique which was the dominant concomitant both of these workers' endorsement of their own trade unionism, and of their deepening uncertainties about the union link with Labour in government.

These questions and answers moved away from specifics to ask for more general judgements about patterns of power, though of course the comments often made reference to particular events. However, my final questions about trade unionism moved back to focus much more directly upon the experiences of my informants by asking them about their participation in and evaluation of strikes at Doxfords. As table 32 shows, over seventy per cent of those I interviewed had experience of strikes in the engine works, the rest having joined the firm since the disputes surrounding the pay negotiations, and in particular since the nearly six week strike in early 1964 precipitated by the dismissal of the Convenor[32]. Among those who reported having participated in a dispute, opinions seemed fairly evenly divided between those who regarded it as worthwhile or necessary (fifty-six per cent) and those who did not (forty-four per cent). Most of the

comments focussed on the 1964 dispute; though there were a few negative remarks about the national engineering one-day token strikes, called several times in the 1960s as part of national bargaining, which were characterised by some as 'pointless' or 'a waste of time'[33].

The six week strike evoked a variety of responses, for though most agreed that it was an important watershed in management-union relations there were different views on the costs and gains involved. There were a few men who felt that the strike had been worthwhile without being too costly to themselves. One of these contrasted it with the impact of the overtime ban and outlined the usual ways for coping with the financial pressure:

> "the nine months on forty-hours was more punishing than the quick six weeks. It didn't affect me much because you've got a bit in hand and you can put people off. Definitely it was worth it"[34].

Another man, in fact one who had mentioned 'strikes' and 'minorities causing trouble' when he argued that unions had too much power, said of his own experience:

> "it did affect the money but not too much, I just got bored off work. But it was worth it in the end as it turned out".

However, when men were asked how the strike had affected them and whether it was worth it, it was more common for them to register the costs of the strike but weigh them against the gains[35] Sometimes the gains were defined directly in terms of the defence of effective trade unionism, and in particular the defence of a vigorous Convenor. Thus one man argued that:

> "it never benefits yourself, but it showed exactly where we stood; we stood behind the union against a personal vendetta".

And another, again a man who had said that unions had too much power as regards strikes ('if they say come out...you've got to do it'), recalled that:

> "I was getting married so it hit us pretty hard financially, but I thought it was worth it to get the man back, the Convenor: he was a good man at his job".

Alongside this other workers underlined the longer term gains which had resulted from their stand:

> "six weeks cost us a lot of money, but it cleared the air. It was worth it because since then conditions at Doxfords have improved quite a lot, though there's still more to go, mind";
>
> "it was a strike that was coming to a head a long time, with bad relations with management. But the minimum wage ultimately came out of it, so in the long run I should say yes, it was worth it".

For these men, then, the strike had definitely been successful despite the

hardships involved, because it had consolidated the active but defensive craft unionism which I explored in chapter seven. In addition these comments underline the manner in which organisational and substantive issues are intertwined in the process and experience of such industrial disputes, undermining the logic of any narrowly 'instrumental' calculation in such contexts; while some of these remarks offer further examples of the widely noted disparity between general and specific judgements about the appropriateness of strike action.[36]

Similar considerations of the defence of union organisation applied for several of those who offered more pessimistic assessments, for whom the strike was damaging but unavoidable:

> "it was a strike that should never have been. It was bad management put the Convenor in that position. No, to me no strike is worth it, but it was forced on the men then, absolutely";
>
> "the problems were mostly financial. A lot of the men think it wasn't worth it, but we couldn't do anything else".

Such views shaded into arguments that management provoked or prolonged the strike, though they then tended to judge the whole episode as rather futile, not least because the immediate achievement was simply to recover the status quo:

> "it was a crippling blow, and stupid how it happened; it makes you think it was an ulterior motive on management's part. No, it was a waste of time from our point of view, with the loss of money, so there must have been something deeper behind it";
>
> "I was annoyed through loosing wages, but the whole thing was prolonged unnecessarily. There could have been the same solution before Runsy was sacked".

For such men the strike seemed both unavoidable and unnecessary, a reaction which can be seen as further evidence of the defensive perspectives of many of the trade unionists who had participated in the strike. The focus of the strike on the issue of victimisation also coloured some of these more equivocal assessments of the dispute, when the Convenor's stance was recognised and even praised as effective, while still being seen as rather too adversarial. Thus alongside the odd sceptic (not one of those who felt unions were generally too powerful) who dismissed the whole thing as "a personality clash...and it didn't prove a thing", there was the man who mused:

> "we came back six weeks later and we were no better off, and if they'd left it over it would have solved itself. It was partly the Convenor's influence, though I admire him for his skill. He's done very well for the lads in this firm; it's due to him we're where we are: a meeker

Convenor wouldn't have achieved it".

And another man, one who believed stewards should be 'fair to both men and management', commented that:

> "it was unnecessary, the last five weeks of it, when they struck about the sacking and he was reinstated. It was a personal vendetta. He was a bit too militant, Runsiman, he hardly saw both sides, like; but mind, he knew his job".

Such equivocations were characteristic of most of the more negative judgements of the strike, where commitments to an effective but defensive trade unionism were only uneasily reconciled with the actions which were required to secure and develop that effectiveness. There were only a few men who simply avoided the dilemmas this involved, by condemning the strike outright as 'not worth it'. One or two of these simply registered the financial loss:

> "I was only getting sixteen shillings National Assistance because my wife was working. It was a waste of time, for I've lost that pay and I haven't made it up yet".

A few others put the financial loss alongside the fact that nothing new was directly gained by the strike:

> "I was lucky as I was earning a bit of money unofficially, so I enjoyed six weeks holiday, but the families were less well off: strikes are no good to them. It couldn't have been worth it because we were in the same position after as before".

But these were clearly minority views. There was, indeed, widespread recognition among the Doxford men that after the strike 'we were in the same position as before'. However, most of them - a larger proportion, I would argue, than the fifty-six per cent who explicitly judged the strike worthwhile or necessary - clearly accepted that in one way or another the 'same position' had to be actively defended. Nonetheless the equivocations that I have outlined clearly flowed from the tensions between defensive craftism and the militant action sometimes needed for effective trade unionism, and were thus as characteristic of Doxfords unionism as were the forthright celebrations of the gains which were built upon the positions defended in the strike.

Trade Unionism in the Rolls and Clarks Factories

Having sought to portray some of the internal texture and dynamics of union membership, consciousness and activity characteristic of the active but largely defensive craft unionism at Doxfords in the late 1960s, I now want to consider more briefly the patterns at Clarks and Rolls, giving particular attention to divergences and contrasts when compared with the Doxford picture. Once more my discussion will be constrained by the limitations of the interview format which I adopted in my research. In crude outline the statistical

comparisons between the three workplaces suggest the following contrasts: at Clarks there was minimal trade union activity on the shop-floor and this coexisted with more critical attitudes about several aspects of trade unionism than at Doxfords, while at Rolls there was a stronger emphasis specifically on workplace trade unionism which was paralleled by widespread emphasis on the need for a strong trade union.[37] I will now explore these and related features in a little more detail.

So far as union membership was concerned, both Clarks and Rolls were characterised by higher numbers of people who joined the union later than their first few years in the labour market; a reflection of the pattern of later joining among some dilutees, and, in the case of Clarks, of unemployment during the 1930s.[38] At Clarks the reasons for joining a union did not diverge very much from the Doxfords pattern, but there was more emphasis on a combination of persuasion and limited choice rather than the positive functions of trade unionism. The odd celebration of unions was balanced by the odd condemnation, but more characteristic responses involved a rather passive recognition of the 'given' role of the union:

> "there was a good shop-steward and he persuaded all the apprentices to join. You have to be a member if you want a job, it's a necessary evil as far as I'm concerned";

> "this was always a strong union place, and my father-in-law introduced me to the union";

> "when I came to Clarks I had to join to be in, to keep my job protection"

This pattern contrasted quite sharply with that at Rolls, where there was a much stronger emphasis than at Doxfords on the need for union strength and protection. Again the institutionalised position of the union was a common point of reference. Thus an apprentice had joined because "it's a recognised thing in factories, a closed shop", while one of the dilutees gave as his reason for joining:

> "that was the understanding at the Training Centre. If you didn't join when you went to the factory you didn't get the job".

But there was a much more frequent emphasis on the positive support which the union provided. Sometimes this was defined in terms of some specific experience:

> "we were getting paid off at Thorns, and the union could help fight our case if we couldn't get a transfer [of apprenticeships]".

More often, though, such experiences flowed into a more general commitment:

> "I realised the benefit of being a fully fledged member. It's a hell of a good thing, the union, I got that from the experience of the older men, in their discussions";

"in the factory you can always have something to fall back on; it's the only help the working man has got";

"I think it's essential for working men to be united in one body".

Such forthright advocacy of trade unionism was more conspicuous at Rolls than at either of the other two factories, though clearly it did not preclude minority experience of union membership as an imposition. However, even among those who emphasised the compulsive side of the union shop there was some echo of the positive arguments for trade union. Thus one man reported:

"I was forced to join to keep my job. I didn't want to join, but I was told by the Convenor. Now I am in I think they are <u>some</u> use, I can tolerate unions now".

The significance of these contrasts requires careful interpretation[39]. People were being asked to recollect their reasons for joining a union when that may have happened many years before, and though they may have recalled some of the circumstances - such as the influence of kin or the effectiveness of the closed shop in their trade - the tone of their responses may also have owed much to intervening experiences. Nevertheless, with that caveat about biographical veracity, these different patterns of responses suggest that trade union membership had come to mean rather different things for the residue of Clarks workers than for the bulk of the men at Rolls. For the former membership appeared to be largely a necessary concomitant of work at a trade, despite the fact that during their working lives a disproportionate number of these men had been shop-stewards; whereas at Rolls there was a stronger sense of active commitment to unionism in a workplace which had only achieved one-hundred per cent membership during the 1960s.

The reported patterns of participation in branch and workplace trade union activities provide a more direct indication of the differing forms of trade unionism in the two factories. So far as the branch was concerned, the men at Clarks reported higher <u>attendances</u> while the Rolls men were on a par with those at Doxfords; but in terms of <u>voting</u> workers at Rolls reported lower levels of participation than the men at the other factories, with twice as many (over fifty per cent) 'never voting' at branch meetings. Since a significant number of those who reported 'never attending' from Doxfords actually went simply to pay their dues, and this was the main reason for going to the branch among each group, more attention should perhaps be given to the contrast between the Rolls men and the rest in terms of voting patterns than to the differences in reported attendance as such.

Certainly the men at Clarks were similar to those at Doxfords in confirming that for most of them attendance at branch meetings was confined to paying-in the union dues, while voting depended on an uneven mixture of advice and local knowledge. Thus characteristic comments were:

> "I go sometimes, not to indulge in branch affairs, just to pay subs";
> "I just call by to pay my dues, only stop occasionally. I vote if he's someone local".

There was also a suggestion, though, that some men were attending less regularly than in the past, and becoming more reliant on other people to take in their dues:

> "I don't go as much as I used to. It's tailed off a bit recently because of the distance, so I rarely go now, just pay my dues or got one of my mates to pay it in for me. I rarely take part in voting: if it were important, local, then I would go";
> "I rarely go. I used to, but when I was on nightshift I got one of the lads to pay it for us, and then that arrangement continued".

On the other hand there was little sign of any branch activists among this small depleted workforce. Even those who went more regularly, and paid-in for their mates, were not particularly active:

> "regularly, every fortnight, I go to pay for a few of the lads; they live away and it's near where I go. That's just to pay the dues, mind. I sometimes vote, but a lot of times it's just blind; I vote for a local person if possible".

Thus, as one man summed it up "to vote and pay the dues, that <u>is</u> the branch meeting". However, despite the implication of some decline in attendance, many Clarks workers, like those at Doxfords, maintained this limited form of participation in branch affairs.

So far as the Rolls workers were concerned this was less evident. The pattern of sending money via a collector or through the post, rather than attendance at the branch, was clearly more common:

> "I rarely go, one of the lads collects the dues; and I rarely vote, only if I happen to be there";
> "I never go. The steward takes them down. I couldn't tell you where the branch is even, now";
> "I just pay my dues by post".

This difference may well have reflected obstacles of time and distance to some extent, for more Rolls workers lived outside the town centre (three quarters as against about sixty per cent in the other works) and the shift system meant that few had a constant day shift[40]. Nevertheless, even those who went to the branch to pay their dues rarely voted. Typical comments

ranged across:

> "never apart from my dues, I've never voted. I just go down to pay once a fortnight";
>
> "rarely go [to the branch]. I sometimes pay my dues myself, sometimes by post [never voted]";
>
> "I sometimes go to pay my dues, or one of the lads takes it down. I've rarely voted; I have done, but I generally don't know the names".

Of course, there were a few men who were more active participants, but even they underwrote the limited role of the branch more strongly than did their counterparts among the Doxfords men. One of them commented that he went:

> "once a fortnight. Oh yes, the branch I'm in it's really a matter of paying your dues, but the branch is there if you have any queries or views to put; except you miss it when you're on night shift. As for voting, I normally take part in ballots when I'm there".

And the Convenor spoke in a similar vein:

> "I go regularly, I miss a few but attend pretty regularly to pay dues, but I don't conduct much business in the branch".

Thus branch participation was quite limited across all three workforces; a strong indication that, within the engineering industry and the Engineering Union, stark contrasts in this regard between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' workforces would be inappropriate. At the same time there were some subtle variations between the different factories, with the residual focus of much branch activity, dues collection, involving fewer Rolls workers, and, alongside this, lower levels of participation in branch ballots. The significance of this can best be explored in conjunction with evidence about the pattern of workplace union participation.

Turning, then, to workplace unionism, it was at Rolls that the highest levels of participation and discussion were reported, whilst at Clarks activity was minimal. So far as talking with workmates about union affairs was concerned half of the men at Rolls said they did 'very often' or 'a good deal', figures which compare with those reported for the Luton craftsmen[41]. Sometimes this discussion ranged beyond factory matters ("about topical issues, like wildcat strikes") but generally it concerned "issues within the works", and the frequency of discussion matched the urgency of the issues:

> "a good deal at the present time, about the work and the wages and related issues";
>
> "a good deal at the moment, very regular".

This suggests that the incidence of union talk reflected the intensity of

the effort bargaining conflicts at Rolls at this time (documented in the previous chapter), rather than particularly distinctive orientations towards trade unionism.[42] This would also be consistent with the comments of most of those who reported less frequent discussions with their workmates, among whom characteristic comments were:

> "now and then, on a particular issue as it crops up, otherwise now and then";
>
> "every so often you get a phase of discussion, then nothing for a few months, then up it crops again if friction occurs".

Nevertheless, the frequency of discussion with workmates contrasted quite sharply with levels of involvement in the branch, and this contrast appeared quite starkly in some individual comments. Thus one man, who reported that he never attended the branch because he paid his dues by post, and was "not really interested in the union at all really", said that he talked with his mates about union matters:

> "very often, when it's to do with the works, when the firm's policies are discussed, arguing against the firm's policies".

So far as talk with the steward was concerned, the workers at Rolls differed little from those at Doxfords, at least in statistical terms. The dominant pattern was to talk 'now and then', "when something crops up" or "when there are problems on our line"; and on the same basis there were those who reported that "I've never really had to talk with him about anything". However there was also evidence of the intensification of activities connected with the conflict over rates:

> "at one time it was only occasionally, but with the present upheaval there's quite a lot of discussion. It's going on day in, day out";
>
> "there's not a steward on our shift, but my mate on the other shift is a steward and I talk to him a lot".

