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"A Question of Construction:
Capital and Labour in Wearside Shipbuilding
Since the 1930's."

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Department of Sociology
and Social Policy.

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- 6 JUL 1989

ABSTRACT

A Question of Construction: Capital and Labour in Wearside

Shipbuilding since the 1930's

Empirically the central problematics addressed in this study are twofold. Firstly, an account was sought to explain the apparent retention of control over the division of labour by workers in the 1930's, and their apparent loss of this control in the 1980's. Secondly, the view of the British Shipbuilding Industry presented by those working within the labour process tradition is questioned. Such work, claiming general applicability, was often partial in its geographical focus, upon the Clyde and Tyne, and in its presentation of social action at the point of production, focusing on issues of change rather than routinisation, and on the activist account of labour within the workplace.

In framing a largely non - activist account of the relationship between Capital and Labour on the Wear from the 1930's to the 1980's it was important to develop an adequate theoretical framework. This task is addressed in Chapter One where the issue of the nature of structure and agency are dealt with, and an attempt is made to "unthink dualism" on the basis of a "receding ontology" of material determination. This theory is related to the labour process tradition which is demonstrated to be an unsatisfactory basis for the development of the empirical concerns. Rather, the concept of the employment relationship is shown to be a more satisfactory focus.

On this basis the study looks at continuity and change within the industry and community on the Wear. Extraordinary episodes in the history of the industry, such as the employment of women during the Second World War, are detailed, as well as the more routine aspects of work in a shipyard. In relating these aspects to the wider community the debate engages with general accounts of the nature of the working class. The importance of a "cultural" perspective is developed throughout the work and control is seen to depend not only upon strategies of capital and labour, but also upon the development of moral legitimacy within relations of dominance and subordination.

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Copyright

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Declaration

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

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my mam and dad; they have lived the reality of which this work remains a pale reflection.

Acknowledgements

I owe many debts to people who have helped me, directly or indirectly, in the formulation of this study. I would like to thank all the workers from the Wear yards who gave me the privilege of insight into their lives, in particular I wish to thank my brother, both for his introductions and for "putting me right" on occasions. Of the Sociologists who have influenced me I must single out two individuals. Firstly, I would like to thank Neil Kelly for the most exciting introduction to the subject that anyone could have had. Secondly, I must acknowledge the immense debt I owe to Richard Brown, for his guidance as my supervisor, and for his personal example of what it means to be a good sociologist. I also express my gratitude to Peter Hughes and Gill Blazey for their efforts in deciphering my scrawl and making it presentable. Finally I must thank my wife, Lee, without whose encouragement this thesis would not have been written.

Introduction

This is a study of the changing nature of the division of labour in the shipyards on the river Wear in the 1930s and 1980s. The specific way that I have constructed this object of study has been influenced by two general factors. One stems from my intellectual development as a sociologist and concerns a search for a "valid" or "acceptable" framework with which to analyse complex social forms (about which more will be said in Chapter 1). The second is the general autobiographical development of my life, with both my father and elder brother being shipyard workers and my first job upon leaving school being in this industry.

Whilst there have been few published studies of the industry on the Wear, it is hard to overstate its dominance within the local culture, and, whilst its importance as a major employer had declined substantially in recent years, Sunderland remains a "shipbuilding town". If the existence of the industry gives a specific identity to the town, its impact on individuals within that town is often far greater. It is perhaps pertinent at this point for me to recall some of the past circumstances which have led to my preoccupation with this industry. They are meant primarily as a contribution towards a "natural history" of the research act, although the substance of what I have to say could be seen as deriving from "participant observation" of the most direct kind.

The shipyards in Sunderland physically dominate many panoramas within the town - this remains so even today with the large cranes and fabbing sheds or the covered berths of the Pallion and Southwick yards punctuating the skyline. As a small child one of several rituals to be practised during a bus journey to the "town" was, on crossing Wearmouth Bridge, to look for my father working on one or other of the ships being outfitted in the river below. This, on reflection, was a pointless exercise as they were too far away to identify individuals. However, there was something magnetic about the yards and the ships themselves, which never failed to attract the eye; for, as well as being excited at the flashes of welding or cranes moving huge loads, I always endeavoured to find out the names of the particular ships, especially the ones that "my dad had built". Shipyards prior to the days of covered in yards had the feature of visibility which is absent from factories constructed more with utility than visibility in mind. From where I lived on the outskirts of the borough the yards could not be seen, however, their presence assailed the senses in another form. The rhythmic sound of Doxford's engines being tested on concrete test beds, often over several days and especially nights, is unforgettable.

The importance of the overt physical presence of the industry lies in the effect of reinforcing identity. In this respect I remember being shocked in primary school by other children who either did not know where their father worked or had

only a vague idea of what he did. I knew both where my dad worked and, as importantly, that he was a craftsman and a plumber, on no account to be confused with "git big daft boilermakers". This was an important source of identity, albeit one that would prove constricting in the years that followed.

Identities are complex and dynamic forms defined in relation to differing groups at different times. If the importance of a specific craft identity was paramount at some times, its importance receded at others. For example, during the strike of 1968 a broader identity was pushed to the fore. This I felt directly at school, for as craftsmen's sons and daughters we were placed in the unusual position of having to stand up (literally) and claim free meals, an onerous task usually reserved for the sons and daughters of "yackers" (1). In this situation our dignity was salvaged by sticking together as children of shipyard workers, and for the duration of the strike this even had the effect of altering patterns of playground interaction.

An important point to make is that the capital/labour divide is not often felt by workers as a clear cut structural opposition on a day to day basis, it is always mediated through individuals. However, such relations include moral elements and the conflict born out of the employment relationship is experienced acutely when a moral conflict arises. In such a situation inequalities of power may preclude practical action, but events may serve to reinforce the validity of the "us" and "them" view of the

relationship. One example of this occurred during an unusual social event, in what was then Doxfords yard. As a reward for satisfactory and prompt delivery of several vessels for the People's Republic of China the new owners laid on a social evening for the workers in the yard (2). I recall going along to Doxfords canteen with my father where food and drink flowed in profusion. The "price" for this free refreshment was that we had to sit and pretend to watch a cine film of a ballet portrayal of the Chinese revolution. At one point my father and I went outside for some fresh air (the free cigarettes were being smoked with dedication). At the back of the canteen the door opening into the kitchen was wide open and several men were loading crates of beer into cars. These, I was later informed, were managers, and this event had a significant impact upon the mood of the people who found out about it. With remarks such as "they've even got to take part of our present from the Communists", and "it's the first time I've ever known managers do labouring work". The point was not the narrow one that the managers were getting some of the refreshments meant for the workers, but rather the way they were doing it - effectively stealing it out of the back door. Thus what was meant for collective consumption in one almighty "binge" was being driven off for individual consumption in the privacy of their own homes. A clear difference was seen between the excessive gluttony of some of the individuals in the canteen and the behaviour of the

managers. The acts of the individuals inside the canteen were "up front", you and everyone else knew who the "greedy ones" were. The managers were covertly removing the crates of beer whilst attempting to appear aloof from the collective consumption of the workers.

In the past it was always a common understanding within the working class community of Sunderland that if your father was a craftsman in the shipyards you would stand a good chance of being able to get employment there upon leaving school, if he would "speak" for you. It should be understood however that seeking work in the yards is not often a positive choice for such work, but rather is usually seen as a realistic goal and is often compared favourably with other work on the basis of competing deprivations. Thus I remember my father suggesting that I applied because the job was not as repetitive as factory work and you were not stuck behind a desk as in office work (pen pushing), and besides these what other opportunities were there? At the time I knew of none and therefore after a successful application I started as an apprentice plumber at the Deptford yard of Sunderland Shipbuilders (formerly Laings). It became clear after several months that I would only ever be a mediocre plumber. This fact coupled with the increasing realisation that I was not really interested in fitting pipes developed over the weeks until I did something unusual for someone in my position, I left. This act not only created friction within the family, principally

between my father and myself, but also had consequences wider than this. The response from most of my friends is hard to overstate. "You must be f---ing crackers" was probably the most common remark. Giving up a craft apprenticeship is not something one usually does in that community. If the response of my friends was that of bemusement, the response of others was sometimes less tolerant. For example my mother, who at this time was working in a packing factory in Sunderland, was "sent to Coventry" by several of her workmates. Some of these women had sons the same age as me, several of whom had applied (unsuccessfully) to become apprentices in the yards. For me to give up such a "good job" was not seen as a purely personal decision, but in some senses as contravening an accepted moral code, an act which reflected not only upon me but also upon my parents both for allowing me to leave in the first place, and following from that came the assumption that they could not possibly have given me a correct upbringing.

In relating the above recollections I have sought to establish that part of my interest in the industry and geographical area stems from direct personal involvement. On a more purely academic level the industry has some particularly interesting features. However as an area for research it has, to some extent, been neglected. For example as late as 1967 R.K. Brown et al stated in their proposal for research submitted to the Social Science Research Council that:

"No study of shipbuilding workers has been carried out, as far as we know, in this country, America or elsewhere." (3)

More recently the industry has received attention from those working within the labour process tradition (4). Historically the British industry appeared to offer a null case to Braverman's "iron law" of deskilling with the retention of the craft division of labour and the importance of the power of the workgroup (5).

"Because the work lends itself to self supervision the traditions of the industry protect the autonomy of the workgroup. It is a common feature of the industry that this often extends to some control over the times when the work actually starts and finishes. It also affects decisions about manning and about the allocation and distribution of overtime ... the extent and organisation of the craft content of the work has led to the emergence of a large number of distinct craft specialisations, each with its own skill, pride in work and control of much of the work process." (6)

Within the labour process tradition general explanations of the persistence of craft control within the industry have been built around the notion of the strength of the unions and the characteristic behaviour of British shipyard workers. Thus,

"British shipyard workers have characterised themselves in resisting at the point of production the expropriation of the control they have exercised over the labour process." (7)

In a similar vein McGoldrick has suggested that,

"The Boilermakers in shipbuilding were able to exert considerable control over their work because of their organised strength and also because of the divisions within the ranks of the employers." (8)

Both of these pieces of research address the introduction of the welding process in the inter-war period. We should however question the level to which we can generalise from them as they

have an overdependence upon events as they happened upon the rivers of the Clyde and the Tyne. The degree of specialisation of production on individual rivers is important as it can impose a particular pattern of output and can even be seen to hold implications for the nature of labour relations in a locality. The fortunes of the industry on individual rivers can and sometimes does exhibit patterns of development opposite to that of the industry taken on a regional basis. Thus whilst the industry in the North East of England has often been spoken of as a unity,

"... the three main shipbuilding rivers in the region have had and still have markedly different patterns of output, employment and types of ship built ... the North East's share of British tonnage fell in bad years and rose in good, the Tyneside yards performed in an exactly opposite way within the North East's total. In good years the Tyne's share fell, in bad it rose." (9)

Clearly then, generalisations about the development of British shipbuilding drawn from a study of one or even two particular rivers must be treated warily. The over-representation of the Clyde and the Tyne in past research further suggests the need for a study of a river such as the Wear, with its historical specialisation, until recently, on "tramp" tonnage in marked contrast to both the above.

The issue of specific locality involves broader issues than that of product specialisation alone. The cultural traditions of labour and capital are clearly built up empirically within both space and time (10). This is especially important in the case of

industries whose workers are seen to belong to an "occupational community". The specific quality of the local culture can be seen to influence the nature of the social relations of production within the workplace, as well as vice versa. This again points to the importance of seeing the empirical object as a particular historical individual. In this connection the context of shipbuilding upon the Wear would seem to provide a cultural background not only very different from that on the Clyde but also in some important respects different to that of the Tyne.

Moreover an analysis which consciously delineates the local context within the national industry has a potential which radiates in several directions. Firstly, as we have noted above, the analysis indicates the need for a more complex explication of the "structure" of the shipbuilding industry as it does not unconsciously generalise particular empirical instances as evidence of a general type. This does not mean that one cannot say anything about the characteristics of the British Shipbuilding industry in general. Rather it is to suggest that our characterisations need to have both a wider empirical base and be more theoretically complex. Secondly, following from an approach stressing a more complex understanding of the structure of the industry in its localities, the importance of the social action of workers and capitalists can be more clearly appreciated. Any tendency to subsume complex developments as the unmediated

outcome of the struggle between the structural categories of capital and labour can hopefully be avoided. At the general level this is clearly important in the shipbuilding industry where conflict within both labour and capital has been almost as important for shaping a particular development as conflict between the two "classes". At another level it hopefully allows one to see individual workers (and capitalists) as more than merely bearers of the mode of production, but rather as human agents struggling to make their own history even though under circumstances not chosen by themselves.