And in this context there were suggestions, unparalleled at Doxfords, that issues and grievances initiated by the shop-floor sometimes overwhelmed the steward:

> "now and then, in general with the [current] issues and at other times. We all speak our minds, that's why he packed it in".

In these respects, then, there was evidence of an uneven but higher level of workplace union involvement than in the more settled Doxfords context. This was matched by high levels of reported participation in elections for stewards. Though some people noted that there was not always a contest, over eighty per cent said that they voted regularly, and various people remarked that "everybody participates then", "that's of direct interest" and "you know who you're voting for", all points of implicit contrast

with the situation in the branch.

At Clarks the pattern was very different. One or two men did report talking about union matters fairly frequently; as one said "more about local matters than other things, money in the local works and so on". However they were very much the exceptions. For the rest there were some of the standard formulae, such as:

"now and then, if anything crops up", or

"hardly ever, nothing ever arises".

But behind such terse comments others spelt out the more specific circumstances of isolation, and the decay of workplace organisation, discussed in the previous chapter:

"only now and then. Things are very low at the moment, but it's been unusual since the last two or three years, it's more or less petered out";

"there's very little talk, with the union out of connection".

Alongside this, and in apparent contradiction, several men said they avoided union matters because they were out of sympathy with the views of their workmates. For example:

"I never talk with my mates about that, because some use the unions and each man should have his own opinion".

However such statements may be less paradoxical than they appear, because differences of opinion were inevitably personalised in the small group setting which had been the result of the run-down of the works.

So far as talking to the steward was concerned, that was no longer possible since there was no longer a steward, though one man noted that "we talked a good deal <u>when</u> we had one"! As table 31 shows, most of the men reported that they had participated regularly in the election of stewards:

"take part in anything doing in the shop, definitely";

"regularly, when we had the opportunity";

"yes, I take part in all trade union activities that may arise".

However several of the men also commented on the problems that had beset steward representation at Clarks, leading eventually to its collapse. These problems involved conflicts between the men and the eventual reluctance of anyone to take on the job. The reality was that:

"one resigns and then someone's badgered into it, to take over. It's a question of who will take the job".

In this context internal conflicts and mistrust meant the badgering failed. One man who had been a steward said he "wouldn't entertain being one again";

another worker remarked in relation to selection of a steward that he would "want nothing to do with some of the men in the shop"; and a third saw the collapse of steward representation as the result of "the problem of craftsmen representing semi-skilled men, as, not being steeped in the traditions, they are inclined to criticism".[43] Whatever the precise basis of the conflicts, they meant that the commitments to participation in voting for a steward were rendered nugatory:

"I've never had a vote here because nobody will have the job".

Of course, in a larger workplace such schisms within a particular workgroup would be 'contained' within a wider pattern of representation, and there were certainly indications in some of the comments from the other factories that sometimes men were not directly represented by a steward or perhaps felt themselves inappropriately represented within particular steward constituencies.[44] However, it seems reasonable to suggest that the small size of the residual workforce at Clarks interplayed with the experience of being an insecure yet unpressured remnant of the old works to exacerbate the tensions which undermined steward representation there.

The situations at Clarks and Rolls diverged in different directions from the Doxfords pattern of workplace and branch involvement. At Doxfords limited contacts at the branch for most members, and the activism of a few, were the features of branch participation which complemented strongly defensive craft unionism in the workplace. Something of a similar pattern may well have characterised Clarks before the large-scale redundancies, but, after several years as an insecure backwater, workplace union activity among the turners had become even more attenuated than branch participation. The latter appeared to have remained a low-key point of contact for trade unionists despite the tensions, and absence of formal representation, that were characteristic of the shop-floor; but as I noted earlier there were also hints of a recent decline in branch involvement too. There was certainly little sign that the union branch had provided a forum within which the deficiencies of workplace unionism could be repaired or compensated.

Though I lack direct historical evidence, it seems likely that the initial institutionalisation of trade unionism at Rolls had embodied a more attenuated relationship to the branch life of the union than had been the case at the other factories. In this context the recent pressures exerted by management appear to have heightened involvement in workplace union activity without shifting the pattern of branch involvement. Thus, as one would expect, it was the patterns of workplace trade unionism which had responded to the shifting character of management initiatives and social relations within production, rather than the subtle variations in branch involvement documented earlier.

I have shown that at Clarks workplace trade unionism had come to lack both formal representation and informal vitality, while at Doxfords and Rolls the pattern of discussion and participation clearly indicated more substantial forms of shop-floor unionism. The low key involvement of Doxfords workers was one aspect of the vigilant defensiveness of their craft unionism, though as I have already shown such unionism embodied significant tensions which were no doubt matched in the uneven pattern of participation. Meanwhile at Rolls the level of involvement in shop-floor unionism was higher than at the other factories, and was broadly comparable with that of the most active of the Luton occupations (the craftsmen)[45]. This higher tempo of dicussion and activity at Rolls appeared to be a response to management pressures for the intensification of work, and may thus be regarded as evidence of a certain defensive vitality of workplace organisation. However, even at Rolls the significance of the levels of participation must be kept in proportion. This was pointed up by the remarks of one of the workers there, who gauged the situation in the aero-engine works against the active trade unionism he had experienced as a plumber, and offered a sharply critical assessment of his fellow unionists[46]. "Yes", he talked a good deal with his mates about union matters, but in his view it "wasn't of much consequence". As for talking with stewards:

> "I did, but I don't, not so much now, I'm very disillusioned. The AEU falls down, it's not a union at all. I'm really cheesed off with them now. The Plumbers were much more united; here they tend to turn tail".

Clearly, patterns of union participation may be expected to vary in different settings, and this diagnosis was explicitly grounded in the (quite unusual) experience of a rather different union milieu and labour market. Nonetheless, it not only cautions against romanticising work-place unionism at Rolls, but it also underlines the importance of considering the substance as well as the level of union participation there; and equivalently, the meaning attached to their passive trade unionism among the Clarks workers.

Turning, then, to people's attitudes to trade unionism to provide some indication of the substance of collective organisation, I will now review the responses of the Rolls and Clarks workers to questions about the role of stewards and of unions more generally. Looking first at attitudes to stewards at each works, both groups of men mentioned a wide range of qualities appropriate for a good shop steward, covering a similar spectrum to the comments of the Doxfords men. However, within that spectrum Rolls workers tended to put less emphasis on 'seeing both sides' and more on being a good negotiator, and in turn this was identified not only with the ability to argue a case but with the commitment to stick to it. Typical of this emphasis

were such comments as:

> "someone who could put a case or argument and who is not easily pressured into things, who can stick out against management", and
> "Nichols is good, he can discuss issues, he's a good representative; he knows his union; and he's not put off, he sticks to the case".

There were several such endorsements of the qualities of the current Convenor, and both these and the more general comments tended to reiterate the theme of skillful and determined representation in such phrases as "he must be able to press the point", "not to be in league with the staff" and "he tells management straight what he thinks". There were occasional comments which emphasised other themes, for example:

> "he has to be a brick, has to be able to take criticisms; he needs to be very rational; and he has to have tact, to be able to listen".

However it was more usual for such qualities as tact and fairness to be interwoven with an emphasis on firm negotiating skills:

> "someone with sensible balanced views, a lad that can fight back for you";
> "none too selfish, reasonably fair when it comes to a consideration of workmates and others. Resilient in that way, and prepared to be militant".

Thus the workers at Rolls were no more likely than those at Doxfords to emphasise militancy as such - it was a significant but minority theme - but their focus on negotiating skills was less qualified by the theme of 'seeing both sides' and hence clearer in its emphasis on resoluteness.

By contrast the workers at Clarks more often allied their focus on negotiating skills with the themes of resilience and independence, and this was clearly associated with the experience of conflicts over steward representation among the turners. There were some men who simply emphasised the active representation of workers' grievances:

> "if you have a grievance he can listen to you and take it up";
> "he's got to stick up for the men, that's really what he's there for".

However it was more common to draw out the importance of independent judgement:

> "he's got to be cool headed, know what he's talking about, the union rules and such, and he should stand for his own opinion, not be swayed by petty complaints";
> "he hasn't got to be led by the men, he must be independent minded, not led by the hot-heads, provided he can put the case properly. Mind you, stewards tend to get called in unnecessarily".

Such assertions were often grounded in the experience of having been a steward, and were clearly part of a 'moderate' trade unionism. Another man,

also an ex-steward, summarised this view when he reflected that:

> "what you need is to be level-headed, you've got to forget 'us and them' and see their side of the problem. You don't push things, but plan out what you want to do. But this is seen as weakness by the 'agitators', you get caught in the middle".

Among these experienced but 'moderate' union members, then, 'independence' had become defined <u>against</u> the demands of some of their own workmates. Indeed for some it had become a virtue to ignore the criticisms of less 'responsible' workers: "to be thick skinned is the first requirement" was one man's verdict on this. Of course the very definition of 'independence' against 'agitators' acknowledges that such attitudes were not universal. I have already noted that <u>some</u> men did stress the active pursuit of grievances, and there was also one ex-steward who struck a rather different note than the others when he said that what was needed was "a certain amount of militancy <u>and</u> to be able to see the other's case". Also, there were hints that some workers had experienced and resented exclusion when stewards had exercised their 'responsible independence'. For example one man listed the key qualities of a steward as "to treat everybody alike, to keep us as much informed as we can be", and pointedly contrasted this with his own experience where "we've had some [stewards] who kept only certain parties informed". Nevertheless, despite such divergent views, the most distinctive and coherent motif among the contributions of the Clarks men was that of 'responsible independence' on the part of a good steward. This is a further indication that the experience of a group of older, experienced and skilled workers had been focussed into a distinctive outlook in the process of run-down and precarious survival of the Clarks works. This had, then, become a distinctive aspect of the crisis and breakdown of union representation which I documented earlier.

These differences of emphasis between the 'responsible' unionism at Clarks and the 'determined' unionism at Rolls were also evident in the more general assessments which workers made of the role of unions in the workplace. The pattern of views among Rolls workers concerning the scope of workplace trade unionism was quite similar to that at Doxfords, with half of the men opting for some sort of say in management. Furthermore the tone of the opinions pro and con was in many respects also similar to Doxfords, with the rehearsal of the virtues of consultation on the one hand, and the dangers of cooption on the other. Characteristic of aspirations for a 'say in management' were such statements as:

> "a restricted say, but some sort of say, possibly joint consultation";
> "it could cause animosity, but if it could be done it would be a good

policy, with more cooperation between the two sides".

Not surprisingly, given the distrust of management which I documented in the last chapter,[47] such involvements were sometimes seen as a way of gaining information and avoiding conflict:

> "I'd like to see us involved in management, to see the firm's point of view and the men's, to get the full picture, which would help to avoid disputes sometimes".

Nevertheless, as at Doxfords, those who endorsed having a say in management usually emphasised consultation rather than decision-making. One man did argue that:

> "unions should have a say in management matters so management wouldn't have a free hand. The more decisions the union can be involved in the better it will be for the workmen".

However, such a prospect of positive incursion into managerial prerogatives was voiced only very rarely.

On the other side of the argument at Rolls there were some who simply emphasised the critical importance of pay and conditions; as one said "as long as pay and conditions are good that's all you want"[48]. Others saw advantages in consultation, but still saw them as firmly subordinated to the focus on pay and conditions:

> "getting higher pay, that's the major thing, and a say in management only at the periphery. But no doubt they will discuss the running of the place, they ought to keep constantly informed rather than jumping when trouble arises".

But again, as at Doxfords, there were also those who explicitly spelt out the dangers of incorporation involved in having a 'say in management':

> "once they align themselves with management they're no longer union men";
>
> "it would possibly be nice to run industry as a coalition, but it's possibly easier for union reps to represent their members when they have someone to fight. It's clear as things are".

This last statement was made by the Convenor, and though more of his members endorsed some form of consultation than otherwise, his balancing of the attractions of cooperation against the effective representation of workers' interests captures much of the feeling on this issue at Rolls[49]. Such a mix of opinions had strong parallels with Doxfords, but what was lacking in the aero-engine works was any strong endorsement of management prerogatives, such as was provided by a few of the men in the marine-engine factory.[50] One man did say that unions already "have too much say, they're cutting everybody's throats all the way up, stewards and union bosses", but he had also

expressed the view that the stewards were ineffective at Rolls, remarking that "I'd prefer to put the case myself, they tend to give ground in their meetings with management". Furthermore, when he was asked about union power more generally he said that unions had too much power, but added:

> "there's got to be unions in such places as Rolls Royce, the way the foremen operate and with the blank on information from management, but they're indiscriminate".

Not only is this far from a general endorsement of managerial prerogatives, but in extreme form it underlines some of the complexities of opinion and experience concerning union representation. Thus his remarks about unions 'having too much say in management' seem likely to have been part of his sense of the 'indiscriminate' power of unions elsewhere, rather than a reflection on the situation at Rolls, whilst his grievance about unionism in his own workplace seemed to concern weakness rather than power, or possibly already established elements of cooption. In this case, then, some of the real dilemmas of effective union representation implicit in the Convenor's remarks were dimly reflected in a reconciliation of the conventional wisdom about over-powerful unions with the practical experience of limited power.

There were other echoes of this disjunction between the general and the particular among the minority of Rolls workers who endorsed the view that unions were too powerful. For example, one man claimed that "they have too much power in that they can virtually bring the country to a standstill, and at least sometimes it's unwarranted", but said of the union's role in the factory:

> "they should have a say in management. The unions should be employed in all decisions within the factory, as they're a representative body, capable of making decisions, and they should always be consulted".

Another rehearsed the theme of militant minorities which I noted among the Doxfords sample:

> "yes, they could hold the country to ransom, in that way they have too much power. Mainly dockers and groups like that. I'm dead against Communist influence".

However, almost three-quarters of the men at Rolls disagreed with the view that unions were too powerful, a clearly more decisive verdict than among the Doxfords men. Some of these allowed minor qualifications which recognised regional or occupational variations:

> "certain cases they may be a bit upsetting, but on the whole they've not got too much power";
>
> "in the country as a whole I don't know, but up here they aren't strong enough".

The dominant theme, though, was a clear defence of effectively organised union power:

> "they have an amount, but properly directed, and being more representative of the people, they can never have too much power in the country";
>
> "not really too much, it's all power play, blackmail in a way, but that's necessary".

In this regard the man who had been exceptional in his forthright advocacy of union involvement in management decision-making again put the point most strongly, but was closer to the mood of many of his workmates, when he said that:

> "I would like to see them have 'too much' power, because the more power they have, the better our lot could be".

On the evidence of their views about the role and power of unions, then, the workers at Rolls were <u>more</u> likely to advocate union power, especially in their own workplace, than were the Doxfords men; though both groups shared a similar spectrum of reactions to some of the strategic dilemmas facing workplace unionism when it comes to involvement in management decision-making.

The pattern which I have outlined so far appears to be entirely consistent with the more embattled position of workplace unionism at Rolls, where workers were facing both management efforts to intensify work effort, and the wider uncertainties of work in a branch factory of a recently merged and 'rationalising' corporate giant. However, the responses of the Rolls workers to my question about the power of big business were rather less predictable. For while three quarters of the Doxfords turners - facing a smaller, mainly local, employer who had compromised over pay structure reforms - had agreed that big business 'had too much power', only forty-four per cent of the Rolls men said the same. Certainly those of the Rolls turners who <u>did</u> feel business had too much power pinpointed the 'minority of big concerns', and particularly the people who controlled them:

> "money always speaks, like when combines take over the small firm. Too few people perhaps have too much power, there's perhaps a dozen that can dictate decisions to government";
>
> "they have too much power when you get a person influencing things without much interest in the firm, especially when they're closing down a works without much concern, like 'rationalisation'";
>
> "they've got too much power among the big combines, they would influence government decisions, but what can you do about it".

However, it was the equal number of men who felt big business did <u>not</u> have

too much power which appears anomalous, and I have no straightforward explanation for this finding, though as I noted in the last chapter the widespread criticisms of their own management by the Rolls workers were characterised by a more defensive tone and were more often personalised than were the criticisms of Doxfords workers.[51] Looking at the reasons which the Rolls men gave when they believed that big business was not too powerful, there were three main themes in the comments surrounding their judgements. Firstly there were some who saw over-powerful businesses as the exception rather than the rule. For example one man labelled the statement about business power 'exaggerated', and explained "it's only true when they monopolise an industry". Secondly there were others who saw business power as limited by union power:

"they would like too much, but the unions counterbalance their power. This is a development from what it was like in the past".

Perhaps a similar sentiment was embodied in such statements as:

"they do have a lot of say, but not such as to make slaves of anybody".

Such a range of reasons undermines any sharp contrast between those who said business had too much power and those who disagreed, but the third theme, the most common, still underlines a real contrast with the pattern of responses at Doxfords. That theme, the dominant one, was simply that big businesses necessarily had to have a lot of power:

"they have a lot but they need a lot. They do sometimes throw their weight around, but generally they're equiped to handle power";

"they've got to have the power to do the jobs they do";

"I can't see how you couldn't have them, their power is great but necessary".

Most of the men who made such points had also condemned their own management as 'worse than average'; indeed the first of these quotes was from the man who had exclaimed:

"management - stinking. They don't even consider the men. It starts at the top, they make the foremen what they are".

Thus for these Rolls workers, at least, there appears to be a disjunction between their general and particular judgements about business management, equivalent to, but with reverse values to, those which have been widely remarked in relation to trade unionism and industrial action.

However, such disjunctions do not themselves explain the apparently anomalous pattern of workers' attitudes at Rolls when compared with the views of the Doxfords, or even the Clarks, workers. If claims about a disjunction between 'dominant ideology' and immediate experience are to

be made in this context they cannot remain generalised, but must explain the differential appeal of conventional themes among the different workforces.[52] In regard to this issue my material can only provide rather limited hints, but some of the features of the criticisms of management at Rolls, which I commented on towards the end of the last chapter, begin to explain how these different assessments co-exist, and may even point towards the conditions under which they are likely to become a characteristic facet of shop-floor sentiment. Thus on the one hand there was a more widespread tendency to personalised criticism of local senior management at Rolls than at Doxfords:

> "it's his attitude, he's not a man. That permeates down the whole of management, they don't become familiar with the men on the shop-floor".

On the other hand, top company management were often seen as unaware of the state of things locally. Thus another of the men who felt that big business power was a necessity claimed that top management were "not informed, they work in ignorance". As I noted in the previous chapter, some of the turners at Rolls saw their local management as very much a product of the policy of a large combine, but among those who were not critical of big business power these themes of personal managerial inadequacy and top corporate ignorance predominated. Possibly such a perspective was reinforced by the technocratic aspect of the power of a massive, technically-advanced company where workers were less confident in their own skills and initiative than at Doxfords, so that top corporate power was less likely to be construed as malign, but this comment is inevitably speculative.[53] Even more so might be the suggestion that Rolls workers were more likely to have a sense of the limits as well as the imperatives of business power in a sector characterised by strong international competition and vulnerable to changes in state policy. Here, then, I have only been able to suggest the form in which contrasting assessments of local managements and big business power were held by perhaps a quarter of the Rolls men, and raise questions about some of the conditions which might sustain such views.

Turning finally to the issue of the link between the unions and Labour, somewhat more of the men at Rolls disapproved of the relationship, but they were also distinguished by being more likely to report that they <u>did</u> pay the political levy. Thus there was more of a disjunction between opinion and reported action on this issue than at Doxfords, though there were signs that similar considerations, such as the impact of incomes policies, had coloured the responses at both works. Thus one man remarked that:

> "I've always voted Labour, it stems back to my father, but imposition of the incomes policy has made that a thing of the past".

In this context there were a few people for whom the levy seemed simply a fact of life ("I'm not really interested, but it's not much to ask a shilling a month") and there were some Labour loyalists who voiced minor misgivings:

> "I approve, I don't mind supporting the Labour Party, basically I'm a socialist, though I think you should contract in, not out";
>
> "Yes, the Labour Party was founded by the unions, so they should have a say. Yes, I pay the political levy, have always been Labour, though now I'm rather suspicious".

However, a more common response among those who paid the levy was to distinguish the idea of political representation for the 'working man' from support for the Labour Party:

> "I always have been staunch Labour but the trade unions should have a political party of their own, rather than Labour";
>
> "I don't think they should have any particular party, they should support the working man. I was Labour at one time".

Thus there was real evidence of disillusionment with Wilsonian Labourism, but for these workers, as for those at Doxfords, the political implications generally remained very much within the orbit of established political competition, rather than involving any substantial re-appraisal of working class politics. Characteristic responses in this vein were:

> "I think they should be separate, though then again it's a working man's party. In that respect it's O.K. Up till now I'm Labour inclined, because there are just the two choices, but I'd like to see a stronger third party, maybe the Liberals";
>
> "they should be separate so you can make an independant stand. I'm not politically active, I disbelieve most of them, just selectively support particular policies. I've a long standing opt out of the levy".

It was perhaps indicative of the almost residual, a-political referents of the quite widespread appeal to 'the interests of the working man' in this milieu that Conservative loyalists could cast their arguments in very similar terms:

> "at one time it was better [for Labour and the unions to be linked] but now the Labour Party are not committed to the working man, they're just concerned with the country. I'm paying the levy but I wasn't aware I would be paying it, I'll opt out next year".

Thus at Rolls there was clear evidence of a commitment to a determined and effective trade unionism at plant level and beyond, and this was coupled with some scepticism about Labourist politics; but the aspirations of these unionists for their workplace unionism remained fairly modest,

their criticisms of management (those documented in the previous chapter) co-existed with divided opinions about the strength of top corporate power, and the dilution of political commitment to Labourism showed no signs of leading towards a radicalised working-class politics.

At Rolls, then, the experiences of rationalisation and skirmishes over job times appear to have given a certain combative edge to 'responsible' workplace unionism. As might be expected, the pattern at Clarks was rather different. To begin with, the view that unions should have a say in management was very much a minority one among the Clarks turners. It is true that a sophisticated argument for a modest role for unions in management was spelt out by one of the workers there:

> "You can't divorce them really. If you're negotiating on conditions and wages, you're obligated to abide by and thus cooperate with management, and that involves a say in decisions on the shop-floor. But unions shouldn't really be concerned with higher management decisions: management are needed to make the unpopular decisions."

But even such qualified endorsements of 'a say in management' were rare. The dominant emphasis was on pay and conditions, and this was justified in a variety of ways. As at Doxfords and Rolls, there were some people who saw pay and conditions as the key objectives for unions; objectives which might possibly be compromised by becoming involved in management decisions:

> "nothing to do with management, the union is just to protect their members";
>
> "getting higher pay and better conditions; let management look after the management side, and the unions look for the conditions and pay";
>
> "higher pay. One man cannot serve two masters, he will either be on the manager's side or the workman's side".

At the same time, though, there were as many who underwrote managerial prerogatives in a more positive fashion:

> "I don't think the men on the shop-floor in general have the ability to have a say in management";
>
> "really just pay and conditions. If I was a business man I wouldn't like it if someone told me how to run my business".

And from someone who elsewhere had remarked that he thought that management were 'too soft':

> "only pay and conditions; management should take advice from the <u>floor</u> but not from the unions".

Whereas at Doxfords and Rolls there was evidence of both an ambition for participation and anxieties about union cooption, at Clarks there was

little sign that the expertise of the skilled worker was often translated into expectations of union participation with management, though as the last quote suggests (and as would be consistent with the sense of personally distinctive expertise among some of these men) it could buttress claims to individual consultation.[54] Without a widespread feeling that cooperation might be sought through management-union consultation, the legitimation of managerial prerogatives by some workers combined with a defensive view of union functions among others to lead nearly eighty per cent of the Clarks turners to reject the 'say in management' option.

So far as union power was concerned these workers split more or less evenly between those who felt that union power was too great and those who disagreed. Among those who thought that the unions were too powerful characteristic responses focussed on union leaders ("in so much as union leaders are little Hitlers who misuse their influence" was one particularly sharp comment) or on political influence ("they stray into matters outside their orbit, they try to govern"), rather than on the sectoral militancy which the minorities of Doxfords and Rolls workers who chose this response tended to have in mind. Indeed, it was among those Clarks workers who believed that the unions were <u>not</u> too powerful that the theme of sectional militancy tended to emerge. Thus, alongside a few straightforward judgements that the unions had a reasonable amount of power, there were those who said:

> "the unions haven't got too much power, it just gets misused on occasion, strikes sometimes get out of hand", or
>
> "not too much power, no, they don't have a firm enough hand over their members".

Clearly a higher proportion of the Clarks workers than of the men in the other two factories held generally negative views about central union power, though some still counterposed 'responsible' trade unionism to sectional militancy. Alongside this, somewhat fewer than at Doxfords were critical of business power, though still nearly sixty per cent (clearly more than at Rolls) judged business 'too powerful'. With various nuances this majority made such judgements as "the really big business men do have too much power, the bankers for instance far outweigh the power of trade unions". On the other hand the minority who disagreed mixed fatalism and the endorsement of business acumen in such statements as "to run the country you've got to have big business men haven't you".

Finally, and despite their more critical attitudes to trade unions, the range of views at Clarks about the relationship between Labour and the unions

was rather similar to that at Doxfords, though with rather less evidence of recent disillusionment associated with the impact of incomes policy. Rather, the answers displayed a relatively settled spectrum of views: at one end there were some Labour loyalists who approved of the political connection and paid the levy; at the other there were a few Conservative loyalists who disapproved, most of whom had contracted out; and in between there was a larger grouping, generally Labour voters, who thought the unions should be less aligned in politics, sometimes mentioned the virtues of coalition politics and often claimed to have contracted out of the political levy. As an example of this latter grouping one man said:

> "the unions should be in politics as a whole, not necessarily Labour politics. I vote Labour, but I stopped paying the political levy when it increased a few years back".

Thus there were varied views about stewards, unions, power and politics even among the small grouping of workers I interviewed (and, as I showed earlier, these variations had sometimes congealed into specific antagonisms), but most of the range of argument was spanned by a 'responsible trade unionism' represented at its most radical margin by Labour and union loyalism. It is plausible to suggest that both the earlier work histories and the recent workplace experience of these men had contributed to this pattern, but my material does not allow me to unravel the significance of each given the complex interplay involved.

Having outlined the differing patterns of attitudes to trade unionism at Rolls and Clarks I now want to complete this comparison by noting the different experiences and assessments of industrial disputes in the two factories. At Rolls almost all of the men referred back to a recent strike, when a man was dismissed after refusing to work on a disputed job. The strike had gained the re-employment of the sacked man and had led on to limited concessions on the pay front, but, as will have been evident from my earlier discussion, substantial conflicts over wages and job times had remained unresolved[55]. It was this rather equivocal outcome which was reflected in the differing assessments of the strike on the shop-floor. The small majority who saw the dispute as having been clearly worthwhile focussed on what had been gained:

> "we were out for a few days in the dispute over the sacking, and lost four day's pay, that's all. It was worth it because when he was sacked the foreman had jumped the gun, acted indiscriminately, and he was reinstated and the job recosted";
>
> "the three or four day dispute meant loss of earnings, but we kept the lad his job so it was worth it".

Beyond this there was also the feeling that the character of management tactics was at stake:

> "the effect was nothing direct, except financial, we just supported it. It was worth it because it could happen again".

It was this point which was central to the Convenor's own assessment:

> "it was a traumatic experience as Convenor, soul searching and very hard work; but I think it was worth it, even though it should never have happened. It was our first sign of independence and it chinked the armour of managerial prerogatives".

Against such positive judgements, those who felt the strike had not been worthwhile emphasised the limits of what had been achieved. Though the strike had been shorter than that at Doxfords, the costs were still weighed against the limited gains, so that, as one man said when asked how the strike had affected him:

> "it was the money, it took weeks to get over it; and it wasn't worth it because we didn't get what we wanted out of it".

However, such assessments referred not just to the strike, but partly to the effort which had been involved before the dispute itself:

> "it was a four day strike after six weeks, so it wasn't worth it, what we got out of it. Six weeks over-time ban for a better pay structure, and we got the waiting time improved, that's all".

There was also some feeling that management had succeeded in recovering much of their position in the bargaining which followed the return to work:

> "it was a minor dispute, and it only affected us in terms of the money really, but it was not really worth it. Management have been more crafty or clever in the negotiations".

Thus the negative assessments were grounded partly in the experience of a reassertion of managerial prerogatives, alongside the continuing piecework grievances on the shop-floor, though it remained unclear what implications this might have for support for future industrial action. Certainly, as at Doxfords, the form of trade unionism at Rolls led to no general or unqualified endorsement of strike action. A similar proportion of my informants in each workplace expressed reservations, which were fueled not only by their knowledge of the costs incurred by workers on strike, but also by their awareness of the limits of what had been achieved in disputes which were essentially defensive responses to management provocations.[56] In such contexts the feeling that the dispute had been justified and successful as a riposte to management could co-exist with a sense that little positive had been gained. At Rolls, though, this latter sentiment was sometimes harnessed to a stronger sense of the need for more effective workplace action in a way unmatched among the Doxfords workers. While the ex-plumber articulated this feeling most sharply, he was not being entirely

idiosyncratic when he allied his judgement that "financially it cost somewhat but it was a waste of time" to his criticisms of both the District Secretary (erstwhile Convenor at Doxfords) and his fellow workers:

> "Runsiman turned face. I'm a great believer in the majority, but they turned tail then, they should stick to what they decided. It was a bonus issue, though it should have been more concerned with the job. Then again, they were sold promises, not money".

Thus the continuing conflict over effort bargaining at Rolls seems sometimes to have inflected the equivocations about strike action in a more militant direction, but the overall pattern of responses remained very similar to that at Doxfords.

At Clarks, however, the assessments of strike action were somewhat more negative. In the absence of any local dispute - there had been no strike against the redundancies at the works, though then, and at other times, other sanctions had been deployed - the Clarks workers recalled only national strikes, namely the one-day token stoppages of 1962 and 1968 and the longer 1957 strike organised under the auspices of the CSEU.[57] The minority who recalled the 1957 dispute were mostly quite positive, though there were one or two who distanced themselves from strike action of any sort. One of these recalled that:

> "I lost a fortnight's wages, and it takes a lot of weeks to get that money back. We got a rise in the end but it wasn't really worth it", and he added "I don't believe in strikes as a matter of fact".

More characteristic of the responses, though, were those who said:

> "ten days stoppage, we got what we wanted, but not what we should have got...Strikes are a last resort, like";
>
> "the official strike of a fortnight, we suffered financial loss as there was only £3 strike pay, but at the time I thought it was worth it, there hadn't been a strike for years and it showed the strength of the workers".