The above points are important and they present the possibility for the unification of the two sources of impetus of this work. The personal biographical connection which (hopefully) ensures that I cannot become totally insensitive to the meanings and actions of the individuals in the industry, and the more purely academic concern with the nature of the industry and its implications for current issues within industrial sociology, call for an account adequate at the levels of both structure and action.

The time period involved in this study focuses primarily upon the 1930s and the 1980s. In these periods economic crisis and depression have characterised both the shipbuilding industry and the North Eastern region as a whole. It has been argued that it is during such periods of crisis, when capital accumulation becomes problematic, that there is the greatest pressure upon

Capital to reorganise the division of labour ⁽¹¹⁾. If such an analysis is valid the periods under consideration in this study should present the best opportunity to witness attempts by capital to restructure the division of labour and possibly deskill the workforce.

It is these processes, or in some cases the lack of them, that form a unifying problematic for the whole study. The analysis of the problems understood by those in the industry to be facing them, theoretical solutions and actual courses of action taken and their effects, form much of the "comparison" between the '30s and the '80s. An initial position adopted after reading the secondary literature questioned why workers had apparently been able to retain control over the labour process in the inter-war period and yet had seemingly so easily lost it in the '80s. Both of these summations of the periods were to prove overly simplistic and that realisation came to dominate the research process as it proceeded. The effects of this realisation fed not only into the empirical account presented here, but also informed the theoretical elaborations outlined in Chapter 1 and are, I hope, evident throughout the work. In this sense the "comparison" between the inter-war period and the 1980s remains a valid one.

However it must be stated that these periods are not self contained, and in order to appreciate that process occurs within the "intersecting planes of temporality" ⁽¹²⁾ it will be

necessary to include a consideration of processes and events occurring at periods outside those of our primary focus.

The structure of the work can be divided into three parts. Firstly a section will be devoted to developing a theoretical approach which can facilitate an account adequate at the levels of both structure and agency. Secondly the inter-war and wartime (World War II) periods will be looked at and the developments on the River Wear will be assessed in the light of the available literature, which deals primarily with the Clyde and the Tyne. Finally the position on the Wear in the 1980s will be looked at and the continuities and the disjunctions with the position in the inter-war period will emerge.

Whilst the formal structure of this thesis can be outlined relatively easily, its empirical and conceptual content is more diverse. The sharp focus on the division of labour in the early chapters becomes increasingly of less importance in later chapters, where issues of the nature of the working class in both the work and non-work spheres assumes greater prominence. In a way this shift of focus represents the changes in the "natural history" of the research project. But it is also indicative of the changes of priorities that I as a researcher underwent during the course of this project. Those changes also represented a shift in methodology. From using largely historical sources and official documents for the inter-war period I increasingly relied upon ethnography and "participant observation".

In one sense this represented a natural widening of opportunity as the study moved to more recent times; however it also represented a shift from a detached strategy of research to one of attempting to get as close as possible to the subjects of the study (13). In this respect I found the strategy of using several key respondents superior to that of attempting to develop a more comprehensive coverage. Not only did this strategy allow for more continuity with respect to following events but it also gave me the opportunity to develop far greater depth to the study. In producing what Geertz has called "thick description" (14) a reliance on key respondents admits a greater degree of control over the validity of the accounts. Thus for example in Chapter 5 one may question the extent to which "sleeping on nightshift" was a routine occurrence, and how much of the accounts were built on exaggeration. My response is that first of all I lived amongst the key respondents and would not expect them to exaggerate to me. But more importantly the objective evidence of the validity of this particular detail was that the men involved, including my father and brother, were around and active during the day (15). These direct checks on the evidence were a feature of my position within the day to day life worlds of most of the key informants, a fact which also led me to appraise official documents and such things as employer and union minutes far more critically than could otherwise have been the case.

Such a methodology contains its own risks, and the danger of "going native" was obviously a potential problem in my case. However I believe that this research is not an uncritical celebration of the craft worker and I hope that I have avoided any tendency to sentimentalise the subjects of the research. How successfully I have avoided these pitfalls I shall have to let others judge.

Notes to the Introduction

- 1 Given the relatively low level of unemployment at this time those eligible for free school meals were identifiable as coming from a distinct "type" of family. Typically one where the family was long-term unemployed and would supplement the family income by hewing for coal on "pit heaps" and railway sidings. These men were locally known by the slang term "yackers" - not to be confused with "pit yackers", another term for miners.
- 2 The two vessels were built for the People's Republic of China in 1967 and as the Sunderland Echo commented,

"While in Sunderland for the building of these ships the Chinese technical staff and crew distributed badges, copies of the thoughts of Chairman Mao and were generally well received by the Wearsiders. To show their appreciation they staged a film show for the workers and their families. It was more propaganda, of course, but the gesture was appreciated."

The Sunderland Echo, 16 June 1972.
- 3 Brown, R.K. et al Orientation to Work and Industrial Behaviour of Shipbuilding Workers on Tyneside, January 1968 - December 1970, Research Report 1970.
- 4 Most notably McGoldrick, J. Crisis and the Division of Labour: Clydeside Shipbuilding in the Inter-war Period and Lorenz, E.H. The Labour Process and Industrial Relations in British and French Shipbuilding: The Inter-war Years.
- 5 Braverman, H. Labor and Monopoly Capital, London Monthly Review Press, 1974.
- 6 Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing, Commission on Industrial Relations Report, No. 22, H.M.S.O. 1971, pp109-118.
- 7 Lorenz, E.H. Op.cit. ppl-2.
- 8 McGoldrick, J. Op.cit. p66.
- 9 Cousins, J.M. and Brown, R.K. "Shipbuilding", Chapter XXI in: Dewdney, J.C. (Ed) Durham County and City with Teesside British Association for the Advancement of Science, Durham 1970, p322.

- 10 For example the characterisation of Clydeside as "the red Clyde".
- 11 Thus for example Gordon, Edwards and Reich have stated that:

"Our analysis begins with the observation that the present crisis is not the first in our history; U.S. capitalism has experienced at least three prior periods of sustained crisis. We argue that the resolution of these crises resulted in three major structural changes in the organisation of work and the structure of the labour markets in the United States."

Gordon, D.M., Edwards, R. and Reich, M. Segmented Work, Divided Workers, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1982.
- 12 Giddens, A. A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, London, Macmillan 1981, p19.
- 13 This, of course, also relates to the shift from the labour process and the division of labour as the central focus of the study to a concern with the nature of the working class.
- 14 Geertz, C. "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in:
Rice, K.A. Geertz and Culture, Michigan, University of Michigan Press 1980.
- 15 During this period my father built a greenhouse and dinghy as well as spending his time gardening and fishing.

CHAPTER ONE

The Theoretical Underpinnings

Part 1

"The weight of two and a half millenia of treating dualism as the obvious basis for effective thought is remarkably oppressive." (1)

It is necessary to enter into the theoretical underpinnings of this work for several reasons. Firstly, this is a work that attempts to be both consciously theoretical and empirical. (2) There are a series of overtly theoretical concerns which underlie even the "most empirical" parts of the following account. This leads on to the second reason why an initial theoretical excursion is necessary. One of the central features of what follows is an attempt to use a framework which can unite not only the concepts of structure and action but which takes seriously the project of "unthinking dualism". To grasp this point is of profound importance in relation to understanding what is meant in the analysis. In attempting to use such an approach I must confess to the adoption of what may be termed "theoretical opportunism". This work cannot claim an untainted theoretical pedigree in terms of being able to call upon the legitimacy of a single theoretical tradition (e.g. historical materialism, or phenomenology). Rather the eventual theoretical structure must be seen as an emergent property of the research itself, certainly as much so as any of the more "empirical" content. The reason for this lies not only in the wish to respect the authenticity of



the data but is also because, whilst the theory of the interaction or indeed the unification of structure and action is quite well advanced, the debate has not so far been too successful in terms of specifying particular approaches through which to operationalise these concerns. (3) However, having said this, it is perhaps useful briefly to review the structure/action debate in order to develop some of the features of the theoretical scheme to be adopted.

The first point to make is that the issues now dealt with under the heading of the structure/action debate are in no way new discoveries. These problems were wrestled with by the classic masters of sociology in their time:

"Durkheim, Marx and Weber each broke with the evolutionary theories of their contemporaries in their effort to develop an analysis of history which could identify pattern and tendency ... without spilling over into a trans-historical teleology which discovered possibility and probability in the interaction of purpose and structure without transforming the structure of action into a supra-historical developmental process governing both structure and action with law like necessities independent of human agency." (4)

Whilst these concerns are evident in the work of the best sociologists, the development of the debate in a reflexively self-conscious manner is a relatively recent phenomenon. It is important to realise that the structure/action debate as understood in this connection cannot be reduced to a duality of micro and macro approaches or the debate over the question of societal-individual priority. For as Zygmunt Bauman has noted this is to some extent a "phoney" question:

"Whatever factor sociological theory will eventually select as its central analytical concept, it will be well advised to beware of choices innate in the irritatingly barren argument over societal-individual priorities. It must be a factor operative on both levels. It must account for both, inextricably interwoven facets of human existence subjective and objective, determining and determined, creative and created, socialising and socialised. Then and only then can it be utilised in building models at once syn and diachronical, and bridging the so far isolated levels of individual situation and social structure in a way which does not beg the phoney question of the "priority" of one of the two modalities of human existence." (5)

Arguably such a movement towards a potential "central analytical concept" was well underway by the time the above words were written. The 1960s had seen a re-emergence and development of theoretical traditions which for some time had been in a state of relative neglect. Two of the most important of these, for our purposes, were the increasing influence of phenomenology in its sociological rather than purely philosophical guise, and the "flowering" of a wide variety of approaches claiming some point of allegiance to Marxist analysis. In the first of these developments two of the most able proponents, Berger and Luckman, began to sensitise us to the "social construction of reality" in which, following Schutz, the inter-subjective nature of the social world is emphasised. This intersubjectivity demonstrates that our understanding of the social world is not uniquely individual, but rather through the "reciprocity of perspectives", meaning is seen as an irreducibly social phenomenon; the abstraction of the "individual" from "society" becomes absurd. However Berger and Luckman did more than demonstrate this point -

they emphasised the importance of two phenomena which for later structure/action theory was to become indispensable, viz. the notions of language and temporality. Whilst much of their work amounts to a "popularisation" of Schutz, their real achievement was to grasp the implications of the Schutzian approach for wider sociological theory and thereby allowing the potential for a cross fertilisation of ideas to take place. (6) Whilst their book is structured around two main chapters entitled "Society and Objective Reality" and "Society and Subjective Reality", in the conclusion they state the essentially inter-related nature of these two abstractions:

"We are suggesting ... that the integration of the findings of such (their) analyses into the body of sociological theory requires more than the casual obeisance that might be paid to the "human factor" behind the uncovered structural data. Such integration requires a systematic accounting of the dialectical relation between the structural realities and the human enterprise of constructing reality in history." (7)

Similarly, at another point they produce a statement which in many ways prefigures the "developments" occurring in structure/action theory in the 1980s when they argue that sociology should be seen as a distinctly humanistic discipline:

"An important consequence of this conception is that sociology must be carried on in a continuous conversation with both history and philosophy or lose its proper object of inquiry. This object is society as part of a human world, made by men, inhabited by men, and, in turn, making men, in an ongoing historical process." (8)

The last sentence encapsulates several of the main features of Giddens' "theory of structuration". The recursive character

of social life is clearly grasped, as is the fundamental importance of temporality and process. Here then we have a work which is, at the very least, attending to some of the same concerns which later became identified under the heading of the structure/action debate, and as will be argued later the contribution from such phenomenologically informed work has great potential as part of an approach to the "paradox of agency". (9)

A second major influence upon the shaping of the problematics that became the structure/action debate has been the work of Marx and later scholars working within a broadly defined Marxian tradition. Marx himself was, as Abrams has pointed out, centrally concerned with the problem of agency. As one of the most quoted passages from "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" makes clear:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." (10)

In another passage in the "Grundrisse", the concerns of agency are located within a framework which overtly recognises both the recursive nature of social reality and the necessity of temporal process:

"Everything that has a fixed form, such as the product etc., appears as merely a moment, a vanishing moment in ... (the) movement ... (of society). The direct production process itself appears only as a moment. The conditions and objectifications of the process are themselves equally moments of it, and its only subjects are the individuals, but individuals in mutual relationships, which equally reproduce and produce anew ... in which they renew themselves even as they renew the world of wealth they create." (11)

Perhaps of more influence for the emerging shape of the structure/action debate of the 1980s than individual passages from Marx was the post war development of a variety of forms of "Marxist" theory, and in particular the emergence of "western Marxism". One of the catalysts in this development was the rediscovery of some of the works of Marx himself. "The Paris Manuscripts" (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844) were published for the first time in 1932, and the "Grundrisse" was effectively first published in its original German edition in 1953. Both these works were of considerable importance and fuelled the debate as to the "true" nature of Marxism. Much debate centred around the question as to whether or not there was an epistemological break in the work of Marx considered as a whole. The argument of those who support the notion of such a "break" suggests that in his early work Marx was concerned with man in the abstract, an overly philosophical view in which the legacy of Hegel dominated, producing a concern with alienation, whereas the mature Marx aspired to scientific socialism and a concern with political economy. The 1844 manuscripts were seen as the turning point between these two phases and as such were the spur to the debate. The "Grundrisse" on the other hand seemed to present evidence to back up those who denied that such a break took place. As Istvan Meszaros pointed out, within the "Grundrisse" there are many examples of the concerns which were supposedly those of the young Marx:

"(It shows) not only how wrong they are who assert that "alienation" has dropped out from Marx's later works, but also that his approach to the discussed problems is essentially the same as in the Manuscripts of 1844 ... Here (in the "Grundrisse") we even have the "anthropological" notions of the early Marx, together with the conception of the supersession of alienation as the transcendence of the abstract mediated character of human activity." (12)

It is not our concern at present to enter into the details of this debate; rather what is to be noted is the importance of the "Grundrisse" as outlined in the above quotation (ref.11) and the contribution of both this document and the "Paris Manuscripts" as "cannon fodder" in the developing schism between the "two Marxisms" of critical and scientific Marxists. It is in the practice of the confrontation of these two opposing tendencies that some of the most useful accounts (for the developing structure/action debate) have been produced.