However, opinion on the more recent one-day stoppages was more negative. As one man put it:

> "the general engineering stoppage we were off a fortnight. It must have been worth it when we won a little extra. But I don't agree with the one-day national stoppages".

For some this was just a question of the pay: "the couple of one-day token strikes, we just lost a day's pay, it's not worth it"; but it was also allied to a feeling that the tactic was pointless:

> "national strikes, token strikes, affected us monetarily, but they were pretty well a waste of time; there should have been a full strike or nothing".

This was not the universal view. Another man argued "you don't gain financially, it's not worth it financially, but it's only a matter of principle", while another spelt out what this could mean in terms of his own experience:

> "it was just a day's holiday as far as most were concerned, but it did something for the backward firms. When I got paid off I found out how low some firms pay".

Nevertheless the predominant tone at Clarks was fairly negative, especially concerning the token strikes, and one man summed up the dominant mood when he reflected:

> "I don't think it was worth it at all, it's the working class's only weapon, but in the long run it's really them who suffer".

Such remarks were grounded in a slightly different pattern of strike experience than among the men at Rolls and Doxfords, as well as being consistent with the predominantly passive and somewhat individualised trade unionism of the Clarks men, but they do reinforce the theme of 'responsible' trade unionism there, while making clear that such an ethos by no means excludes support for some sorts of collective action.

Perspectives on Trade Unionism: a Resume

The limited evidence which I have outlined in this chapter gives further support to my earlier characterisation of a largely low-key and defensive trade unionism among these skilled engineering workers. Like most other workers their union activity was centred in the workplace, and there it tended to involve only a spasmodic and limited mobilisation to confront specific management challenges to a fairly settled pattern of craft labour. This pattern of experience tended to sustain attitudes which can fairly be characterised in terms of a 'responsible' trade unionism, in which effective representation of workers' interests was seen as the outcome of shop-floor circumspection and the use of established procedures and negotiations much more than any active militancy; and in which having an influence over management decisions was widely supported, but was often balanced by concerns about the dangers of union co-option and was rarely interpreted in terms of active encroachment upon established management prerogatives.

Such a characterisation captures significant features of the shop-floor unionism in all three factories, but should not be taken to imply any simple uniformity. Though the views and experience of the workers at Doxfords, Rolls and Clarks had significant features in common, the emphases in each case were also different in important ways. Thus my evidence suggests that,

even within such a specific occupational grouping as the Sunderland turners, sharing as they did a common niche in the local labour market, there were important variations in both patterns of union participation and attitudes towards trade unionism. Furthermore these variations appear to have been directly related to the distinctive ways in which the workers in the three workplaces experienced attempts at corporate rationalisation in this period.

In examining such variations it is possible to view the Doxford pattern as the occupational norm, with the experiences and attitudes of those at Rolls and Clarks as contrasting departures from that norm arising from the distinctive and contrasting impacts of a fuller rationalisation in those firms. However, such an assessment needs to be carefully qualified rather than taken for granted. It can only be fully justified by evidence that the dominant pattern of experience among skilled turners had been of the marginal, and quite successfully contained, rationalisation experienced at Doxfords, where the limited initiatives of management and the very effectiveness of craft unionism meant that low-key shop-floor vigilance stood in the background rather than the foreground of everyday workplace activity. When attention is confined to just the three Sunderland firms there is some evidence that such an assumption may be fairly adequate for much of the post-war boom. Thus it appears likely that the pattern of class relations at Clarks before the virtual closure of the works had had quite strong parallels with that which had been sustained at Doxfords, while the experience at Rolls seems to have been one of only a gradual divergence from the Doxford pattern, through a combination of dilution, a decline in relative wages and pressures for faster pace. More speculatively one may refer back to the material presented by such writers as Lee to suggest that similar patterns may have been quite widespread elsewhere in Britain during this period; though as I noted in the last chapter, his explanation of this is rather one-sided[58]. However, it is only in this specific historical context that the treatment of Doxfords as the norm may be justified; a point which is re-emphasised by the later fate of the Doxford workers in common with many other craft workforces[59].

The other side of this point is that the distinctive inflections given to the unionism of skilled workers at Rolls and at Clarks respectively must be regarded as significant forms in their own right; and quite possibly as forms which have become more important with the further impact of corporate rationalisation. Thus the variations between Doxford, Rolls and Clarks suggest not only that low-key workplace unionism may be sustained by a combination of the limited character of management challenges and the

efficacy of established union organisation and bargaining. They also imply that stronger management action and the need to actively contest management decisions tends to give such shop floor unionism a more abrasive edge; while lessened pressure for small groups of workers may exacerbate internal tensions and uncouple more personal notions of craft pride and competence from any active collectivism[60]. Furthermore, the range of views expressed within each of these workplaces implies that the seeds of these different developments were present in each factory, both in the internal texture and contention of attitudes and in the distinctive individual viewpoints (often rooted in specific work careers) which they contained. This is one reason why attention to the cross currents and minority opinions within the spectrum of viewpoints within each workforce remains analytically important alongside the consideration of dominant attitudes[61].

This evidence of internal occupational heterogeneity and change needs to be borne in mind as a qualification to any simple comparisons with the patterns of experience and outlooks among other groupings of workers, since none of the groupings concerned should be taken to possess a settled and uniform cluster of occupational characteristics. Nevertheless, having noted these reservations, such comparisons can serve to locate and specify a little more the distinctive features of the trade unionism of these Sunderland engineers. In this regard it is worth reiterating first that the pattern of workplace union participation among these turners was predominantly lower key and more muted than that documented for most of the groupings of workers in the Luton sample, while it would be difficult to regard their involvement in branch business as particularly significant or in any sense an alternative locus of such participation[62]. Turning to wider comparisons it seems clear that on the one hand the patterns of experience and views of these workers involved a less active and militant commitment to workplace unionism than that among Halewood workers or on the docks, but on the other hand the men at both Doxfords and Rolls remained active participants in shop-floor union activity in a way which contrasts with the informal and often individualised forms of resistance at ChemCo or the apparent passivity and 'externality' of craft unionism among Davis's maintenance craftsmen[63].

Turning to more specific comparisons of patterns of attitudes, I have noted that support for 'a say in management' was quite widespread among the Sunderland men, but, though this view was more popular than among most of the occupational groupings interviewed by Goldthorpe et al, it remained less pronounced than among the craft unionists in Luton, and markedly less than among the London dockers interviewed by Hill[64]. Thus, while it is

appropriate to suggest that the majority support for 'getting a say in management' at both Doxfords and Rolls had grown out of an ingrained scepticism about the conduct and intentions of management coupled with a sense of the craft competence of the shop-floor, there was certainly no direct or wide-ranging translation of such sentiments among these workers into notions of encroaching trade union control (a point only reinforced by the specific pattern of responses at Clarks). The limited character of the expectations of these workers in this regard is underlined by a fuller comparison with the responses of the dock workers studied by Hill. The London dockers expressed a rather stronger sense of a clash between workers' knowledge and managerial incompetence, which, despite some misgivings about union involvement in Docks administration, was allied with a more combative workplace unionism to sustain a more ambitious view of the appropriate union role in management decision-making. For the Sunderland craftsmen, on the other hand, the scepticism about management appeared to nurture a wary but largely defensive vigilance aimed at limiting the scope of active management control on the shop-floor, and though this was coupled with advocacy of a firm stance in collective bargaining it led mainly to fairly modest claims about the scope for more productive cooperation between unions and management.

Comparisons between the attitudes of such occupational groupings in regard to broader themes concerning the role and power of unions continue to sustain the diagnosis of a fairly settled, defensive but resilient trade unionism among the Sunderland engineers. Thus in regard to the question of union power the views of the men at Doxfords coincided quite closely with those of the London dockers and several of the categories of Luton workers in giving majority support to the view that the unions were <u>not</u> too powerful, while the Rolls men and the Luton craftsmen were even more decisive in this view[65]. Furthermore such a general asssessment was accompanied, in both factories, by support for effective steward representation and a measured endorsement of the necessity of strike action when provoked by management (again with the Doxford workers giving a more 'responsible' and the Rolls men a somewhat more 'militant' inflection to these views). In these ways, then, the ethos in these workplaces was substantially at odds with such dominant ideological themes as the overwhelming power of the unions or the irrationality of strikes; and among these workers there were strands of radical opinion and advocacy. At the same time, however, the limited levels of mobilisation characteristic of this unionism did not actively contest, and may even have helped to sustain, other interpretations of 'responsible trade unionism' which were critical of more forceful shop-floor action. Thus a significant theme of minority opinion among these turners contrasted the unionism in

North East engineering with the unjustified militancy through which such groups as dockers and car-workers protected their interests. The point I wish to make here is that such views, which interplay with the popular defence of trade unionism and shop-floor organisation, should not simply be seen as reflections of dominant ideologies. Rather, they should be viewed as active components of a defensive craft unionism, which work on real, though no doubt only partially understood, differences in the form and practice of trade unionism and on the practical dilemmas of effective collective action. As such they may gain greater salience in certain cirumstances, such as those faced by the workers at Clarks.

Turning to the question of labour movement politics, the level of scepticism about the link between Labour and the unions among the Sunderland men was greater than among the Luton sample (and <u>especially</u> their craftsmen), but was very similar to that recorded among the dockers and also among Tyneside shipyard workers in the same period[66]. Such views, alongside those on union power and the necessity of strike action in the face of management initiatives, certainly suggest that their settled and 'responsible' trade unionism had been somewhat unsettled, both by the pressures of rationalisation and by the impact of Labour's wage restraint during the late 1960s. At the same time, though, the responses of these workers suggest that such unsettlement had not then been resolved in any clearly radical direction. Thus the dominant ways of voicing doubts and criticisms about union-Labour Party links appeared to involve a reaffirmation of the old Labourist division of labour between the Party and defensive trade unionism, against both more militant politicised unionism and a more interventionist and restrictive corporatist statecraft, rather than any more challenging and radical response. As I noted in chapter four, Hill focusses on contrasts such as that between scepticism about political links with Labour and a strong endorsement of workplace unionism to argue that they reflect a characteristic disjunction of consciousness among dockers (and indeed other workers)[67]. Having already criticised this aspect of his analysis in terms of his own data, I now want to make two further points in relation to my findings. The first point is that there is less evidence of such a disjunction in the views of the Sunderland workers, since their scepticism about the links with Labour tended to operate within conventional conceptions of the relationship between unions and politics while their support for workplace organisation tended to be fairly defensive and to involve quite modest interpretations of such topics as 'having a say in management'. The second point is that, as I have suggested at several points in my discussion, any contrast between specific assessments and generalised ideological themes is too crude, for there are elements of the

day to day experiences of these workers, of a combination of reactive and low key trade unionism, differences in the policies of different firms and factions of management, real dilemmas in the pursuit of effective collective action, and internal tensions within these workforces, which may have helped to sustain the mix of assessments which I have documented.

Though I cannot, within the limits of my research and data, trace out any more fully the contention of different perspectives on trade unionism and politics within these factories, I believe that even this material suggests that the scepticism about Labour and the trade unions expressed by these workers should not be regarded simply as a calculative repudiation of Labour arising from the experience of a combination of wage restraint and sectoral restructuring. Nor should it be seen as evidence of any clear ideological rupture with Labourism. Rather it should be seen as evidence of a wider uncertainty and internal crisis of Labourist institutions and perspectives, which nevertheless involved the continuing predominance of various notions of responsible unionism, and continuing hopes placed in stable workplace organisation and settled bargaining relationships with the more competent and reasonable sections of management[68]. With the benefit of hindsight it is possible to reflect that such a complex political and ideological legacy was probably one of the major results of the uneven and contested processes of rationalisation of craft-based manufacturing industries under the auspices of corporatist state policies during the 1960s and 1970s.

A Final Note on 'Social Imagery'

The research and debate about social imagery which I reviewed in chapter four clearly demonstrated both the complexity and the plasticity of the elements of such imagery. The work on social imagery reviewed there showed how it may be penetrated by contradictory themes and how it may contain tensions between conventional and critical motifs, as well as its problematical relationship to specific arenas of social conduct. A recognition of these features initially reinforced the emphasis of the Affluent Worker study upon an open-ended and subtle exploration of social perspectives; then extended that theme to highlight the likely significance of internal inconsistencies and situational shifts in consciousness; and then finally undermined any inflated claims for the analytical significance of coherent and contrasting types of imagery[69].

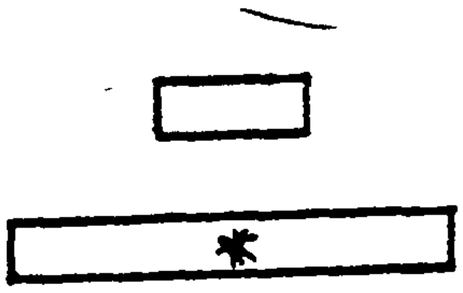
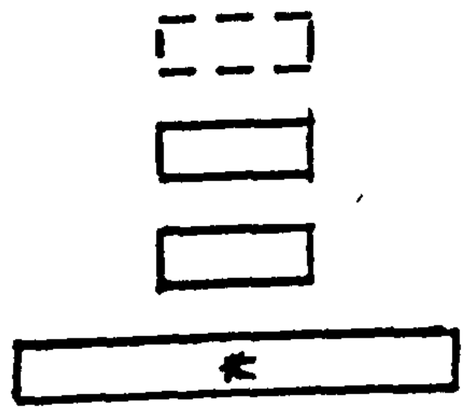
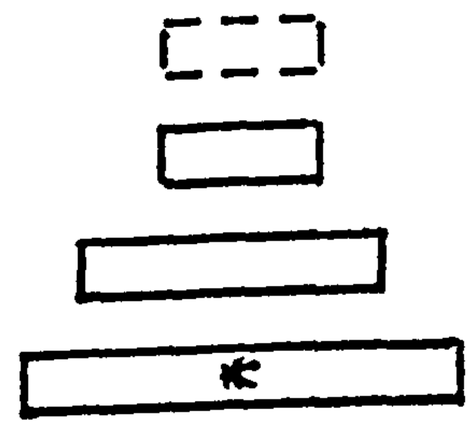
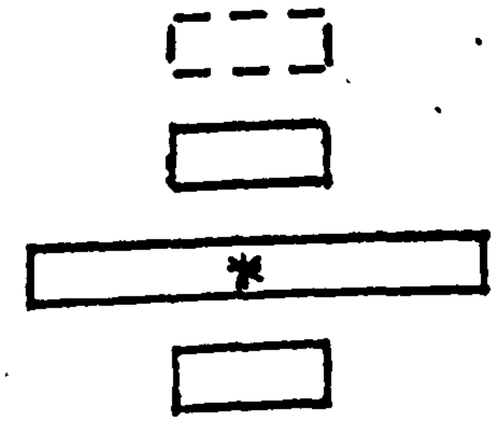
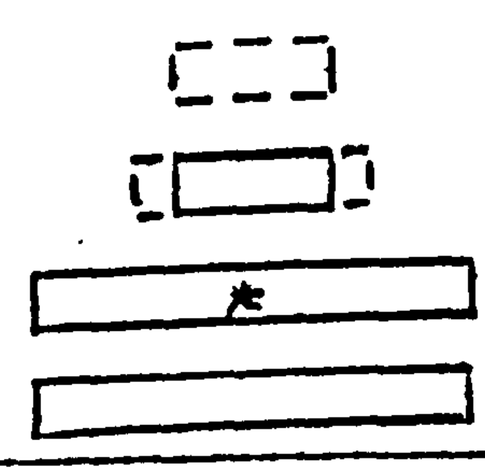
In relation to the ambition and sophistication of some of the resulting research on imagery and class consciousness my data on broad patterns of

social imagery among the Sunderland engineering workers is distinctly thin and rudimentary.[70] It consists of the responses which these men made to a group of questions at the very end of my interviews, which took as a point of departure the question 'what do you think are the main social groups in Britain today?', and followed this with some exploration of the composition and relationship of both class and (where they were nominated) non-class groupings; the class location of kin, friends and self; and patterns of mobility and change in the social structure.[71] Most people's answers were fairly brief and I did not seek to probe complexities or contradictions in the answers in any detail, though I did ask about the location of various occupational groupings such as foremen, managers, teachers and labourers. Given the limitations of this material I have relegated a discussion of my findings to this note, as a postscript to the discussion of attitudes to trade unionism. Nevertheless I believe that a brief review of the patterns of response to these questions will add a useful additional element to the analysis and understanding of the experience and outlook of these skilled workers on the margins of rationalisation, so long as the material is not over-interpreted.

My first move in analysing the material generated by the responses to my social imagery questions was to classify each respondent's answers in terms of their overall configuration, bearing in mind the argument of Moorhouse regarding the relative stability of such basic configurations[72]. For this purpose I utilised the classification of images developed by Cousins and Brown in their study of shipyard workers, because it provided a more comprehensive range of basic configurations than most other studies, and I found it relatively easy to assign responses to the available categories without distortion.[73] A further advantage of the classification provided by Cousins and Brown was that, by focussing on the shape of the class structure being talked about, it did not pre-judge the diagnoses of the causes and symptoms of the relationships mapped out by these configurations, and thus provided only a point of departure for exploration of the fuller meaning of these relationships.

As can be seen from table 33, the patterns of responses defined in terms of these configurations look rather similar for the Doxfords and Clarks workforces, and they both contrast somewhat with the pattern of responses at Rolls. In the remainder of this note I will provide a brief indication of the qualitative character of the views which I have categorised into each configuration. My intention is to draw out the key

Table 33: Patterns of Social Imagery

Configurations of imagery (adopted from Cousins and Brown 'Patterns of paradox')	Doxfords n=39	Clarks n=17	Rolls n=24	All n=80
	15%	18%	33%	21%
	49%	53%	25%	43%
	10%	12%	4%	9%
	18%	18%	38%	24%
	8%	-	-	4%

Notes: blocks shown in continuous lines represent main class categories;
blocks with discontinuous lines represent variations on main patterns;
asterisk identifies respondent's own class position (self-rated).

themes within each viewpoint while also paying some attention to the range of variation in perspectives which may also be involved. This overview then provides the basis for some final comments on the implications of this material.

As table 33 shows, the most common configuration was that which distinguished several classes above the respondent's own position within the working class. As with other configurations 'money' was clearly the dominant idiom in defining such a pattern ("what you own and how much money", "definitely money, it's obvious", "money has a tremendous amount to do with it, and the environment you're brought up in"), though a significant minority added or focussed on other features such as "position, goods and behaviour" or "qualifications and education". The working class was uniformly seen as much the largest group ("the majority of the population", "the largest majority is working class"), including alongside manual workers clerks, foremen, usually teachers, even some managers. As one man said "it's rather a mixed bag", but significantly claims to superiority among these groups tended to be regarded as pretentious: "it's the same sort of life, though some of them think themselves a cut above the working class", but in reality "no one's better than any other when it comes down to it". Alongside such sentiments, though, there was a clear recognition of two more privileged classes. At the top there was "the upper crust", "the very rich", which included such groups as the aristocracy, landowners, bosses, bankers, industrialists, and executives; while between them and the working class was a middle class defined in such terms as "the reasonably well off" or "the professionals", including managers, doctors, lawyers, accountants and the like[74]. Among those workers who outlined such patterns there was scope for differences of emphasis, for example between highlighting the aristocracy or big business in defining the upper class, or in stipulating which managers and professionals belonged within a more or less exclusively defined middle class. However the working class was very generally regarded as wider than just manual workers, while the upper class included top industrialists. Within this configuration there were also differing views on both the scope for social mobility and the likelihood of changes in the class structure. Many felt that "it would be very difficult, even if you got the money, say you won it, it would still be difficult", but others felt that "if you have the money it's not difficult to move up", while some pointed to education and qualifications as a basis for movement. So far as broader social changes were concerned there was a fairly even

split between those who felt "it will stop as it is really" and those who saw "class distinctions gradually diminishing, becoming less important". Thus for some the three class model captured an essentially static reality but for others there was limited fluidity and gradual change. Only one man saw potential changes explicitly as an issue of political power:

> "the working class is growing more powerful, and if it becomes more powerful and takes power things would change. The embers are there, but the ball hasn't started rolling".

The two class model has conventionally been identified as distinctively working class, and most likely to focus on power, but in my sample the two class configuration shared many features with the three class model which I have just summarised. The dominant idiom was again that of 'money': such statements as "money is the main thing, the crucial thing" and "money really, money talks" were very general, though they were sometimes supplemented by reference to additional bases of advantage such as "a few distinctions based on the old school tie". Despite the willingness of many of these workers to designate big business as 'too powerful' elsewhere in my interview, the theme of power was as uncommon among the men who worked with a two class model as among others. Thus these men tended to contrast "them that have got money and them that haven't", with businessmen and related groups of the well-off on one side and ordinary 'working middle class' people on the other:

> "now it's the ones who've got thousands, the directors, versus the middle class. There was a divide between the professionals and workers but that's rapidly evening out. That includes middle management, though they try to keep up a front".

So "big business are still separate", often along with some top professionals and the aristocracy, but for the rest "they are all one class now, the best part are really one class". For these men, then, the 'us and them' involved an 'us' which was much more inclusive than just manual workers. Though the cut-off point between the classes was still variously defined, the line was often drawn at "businessmen" while at the lowest "middle management's the dividing line". A corollary of this was that divisions within what was often termed the 'middle class' were seen as both diminishing and spurious, while the disparagement of such gradations was a stronger and more inclusive theme than within the other configurations. Thus not only foremen and clerks but also professionals and lower management "may think themselves better but they don't earn much more", while on the other hand "the working man doesn't regard anyone as his better". From this perspective social mobility across the boundary into the upper class was generally seen as

difficult: on one hand "if you've got the money you can move up" (though even then some felt that "it's not easy, you can never really get into the circle"), but on the other "it's difficult to get the money, it's by no means easy to come by", "to get into high society you have to win the pools or something". Thus the key characteristic of most of the responses framed in terms of two classes was an insistence, part moral and part empirical, on the common class location of the bulk of the population, set against the secure and exclusive privilege of "the rich". Thus it was more a modestly 'egalitarian' than a conflict model of society, underpinned by a belief that there had been real improvements and convergence in the lot of ordinary people but that there would be little change in their position in relation to the really privileged. Sometimes the convergence was projected beyond the working or middle class:

> "very difficult to move up into the upper class, the working class are still struggling in comparison, but the boundaries are breaking up, even between upper and working classes".

However such projections were in the minority while it was again even more uncommon to see this as an active process of the sort envisaged by one man at Rolls who argued that "the working class are now better equiped to invade the old fortresses". In many respects, then, those working with a two-class model used an imagery which <u>accentuated</u> key features of the 'money model' delineated in the Luton research - the inclusive definition of a large working/middle class which "discounted the manual-nonmanual distinction as a significant line of social cleavage"; the unlikelihood of social mobility which would be premissed on "some quite dramatic change of circumstances"; and the critique of white-collar claims to superiority as "'pretensions' and 'snobbism'" - rather than contrasting sharply with that model.[75] Furthermore most of these men saw themselves as "the collective beneficiaries of a developmental process rather than seeing their ... future as dependent upon the outcome of social struggles";[76] and this was true for both the optimistic two-thirds who felt that "things are changing, they're gradually getting better for everyone, that's progress" and for the less optimistic minority who felt that "things will stay the same really, it's evened out as much as it's likely to".

From the above discussion it should be clear that the contrast between the most popular three-class configuration and the two-class model (used by around twenty per cent of the respondents) should not be overdrawn. This point is strengthened by consideration of the second most popular of all the configurations, the three class model depicted by around a quarter of the sample where the respondent was a member of a large central class. Within

this category there were three almost equal groupings, two of which were complications of the two-class imagery I have just discussed. Both of these added a small subordinate class category beneath the 'working middle class', though they defined the subordinate category in rather different terms, while the third grouping was closer to the most popular three-class model in distinguishing between upper and middle class groups above their own. Once more money was the dominant reference point - "money's everything", "money and opportunities", "money's the key, I can compete on that basis with white-collar workers" - though among the third of my sub-groupings it was more likely to be qualified by reference to birth and upbringing, and a couple of the men in that group went further to define such features as more important than money:

> "it's the way you've been brought up; even if I had the money I'd still be working class. It's impossible to get out of it, but you might get your kids out of it".

For the first two sub-groups, though, money was clearly the crucial contrast in comparing the upper class ("business men and such, and professionals who lead a luxury life") and the working/middle class ("the middle class man is the working man", "there's a tendency to blend and expand into the middle", "the working class is more prosperous on the whole and is creeping up", though some white-collar workers still "give themselves airs"). Again the scope for mobility was usually seen as limited ("the upper is very exclusive, it's virtually impossible to get in") while broader changes were generally seen as having more or less run their course ("it'll now stop as it is, with the merger of the middle and working class"). What remained to differentiate these two sub-groups was their explicit recognition of those below and outside this merger in very different terms. While one sub-group saw such people in terms of poverty ("there are still some very poor people, the lower class", who are "struggling because they are very low paid, like the labourers in some firms, or unemployed"), it was just as common to see them in critical, moralistic, terms ("your lower class now is more the layabouts, the reckless, the neck-enders", who are "not trying to help themselves"). My third sub-group worked with similar moralistic categories ("the dregs", "the workshy") and also tended to be fairly pessimistic about the scope of social mobility or future changes in the class structure, though this was not universally the case, but as I have indicated these features were accompanied by a finer range of other distinctions, for example:

> "the socialites, brought up in the aristocracy, and some successful businessmen; then the middle class, bank-managers, senior executives and other management. The lower-middle class are the working men, say

> earning twenty-five to thirty pounds a week, and white-collar workers and foremen; then there's the poor, those who lack education, most labourers, the workshy".

In this third sub-category, then, elements of prestige and life-style distinctions interweave with, and qualify, the money model which prevails elsewhere.

Finally I need to comment on the two remaining categories I have distinguished, both of which were only rarely chosen. Among the nine per cent of men who adopted a three class model with a sizeable intermediate class above them the key feature was a willingness to designate white-collar workers as a distinct middle or lower-middle class ("those with a salary, like clerks or shop-keepers"), but still half of this group went on to emphasise that such a distinction was really one of somewhat spurious attitudes:

> "middle <u>think</u> they're better. Office staff are necessary but there's too many of them";
>
> "they're lower-middle class by attitude. I don't see people as better than me, I just see this as an attitude towards people".

As for the few men who defined a sizable class below them, they tended to distinguish between better-paid skilled workers in the middle or upper-working class and other manual workers ("those without a trade, struggling along", those "worse off, in the lesser trades, it's not their fault"). However, looking at the whole sample what is notable is the infrequency with which such distinctions, either between skilled and less skilled or between manual and white-collar, were marked as critical class boundaries. This did not mean that real differences of circumstance and attitudes among the bulk of manual and white-collar workers were denied, but rather that they were seen as inappropriate or insignificant bases of distinction compared with the contrasts between these workers and the professional and managerial middle class or even more clearly the rich, "the money men". As the comments I have just quoted indicate, even some of those few who did distinguish a sizeable white-collar middle class really shared such a perspective.

In summary, then, the following features emerge from this material on social imagery. Firstly, at the superficial level of such material, the money idiom clearly predominates, and from other features of these responses this emphasis appears symptomatic of a fairly static and relatively passive sense of given class relations. Moorhouse's argument that the money idiom may embrace an awareness of active power and contestation between social

classes should not be discarded even for these workers on the basis of this necessarily limited material, not least because the responses of these same workers when discussing union and business power often quite clearly identified significant forms of contention between workers and employers[77]. However, what is clear is that for these men a more immediate reflex when asked more generally about inequalities was to think in terms of an enduring contrast between the established privileges of the well-off and wealthy and the broadly common lot of ordinary working people. In this regard these men tended to see the privileges of the rich in rather fatalistic terms, while their views were more likely to have a critical edge when discussing the status pretensions of white-collar workers and semi-professionals. Certainly this critical emphasis was much more common than were condemnations of a subordinate stratum of the unskilled, inadequate or workshy, and indeed one of the most notable features of the social imagery of these skilled workers was the surprisingly limited salience of distinctions between the skilled and non-skilled in these general discussions, even where, as at Clarks for example, such distinctions had evident significance in day-to-day workplace relations.

The significance of this material clearly has to be treated with some caution, both in the light of the wider arguments about social imagery which I mentioned earlier and because my own research focussed attention upon workers' experiences of, and attitudes towards, class relations in the immediate process of production, without exploring the shifts and complexities of imagery. All that I wish to suggest here is that the pattern of social imagery which I have outlined, and in particular the predominance of a combination of a fairly inclusive conception of the working class and a relatively passive conception of social stability and change, is not inconsistent with the piecemeal and uneven experience of rationalisation among these workers, or with the parochially active but defensive trade unionism which represented their organised response to such initiatives. These features, together with the rarity of any more explicitly conflictual imagery at this level of discussion, may also be seen as indicative of another aspect of the potential resilience of a residual Labourist class consciousness among these workers, despite the internal tensions and uncertainties of such a perspective on trade unionism and politics which had been induced by a combination of state-initiated wage restraint and corporate restructuring.

In this sense the material on imagery, like that on attitudes to unions,

should not be treated in any straightforward fashion as evidence of a disjunction between specific and more general aspects of consciousness. The very unevenness of the impact of rationalisation, the sceptical and often somewhat personalised criticisms of management, and the manner in which subtle differentiations among skilled workers dilute any strong sense of collectivity, may all help to explain the continuing appeal of the money idiom as something of a lowest common denominator, which registers basic features of the distinctive fates generated by more fundamental class relations, without in any systematic way penetrating beyond those features[78]. In this context it is worth noting that the Rolls workers, who tended to espouse a rather more combative conception of trade unionism than did the other turners, were also distinctly more likely to adopt a straight two-class model of society, and when they adopted a three-class model were rather more likely to differentiate the 'working-middle class' from the poor, but this made the money idiom no less popular amongst them.

While an understanding of such imagery should not be given priority over the investigation and analysis of lived class relations within and beyond the immediate production process, it does remain worthwhile to seek to understand the appeals of such idioms as more than merely a reflex of 'dominant ideologies'. The practical pervasiveness of the cash nexus in capitalist society is properly emphasised in general treatments of this issue, but beyond this my case-studies of one section of the British working class hint at the ways in which the real complexities of lived class relations and the relatively settled character of certain forms of class accomodation may help to sustain such imagery[79].

chapter 9: footnotes

1 While I consider the responses under the first two headings in this chapter I do not report any analysis of the data on sociability in this thesis. I have excluded consideration of this material (i) because of deficiencies in the data, (ii) because of its marginality to my major analytical concerns, and (iii) because of scepticism about the significance attached to such data in the Affluent Worker analysis itself. On the second point see my comments on Hill and on Penn in chapters 4 and 8 respectively. On the third see ch. 2.