One such confrontation was the debate between E.P. Thompson and Louis Althusser concerning the nature of history and the role of human agency. Althusser, the structuralist, proclaiming that "History is a process without a subject" (13), whilst Thompson insists that history is to be seen as "Unmastered human practice" (14). The position taken by each of the authors would seem to be the exact polar opposite of that taken by the other with the status of structure being seen to be of central importance. Thus for Althusser:

"The structure of the relations of production determines the places and functions occupied and adopted by the agents of production, who are never more than the occupants of these places, in so far as they are the "supports" of these

functions. The true "subjects" (in the sense of the constitutive subjects of the process) are therefore not these occupants or functionaries, are not, despite all appearances, the "obviousnesses" of the "given" of naive anthropology, "concrete individuals", "real men" - but the definition and distribution of these places and functions." (15)

Thompson's view of structure and agency is very different and he widens his attack from "Althusser's orrery" to include other non-structuralist approaches which comprise:

"The sociological section: the elaborate differential rotations within the closure of the orrery; the self-extrapolating programmed developmental series; the mildly disequibrated equilibrium models, in which dissensus strays unhappily down strange corridors, searching for a reconciliation with consensus; the systems analyses and structuralisms, with their torques and their combinatories; the counterfactual fictions; the econometric and cleometric groovers - all of these theories hobble along programmed routes from one static category to the next. And all of them are Geschichtenscheissenschlopf, unhistorical shit." (16)

For Thompson and Althusser there can be little agreement, the authors inhabit different universes of discourse and as such the gulf between them cannot be bridged. (17) In this context the emphasis upon structure or agency is exclusive and both positions are predicated upon opposite ontological and epistemological bases. The debate would appear to be sterile in relation to the further development of the structure/action debate. However, this is not the case because of the secondary comment that Thompson's attack upon Althusser provoked. In this connection Perry Anderson has raised several points, one of which is of particular importance for our purposes and this concerns the potentially heterogenous character of human agency. Anderson

suggests that Thompson does not distinguish between "agency" directed at different types of goals:

"... if agency is constructed as conscious goal directed activity, everything turns on the nature of the goals. For it is obvious that all historical subjects engage in actions all of the time, of which they are "agents" in this strict sense. So long as it remains at this level of indeterminacy the notion is an analytic void." (18)

The author sees a three part distinction of "types" of goals pursued by agents. Firstly, "private goals" - these are the goals pursued by the majority of the people for the majority of the time:

"... (the) cultivation of a plot, choice of marriage, exercise of a skill, maintenance of a home, bestowal of a name. These personal projects are inscribed within existing social relations and typically reproduce them." (19)

Secondly there are goals which are "public" in character. These for example would include such things as religious movements, political struggles, military conflicts, diplomatic transactions, commercial explorations and cultural explorations. Here:

"Will and action acquire an independent historical significance as causal sequences in their own right rather than as molecular samples of social relations ... However these (goals) too in their overwhelming majority have not aimed to transform social relations as such - to create new societies or master old ones; for the most part they were much more limited in their (voluntary) scope." (20)

Finally, according to Anderson:

"... there are those collective projects which have sought to render their initiators authors of their collective mode of existence as a whole, in a conscious programme aimed at creating or remodelling whole social structures ... essentially this kind of agency is very recent indeed." (21)

The author goes on to suggest that in this sense the Russian revolution represents the beginning of a new kind of history founded upon an "unprecedented form of agency". The importance of this formulation for the confrontation of structure and agency in the dispute between Thompson and Althusser is that the former conflates the three types of agency, appealing, the vast majority of time, to types 1 and 2 in order to make Althusser's claims about structure look silly. The result of this conflation by Thompson can be seen to be ironic:

"The conceptual error involved is to amalgamate those actions which are indeed conscious volitions at a personal or local level but whose social incidence is profoundly involuntary with those actions which are conscious volitions at the level of their own social incidence, under the single rubric "agency". The paradoxical result of Thompson's critique of Althusser is thus actually to reproduce the fundamental failing of the latter, by a polemic inversion. For the two antagonistic formulae of a natural human process without a subject and "ever-baffled, ever-resurgent agents of unmastered practice" are both claims of an essentially apodictic and speculative character - eternal axioms that in no way help us to trace the actual variable roles of different types of deliberate venture, personal or collective, in history." (22)

Whilst one may agree with Anderson's conclusions upon the positions adopted by Thompson and Althusser, the question now becomes how far does his own formulation of the three-fold differentiation of goal-directed agency escape the charge of being essentially apodictic and speculative? At first sight the division seems sensible enough; however on closer inspection several problems become apparent and in general these are rooted in the taken for granted dualism between structure and agency

which Anderson accepts uncritically from the polar positions of Thompson and Althusser.

Firstly, his opposition of "private" and "public" in the first two "types" of agency seems overly simplistic. Consider several examples given by the authors of the private goals which are pursued by:

" ... the overwhelming majority of people for the overwhelming major part of their lives." (23)

These include: the cultivation of a plot and choice of marriage. In the first example the cultivation of a plot may be seen as a private goal if the plot concerned is a garden or allotment cultivated as a hobby or pastime. However, where that cultivation is the source, either totally or in part, of subsistence of an individual or group its social significance can take on distinctly "public" dimensions. For example Perry Anderson himself has outlined the significance of the stabilisation of agrarian settlement in the passage from "Antiquity to feudalism":

"Once agrarian settlement was stabilised, and military campaigns became longer-range and lengthier, the material basis for a social unity of fighting and tilling was inevitably broken. War became the distant prerogative of a mounted nobility, while a sedentary peasantry laboured at home to maintain a permanent rhythm of cultivation, disarmed and burdened with provision of supplies for royal armies." (24)

Whilst it may be objected that such developments are the unforeseen consequences of action and therefore are not part of agency "consciously goal-orientated action", nevertheless the

goal will vary with the context, in terms of both the absolute orientation (i.e. cultivation as a pastime, provision of subsistence or for the production of a surplus product) and relatively, in terms of the "slippage" that can occur between the "private" and the "public", for example in times of changing land use (25). The second example of a private goal given by Anderson, that of choice of marriage, also fits rather uncomfortably under the heading of "personal projects". For as anthropologists have shown there are differences between cultures in relation to the "rules" governing who can or will marry whom. Thus prescribed marriages may be the norm in some societies, whilst the lesser defined preferential marriage may characterise others. When other complications such as rules relating to endogamy and exogamy or formally arranged marriages are introduced the notion of the choice of marriage partner as an example of "private" goals involving purely personal projects becomes increasingly problematic. The "public" element involved in the "choice of a marriage" should be clearly understood:

"Since the obverse of any system of marriage prohibitions is the necessity of finding a spouse from among those permitted, this system itself results in the formation of tiers running in every direction through the society, what Fortes has called the "web" of kinship and others call a network ... It has been remarked of the Nuer that the prohibitions on marriage which they recognise, taken together, have the effect that a young man looking for a wife is pretty well obliged to find her in some other village than his own. The advantage of this is not that he brings in "new blood", but that every marriage creates a new link between the small village groups ... It is no accident that in French the word "alliance" still refers to marriage. Often marriages form the bond of peace between groups that

would otherwise take hostility for granted; many peoples, in Africa and elsewhere say "we marry whose with whom we fight." (26)

Again, the slippage that exists between the public and private domains is evident. In this sense what Anderson fails to realise is that the very notions of the "private" and the "public" are socially mediated and therefore the position of an individual act can be variously located depending upon the type of society which we are discussing.

Greater problems are evident in Anderson's differentiation between the two "public" types of agency the one in which "the goals pursued have been characteristically inserted within a known structural framework", and the other in which the goal is that of "creating or remodelling whole social structures". Such a division implies an overly simplistic notion of structure and is to a large extent idealist. Thus Anderson appears to suggest that the action of agents either reproduces the given form of social relationships (in his view the structure) within a society or in the third type of agency aims to smash them. This view assumes an extreme polarity (either reproduction or revolution), thus agency that is not directly orientated towards the overthrow of the existing structure of social relationships is seen merely to reproduce them (27). Not only could such a position lead to insensitivity in analysing differing forms of civil society (e.g. Fascism or Democracy) built upon the same mode of production (e.g. Capitalism), but it also trivialises the role of

institutions such as trades unions which in the absence of revolutionary goals could be seen in this way as "functional" for the reproduction of the social relations of capitalism. Such a position has indeed been adopted by some orthodox Marxists, who, following Lenin's insistence that there is a rigid dichotomy between trade union consciousness and revolutionary socialist consciousness, have sought to portray the effect of trades unionism as leading to the institutionalisation of industrial conflict and thereby becoming the "junior partners of capitalist enterprise" (28). Others who have developed a more thorough going historical analysis of trades unions (as institutions involving rank and file members as well as leaders) often adopt a more historically contingent conclusion. Thus as Tony Lane has suggested of the trades union movement in Britain in the late 1960s and early 1970s:

"That the trade unions proved an integrative force did not mean that they had been totally absorbed and incorporated into the State - despite appearances to the contrary and the implications of the standpoints of some right wing trade union leaders." (29)

Lane goes on to show how rank and file pressure effectively frustrated agreements between the T.U.C. and the governments of the period on incomes policy, thereby ensuring that the unions could not be used as "instruments of State policy" (30). The point to be made here, then, is that the importance of the trades union movement cannot be reduced solely to the level of Anderson's first type of public agency, characteristically

serving to reproduce existent social relations, neither is it totally orientated towards the transformation of those relations; rather it has potential to be active on either level both as an agency of reproduction and disruption, a "double tongued sign" indeed, to use E.P. Thompson's phrase. In other words the extreme dichotomy between the reproduction of existent social relationships or their transformation (one is tempted to write of factors functional or dysfunctional for the maintenance of social order) cannot hold - there is historically and empirically little evidence for the existence of such "pure" forms of agency.

A final problem with Anderson's typology concerns his second type of public agency - that which "sought to render their initiators authors of their collective mode of existence as a whole in a conscious programme aimed at creating or remodelling whole social structures". Anderson suggests that the Russian Revolution is the "inaugural incarnation" of a new kind of history founded on this unprecedented form of agency. However he goes on to note that:

"Notoriously, the results of the great cycle of upheavals it initiated have to date been far from those expected at their outset." (31)

The problem with this kind of analysis defining agency purely in terms of conscious goal orientation is that it is idealist. Given the unanticipated consequences of the social action which were initiated in the Russian Revolution the question must be how different is this "recent form of agency"?

The efficacy of this "unprecedented" form remains unproven (although still a potentiality). It would be possible to analyse what Anderson is talking about not as a new form of agency but rather as a form of ideology.

Anderson's project of detaching different levels of agency will not necessarily further our understanding. Indeed it may lead to the trivialisation of the everyday life worlds of individuals and groups predicated upon an overly simple conception of the processes of reproduction of social relationships; one which sees conflict and consensus as mutually exclusive rather than as a processual dialectic. However, the debate between Thompson and Althusser and Anderson's comments upon it have been useful in ensuring the development of the structure/agency debate within the Marxist tradition. But to some extent within that tradition this problematic remains marginal and is usually subordinated within the wider concerns of Marxism. Partly because of this the tendency to view structure and agency as two mutually exclusive categories remains. To address the problematic of structure and agency in a more reflexively self-conscious form we need to look at developments outside specifically Marxist social theory.