2 For details see Jack Eaton and Colin Gill (eds) The Trade Union Directory (second ed) London 1983, pp 85-86.

3 At Doxfords the Convenor was nominally a member of one of the sections/ workgroups I interviewed, but he was engaged for the bulk of his time on union work within the factory and rarely worked at 'his' machine. For this reason I excluded him from the sample of shop-floor workers from whom I sought a standard interview, and instead I talked to him about the pattern of workplace negotiations and trade unionism.

4 Among the few dilutees joining a union could come much later. One had joined the TGWU aged 38 when he got a job at the Gasworks which was a closed shop.

5 John Goldthorpe et al The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour Cambridge, 1968 p 96.

6 Ibid p 105.

7 Ibid p 99, table 40, and table 31 in the text.

8 Another factor, indicated by one respondent, was that some people went to the meeting especially for the ballot.

9 W.E.J. McCarthy The Role of Shop Stewards in British Industrial Relations (Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Research Paper 1) London 1966, pp 38-39. The date of the survey is given as 1964 in H.A. Clegg The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain Oxford 1979, p 44.

10 Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 103 table 43. The craftsmen recorded 88% regularly voting for stewards.

11 Goldthorpe et al Industrial pp 105-106, compared with the data in my table 31. Unfortunately Goldthorpe et al provide no qualitative evidence concerning the content of such talk, and it is systematically interpreted in terms of varying orientations rather than in relation to management initiatives which might differentially stimulate union-focussed conversation.

12 See the discussion in chapter 7, pp 135-137.

13 Since the convenor 'worked' in one of the sections at Doxfords some of these comments probably referred to his role as well as that of section stewards. See footnote 3 above.

14 Since it was this man who reported that he voted regularly for stewards because you then knew "what sort of chap you're going to get" (p 253 above) it is unlikely that this feature was being attributed to any non-representativeness of stewards as such.

15 Theo Nichols and Huw Beynon Living with Capitalism London 1977, chapter 9 especially the discussion of Alfie Grey.

16 This man later generalised his criticism to Unions and particularly union officials: "I don't like officials, I've never got on with the officials".

17 Compare Eric Batstone et al Shop Stewards in Action Oxford 1977, esp. pp. 40-53, and Mick Marchington and Roger Armstrong "Typologies of Shop Stewards" Industrial Relations Journal 14, 1983 pp 34-48. Batstone and his colleagues

provide a very brief indication of workers' expectations of their stewards and argue that the emphasis of the manual workers in their study parallels that of their manual stewards in focussing on leadership. However, their brief comments suggest that members' expectations involved criteria of steward performance quite similar to those adopted by the Doxfords workers:

> "On the shop-floor ... steward commitment is associated with expectations of leadership. What 'commitment' therefore involved is that, given the degree of freedom which members necessarily give to stewards who lead, they should not use this to their own advantage by working 'fiddles'. Along with this, shop-floor members expect their stewards not to be 'soft' with management or be fooled by them. Leadership involves a certain degree of independence in terms of relationships with management. Again, members are concerned that stewards should not abuse these relationships to the detriment of their members." (pp 112-113).

18 Compare Nichols and Beynon Living with Capitalism esp. part III, and Theo Nichols and Peter Armstrong Workers Divided Glasgow 1976, discussed earlier.

19 See table 32, page 256, and Goldthorpe et al Industrial pp 108-109, esp. table 47, where 61% of craftsmen but only between 22% and 46% of the other Luton groupings are shown to have endorsed getting a say in management.

20 Ibid p 108.

21 In the light of the material summarised in chapter 7 this suggests that such productive cooperation would operate on the basis of considerable craft initiative and autonomy on the shop-floor which would involve a reaffirmation of such features of craft production rather than any clear encroachment on managerial prerogatives more generally.

22 One version of such a perspective was developed in academic terms by Hugh Clegg in his A New Approach to Industrial Democracy Oxford 1960, while the dilemmas of encroachment versus incorporation are emphasised from a very different perspective by Arthur Scargill and Peggy Kahn The Myth of Workers' Control Leeds 1980. Some of the differing views on participation were quite strongly articulated during the debates among unions concerning the Bullock Report on industrial democracy, and some of the positions are outlined in Robert Taylor The Fifth Estate London 1980 pp 165-173.

23 This is important because, although such opinions were regarded as eccentric, they were not as sharply at odds with some more widely shared strands of opinion as some discussions of 'traditional solidaristic' work milieux might suggest.

24 see table 32.

25 Goldthorpe et al Industrial pp 110-114, tables 48 to 50 and quotes from pp 113 and 112.

26 David Butler and Donald Stokes Political Change in Britain Harmondsworth 1971 esp. p 211, and Political Change in Britain (second edition) London 1974 esp. p 199. Unfortunately the second edition provides only aggregate statistics which show a marked decline in the percentage endorsing close ties between unions and Labour between 1963 and 1966, with relative stability thereafter. The first edition provides separate figures for those who were union members in the 1963 and 1964 samples, and among these both the supporters of close ties and those who believed that unions should stay out of politics increased at the expense of the 'don't knows'. This suggests that the changes involved may have been more complex than Butler and Stokes allow.

27 Especially in Leo Panitch Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy Cambridge 1976. Panitch's documentation and analysis of the 'corporatist' role of British Labourism has combined a sensitivity to the internal conflicts and contradictions which beset Labourist trade unionism with an awareness that they would not automatically generate a more radical union politics, though this has left rather unclear the limits to the recuperation of Labourist

politics. See also Leo Panitch "Socialists and the Labour Party: a Reappraisal" in R. Miliband and J. Saville (eds) The Socialist Register 1979.

28 Butler and Stokes Political Change (2nd ed) p 198, footnote 2 for the figures for the electorate; Ivor Crewe "The Labour Party and the electorate" in D. Kavanagh (ed) The Politics of the Labour Party London 1982, p 39 table 1.11 for the figures for 'Labour identifiers'. As usual some of the complexities of the attitudes touched on in such surveys are only indicated in the footnotes. Thus Crewe notes of his 1979 data that when "trade union members were asked whether 'your own trade union at the place where you work is too ready to take industrial action or not?'. The answers were: far/a little too ready, 16%; about right, 52%; not quite/nearly ready enough, 28%" (page 47, footnote 15). In these sources the only analysis of union members' views on union power appears in Political Change (1st ed) p 210, where the 1964 data only are broken down by union membership and 1964 party vote.

29 Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 113 table 50, and my table 32 above.

30 Nichols and Armstrong Workers Divided pp 130-147.

31 Goldthorpe et al Political table 13, page 26, which reports the responses for the whole of their manual sample, not just union members; and Butler and Stokes Political Change page 198, footnote 2, which shows the percentage of their sample of the electorate believing that 'big business has too much power' declining from 59% in 1963 to 48% in 1970.

32 See the discussion of bargaining and sanctions in chapter 7, pp 93-108.

33 For details of these national strikes see Department of Employment "Large Industrial Stoppages, 1960-79" Employment Gazette vol 88, 1980, pp 994-9; and Richard Hyman "Industrial Conflict and the Political Economy" Socialist Register 1973.

34 Such an emphasis on the use of savings and deferred payment corresponds with the findings of systematic studies of strikers' finances, usefully summarised in Clegg Changing System of Industrial Relations pp 281-284.

35 Of course it should be noted that my question format invited such a stock-taking.

36 See Richard Hyman Strikes (1st ed) London 1972 p 129, and the findings of Crewe quoted in footnote 28 above, among others.

37 See tables 31 and 32, which provide the statistical background to the following discussion and are the sources of the statistics quoted in the text.

38 See chapter 8, pp 168-173.

39 It is worth noting here the observation of Stephen Hill in The Dockers London 1976 p 130, that in settings where there is a closed shop "membership tells us little about the nature and extent of people's involvement in their unions", and this, as well as the passage of time since many of the men first joined, limits the meaningfulness of this specific set of responses.

40 For the pattern of residence see chapter 5, table 1.

41 Table 31 above, and Goldthorpe et al Industrial p 105, table 45.

42 See chapter 8, esp. pp 182-190.

43 See the discussion in chapter 8, pp 198-200.

44 For examples see p 257 (first and last quotes) and p 258 (third quote) in relation to Doxfords; and p 275 (final two quotes) for Rolls.

45 Goldthorpe et al Industrial tables 45 and 46, pp 105-106; though it also seems likely that the aggregation of craftsmen from different factories in the Luton sample concealed significant variations in levels of discussion at Skefko and Laporte.

46 For an indication of the distinctiveness of his labour market experience within my sample see chapter 8, p 158.

47 See chapter 8, pp 189-194.

48 Though of course most of the men at Rolls did not take the view that pay and conditions were good at their factory. Unfortunately I did not seek to explore what implications this might have for this man.

49 It is also worth noting that in his earlier discussion of management the Convenor had remarked on the manner in which management ignored the skills and knowledge of shop-floor workers (see chapter 8, p 191).

50 See above, p 261.

51 See chapter 8, pp 189-193, for cross-references in this and the next paragraph.

52 For more general comments on the arguments about dominant ideologies, pragmatic accomodation and class consciousness see chapter 4 above.

53 Chapter 8, pp 191-192.

54 Compare the comments in chapter 8, pp 197-198.

55 For contemporary press reports on the strike see the Sunderland Echo 22.5.67 "Pallion works strikers decide to stay out" (page 1) and 23.5.67 "Pallion strikers going back" (page 1). See also the comment on the management's conduct of the strike in chapter 8, p 190. According to the negotiating records the issue of the prerogatives of foremen in dismissing workers, a central issue in the dispute itself, was still unresolved at a works conference in February 1968, t.u.f. p 1.

56 See table 32 p 256.

57 For details of the 1957 dispute see H. Clegg and R. Adams The Employers' Challenge Oxford 1957.

58 See David Lee "Skill, Craft and Class" Sociology 1981 pp 56-78, and my discussion in chapter 8, pp 218-236.

59 See, for example, the experience of machine tools discussed in Coventry Workshop Crisis in Engineering: Machine Tool Workers Fight for Jobs (Coventry Machine Tool Workers' Committee) Coventry 1979, and in the thesis in progress on the experience and organisation of workers at Alfred Herbert Ltd. by Ken Grainger (University of Warwick); and the discussion of contemporary challenges to the position of the craftsmen in the print in Cynthia Cockburn Brothers London 1983.

60 In this respect the men at Clarks appear to have reverted to forms of craftism and job control which are in some ways similar to those which preceded the more organised collectivism of craft unionism (see David Montgomery "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the Nineteenth Century" Labor History 17 1976 pp 486-509 for some discussion of this in the American context).

61 See the discussion of research on attitudes and imagery in chapter 4, and especially the comment of Cousins and Brown quoted on p 236.

62 See the discussion and data presented on pp 254-5 and 274-277.

63 See the discussions in Huw Beynon Working For Ford 1973 & 1984, Stephen Hill The Dockers 1976, Theo Nichols and Peter Armstrong Workers Divided 1976, Theo Nichols and Huw Beynon Living With Capitalism 1977, and Howard Davis Beyond Class Images 1979 chapter 5, all reviewed in chapter 4 above.

64 The relevant figures were: 'get workers/members a say'

Sunderland workers	Doxfords	52%
	Clarks	16%
	Rolls	50%
Luton workers	Craftsmen	61%
	Setters	35%
	Process workers	22%
	Machinists	46%
	Assemblers	28%
London dockers	Dockers	81%

Sources: Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 47 p 109; Hill Dockers table 7.4

65 The relevant figures were: 'Unions have too much power'

		agree	disagree
Sunderland workers	Doxfords	37%	59%
	Clarks	50%	44%
	Rolls	27%	73%
Luton workers	Craftsmen	27%	69%
	Setters	70%	30%
	Process workers	39%	59%
	Machinists	44%	56%
	Assemblers	43%	56%
London dockers	Dockers	40%	49%

Sources: Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 50 p 113; Hill Dockers table 7.4

66 The relevant figures were: 'Union support for/affiliation to Labour'

		support	keep separate
Sunderland workers	Doxfords	38%	57%
	Clarks	42%	53%
	Rolls	26%	63%
Luton workers	Craftsmen	61%	39%
	Setters	26%	74%
	Process workers	49%	51%
	Machinists	44%	50%
	Assemblers	37%	59%
London dockers	Dockers	32%	61%
		'should affiliate'	
Tyneside shipbuilders	Shipbuilders	38%	

Sources: Goldthorpe et al Industrial table 49 p 112; Hill Dockers table 7.4; Jim Cousins and Richard Brown "Patterns of Paradox" in Bulmer (ed) Working-Class Images of Society London 1975, table 4.10 p 75.

67 Hill Dockers especially chapters 6 and 10, and discussion in chapter 4 of this thesis, esp. pp 253-257.

68 An interesting indication of the continuing conflicts within the local institutions of Labourism concerning the division of labour between party and unions is provided by the threat of the district committee of the AUEW to disaffiliate from the Labour Party over the blocking of a private purchase of a shipyard closed by the state-owned British Shipbuilders. See Peter Hetherington "Union threat to leave party" The Guardian 24.5.76 p 5.

69 See the discussion in chapter 4, especially of the material in Bulmer (ed) Working-Class Images of Society.

70 In addition to the literature reviewed in chapter 4, there are particularly sophisticated treatments of survey and ethnographic material in Peter Hiller

"The Nature and Social Location of Everyday Conceptions of Class" Sociology 1975 pp 1-28; Paul Willis Learning to Labour Farnborough 1977; and Cynthia Cockburn Brothers, all of which in different ways develop far more sophisticated discussions than my material will allow.

71 See appendix for details, esp. questions 73-91. The very location of the questions in the interview, at one remove from the discussion of work and following discussion of social life, is likely to have pre-disposed people to focus on social relations in 'civil society' more than work.

72 H.F. Moorhouse "Attitudes to Class and Class Relationships in Britain" Sociology 1976 pp 469-496.

73 Cousins and Brown "Patterns of Paradox" esp. pp 67-72.

74 Such groups were often spontaneously mentioned but I also queried people about their position.

75 Goldthorpe et al Affluent Worker in the Class Structure quotations from pages 149, 151 and 151-2.

76 Ibid p 153.

77 See footnotes 71 and 72.

78 In this regard the analytical discrimination which Willis makes in Learning to Labour, between the penetrating and limiting features of consciousness, is critically important, but it should not lead to the assumption that those features which are limiting have no grounding and sustenance in lived experience.

79 It is worth noting here that in one of the major modern marxian discussions of processes of legitimation, that of Ralph Miliband in The State in Capitalist Society London 1969, especially chapters 7 and 8, the author acknowledges the centrality of experience of the practical exigencies of wage labour and market relations, but this comes at the end of the discussion of legitimation and ideological hegemony and does not involve any substantial consideration of the processes involved. See in particular Miliband's discussion in ibid pp 261-264, which begins with the statement: "there is one last aspect of the process of legitimation to which reference must be made, and which is of crucial importance, since it underlies all others. This is the degree to which capitalism as an economic and social system tends to produce, in itself, by its very existence, the conditions of its legitimation in the subordinate classes, and in other classes as well".