One starting point for this project is the work of Alan Dawe (32). His analysis locates the origin of the "two sociologies" as a response to the problematics raised during the enlightenment, the French and the industrial revolutions:

"There are, then, two sociologies: a sociology of social system and a sociology of social action. They are grounded in the diametrically opposed concerns with two central problems, those of order and control. And, at every level, they are in conflict. They posit antithetical views of human nature, of society and of the relationship between the social and the individual. The first asserts the paramount necessity, for societal and individual well being, of external constraint; hence the notion of a social system ontologically and methodologically prior to its participants. The key notion of the second is that of autonomous man, able to realise his full potential and to create a truly human social order only when freed from external constraint." (33)

Dawe goes on to suggest that underlying both sociologies is, in fact, the notion of human agency, in the sociology of social system such a view predicates the destructive nature of agency, in the social action approach the view is of creative energy (34). Ironically in attempting to transcend the division between the two sociologies the author has merely replicated the problem. Because his vision of these two opposed doctrines is built upon other dualities such as those of the individual and the social (despite the disavowal of this very duality), and his view of structure and system is one that emphasises constraint, Dawe's "solution", in his later work, is to opt for a naturalistic methodology suited primarily to situations of co-presence. His concern with the "appropriate communal foundation of genuine moral individuality" has led him in the end to emphasise only one side of the duality as authentic. Thus he quotes Martin Buber with approval:

"The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each, considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction ... The fundamental fact of human existence is man with man ... All real living is

meeting." (35)

The appeal to naturalism to overcome the increasingly theoretically complex problematic of structure and agency (or system and action) is tempting. However, in this case it is also limiting for instead of achieving a synthesis Dawe has merely opted for one side of the duality and thereby locates agency in what Anderson referred to as "private goals". The result is not only that "structure" is ignored, but in seeing sociology metaphorically as conversation the potentially wider contexts or "reach" of agency is restricted. Thus:

"... peoples' lives reside in the details. So, therefore, does human agency. Peoples' lives are the details, the fundamentally communal details, the materials with which they weave their lives, strand upon strand. So, therefore, is human agency:

"All over the great round earth and in the settlements, the towns, and the great iron stones of cities, people are drawn inward within their little shells of rooms, and are to be seen in their wondrous and pitiful actions through the surface of their lighted windows by thousands, by millions, little golden aquariums, in chairs, reading, setting tables, sewing, playing cards, not talking, talking, laughing inaudibly, mixing drinks, at radio dials, eating, in shirt sleeves, carefully dressed, courting, teasing, loving, seducing, undressing, leaving the room empty in its empty light, alone and writing a letter urgently, in couples married, in separate chairs, in family parties, in gay parties, preparing for bed, preparing for sleep; and none can care, beyond that room; and none can be cared for, by any being beyond that room." (36)

Such an approach may retain its grounding in and articulation of human social experience - the sour and weary modern experience of isolation and privatisation (37), but in resonating to and affirming as authentic such experience there is a risk that the approach will become merely the mouthpiece of

this inevitably particular (historically and geographically) form of experience. What started as a reflexively self-conscious statement of the problematic of structure and agency (system and action) has in the end retreated into a concern with detail and is thereby restricted to a single modality of human agency. In order to avoid the "sociology of the single vision" and affirm the authenticity of (modern) social experience Dawe has almost prescribed the level and (metaphorical) "type" of approach and therefore even while pronouncing the importance of ambiguity the author is producing a single vision of his own:

"So it is the prime imperative of the sociology of the conversation that we ceaselessly listen to and converse with the voices from everyday life, wherever and however they are to be heard, including our own: that we listen for detail, for every nuance, every inflection, every change of tone, however slight, in the myriad ways in which people make their lives, in order to recognise and understand and articulate human agency at work. There is no other way." (38)

Others however have suggested that there is perhaps another way, and to this end Anthony Giddens has expended great energies in order to go beyond a celebration of the tension between structure and agency and rather to look towards the mutual dependence of the two concerns based upon his "theory of structuration" (39). As Giddens puts it:

"The concept of structuration involves that of the duality of structure, which relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency. By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems. The theory of structuration, thus formulated, rejects any differentiation of synchrony

and diachrony or statics and dynamics. The identification of structure with constraint is also rejected: structure is both enabling and constraining." (40)

Here then, the imperialism of structure is dealt a severe blow: the emphasis placed upon the production, reproduction of structure understood as a duality, the medium and outcome of agency, ensures that structure is seen to have only a virtual existence. In other words structure is only existent in its instantiation and can have no independent ontological status (41). Crucial to the duality of structure is the concept of agency, which does not consist purely of intentional action. As one commentator has noted:

"Agency ... "cannot be defined through that of intention, as is presumed in so much of the literature to do with the philosophy of action; the notion of agency as I employ it, I take to be logically prior to a subject/object differentiation." Formulated in this manner "agency" undercuts or transcends the customary bifurcation between subjectively intended conduct and externally stimulated reactive behaviour." (42)

This provides an expanded account of agency, and as Giddens suggests, one which for the individual actor will include elements of "practical" and "discursive" consciousness. However such an approach does not deny the existence of the unintended consequences of social action, indeed agency as defined in the theory of structuration is inclusive of such unintended ramifications because it is situated in the matrix of differing time space paths within locales and regions. As Giddens states:

"Human agents always know what they are doing on the level of discursive consciousness under some description. However, what they do may be quite unfamiliar under other descriptions, and they may know little of the ramified

consequences of the activities in which they engage. The duality of structure is always the main grounding of continuities in social reproduction across time-space. It in turn presupposes the reflexive monitoring of agents in, and as constituting the duree of daily social activities. But human knowledgeability is always bounded. The flow of action continually produces consequences which are unintended by actors, and these unintended consequences may also form unacknowledged conditions of action in a feedback fashion. Human history is created by intentional activities but is not an intended project; it persistently eludes efforts to bring it under conscious direction. However, such attempts are continually being made by human beings, who operate under the threat and the promise of the circumstances that they are the only creatures who make their "history" in cognisance of that fact." (43)

This then is the crux of the structuration theory, that continuities (and discontinuities) in social, as opposed to system, reproduction across time-space are present only in the "moment of their instantiation", the medium and outcome of social action. The apparent solidity of "structure" in some social theory appears as a function of distance in time and space and of the disjunction between actors, their action and the "sediment action" of differing time-space matrices. In other words the reification of structure is often a product of a view predicated upon a static and unitary view of time and space, the implicit "location" of such views is always the view from "here" (44). However, once a determined attempt is made to incorporate the "problematic of time-space distancing", or to put it more graphically "the stretching of social systems across time-space" (45), the potential to understand systems as sedimented social action and social action as implying the mutuality of both agency and structure is possible.

Giddens' theory of structuration is clearly an intricate one and could not be otherwise given the task with which he is grappling. For as one reviewer puts it:

"According to Giddens, the endeavour to avoid the twin pitfalls of idealism and the genetic fallacy points up the need to develop an adequate theory of human agency or a "theory of the acting subject". "The pressing task facing social theory today is not to further the conceptual elimination of the subject, but on the contrary to promote a recovery of the subject without lapsing into subjectivism. Such a recovery, I wish to argue, involves a grasp of "what cannot be said" (or thought) as practice, a grasp of which in turn depends upon stressing the importance of the "reflexive monitoring of conduct" as a chronic feature of the enactment of social life." (46)

So then, this would suggest that the problematic under consideration lies inevitably at the boundaries of our language (and thought). Giddens' attempt to deal with these issues should be applauded; however it may be that his scheme is in some ways overly formalistic. The detailed interlinking scheme he outlines in his book "The Constitution of Society" may be an attempt to develop a series of "sensitising concepts"; however in so doing he may risk losing "the sense" of what he means. In some ways his theory is too tight and indeed by outlining (prescribing) the nature of the linkages between social action within locales, regions and systems he has constructed a "grand theory", which for some observers seems to distance the theory from the study of empirical aspects of social reality (47). To some extent this is perhaps inevitable given the limitations which are built into our common language, and it is indeed a tortuous route to move

towards "what cannot be said". The attempt to recombine the dualism of structure and action behind the cumbersome term of "structuration" and the "duality of structure" bears witness to the uneasiness that is produced when dualism is rejected. This indeed constitutes the horns of the dilemma upon which Giddens is impaled - the problem of structure and action is only one of the dualities underlying the sociological endeavour.

"Thus modern society is condemned to exist within a world defined by a series of abstract dualisms which reflect the inadequacy of its foundations but which nevertheless structure sociological debate: structure-action; object-subject; positivism-humanism; holism-individualism; society-individual; explanation-understanding; order-conflict; authority-consent." (48)

A recognition that such dualistic thought patterns constitute much of the problem in relating a recombined account of structure and action was advanced by Philip Abrams. Whilst he suggested that the task facing us is to make a "determined effort to un-think dualism", he did not underestimate the problems that such a move would involve:

"... although I find the call to abandon dualism (a call social scientists have been making to each other since the time of Marx) quite comprehensible, sensible and persuasive in principal, I must admit to finding it almost impossible to accomplish in practice. The weight of two and a half millenia of treating dualism as the obvious basis for effective thought is remarkably oppressive." (49)

So then, the attempt to conceive of a unification of structure and action and other pervasive dualities amounts to attempting to "grasp what cannot be said" and is "almost impossible to accomplish in practice". However Abrams and

Giddens are united in their advocacy of attempting the almost impossible. If for Giddens this involves the production of a formal theory of structuration, for Abrams the sensitising concepts are more empirically based as evidence in some of the work of classic sociologists. The endeavour is seen to involve the "problematic of structuring" and the constitution of an "historical sociology" which is seen as:

"... the attempt to understand the relationship of personal activity and experience on the one hand and social organisation on the other as something that is continuously constructed in time. It makes the continuous process of construction the focal concern of social analysis. That process may be studied in many different contexts: in personal biographies and careers; in the rise and fall of whole civilizations; in the setting of particular events such as a revolution or an election, or of particular developments such as the making of the welfare state or the formation of the working class." (50)

This concern is not a new one, then, but what is new is that the "problem" that the above authors address can no longer be seen as an implicit concern, whispered at in the work of "good" sociologists. We can now no longer ignore the problem; to conceive of the essential unity of social processes must be one of our consuming aims.

The question of course remains how do we set about this task? If we are to "unthink dualism" are we not left with little purchase upon social reality: how can we proceed once we renounce the "reality" of concepts such as subjective/objective, structure/action etc.? In order to avoid losing our foothold altogether we need to address the problem of ontology, the

question of existence in its most basic form. Here perhaps is a starting point, but again one in which we must be careful to avoid the invocation of a solitary absolute, thereby structuring a duality in absence of "the relative". In other words, the question becomes how we envisage the relativity of the absolute. This question is perhaps best addressed through the concerns of other theorists and a useful point of departure is the notion of the material basis of reality, an issue which is central to the work of both Marx and Weber. What this involves is, according to Weber, part of the very essence of the concept of the "social economic":

"Most roughly expressed, the basic element in all these phenomena which we call, in the widest sense, "social economics" is constituted by the fact that our physical existence and the satisfaction of our most ideal needs are everywhere confronted with the quantitative limits and the qualitative inadequacy of the necessary external means, so that their satisfaction requires planful provision and work, struggle with nature and the association of human beings." (51)

Similarly, for Marx the "first premise of human existence" is that:

"... men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history"." (52)

In both accounts the importance of reproducing human physical existence is seen as a "fundamental condition of history". The appreciation of this "fundamental condition" is apparent in Giddens' attempts to promote a "recovery of the subject". This theme is demonstrated in his approach to semiotics and his repudiation of the Cartesian cogito:

"We must actually repudiate the cogito in a more thoroughgoing way than Kristeva does, while acknowledging the vital importance of the theme that being precedes the subject-object relation in consciousness. The route to understanding this is not to be found through a sort of reconstituted cogito, but through the connection of being and action." (53)

At another point Giddens stresses the importance of being in a way reminiscent of Marx and Weber, referring to existential contradiction as:

"... an elemental aspect of human existence in relation to nature of the material world. There is, one might say, an antagonism of opposites at the very heart of the human condition, in the sense that life is predicated upon nature, yet is not of nature and is set against it. Human beings emerge from the "nothingness" of inorganic nature and disappear back into that alien state of the inorganic. This might seem to be an unabashedly religious theme and as such to be the proper province of theology rather than social science. But I think it to be in fact of great analytical interest ... " (54)

This is perhaps an understatement as the notion of "being" in its various guises, as "existential contradiction", "the fundamental premise of history" or the confrontation of physical being with "quantitative limits and qualitative inadequacy of the necessary external means", is arguably the central pivot of the perspectives developed by these theorists. Here then is the absolute: the physical existence of humankind understood both as the survival of the species and of the "individual"; the ontological basis of existence is to be found in "being" itself. This "reality" has, as we have seen, exercised a profound influence upon the form of social theory advanced. The limitations of the struggle with nature are seen to exercise a

greater or lesser determination upon the form of human social organisation. It is perhaps Marxian theory which has suffered most from the "vulgar" application of such determinations mediated through the "means" and "relations" of production and the wider base/superstructure debate itself.