Conclusion

I began the research on Sunderland engineers which I have reported in the last few chapters very much influenced by the Affluent Worker study. However, both my own research experience and the wider critical debate which followed the publication of the Luton research led me to look more closely and sceptically at the analytical paradigm which it provided. As a result this thesis has been concerned both with a re-appraisal of the Affluent Worker study itself from within a marxian perspective, and with the presentation of my own research findings in a form which reflects that critical engagement.

In the first volume of this study I have, then, sought to pay the Affluent Worker study the appropriate respect of a thorough critical scrutiny, drawing upon, assessing and extending the substantial criticism and debate which has accumulated over the years[1]. While I have been sharply critical of many aspects of the empirical sociology of wage labour developed in the Affluent Worker, I have nevertheless focussed my attention on this major empirical study (and some of the further research which was stimulated by the Luton investigation), in the belief, shared by Goldthorpe and his colleagues and the marxian ethnographers alike, that analytical clarification and controversy must hinge around the substantial empirical investigation of the changing contours of contemporary class relations. I have summarised my critical assessment of the Affluent Worker debate in the conclusion to chapter four, and I have discussed some of the issues and implications arising from my own study at the end of chapter eight. Taking these discussions as read I intend to use this final conclusion firstly to make some final observations on the case study and secondly to reflect upon the contrast between the weberian focus on the market and the marxian focus on production relations which has been the organising theme of my discussion.

My own empirical study of the ways in which groupings of skilled workers in engineering experienced the rationalising efforts of corporate management has obvious methodological and analytical limitations, especially when measured against the benchmark of the wide-ranging critical discussion of empirical studies provided in volume one. Accordingly, in presenting my analysis in volume two I have sought both to repair some of the

limitations of my initial research and to give careful consideration to the strengths and weaknesses of my material, and on this basis I wish to highlight the following points.

Firstly my admittedly partial investigation of state and corporate strategies recognises that there are internal contradictions which become the focus of factional rivalries in the formulation and implementation of both state and management policies, and furthermore that there is a necessary hiatus between the initiatives of state agencies and of individual capitals[2]. Nevertheless I have sought to demonstrate that both state policies and specific corporate strategies represented responses to underlying problems in the organisation of capital accumulation, and that in this period these responses involved attempts to recast class relationships in terms of job losses and the intensification of labour without radically transforming or dismantling a craft-based labour process. I have also explored the strengths and limitations of the forms of leverage afforded to skilled workers in these circumstances, and thus the manner in which such corporate strategies were subjected to challenge and bargaining in their detailed implementation. On this basis I have sought to explain how corporate rationalisation in this period sustained craft organisation and consciousness, while at the same time involving subtle but significant changes of internal relations and meanings. While my own detailed study spans only a brief phase in the interplay between corporate restructuring and skilled labour, and has only a narrow geographical and sectoral focus, I have also argued that the processes illuminated by my own study are likely to have a wider relevance in understanding both the persistence and internal modification of forms of skilled labour within the capitalist labour process.

Secondly, following on from this, I have sought to explore how the variant forms of rationalisation developed by different enterprises, and the different ways in which they impinged on specific sites of multi-plant firms, gave particular inflections to the work careers and experience of specific groupings of skilled men, and elicited distinctive variants of workplace trade unionism. These features, together with the recognition that these craft labour processes sustained important internal differentiations among skilled workers, served to highlight both the subtle internal heterogeneity of this relatively cohesive occupational grouping, and the complex ways in which rationalisation worked on that heterogeneity.

I believe that some of the features of this heterogeneity, such as the centrality of surplus skills together with the selective reciprocities through which they were sometimes mobilised, were significant facets of the experience and consciousness of these workers; and that they need to be understood as part of any attempt to escape from the crude contrast between 'radical deskilling' and 'craft continuity' in understanding changes in this section of the British working class during the post-war period[3].

At this point, however, it is important for me to acknowledge that my theme of internal heterogeneity gains some of its prominence in my own analysis from the narrowness of my focus upon a specific occupational grouping of skilled workers. In particular it is difficult to place this internal complexity of the experience of craft work in wider perspective because of the lack of systematic attention in my research to relationships with other groupings of wage workers, such as those semi-skilled, unskilled and white-collar workers whose relationships with skilled workers have been pinpointed as important in other recent studies[4]. In this regard it is clear that one of the most substantial limitations of my own study is that the experience and activity of these other groupings of workers remain in shadow. Nevertheless I wish to suggest that the subtle internal variation and change which I have thereby highlighted also needs more analytical attention than it has hitherto received; and indeed that analysis of the dynamics of the internal social relations of craft labour and the investigation of inter-occupational relations must be treated as complementary in any full exploration of the contested impact of such corporate strategies as rationalisation and the intensification of labour.

Thus, on the particular, rather narrow, but in certain respects critical terrain of the study of craft labour I have sought to develop an analysis which grasps the internal complexity, and, by implication of the survival of such labour, the wider variation, of the experience of wage labour in terms of the dynamics of class relations in the immediate process of production. Furthermore I have then traced some of the ways in which major features of such craft labour, including its internal texture and tensions and the specific forms taken by contested management attempts at rationalisation, inform the consciousness of skilled workers. In this regard I have argued that the criticism and contestation of management policies in these firms was part of a low-key craft and trade union consciousness, which, though it included strands of radicalism which could be sharpened under pressure, showed more signs of being sustained as a

'responsible' trade unionism than of undergoing any radical transformation. I have also suggested that this was not merely the outcome of the established dominance of Labourist trade unionism, but that significant features of the experience of work relations among these men articulated with, and gave some vitality to, conventional ideological themes concerning such features as the personalisation of blame for management failings or the destructiveness of overt workplace militancy.

Thus my study suggests that for such groupigs of workers the experience of piecemeal and uneven rationalisation had, by the end of the 1960s, done little to challenge, and indeed may even have helped to sustain, the dominance of a circumspect, defensive and distinctly 'social democratic' trade unionism, though this was accompanied by little positive commitment to, and almost certainly some dilution of enthusiasm for, the politics of Labourism. In common with other workplace studies which focus on experience, organisation and consciousness over only a quite limited time and space, my analysis does not directly illuminate the interplay between the outlooks and understandings of these workers and differing political and trade union traditions within the wider labour movement. Indeed, my focus upon the range and texture of mundane rank and file experience and opinions, rather than upon the interventions of activists and moments of active mobilisation, means that in comparison with some of the marxian ethnographies discussed in chapter four these issues were woefully neglected; and this represents another substantial limitation of my research.

Nevertheless what the focus of my study does illuminate is the complex interplay between radical, oppositional, reformist and conservative themes in shop-floor consciousness among such workers. In particular it suggests that, while key features of lived class relations in these workplaces nurture a scepticism and hostility towards management and a fairly resilient corporate trade unionism, still conservative and reformist themes in popular consciousness also draw sustenance from certain aspects of the lived experience of wage labour; not least from the uneven character and impact of corporate strategies and the internal variety of experience and relationships within the skilled milieu. Among these workers, at least, such features are not simply superimposed upon an incipient workplace radicalism, but selectively articulate certain features of the immediate experience of skilled labour, even in the context of state and corporate attempts at rationalisation. This is not to suggest, like Burawoy, that the experience

and perspectives of these workers were fully encapsulated within immediate interests which reproduced established class relations; for their cynical view of management, their conceptions of craft competences and their refusals of effort each challenged the rationalisation strategies of management and implied radical needs and aspirations in contradiction with the logic of capitalist production[5]. But it is to recognise the contradictory character of the experience of wage labour among such skilled workers, and the problematical character of the articulation of such radical needs in a shared vision and active collective organisation.

Turning now to the contrast between weberian and marxian analyses of class relations, it has become a commonplace in recent decades for much sociological debate to take the form of a confrontation between these approaches, and in particular between the weberian focus on the market and the marxian focus on production relations. In the introduction I outlined my understanding of this contrast and I have organised much of the discussion in this thesis in the terms I set out there. In doing this I have not sought merely to pursue a simple and potentially misleading exercise in labelling, but to explore in some detail the relevance and implications of this contrast through both a critical discussion of earlier literature and a focussed empirical study. Thus in part one I argued that the Affluent Worker project represented an exemplary development of a neo-weberian class analysis, and that the problems associated with that study were substantially rooted in the limitations and dilemmas inherent in market-based class analysis. Furthermore, I sought to trace the continuing and debilitating focus on market relations in much of the following investigation and analysis of class location and social consciousness, and to point up the strengths of the marxian ethnographies which focussed upon the dynamics of production relations. In this context I also suggested that, somewhat paradoxically, neo-weberian market analyses failed to grasp the complex heterogeneity of the specific experience of wage labour; and that, though the marxian case-study ethnographies also left this feature inadequately explored, it could and should be a major focus of marxian analysis.

This argument, together with the analysis in my own case-study of the experience of skilled workers, suggests that the weberian claim for superiority in the analysis of heterogeneity, which received its classic formulation in Lockwood's critique of marxian accounts of the proletarianisation of white-collar workers, must be regarded as seriously flawed even though it poses a significant challenge to marxian arguments[6]. For such

neo-weberian analyses, based upon the operation of the labour market juxtaposed with the technical organisation of production, appear to operate with notions of market capacity which become idealised fictions abstracted from the dynamics of production relations, or otherwise they become absorbed into discussions of status distinction and social closure in civil society[7]. In saying this I do not want to argue that either the marxian or the weberian traditions are entirely coherent in their strengths and weaknesses, or that they cannot harbour variant heterodoxies. For having looked at the Luton study as <u>one</u> exemplary neo-weberian analysis, and then at only some of the ensuing debate on social imagery and on the market position of the skilled worker, I cannot claim that these features or limitations are universally or automatically inscribed within the weberian theoretical tradition (the tendency to discern such inevitable implications has, after all, bedevilled liberal and social democratic critiques of marxism). However I hope, by looking at such an exemplary study and debate, to have shown that these analytical problems are deeply rooted[8].

At the same time, while I have wished to emphasise the possibilities inherent in analyses of the dynamics of production relations and class relations in the immediate production process, it cannot be denied that weberian sociologists have been right to criticise marxian analyses for underdeveloped treatments of the internal heterogeneity of wage work. Leaving aside the debate about white-collar workers and the new middle class (which has been marginal to the focus of this thesis) the recent popularity of radical dual labour market theories clearly represents an important recognition of the need to develop analyses which grasp both the common features and the specific differentiated forms of wage labour; but at the same time such theories, which have focussed almost entirely upon management divide and rule strategies, have been rightly criticised both for being over-conspiratorial and for being functionalist, and also for failing to address the shifting and ultimately somewhat precarious character of the divisions upon which they focus[9].

In this regard what I have wished to assert is not only that the exploration of class relations within the production process must serve as the crucial basis for understanding the fundamental features of class struggle and consciousness, but also that it provides some critical starting points for more adequate marxian analyses of homogeneity and heterogeneity, and of unities and divisions among wage workers. In particular my

discussion of the debate about ~~about~~ skilled workers and the capitalist labour process in chapter eight suggests that the heterogeneity of wage labour should not <u>simply</u> be analysed in terms of the development of variant forms of what Burawoy terms the 'political apparatus of production', which have been the focus of attention in radical dual labour market analyses and in discussions of 'hard' and 'soft-line' managements[10]. Rather, such heterogeneity must <u>also</u> be seen as an outcome of the interplay of differing priorities in the organisation and reorganisation of the labour process arising from the distinctive accumulation strategies of different firms and sectors.

Thus on the one hand the imperative of renewed investment in capital equipment, to gain competitive advantage by improving or cheapening commodities, may sustain niches of skilled or specialist labour which cross-cut the general degradation of labour; while on the other hand the intensification of labour within established work processes, be they relatively skilled or unskilled, may represent an alternative route for renewed accumulation to that requiring any radical restructuring of class relations in production. Such divergences and dilemmas in the accumulation strategies of different firms and sectors involve distinctive terrains for collective organisation and action by workers, since, within the broader parameters of the relations between capital and labour, they offer distinctive sources of leverage and involve distinctive pressures and threats. On this basis the variations in the experience of wage labour, and the shifting and uncertain character of the resulting differentiations of bargaining leverage and advantage (which were one focus of my discussion in chapter four), need to be analysed as an outcome of the contested recasting of specific forms of the labour process <u>and</u> the 'political apparatus of production'.

Having developed this argument as far as I can within the bounds of this thesis, I want to add three final points of clarification concerning the status of my claims about the significance of transformations in the immediate process of production in specific firms. The first concerns the relationship between such attention to variant strategies and sources of heterogeneity in the immediate experience of wage labour, and arguments about the universal features of wage labour and common class interests. My argument is that the underlying common features of wage labour in capitalist society - exploitation, alienation, insecurity and struggle - are fundamental features of capitalist class relations, but that they do

not generate any simple uniformity of class experience. Rather, it is necessary both to recognise and to penetrate beyond the immediate differentiation and subtle heterogeneity of the experience of wage labour, by tracing how these features both arise out of, and are circumscribed by, the underlying realities of class relations[11].

The second point concerns the relationship between detailed explorations of the dynamics of accumulation in particular firms and sectors, and broader characterisations of what various authors have termed the dominant 'regimes' or 'structures of accumulation'[12]. My argument is intended to recognise and underline the range of variation of corporate and sectoral accumulation strategies which may persist within, and indeed characterise, specific regimes of accumulation; but it is not intended as an argument in favour of the mere elaboration of variation and complexity (though of the nature of a specific and limited case-study it risks having that appearance). Rather it should serve as a reminder that analyses of regimes or structures of accumulation operate at a different level of abstraction than characterisations of specific sectors and firms, so that the features of the latter cannot be read off in a one-to-one fashion from the former. Thus analyses of such regimes of accumulation need to clarify the basis upon which certain forms of labour process and modes of consumption become the dominant forms, and the ways in which they relate to competing, subordinate or marginalised forms.

Finally, by focussing my attention on the sources of differentiation and division arising from variant strategies of accumulation I do not wish to espouse a 'labour process reductionism'. As I explained in my introduction, my understanding of the marxian analysis of the social relations of production is of the particularisation of labour process, labour market and civil society as aspects of those social relations. In this context class relations in the immediate process of production are fundamental but not exhaustive, and interplay with forms of class organisation, struggle and accomodation beyond the labour process. Furthermore heterogeneity and divisions among wage workers are sustained and changed not only through the dynamics of class relations but also in terms of gender and racial divisions, which, as the arguments surrounding analyses of labour market dualism and the structure of the reserve army of labour demonstrate, cannot simply be understood in terms of class relations and the dynamics of accumulation[13]. In part as a result of the narrow occupational focus of my study, and in part because of the shared neglect

of these sources of division in both the market- and production-focussed analyses which I have examined, I have given no attention to the major analytical issues which are raised in trying to understand how racial and sexual divisions are both implicated in and reproduced through the organisation of divisions among workers within production. All I can do here is to acknowledge this absence, and to suggest that it does not undermine the specific analyses and arguments which I have presented, but rather indicates the need to integrate them with wider arguments in any fuller analysis of unities and divisions among wage workers[14].

conclusion: footnotes

1 As I have noted in the conclusion to volume 1, an overview of the reception, interpretation, critique and citation of the Affluent Worker studies, by Jennifer Platt ("The 'Affluent Worker' Re-visited" in Colin Bell and Helen Roberts (eds) Social Researching: Politics, Problems, Practice London 1984), was published after I had completed that volume; but, as I indicated, her discussion has not led me to wish to revise mine.

2 Such features have been regarded by some authors, such as Rose and Jones, as undermining the very notion of management strategy, but others, such as Child, have defended analyses of strategy, I believe in an effective fashion. See the contrasting arguments in Michael Rose and Bryn Jones "Managerial Strategy and Trade Union Responses in Work Reorganisation Schemes at Establishment Level", and in John Child "Managerial Strategies, New Technology and the Labour Process", both in David Knights et al (eds) Job Redesign Aldershot 1985; and also the valuable overview developed by John Storey in "The Means of Management Control" Sociology vol 19, 1985 pp 193-211.

3 As I argued in chapter 8, Lee and Penn do not escape from this dichotomy in their analyses presented in Stephen Wood (ed) The Degradation of Work? London 1982. In some respects the position which I am proposing converges with that developed by Paul Thompson in his discussion of the debate on the labour process in The Nature of Work London 1983.

4 See Bryn Jones "Destruction or Redistribution of Engineering Skills?" in Wood (ed) Degradation of Work? and Barry Wilkinson The Shopfloor Politics of New Technology London 1983 for discussions of inter-occupational relationships in the context of introduction of numerically-controlled machine tools in engineering; and Cynthia Cockburn Brothers: Male Dominance and Technical Change London 1983 for such relationships in the print. Major technical changes throw such relationships into sharper relief than do the piecemeal efforts at intensification experienced by the Sunderland engineers.

5 See Michael Burawoy Manufacturing Consent Chicago 1979, and the critical comments in chapter 8 above.

6 David Lockwood The Blackcoated Worker London 1958.

7 This characterisation is based on the arguments developed in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 8 above.

8 Of course similar arguments have been developed in relation to a wider literature in such studies as Rosemary Crompton and Jon Gubbay Economy and Class Structure London 1977.

9 See in particular Richard Edwards Contested Terrain London 1979 and Andrew Friedman Industry and Labour London 1977, and the critical assessments in Jill Rubery "Structured Labour Markets, Worker Organisation and Low Pay" Cambridge Journal of Economics vol 2 1978 and in Thompson Nature of Work chapter 5. See also my comments in the conclusion to vol 1.

10 See Burawoy Manufacturing Consent, and the marxian ethnographies discussed in chapter 4 above.

11 This is very much in line with the discussion in Richard Hyman "Occupational Structure, Collective Organisation and Industrial Militancy" in Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno (eds) The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe Since 1968 vol 2 London 1978

12 See in particular Michel Aglietta The Theory of Capitalist Regulation London 1981 for a discussion of the concept of regimes of accumulation, and David Gordon et al Segmented Work, Divided Workers Cambridge 1982 for the notion of social structures of accumulation. Critical assessments of these pioneering analyses have begun to give attention to the relationship between overall structures of social relations and the internal complexity and heterogeneity of forms of immediate class relations, for example in the discussion of Aglietta by Ciaran Driver (Capital and Class 15 1981) and in the critique of Gordon et al by Peter Nolan and P.K. Edwards ("Homogenise, Divide and Rule" Cambridge Journal of Economics 8 1984).

13 For overviews of the debates surrounding these questions see Michele Barrett Women's Oppression Today London 1980, especially chapter 5; and Robert Miles Racism and Migrant Labour London 1982, especially part two. A particularly interesting discussion of the qualified gender segmentation of wage labour, and the specific but shifting situation of women wage workers, is provided by Jane Humphries "The 'emancipation' of women in the 1970s and 1980s: From the latent to the floating" Capital and Class 20 1983.

14 An analysis which takes these issues on directly in the context of skilled labour is provided by Cynthia Cockburn Brothers: Male Dominance and Technical Change London 1983, and as such her study underlines these limitations of my ethnography and analysis.

Appendix The Interview Schedule

When I have presented interview data I have usually indicated the specific question in the text or with the table concerned, but in this appendix I provide a complete list of the questions which I included in my interview schedule in the sequence in which they were asked.

Name:

Could I start by asking you some questions about yourself?

1) Could I start with your age please?

2) Could you tell me how old you were when you left school?

3) What sort of school was that?

4) Where were you brought up (where was your home mainly during your school days)?

5) Where have you spent most of your life, then?

6) How long have you lived in this neighbourhood then?

Now coming up to the present

7) Do you own or rent your home? (Private or council rent?)

8) Are you married/single..?

9) Have you any children? Could you tell me their age, sex, school/occupation?

10) Could I ask, does your wife work?

10a) What sort of job is that?

If not at work

10b) Has she worked since you were married?

10c) What sort of job was that?

For all married respondents

10d) What sort of job did your wife do before you got married?

11) Could you tell me, what was/is your father's occupation? (if appropriate at retirement)

11a) Was that the job he spent most of his working life doing?

12) Now going on to your work, how long have you worked at ....?

13) Have you ever worked at any other firm?

13a) Could you tell me the firms you have worked for since you first started work, and the jobs you did in each?

13b) Were there any breaks in that time, in the services or of unemployment?

14) How did you get your present job (join this firm)?

15) What made you decide to take it?

16) Have you always done the same work since joining ...?

17) Could you describe just what you do in your job?
Probe: batches; conditions; progressing

18) If there was one thing about your job you could change, what would it be?

19) Did you like any of your other jobs more than the one you have now?
Probe: which and why.

20) Are there any other shop-floor jobs in ..... you would rather have than your own? Probe which and why.

21) Have you ever thought of leaving your job at .....?

21a) Why was that?

21b) Have you done anything about it?

21c) What made you decide to stay?

22) If you were offered a job in another firm doing the same work for more pay, how would you consider it?

23) Could you answer the following questions about your present job, in comparison with other jobs you have had or know of:

(a) Do you find your job monotonous in comparison?

(b) Do you find the pace of your work faster or slower?

(c) Does your job really give you a chance to try out ideas of your own?

(d) Do you find you can think about other things while doing your job?

24) Do you find you are free to leave your work for half an hour or so, or does someone have to take your place then?

25) Now going on to production and output. Do you generally have a target in mind for the day's work, or not?

26) Do you think there is generally agreement about what is "a fair day's work" among your workmates, or do you think people have different ideas?

26a) What about between workers and foremen, do they have similar or different ideas?

27) Does the foreman keep a sharp eye on your output, or does he leave you pretty much to get on with it?

28) What sort of things does the foreman generally look out for?

29) With the/a piecework system do you find that some rates are loose or tight, or do they seem O.K.?

30) What level of bonus, how much an hour, is normally expected on a fair job do you think?

30a) Is/was there a limit to how far you can/could go above that level without running into trouble?

31) Can/could you query a rate then?
Probe reasons for querying.

32) Now can I ask a more general question: what aspects of production interfere with getting on with the job?

32a) Which interfere with getting a fair reward (in the incentive scheme)?

Prompt for: run length; availability of work; breakdowns and interruptions; availability of tools and services; faulty materials; other things.

33) We've been discussing the obstacles to production, so I'd like to ask about work-study. Do you think work-study men are more concerned to make things go smoothly for everyone, or chiefly to make workers keep up a fast pace all the time?
Probe for experiences.

34) Following on from those questions, do you think the method of payment at ..... gives people adequate rewards for their efforts?

35) You are paid on an [hourly/piecework] basis; some workers in other firms are paid on [piecerates/timerates, as relevant] and many office workers get paid a fixed salary with nothing extra for overtime. Which method of payment would you prefer?

36) Now I want to ask about wages. Could you tell me roughly your average weekly take-home pay (including overtime) over the last four weeks; which category would it fit in?

37) I mentioned overtime, do you get any chance of overtime?

37a) How many hours did you work last week?
Is that typical?

37b) Would you prefer less overtime?

38) Do you work shifts, or just days?

39) Could I ask, what sort of arrangement do you have about the housekeeping money?

40) Finally on money, do you and your wife discuss together spending and budgetting? (If affirmative) What sorts of things do you discuss?
Probe for degree of planning and kinds of perspectives involved.

41) Now going back to your work. About the foreman, how well do you get on with your foreman? Would you say you get on very well, pretty well, not so well, or very badly?

42) What do you think makes a good supervisor or foreman?

43) Now could we go on to the management at .....? How would you say ..... compares with other firms as a firm to work for? Would you say it was better than most, about average, or worse than most?
(For good points mentioned:) Do you think there are many firms which would give you that?

44) Do you think that applies to top management or just to lower management?

45) Do you think the firm could pay you more than it does without damaging its prospects for the future?

46) Going on to Trade Unions now, are you a member of a trade union? Which is that? Have you held any union position? When did you join? What made you decide to join?

47) How often do you go to union branch meetings? Would you say you went regularly, sometimes, rarely or never?

48) How often do you vote at union branch meetings? Would you say regularly, sometimes, rarely or never?

49) What about voting for the shop steward, how often would you say you vote for shop stewards? Regularly, sometimes, rarely or never?

50) About the shop steward, what do you think makes a good steward?

51) And about union affairs; how often do you talk to your workmates about union matters? Would you say very often, a good deal, now and then or hardly ever?

52) And what about your shop steward, how often do you talk to him about your work and conditions? Very often, a good deal, now and then or hardly ever?

53) Moving on to more general questions about unions, some people say unions should just be concerned with getting higher pay and better conditions for their members. Others think they should also try to get workers a say in management. What are your views?

54) As you know, most Trade Unions support the Labour Party. Do you approve of this or do you think they should keep themselves seperate?

54a) Do you pay the political levy in your union dues then?

55) Some people say that the Trade Unions have too much power in the country, would you agree or disagree on the whole?
Probe: Reasons, and how much factual power.

56) To conclude the questions on industrial relations I'd like to ask: Have you ever been on strike at .....?

56a) How did it affect you?

56b) Do you think it was worth it in the end?

57) Now I'd like to ask about your workmates. Did you get to know your workmates at ..... or did you know some of them before that?

57a) About how many did you know before, then?

58) How about other people around the factory - would you say you knew many of them or just a few?

58a) Did you get to know most of them since they worked here, or did you know them before that?

59) In your job how much would you say you talk to your workmates; would you say a good deal, just now and then, or hardly at all?

59a) When is that, do you talk mainly during work or during breaks?

60) On your job are you moved around or do you normally stay on the same machine?

60a) How would you feel if you were moved to another job in the factory, more or less like the one you do now, but away from the men who work near you at present. Would you feel: very upset; fairly upset; not much bothered or not bothered at all?

61) How many of the men who work near you (in this shop) would you call your friends rather than just workmates? Probe identity.

61a) Do you see him/them outside work much?

61b) Do you see any other workmates outside work?

61c) Do any of them/does he live near you, say within ten minutes walk?

62) This brings us on to social life. I'd like to ask you something about your spare time activities. I'm not after private details, but just the general pattern of the things you do. First about home, what sort of things do you spend time on at home?

63) For married men. Also I8d like to ask about how you divide the jobs to be done at home, like washing up. Is it one or other of you, both together, or sometimes one and sometimes the other?

(a) Who does the washing up?

(b) Who does the main shopping of the week?

(c) For those with children: who is it who takes (or took) the children out when you're both at home?

(d) Who decides about buying new items of furniture?

64) Now about spare time in general, both at home and outside activities, could you try and think back and tell me what the main things you did last week were, starting with the weekend? I realise it can be a bit difficult. Note day, activity, time, place, and ask: Was that with anyone in particular?

64a) Would you say that's typical of the way you spend your spare time, or is there anything else that you often do?

65) I've asked about your leisure activities, now could I ask about people. How about the neighbours, how much do you see of them? Probe steretypes

66) And who would you say are the main people that you most often spend your spare time with? Could you tell me a bit about them? Their name/ relationship; occupation; how you got to know them, when; where they live?

67) How about friends you see less often?

68) Do you have many other friends that you keep up with just by meeting casually? Would you say a lot, some, a few or none?

69) We've been talking about your friends and your spare-time activities. How about having other couples around for the evening/ entertaining people at home?

If ever (a) when last?

(b) who is it that you have round - are they friends, relatives or who?

If never Does that include relatives?

70) Do you belong to any social clubs or organisations or anything like that?

If yes Have you held a position in it?

How often do you go?

Would you describe any of the people you meet there as friends rather than acquaintances?

70a) What about the works club?

71) You mentioned/haven't mentioned some of your relatives...so could I ask you a bit about what relatives you have, and where they live and so forth.

71a) Do you have any relatives living in this area?

(If yes) Could you tell me which relatives?

Where abouts do they live?

About how often do you see them?

Where do you see them/ What kinds of things do you do together?

71b) What about relatives who don't live in this area?

Do you ever see them?

(If yes similar queries to 71a)

72) Could I ask a couple of questions about the neighbourhood now?

72a) First, do you find you tend to loose track of friends if they move away, or can you keep in touch with them usually?

72b) Now which of these descriptions would you say fits this area? A pretty rough area; an ordinary working class area; a very mixed area; a nice quiet and respectable area; a rather select area.

72c) Do you like this part of the town/..... or would you like to live somewhere else? Probe why, (and if affirmative: where else?)

Well, now we come to a slightly different kind of question. So far we've concentrated on your work and your social life. At this stage could we turn to your ideas on some more general topics so as to get a rounded picture of the way you look at things?

73) Could I start by asking you how secure you think your present job is? Would you say dead safe, fairly safe, rather insecure or very insecure?

74) Do you see any prospect of short time or redundancy in the next twelve months?

75) What do you think your job might be in five years time?

76) Have you ever thought seriously of becoming a foreman?

76a) Just suppose you did become a foreman, what do you think your mates would feel about it? Probe why?

76b) How would you rate your chances of getting to be a foreman?

76c) What, then, stops you becoming a foreman?

77) Have you ever thought of starting up a business of your own?

78) Now going on to careers: If a son of yours were actually choosing a job at the moment, what sort of job would you prefer?

79) Ask about eldest son: what kind of job would you like .... to go in for?

79a) What sort of chance do you think there is that .... will get that kind of job; would you say it was more or less certain, about fifty/fifty, or not much chance?

79b) Suppose you knew of a better job than he could get in ..... going in another part of the country, would you rather he stayed here?

(Ask about the merchant navy)

80) About school and jobs, how far do you think there is equal opportunity for children from all sections of the community to get ahead these days?

81) Following on from that, what do you think are the main social groups in Britain today?

(If no mention of classes:)

a) What kinds of people are in each group?

b) What makes one group different from another?

c) People usually agree that there are such things as social classes; how do these compare with the groups you have mentioned?

(If classes mentioned:)

a) What kinds of people are in each class?

b) What makes one class different from another?

Probe location of such groups as foremen, teachers, managers.

82) What class would you say most [neighbourhood] people are in?

83) What class would you say you were in?
Possibly probe for class of male relatives, friends.

84) Is it possible to move from one class to another do you think? How do people move? How easy is it?

85) Do you think family life varies according to class?

86) Do you think there will be any changes in the future in the class picture as a whole?

87) Now finally about changes in your way of life: looking back would you say that your standard of living has improved over the last five years?

88) Apart from standard of living, do you think any other aspects of your way of life have improved?

89) In the next five years do you expect things to be better for you than they have been up to now or not?

90) What changes in your way of life would you most hope for in the next five years?

91) Do you forsee any changes, or do you plan any changes which might radically alter your way of life?

Thanks very much for answering my questions. Could I just add: is there anything else you wanted to mention or anything you would like to comment on further?

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Rolls-Royce (1971) Ltd.

for period 16.8.73-19.8.74

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for period 8.6.77-6.5.83

Rolls-Royce Ltd