Perhaps there is a need for a reconceptualisation of the problem. It may be that the determinant force of the "fundamental premise of history" is in itself historically contingent. No one can deny the potency of effect of the needs of physical survival when available resources are critical, although the idea that the satisfaction of such needs "requires planful provision and work ... and the association of human beings" would seem to be a rationalisation of the "rise of civilisation" (55). However, it could be argued that once the productive system has advanced beyond satisfying the basic physical requirements of existence the importance of the ontological base (i.e. being) recedes and thereby the degree of determination of human social organisation by the struggle with nature is lessened. In other words, the absolute is rendered relative by the praxis of human activity, being retains its absolute status however and becomes relational only to the extent that its fundamental requirements are fulfilled unproblematically. Understood in relation to one of the Marxian problematics (defined by Engels), whilst human physical production and reproduction is accomplished "unproblematically" the "moment" of "the last resort" is never reached. In other

words the unchanging scheme of the materialist conception of history which argues that:

"... the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life." (56)

needs to understand that the pattern of ultimate causation is itself historically contingent. In these terms the vast importance of the production and reproduction of real life, to which Marx and Engels rightly drew our attention, achieves, through the increasing mastery of nature and increasing production of surplus, the increasing negation of the determining links of "the economic factor". The "success" of the productive system in overcoming the basic "existential contradiction" of the struggle with nature serves progressively to uncouple the degree of determination that this contradiction exercises over social organisation. Quantity is indeed transposed into quality, the ontology recedes as far as phenomenal determination is concerned. One is tempted to echo the sentiments of Nietzsche that "God is dead and we have killed him". It is here through the relativisation of the absolute, the partial transcendence of existential contradiction via the routinisation of the potential satisfaction of the physical requirements of being, that the historical rise of agency must be located. It is in this way that the potential for an integrated view of the idea of agency encompassing all of Anderson's three "types" arises. The importance of the rise of the potential of agency is the outcome of the relativisation of the absolute, the receding ontology, as the upshot of material

processes, not, as in Marx, Engels and Anderson, the idealistic grafting of imputed socialist (true) consciousness of classes in conflict. This potential is evidenced not in grasping the "truth" of scientific socialism in its (static) determinate prophesies (as an ideology) but rather through a more materialist understanding of the "material struggle for existence".

Again, dualistic concepts such as "determinism" and "free will" are emphatically rejected as static absolutes. The single "absolute" category is that of being, and as we have seen that ontology recedes as the determining factor. Our analysis remains materialist but is increasingly less happy with ultimately determining factors. Following from this we can see that "unthinking duality" need not lead to a surrendering of all useful concepts, but rather to the rejection of all static determinate accounts. This holds true when the level of analysis is that of the world system or that of the changing division of labour in an individual shipyard.

The implication that such a "material ontology" holds for epistemology is that it preserves the potential for a kind of "reflection theory" (57). Here the emphasis is placed not upon the identity of "external object" and object of thought; neither is the idealist position, which sees the external world as being constituted by mind, acceptable; rather the external materiality of being is grasped by and through concepts. However this "grasp" of the world is never simply to be equated with the

"concrete in thought", for several reasons. Firstly, the ontological basis of reality is most forcefully expressed in the existential contradiction, to use Giddens' term; as we have already seen this absolute is rendered relative by the historical praxis of humans. Therefore the access to the external world must take account of the drift of the absolute towards the relative; the external itself is contingent upon the asymmetrical realisation of the unity (past and present) of conception and execution, thought and action, in other words the effectiveness of praxis itself. Secondly, the idea of thought itself is again to be seen in its historical contextuality, thought is never totally empty but is always "about" something; however as with language it is not the individual thought which totally imparts meaning but rather its relationship to other concepts and words in either their co-presence or absence. Such a view of "meaning" represents an established position within linguistic philosophy, that what is implied by invoking a word is not merely contained "within" that word but rather also implies a set of relations which that word conjures up in relation to our view of the world. This is not meant to imply that we have to know everything before we can know anything, but rather that meaning is a relational problem as well as a nomenclative one. As Jost Trier suggested:

"It is not a single sign which says something but a system of the totality of signs which may say something in view of single signs." (58)

This relational view of meaning is not only applicable to the use

of language systems, but also represents the apprehension of meaning through praxis in the world. Not only is this relational "problem" applicable to the concepts of "thought" and "language" but it is also evident in relation to the "individual" thinker. In this sense the Cartesian dictum "I think therefore I am" does not point to an existential truth but rather is the source of much of the later confusion over the individual and society duality. In this sense the "I" of Descartes could have gained from an infusion of the "me" of Mead. The point to be remembered is that the "individual" thinker thinking the individual thought not only implicates an historically contingent system of concepts in terms of "presences" and "absences", but in doing so he or she implies the social self. In this sense the unitary form of language and thought (the difficulty of saying or thinking more than one word/thought at one "moment") can only grasp meaning sequentially as presence and absence and this inevitably implies the problem of the expanding content.

Nowhere is the problem better stated than in the work of Weber:

" ... as soon as we attempt to reflect about the way in which life confronts us in immediate concrete situations, it presents an infinite multiplicity of successively and co-existently emerging and disappearing events both "within" and "outside" ourselves. The absolute infinitude of this multiplicity is seen to remain undiminished even when our attention is focussed on a single "object", for instance a concrete act of exchange, as soon as we seriously attempt an exhaustive description of all the individual components of this "individual phenomena", to say nothing of explaining it causally. All the analysis of infinite reality which the

finite human mind can conduct rests on the tacit assumption that only a finite portion of this reality constitutes the object of scientific investigation, and that only it is "important" in the sense of being "worthy of being known". (59)

Again this suggests that there can be no identity between thought and an "external object", for it cannot be grasped in its totality. Furthermore, efforts to overcome partially the finite nature of the human mind by adopting an eclectic approach to any one phenomenon, and thereby accepting the principle of cumulative knowledge as an attempt to "fill in the gaps", again introduces the potential for further "distortion" (or refraction). For all these reasons, then, the reflection theory of knowledge is superior either to an identity theory or idealism. It can accommodate the materialist (receding) ontology as outlined above whilst not denying the impact and non-neutral effect of the concepts and language which we use to gain purchase on "reality".

In this way the status of concepts and more formal theory is seen as that of working assumptions (acknowledged or unacknowledged) which whilst they are not identical to a "reality" external to the individual thinker and the "thought" are nevertheless anchored ultimately in the ontological basis of the existential contradiction and processually within modes of temporality and intersubjectively held paradigms. In other words such "working assumptions" are constrained (and enabled) in their view of reality (the content of the thought) both existentially (that is ontologically) and phenomenologically. Such a view makes a nonsense of the debate over the primacy of the

theoretical or empirical, for our grasp of any social reality should inevitably involve both of these aspects.

A final point to be made in this section concerns the problem of closure (60). It should be apparent from the foregoing discussion that the point at which closure of study is affected is to some extent an arbitrary decision made by the researcher. The approach taken here is that to some extent the boundaries of closure must be left as permeable as possible, and potential interconnections should be indicated even as they trail off into the void of unstudied reality. This presents stylistic problems; however, to be true to our theoretical approach of following the multiplicity of contexts involved in "unthinking dualism", an effort to sustain the view that no study is ever finally and absolutely complete must be made. The eclectic approach adopted here is then grounded in the (receding) ontology of human "being", its range attempts to span the "reality" of "the small life-worlds of modern man" (61) to that of "the world system" (62). In so doing, the specific form of the interconnections of these various levels will be indicated without attempting to develop any static hierarchical scheme of interdependence. Again it must be stressed that these theoretical underpinnings are "alive" in the "empirical" body of this work and must be understood as such if the meaning intended by the author is to be recovered.

Part 2

The relationship of the theory to more empirically substantive content is a particularly thorny problem in what is perhaps the most developed approach to the study of the changing division of labour and work organisations, namely the labour process debate. In reviewing some of the main publications within this debate I shall highlight some of the problems and advantages associated with this approach, and show how some of the more useful insights can be developed.

Since the publication of Braverman's "Labour and Monopoly Capital" in 1974 there has been much interest stimulated in the labour process. Even the most elementary introductions to industrial sociology now being published mention either Braverman directly or the labour process more generally. Therefore whilst Paul Sweezy could claim, in the foreword to Braverman's book, that the work filled a gap in the literature in which there was:

"... an almost total neglect of a subject which occupies a central place in Marx's study of capitalism: the labour process." (63)

this is perhaps no longer the case. However, it must be said that the success of most formulations of the issues dealt with under the heading of the labour process has been strictly limited. Indeed one may fairly address Braverman's comments dealing with the literature that existed before his publication, at later formulations of labour process work:

"In the course of a fairly extensive reading of this literature, I was particularly struck by the vagueness,

generality of working, and on occasion egregious errors of description of the concrete matters under discussion. It seemed to me that many widely accepted conclusions were based on little genuine information, and represented either simplifications or outright misreadings of a complex reality." (64)

This is indeed a damning comment, and in order to evaluate whether it is a justifiable summation of much that goes for labour process theory and substance we must look at individual contributions. However, before we go on to that I will explicate a general framework within which I suggest much labour process work can be situated. The central problem is that there would seem to be no agreement as to what the labour process actually consists of. As Jim McGoldrick has suggested:

"In the Marxist theory of the labour process there is no unified position which states exactly is meant when the labour process is being discussed." (65)

Whilst this is true, it is perhaps an understatement. For as the idea of the study of the labour process has gained popularity it has been grasped by those working in non-Marxist traditions. In many of these works a specific notion of what the labour process involves is either only implied or is left completely unspecified. In other works the labour process is presented as the empirical content of industrial sociology, it is seen purely as the physical work done within an organisation.

Within the Marxist tradition there is equal confusion over the matter of what the labour process is. This is compounded by the insistence of its central importance, and whilst this was given fresh impetus by Braverman it is by no means a new phenom-

enon. For example, as early as 1941 Marcuse was proclaiming that:

"The labour process, which shows forth as fundamental in the Marxian analysis of capitalism and its genesis, is the ground on which the various branches of theory and practice operate in capitalist society. An understanding of the labour process, therefore, is at the same time an understanding of the source for the separation between theory and practice and of the element that re-establishes their interconnection. Marxian theory is of its very nature an integral and integrating theory of society. The economic process of capitalism exercises a totalitarian influence over all theory and all practice, and an economic analysis that shatters the capitalist camouflage and breaks through its "reification" will get down to its subsoil common to all theory and practice in this society." (66)

It is because of this central importance held by the labour process in wider Marxian theory that its precise definition has become crucial. This has given rise to a self-perpetuating debate as to the nature of the labour process. And so, then, if the non-Marxist appropriation of the notion of the labour process shows in the main a marked empiricist leaning, many "Marxist" formulations show a tendency towards formalistic abstraction to the almost total lack of substantive content. Coupled with this, many of the reviews are wholly negative in terms of their critique, content to condemn errors rather than suggesting useful amendments. However, we are running ahead of ourselves - it is perhaps useful to begin by looking at "Labour and Monopoly Capital" itself. Working within a Marxist framework Braverman's argument bemoans the recent lack of attention which has been paid to the labour process. This situation, he suggests, arose because within the Marxist tradition in particular:

"... the critique of the mode of production gave way to the critique of capitalism as a mode of distribution. Impressed, perhaps even overawed by the immense productivity of the labour process, baffled by its increasing scientific intricacy, participating in the struggles of workers for improvements in wages, hours and conditions, Marxists adapted to the view of the modern factory as an inevitable if perfectable form of the organisation of the labour process." (67)

Braverman seeks to question the inevitability of the modern factory by:

"Recognising that there are very few "eternal" or "inevitable" features of human social organisation." (68)

Having made this point the substance of the book is concerned with charting historically the development of the processes of production and of labour processes in general in capitalist society. That Braverman's study is of labour processes in general is of particular importance, a point not grasped by many of his critics who point to specific labour processes to "disprove" the relevance of the analysis. The conclusion of the study is that there exists within capitalist labour processes a deskilling dynamic: the fragmentation of work processes is accompanied by a shift of knowledge about those processes away from the shop floor and towards management. This movement is formalised primarily in the adoption of the organisational form of scientific management. The increasing degradation of work is seen, then, to have both technical and social organisational forms, the repercussions of which transcend the boundaries of the factory and suggest an increasing homogeneity of condition for an increasing number of employees.

Whilst, on the whole, Braverman's book was received with a good deal of enthusiasm it has also been criticised. That criticism comes in many forms, from a general critique of the perspective suggesting that it is based upon a "philosophical anthropology of humanism" and is therefore less than scientific (69), to specific objections to the deskilling process based upon studies of individual industries at particular historical junctures (70).

It is possible to argue that many objections raised to Braverman's work, based on particular examples which do not conform to a deskilling model in the labour process, miss the point of the work. His analysis was not a summation of deskilling tendencies deduced from all individual labour processes, rather, as he says in his introduction:

"In this book, we will be concerned with the development of the processes in general in capitalist society." (71)

Indeed at a later point the author denies that subordination of labour will be fully realised, and in as far as it is, it will be unevenly achieved between specific industries:

"The displacement of labour as the subjective element of the process, and its subordination as an objective element in a productive process now conducted by management, is an ideal realised by capital only within definite limits and unevenly among industries." (72)

So then, we can see that the relationship of Braverman's thesis to empirical situations is more complex than some think. It cannot be "tested" with reference to single situations or even individual industries. The level of its relationship to the

empirical world is at a higher level than individual examples; it attempts to speak of a general dynamic tendency expressed within the capitalist labour process as a whole. Braverman acknowledges his intellectual debt to Marx and seems to suggest that his own project is to update Marx's writings on the labour process in *Capital*. However it would appear that many of the problems associated with Braverman's analysis are centred upon his partial and illegitimate use of Marx's methodology. For Marx in "*Capital*" a study of the labour process is only part of the articulation of the capitalist mode of production, whereas Braverman's study seeks to address the labour process as a theoretical object in itself. Here is the source of many of the problems with what is otherwise a stimulating work.

Firstly, however, we must look at the objections which have been raised to the Braverman presentation. Here I will deal with criticisms which are more generalised than those which refute the argument citing individual examples. Many of these critiques have a central theme in common, which is that Braverman's account has on the one hand an over-structural bias, the corollary of which is an over-conspiratorial view of the working of capitalist agency, and in this sense his account is seen not to balance the problematic of the structure/action dichotomy in an acceptable fashion (73). Thus as David Stack argues:

"It is not unfair to argue that Braverman portrays the capitalist class as veritably omniscient and the working class as infinitely malleable." (74)

The work of Braverman has however an elusive quality about it. It has been claimed that it is in some respects in a similar tradition of Marxist humanism to the Frankfurt school (75); whilst on the other hand it is suggested that the study relies heavily upon Marxist functionalism and structural dynamics (76). Nowhere more so than in relation to this problem of the omniscience of capital and the malleability of labour is the tension more apparent. It may be helpful to attempt to simplify the problem by looking at Braverman's conception of the working class and the capitalist class respectively.

Firstly, his view of the working class. Perhaps the most criticised feature of the whole analysis is his limitation to the "objective" content of class:

"This is a book about the working class as a class in itself, not as a class for itself." (77)

However the author's view of the nature of class seems at points to be more complex than the advocacy of a purely objective structure. For example, in a number of passages reminiscent of the views of E.P. Thompson (78) Braverman argues that:

"The term "working class" properly understood never precisely delineated a specific body of people but was rather an expression for an ongoing social process ... We are dealing not with the static terms of an algebraic equation, which requires only that quantities be filled in, but with a dynamic process ... " (79)

However, at a further point he notes:

"To make this a little more concrete: I have no quarrel with the definition of the working class, on the basis of its "relationship to the means of production" as that class which does not own or otherwise have proprietary access to

the means of labour and must sell its labour power to those who do. But in the present situation almost all of the population has been placed in this situation so that the definition encompasses occupational strata of the most diverse kinds, it is not the bare definition that is important but its application." (80)

It is indeed the application of the definition that is important and it is here that Braverman's analysis is not up to his theoretical standards. His account of the existence of the working class given in Part I of "Labour and Monopoly Capital" through to Part V does give a passive view of the working class, outlining a progressive deskilling dynamic at work within the labour process and emphasising a shift in control of these processes away from labour towards capital. And yet in Part V of the book the author seems to acknowledge the possibility of an "active" working class:

"This working class lives a social and political existence of its own outside the direct grip of capital. It protests and submits, rebels or is integrated into bourgeois society, sees itself as a class or loses sight of its own existence, in accordance with the forces that act upon it and the moods, conjectures and conflicts of social and political life. But since in its permanent existence it is the living part of capital its occupational structure, modes of work and distribution through the industries of society are determined by the ongoing processes of the accumulation of capital. It is seized, released, flung into various parts of the social machinery and expelled by others not in accord with its own will or self activity, but in accord with the movement of capital." (81)

It can be argued that this bracketing of spheres of life contributes to an over passive view of the working class and an over emphasis of the efficacy of capitalist agency. The problems of restricting the analysis purely to the productive system are

considerable and we can say that as far as any conception of the "agency" of the working class is concerned, this restriction, coupled with the "objectivist" view of the nature of class, is treated mechanically in order to "fit" within the twin concepts of the "formal" and "real subordination of labour". The discourse has successfully rendered class as a structural notion and therefore more conducive to use in a generalised analysis. This, together with the level of analysis has unfortunately succeeded in rendering a "subjectless subject" in the structuralist sense. The other side of the coin, so to speak, is the conception of the nature of the capitalist class portrayed in the analysis. Whilst there is not as much time devoted to defining the capitalist class as there is to the working class, the view that is portrayed is that in the aggregate form the capitalist is the human embodiment of capitalism. This view, because of the insufficient theorisation of the "moments" of the production and reproduction of society as a whole, leads to the apparent omniscience of capital. Where the working class does not move in accordance with its own will or self activity, capital is seen to do just that in pursuance of its aim of accumulation. It is easy to overstress the dominance of capital, however it is also easy to underestimate it. The formal subordination of labour based upon the very social relationships of capitalism do ultimately imply an imbalance in what are seen as legitimate power resources. As Jean Gardiner has suggested:

"Variation in relative control as between capital and labour must always be seen in the context of the ultimate power capitalists have to close a plant or divert investment elsewhere." (82)

In Braverman's analysis the "ultimate power" of the capitalist based within social relationships is projected upon the "real" subordination of labour within the labour process. In restricting his analysis to the objective aspect of the working class at a generalised level and yet still attempting to say something useful about the changing labour process he is forced into adopting an undifferentiated concept of agency. And as his starting point is the antagonistic social relationships of capitalism the continued existence of these relationships inevitably implies the ineffectiveness of working class agency.

In order to have avoided this problem Braverman would have needed to look at what he referred to as the subjective aspects of class consciousness and ideology. In considering such features a more realistic view of the relationship between the formal and real subordination of labour can be developed, one in which the formal subordination of labour, or the structuring of social relationships does not imply the total progression to the real subordination of labour in the labour process. Obviously in this respect notions of ideology and legitimacy become of prime importance. Just what is seen by workers to be within the legitimate sphere of negotiation and/or resistance? In this sense the continued existence of capitalism need not necessarily imply that the working class does not move "in accord with its

own will or self activity" but rather that its own will or self activity is not conceived as the overthrow of capitalist social relationships. This then is precisely the issue and is centrally a problem of consciousness, and as such is left untheorised in Braverman's account as a subjective element of class. Furthermore it is this oversight which projects the formalised social structuring of relationships into the patterns of change within the labour process, giving the contradictory position of a dehumanised working class structure which is directed by a consciously conspiratorial group of capitalists. In other words, in Braverman's analysis structure totally dominates action. Capitalist social relationships are the structural embodiment of the subordination of labour and therefore deny the possibility of the self activity of the working class. However in as much as Braverman remains true to his assertion that:

"... there are very few "eternal" or "inevitable" features of human social organisation"

he posits the continued existence of capitalist social relationships in the dominance of capitalist agency. In this way Braverman can be seen to be advocating a type of Marxist functionalism in which the dominant form of social relationships is equated with the total dominance of the agency of the ruling class.

So far then, what we have criticised in Braverman's presentation is not the generalised level of his endeavour but

its partial theoretical framework in as far as this is evident in his adoption of an objectivist view of social class. We must now turn our attention to another theoretical closure made in "Labour and Monopoly Capital" - that of the over-emphasis given to the primacy of the "moment" of production. Whilst it is Braverman's concern to redirect attention away from an over-emphasis on issues of distribution and towards production, his focus does seem in this respect to be rather narrow. In this way his analysis is unlike that of Marx for, whilst Marx often asserted the primacy of production, this was in terms of a logical preliminary "moment" in the reproduction of society as a whole - as he wrote in "Grundrisse":

"The conclusion we reach is not that production distribution exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity ... production predominates not only over itself but over the other moments as well. The process always returns to production to begin anew." (83)

At a later point, however:

"... production is itself determined by the other moments. For example if the market, i.e. the sphere of exchange, expands, then production grows in quantity and the divisions between its different branches become deeper. A change in distribution changes production, e.g. concentration of capital, different distribution of the population between town and country etc. Finally the needs of consumption determine production. Mutual interaction takes place between the the different moments. This is the case with every organic whole." (84)

This is a point of importance, for Braverman's analysis predicates a general deskilling dynamic within the labour process as the outcome of capitalists seeking capital accumulation.

However he does not attempt to theorise the linkages between the moment of production and the other moments. It can be argued that this factor contributes greatly towards the oversimplification of the real movements within the labour process. For example, the development of the labour process in the British Shipbuilding industry cannot be made sense of in terms of both structure and action unless the market demand for ships and the existence of the "business cycle" is taken into account. In terms of such examples it is not enough merely to state that the deskilling effect will be uneven amongst industries, or more importantly in the above case amongst national industries. The possible reasons for such anomalies may not lie within the moment of production.

The above problem also indicates another inadequacy in the analysis. Not enough consideration is given to national specificity. And whilst Braverman's supporters may again point to his general level of analysis to suggest that the object of study is the capitalist labour process irrespective of purely national considerations it is clear that his own conception of the changes taking place refer in certain respects to uniquely American features. The importance of recognising particularly national features in analysing social formations was superbly demonstrated by Antonio Gramsci in his "Americanism and Fordism" (85), in which he suggested that the American example was extreme and in some respects foreign to European traditions. Indeed it is this

reliance upon the American example which (wrongly) leads Braverman to extol Taylorist scientific management as the form of control within the developing labour process. That management control strategies in different countries can and do vary in response to common pressures has been demonstrated in the volume edited by Howard Gospel and Craig Littler (86).

We are now in a position to attempt to draw together the above criticisms into a unified whole. Firstly, we can say that the shortcomings of the Braverman analysis are clustered around a unilinear simplistic conception of the deskilling tendency as a dynamic existing within the capitalist labour process in general. This follows from his central reliance upon a perspective based on the notion of a structural dynamic drawn from the labour theory of value. In as far as this dynamic is grounded in actual social relationships it is seen to be expressed in the commodity status of labour (87). The commodity status of labour, which is the articulation of the formal subordination of labour, is transformed, in this work, through the use of a purely objectivist conception of the working class into a developing real subordination. The structural over-emphasis thus gives on the one hand a totally passive working class structure manipulated on the other hand by a conscious, cohesive and active capitalist class. Had Braverman been a structuralist this problem would not have arisen. It is only because he attempts to relate the theorised structural tendencies within the

"empirically real" development of the labour process that over-active capitalist and totally passive working class becomes a problem. It is here that it is apparent that the structure/action problematic is left untheorised in his analysis.

The second feature of Braverman's analysis which contributes to its demise is the insularity given to the labour process. This would again seem to stem from the adoption of a structural dynamic developed upon the labour theory of value; the idea that the necessary features of successful accumulation are contained solely within the "moment" of production. This again contributes to an overall impression of a unilinear development within the labour process. This is understandable given that fluctuations in market demand are only treated in as far as they concern the demand for labour and the constitution of its "reserve army". The problem is again seen to be purely one of the control of "variable capital" within the labour process. We are given no appreciation that the operation of the business cycle may militate against the rationalisation of the labour process in an attempt to retain the flexibility of variable capital in the face of a constantly changing market demand for goods (88).

In Braverman's formulation, then, the conception of the labour process presented starts off looking like an incredibly wide sweep over the terrain traditionally dealt with, in a piecemeal fashion, by industrial sociologists on the one hand and orthodox Marxists on the other. To the former he presents the

stance that in order to study industry effectively the class basis of the organisation of production has to be recognised, both in a formal and real sense. To the latter he brings the suggestion that the actual process of the transformation of raw materials into use values must not be conceived merely as a "black box". However, whilst in one way this does widen the areas of debate within both industrial sociology and more generally within Marxist theory, in another way his presentation is unnecessarily restrictive. As Theo Nichols suggested in a review of "Labour and Monopoly Capital":

"The job, and control over the job, is not the whole story and to understand the different things which are happening in and to the labour process, it is necessary to encompass more than Braverman does." (89)

It is in attempting to achieve this that some of the more interesting work within the labour process tradition has been completed. In many of these attempts the tensions of the original formulation have been replicated. In others a more one sided approach, tending either towards a totally structural account in general or towards ethnographies of individual work places, have relieved some of these tensions only at the cost of again restricting the area of debate even further.

Whatever our reservations with Braverman's formulation may be, one cannot deny the immense impact that "Labour and Monopoly Capital" had on all those interested in industrial sociology. However, the fortunes of the labour process approach have been various and after a relatively brief explosion of interest, which

saw the boundaries of the debate moving outwards apparently towards infinity (90), the popularity of the approach has begun to collapse:

"It is not perhaps an exaggeration to claim that the labour process bandwagon has run into the sand. Indeed the catalogue of amendments and criticisms attaching to labour process theory has led a number of critics to call for little less than the abandonment of labour process theory. It has served a useful purpose but it is now holed and patched beyond repair." (91)

That this situation should have arisen is unsurprising given that

"In the Marxist theory of the labour process there is no unified position which states what exactly is meant when the labour process is being discussed." (92)

Many formulations exaggerated the original tensions in Braverman's work, concentrating wholly on the structural tendencies of the productive system (93) or producing more particular accounts of the individual work place (94). It is not that such studies are in themselves unsatisfactory, but rather that they preclude the approach which is latent in Braverman's work to see the physical labour process as an activity situated in a specific set of social relations, the potential for an analysis which can integrate many levels of social reality. It would seem that to some extent the most outstanding examples of empirical accounts of work processes, such as that of Burawoy (95), are flawed by unnecessary limitations, in this case the stress placed upon generation of consent at the point of production. So then, whilst the boundaries of labour process theory have been moving inexorably outwards, it is rarely the

case that empirical accounts have been able to operationalise these widening concerns. To some extent the basis of this problem lies within the tension already outlined, between structure and agency as traditionally conceived within Marxist theory. Not only is there a tendency for the "moment" of production to dominate in an absolute sense, but also where the notion of agency is developed it is often done so in a way in which its efficacy is structurally located and given an over-homogenised form, therefore producing an over-simplistic outcome. In other words episodes are represented as mutually exclusive events, and whilst, as we shall see in a later section, this moves away from the view of capital as omnipotent, it does so merely by inverting the equation. In such accounts it seems obvious that the alternative outcome of a victory for capital (strong capital - weak labour) is a victory for labour (weaker capital - stronger labour). Recently there have however been moves to bring about a cross fertilisation of the labour process debate and the structure/action debate.

In one essay Giddens draws our attention to what he calls the "dialectic of control" (96). In criticising Braverman's over passive view of the working class Giddens suggests that it is the very nature of human agency which militates against such a passive representation:

" ... Braverman's study is about "alienated labour" ... although he barely mentions the term itself. In my terminology the connection of alienation with the "humanness

of man's species being" can be expressed simply and coherently in a single sentence. The more a worker comes close to being an "appendage of a machine" the more he or she ceases to be a human agent. As Marx puts it, "The animal becomes human and the human becomes animal". The interest of this analysis for a philosophical anthropology of labour, however, should not make us forget that, precisely because they are not machines, wherever they can do so human actors devise ways of avoiding being treated as such." (97)

Coupled to this criticism, Giddens applauds the work of Friedman (98) for realising that the management strategy is itself the outcome of situated agency and is not merely directed towards one solution to the problems of accumulation. Similarly, as Thompson has stressed:

"... the point about human agencies is that they are never ciphers and they make choices within structural constraints. Indeed the contestation involved in the capital-labour relation, and the dynamic and varied nature of capital accumulation, create many of the conditions for diversity in managerial behaviour." (99)

More than this Thompson argues that the "greatest task" facing labour process theory is the "construction of a theory of the missing subject" (100). A task which he acknowledges cannot be accomplished "within" labour process theory itself.

In this connection one final criticism of much labour process work concerns the arena within which this "missing subject" can be sought. Thompson rightly criticises what he refers to as the tendency of the ultra-left to reduce all activity to struggle. However all too often studies have been concerned with the "frontiers of control" situations in which new technologies are introduced or management strategies produce

activist resistance. Too often access to the workers' experience of the labour process has been through the trades union movement or through activist workers. Whilst such "frontiers" are important and an activists' viewpoint is often a crucial one this should not be taken as the whole story. Largely because of the Marxist origins of the labour process debate attention is paid solely to the "sharp points" of the capital/labour relationship, a relationship which all too often is actively invoked (as a structural contradiction) and only imperfectly theorised.

Another attempt at relating the concerns of structure and agency to the labour process debate is a paper by Neimark and Tinker (101). Here the authors outline their theoretical attempt to deal with agency and structure on the basis of Ollman's reading of Marx, as the "philosophy of internal relations" (102). In criticising Giddens they appear to be preparing the ground for a more thorough going conception of the essential unity of agency and structure:

"The concern with the relative importance of agency and structure (or individual and society) and the solution suggested by Giddens are motivated by analytical premises. Although Giddens recognises the dependence and reciprocity between the individual and society (or agent and structure) the category pairs are conceived as ontologically distinct. For the philosophy of internal relations, however, such a distinction and the concerns it raises are without meaning; so deeply do individual and society inter-penetrate each other." (103)

However, their apparent willingness to use interchangeably the notions of agency and structure with those of individual and society should lead us at once to be wary of their summation of

the work of Giddens, who, as has been argued earlier, sees fundamental ontological categories as a product of a basic existential contradiction and not as lying within a cleavage between the individual and society. On a more substantive level the paper is disappointing in its attempt to introduce dialectics into the labour process debate by way of:

"... illustrating the use of a dialectical framework that is grounded in the philosophy of internal relations by examining the origins of the current crisis facing U.S. labour with particular emphasis on General Motors and the automobile industry." (104)

The account produced amounts to a "traditional" outline of industrial relations at General Motors since the 1930s to the present. Primary sources of data are the annual reports of G.M., and the specific consciousness of the "workers" is gauged by the "type" of strike action undertaken or wider references to "the new social consumption norm" (105). References to the labour process at the point of production are sparse and where such issues are mentioned they are often skipped over in a "shopping list" fashion. Thus in explaining the issues at stake at a strike within the Fisher Body plant in December 1936 the authors suggest that for the union the issue of recognition was paramount, whereas:

"... the workers on the other hand, were more concerned with the pressures of line speed-ups, wage cuts, unsafe and unsanitary working conditions, the lack of steady work, the capricious power of foremen, and the absence of any control over workplace conditions." (106)

Whilst this is a fairly comprehensive list, its object is unfocussed and the use of phrases such as the "absence of any control" again renders any potential agency of the workers impotent, the dialectic of control has vanished and the apparently total "real subordination of labour" irons out the complexities of the individual workplace.

It would be unfair however to attack this paper alone for these failings. Indeed as we noted earlier many labour process studies share the same problems and failings, but what makes this paper particularly disappointing is that the problematic of structure and agency is, in a conscious fashion, related to the labour process debate in the theoretical introduction and then largely ignored in the empirical study. This failing is perhaps not only the responsibility of the individual authors, but also includes a problem of using the "labour processes" as the starting point for analysis. The transformation of raw materials into products having use-value consisting of three simple elements:

- 1 Purposeful activity of man, directed to work.
- 2 The object on which work is performed, in the form of natural or raw materials.
- 3 The instruments of that work, most often tools or more complex technology. (107)

can indeed be construed as a social process, but all too often can lead to a reified abstraction of a collection of physical tasks situated in time and space between the monolithic structures of labour and capital. In order to avoid such a

failing it is perhaps useful to redirect our attention towards the employment relationship. Focussing upon this relationship as a starting point for analysis is useful as it can be seen to imply the embodiment of structure and agency within the "moment" of the production process. Moreover such a focus escapes both the failing of a labour led theory and an over-emphasis upon the physical concept of the mode of production whilst not neglecting an investigation of how industrial capital is organised. The importance of such issues has been well brought out by Theo Nichols in another connection:

" ... it might well be said that both productivity researchers and students of the labour process have much in common - at least in the sense that neither of them have typically made much of an attempt to marry an analysis of the ("vertical") capital-labour relation to a serious analysis of organisation forms (including "horizontal" aspects). ... Just as C_{MP}^L ... P cannot be reduced to C^L ... P, nor L reduced entirely to a question of the intensity of labour, so even C_{MP}^L ... P is only the beginning of the story when international differences are considered. Any adequate comparison has to take in not only possible differences in organisational capacities on the side of wage labour (in particular different trade union structures and strategies) but differential organisational capacities and qualities on the capital side as well. For this a literally physical concept of MP is of no help." (108)

The focus on the employment relationship gives at once an undeniably social character to the production process without legislating its actual form on the basis of an unchanging imminent law. It therefore admits the problem of the dialectic of control as an empirical question without prejudging the extent

to which the formal subordination of labour can or will be translated into real subordination. Moreover because its "substance" is the relationship between employee and employer, no matter what the level of analysis it should be obvious that it would be absurd to speak of the working class (or indeed the capitalist class) only in its "objective" aspect. The relationship must imply both objective and (inter) subjective dimensions understood as a totality and as such this approach is unavoidably outward looking. Others have suggested a similar approach:

"The central characteristic of work in industrial societies is that by far the largest proportion of it is carried out by employees. The employer - employee relationship is a key social relation in such societies and in my view it is on investigating this relation, and all those social relations which surround and arise out of it, that industrial sociology can and should focus as its distinctive field of competence. An analytical starting point for industrial sociology can be found in the employment relation, and from that point the investigation can and should lead outwards to consider the whole complex of social relations within which it is situated. (109)

The strength of this approach then is that it can accommodate and indeed necessitates the inclusion of the concerns dealt with within the labour process tradition; the details from within the "hidden abode" of the workplace cannot be treated in a cursory fashion. Neither however can the wider systemic features of (ultimately) the world system be neglected, for it is through this multiplicity of contexts that the employment relationship is created and reproduced anew. The relationship is the social form

of the activity which not only meets the material needs of the existential (humankind and nature), but within the industrialised nations also goes beyond the provision of mere physical subsistence towards an increasingly indeterminate determination of material need. This implies not only a receding ontology but also holds out the possibility of receding determination by factors other than human agency. To understand the limits of the possibility of such potential we need a sustained effort to sketch the existing dilemmas caught in the vortex of structure and action. This is why the following "empirical" account cannot be understood apart from these theoretical foundations. The interpenetration of agency and structure is the principal axis through which to grasp the unfolding dimensions of the employment relationship in all of its complexity. The theoretical task I have set myself is a hard one; the relevance of this approach however is to be judged with reference to the following sections.

Notes to Chapter 1

- 1 Abrams, P. "Historical Sociology", Shepton Mallet. Open Books 1982 p227.
- 2 The idea that any study can be purely empirical is nonsensical. To claim this is only evidence that the author does not recognise his/her theoretical bias.
- 3 Anthony Giddens has attempted to deal with some of the issues raised by structuration theory for empirical research in Chapter 6 of his book "The Constitution of Society", Cambridge Polity Press, 1984.
- 4 Abrams, P. (1982) op cit ppl08-109.
- 5 Bauman, Z. "Culture as Praxis", London, RKP 1973 p81.
- 6 Shutz himself saw his work as a radical break with existing conceptions of social life and saw his task as laying a foundation for an entirely new conception of the study of social life, drawing on the philosophy of Husserl. See Cuff, E.C. and Payne, G.C.F. (Ed) "Perspectives in Sociology" London, George Allen and Unwin 1980, especially Chapter 5.
- 7 Berger, P.L. and Luckman, T. "The Social Construction of Reality", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1967, p208.
- 8 Ibid p211.
- 9 Philip Abrams identified the work of Berger and Luckman along with that of R.K. Merton, Alvin Gouldner and Alan Dawe as representing contemporary attempts to grapple with the "Paradox of Agency". See Abrams, P. 1982, op cit pxiii.
- 10 Marx, K. "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in Marx, K. and Engels, F. "Selected Works" Vol. 1, Moscow. Foreign Languages Publishing House 1962, p252.
- 11 Quoted in Giddens, A. "Studies in Social and Political Theory", London, Hutchinson 1977, pl29.
- 12 Mezaros, I. "Marx's Theory of Alienation", London, Merlin 1970, pp224-225.
- 13 Althusser, L. "Politics and History:", London, New Left Books 1972, pl83.

- 14 Thompson, E.P. "The Poverty of Theory and other essays", London, Merlin 1978, p290.
- 15 Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. "Reading Capital", London, New Left Books 1970, p180.
- 16 Thompson, E.P. 1978 op cit, p300.
- 17 There is evidence to suggest that Thompson's opposition to the notion of structure is not as total as his polemical attack upon Althusser would make it seem. Indeed within "The Making of the English Working Class" Thompson suggests that:
 "The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born or enter involuntarily".
"The Making of the English Working Class", Harmondsworth, Pelican 1968, p10.
 This clearly implies a structural reference point. Indeed as G.A. Cohen has argued it can be seen that in relation to the traditional structural notion of "class":
 "... at most Thompson could say that it is the wrong word for a good concept."
 Cohen, G.A. "Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence", Oxford, Clarendon Press 1978, p75.
- 18 Anderson, P. "Arguments within English Marxism", London, Verso 1980, p19.
- 19 Ibid, p19.
- 20 Ibid, p19.
- 21 Ibid, p20.
- 22 Ibid, p21.
- 23 Ibid, p19.
- 24 Anderson, P. "Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism", London, Verso 1978, p140.
- 25 Thus during the period of land enclosure in England or the Highland clearances in Scotland the goal of cultivation of a plot could and sometimes did take on a very public form. In relation to the enclosures one authority has noted that:
 "There was resistance, bitter and often violent - in the case of Otmoor, near Oxford, long and determined."
 Gregg, P. "A Social and Economic History of Britain", London, Harrap and Co. 1961, p30.
 In the Highlands collective resistance by riot was also in

evidence; some of the more notable of these took place between 1820 and 1840 and even after this period:

"The slow attrition of the people went on, small removals as the sheep-walks changed hands, grew in size, or were broken into lots. Thirty years after Knoydart, and sixty since Strathnaver, the cause of the people was taken into politics by the Land Restoration League and by a league for the Nationalisation of Land. On Skye and Lewis crofters fought with police, Marines and Royal Scots."

Prebble, J. "The Highland Clearances", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1984, p303.

In these cases then the "cultivation of a plot" became in no way a purely private goal and the context within which such orientation took place ensured that it was not the case that

"These personal projects are inscribed within existing social relations and typically reproduce them."

- 26 Mair, L. "An Introduction to Social Anthropology", Oxford, Clarendon 1972, pp86-87.

It should not be thought that marriage "systems" only exist in traditional societies. Evidence exists to suggest that within modern Britain the choice of a marriage within certain social groups is "structured" to the extent that highly connected networks can develop. See Lupton, T. and Shirley-Wilson, C. "The Kinship Connections of Top Decision Makers" in Worsley, P. (Ed) "Modern Sociology", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1975, pp151-164.

- 27 Such an approach has parallels with that outlined by Rosa Luxemburg in "Reform or Revolution" where anything short of revolution is seen to be relatively inconsequential, thus:

"That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society."

Luxemburg, R. "Rosa Luxemburg Speaks", New York, Pathfinder 1970, pp77-78.

The use of the physical metaphor in terms of the notion of "surface modifications" clearly implies the existence of more fundamental "deep structures" and thereby imposes a hierarchy of the importance of the "Structure" over the "surface".

- 28 Miliband, R. "The State in Capitalist Society", London, Quartet 1973, pl44.

- 29 Lane, T. "The Union makes us Strong", London, Arrow Books 1974, p144.
- 30 Other writers have also stressed the historically relative position of trades unions in relation to their role as either "subversive organisation" or as a "restraining influence upon the workers". A useful summary of this debate is the volume edited by Clarke, T. and Clements, L. "Trade Unions Under Capitalism", Glasgow, Fontana 1978.
- 31 Anderson, P. 1980 op cit, pp20-21.
- 32 Two articles are of particular interest here: Dawe, A. "The Two Sociologies" in Thompson, K. and Turnbull, J. "Sociological Perspectives", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1976.
Dawe, A. "Theories of Social Action" in Bottomore, T. and Nisbet, R. (Eds) "A History of Sociological Analysis", London, Heinemann 1979.
- 33 Dawe, A. 1976 op cit, pp550-551.
- 34 As Dawe puts it:
" ... sociological thought and analysis constitute one response to the ambiguous rise of human agency. Their history turns on the bifurcation of the ambiguity into two opposed concepts of social action, and thence into two opposed moral and analytical traditions, the sociologies of social system and social action. Their central problems of order and control constitute opposed formulations of human agency and its consequences, and their doctrinal answers to these problems opposed versions of the appropriate communal foundation for a genuinely moral individuality. At root, therefore, both sociologies are sociologies of social action."
Dawe, A. 1979 op cit, p380.
- 35 Ibid, p411.
- 36 Ibid, p413.
- 37 Ibid, p414.
- 38 Ibid, p414.
- 39 Giddens has outlined the theory of structuration in several publications:
"Studies in Social and Political Theory", London, Hutchinson 1977.

"Central Problems in Social Theory", London, Macmillan 1979.
"A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism", London, Macmillan 1981.

The most comprehensive statement of his theory is to be found in:

"The Constitution of Society", Cambridge, Polity Press 1984.

- 40 Giddens, A. "Central Problems in Social Theory". London, Macmillan 1979, p69.
- 41 This point is of immense importance and lies at the heart of the disjuncture between structuration theory and some more established social theory. Thus for example one theorist, in an article which counterposes morphogenesis to structuration, misunderstands the crucial division between social structure and social system and the importance of the existence of a matrix of different contexts (spatial and temporal) and the non-linear occurrence of such contexts. The upshot of this critique then is to restate the division between structure and action within a simplistic duality of temporal sequence, however disjointed for "action" and "structural elaboration". The ontological status of structure is clearly stated:

"The morphogenetic argument that structure and action operate over different time periods is based on two simple positions:
- that structure logically predates the action(s) which transform it;
- that structural elaboration logically postdates those actions."

Archer, M.S. "Morphogenesis versus structuration: on combining structure and action." BJS Vol.33 No.4 December 1982, p468.
- 42 Dallmayr, F.R. "Agency and Structure", review article in "Philosophy of the Social Sciences" Vol.12 1982, p434.
- 43 Giddens, A. "The Constitution of Society", Cambridge, Polity Press 1984, pp26-27.
- 44 This remains so even when an attempt is made to cobble together several contexts, which individually in themselves remain a series of static (in time and space) "heres".
- 45 Giddens, A. 1984, op cit p181.
- 46 Dallmayr, F.R. 1982, op cit pp429-430.

- 47 Such a criticism was the central thrust of the review article by Nigel Thrift who saw Giddens' attempt to reformulate social theory as unsuccessful"

"The result is that Giddens ends up with a rather traditional conception of social theory."

and any further work Giddens undertakes:

"... would have to show how structuration "theory" can act as a basis for challenging existing interpretations of historical events. It would therefore show whether structuration "theory" was viable. Of course, this may sound like a plea for Giddens to do some "empirical work". But it seems to me that, more than most other social theories, that is the import of structuration theory. After all it is not possible to expose the importance of context and then ignore it. At some point "conceptual salvoes" must hit particular places or disappear back into the thin air of high theory."

Thrift, N. "Bear and Mouse or Bear and Tree? Anthony Giddens' Reconstruction of Social Theory." Sociology Vol.19 No.4, November 1985, pp609-623.

Similarly John Urry suggested that:

"Many people will accept the broad outlines of structurationism, if not the particular formulation. But that is not really the issue. What is really important is to develop precise and detailed modes of understanding contemporary class societies, modes which are helped by but by no means follow from what Giddens describes as the mere "approach" developed in this book."

Urry, J. Review of "The Constitutions of Society" in "Sociological Review" Vol.34 (2) 1986, pp434-437.

- 48 Clarke, S. "Marx Marginalism and Modern Sociology: From Adam Smith to Max Weber", London, Macmillan 1982, p239.
- 49 Abrams, P. "Historical Sociology", Shepton Mallet, Open Books 1982, p227.
- 50 Abrams, P. 1982, op cit ppl6-17.
- 51 Weber, M. "The Methodology of the Social Sciences", New York, Free Press 1949, pp63-64.
- 52 Marx, K. "The German Ideology", London, Lawrence and Wishart 1970, p48.
- 53 Giddens, A. 1979, op cit p39.
- 54 Giddens, A. 1984, op cit pl93.

- 55 Such a view seems to imply a progression towards "planful provision and work and the association of human beings under the impetus of the satisfaction of the conditions of human existence". However the attempted satisfaction of such needs can lead to the opposite situation implying the breakdown of human association. See Turnbull, C. "The Mountain People", London, Picador 1973.
- 56 Engels, F. in a letter to J. Bloch, Sept. 21st 1890 in Marx, K. and Engels, F. "Selected Works", London, Lawrence and Wishart 1968, pp682-683.
- 57 For a discussion of materialism and reflection theory as it relates to Marxism, see Hillel Ruben, D. "Marxism and Materialism", Sussex, Harvester 1977, especially Chapter 5.
- 58 Trier, J. quoted in Schaff, A. "Language and Cognition", New York, McGraw Hill 1973, p15.
- 59 Weber, M. 1949, op cit p72.
- 60 For a useful discussion of the problem of closure, see Gluckman, M. (Ed) "Closed Systems and Open Minds", Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd 1964.
- 61 Luckman, B. "The Small Life Worlds of Modern Man" in Luckman, T. (Ed) "Phenomenology and Sociology", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1978.
- 62 Walerstein, I. "A World System Perspective on the Social Sciences"; in EJS Vol 27, pp343-352.
- 63 Braverman, H. "Labour and Monopoly Capital", New York, MRP 1974, pIX.
- 64 Ibid, p4.
- 65 McGoldrick, J. "Crisis and the division of Labour" in: Dickson, T. (Ed) "Capital and Class in Scotland", Edinburgh, John Donald Ltd, 1982.
- 66 Marcuse, H. "Reason and Revolution", London, RKP 1955, p320.
- 67 Braverman, H. 1974, op cit p11.
- 68 Op cit p17.
- 69 Cutler, T. "The Romance of Labour", Economy and Society, Vol 17 No 1 1978.

- 70 See Wood, S. (Ed) "The Degradation of Work?", London, Hutchinson 1982, especially Chapters 5, 6 and 10.
- 71 Braverman, H. 1974, op cit p14.
- 72 Op cit p172.
- 73 See Littler, C. "The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Society" 1982 and Stark, D. "Struggles and the Transformation of the Labour Process" in "Theory and Society" Vol 19 No 1.
- 74 Stark, D. op cit p92.
- 75 Jacoby, R. Review article in "Telos" No 29, 1977.
- 76 Littler, C. and Salaman, G. "Braverman and beyond: Recent theories of the Labour Process" in "Sociology", Vol 16 No 2, 1982.
- 77 Braverman, H. 1974 op cit p27. For criticisms see:
Nichols, T. "Sociological Review" Vol 25, No 1.
Coombs, R. "NLR" 1978.
Jacoby, R. "Telos" 1977.
Burawoy, M. "Manufacturing Consent", Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1979.
- 78 Thompson, E.P. 1968, op cit.
- 79 Braverman, H. 1974, op cit p24.
- 80 Op cit p25.
- 81 Op cit p378.
- 82 Aronovitch, S. et al "The Political Economy of British Capitalism", New York, McGraw Hill 1981, Chapter 19 p304.
- 83 Marx, K. "Grundrisse", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1973, p99.
- 84 Ibid pp99-100.
- 85 Gramsci, A. "Selections from Prison Notebooks", London, Lawrence and Wishart 1971, pp277-318.
- 86 Gospel, H.F. and Littler, C. (Eds) "Managerial Strategies and Industrial Relations", London, Heinemann 1983.
- 87 The commodity status of labour is a problematic notion which

- often suggests an over-deterministic view of the real subordination of labour. For a further elaboration of this point see McInnes, J. "The Labour Process Debate and the Commodity Status of Labour: Some Problems", Paper at a conference "Organisation and control of the labour process", 23rd-25th March 1983, UMIST.
- 88 A similar problem is highlighted by Sohn-Rethel, A. in "The Dual Economics of Transition" in "The Labour Process and Class Strategies", London, CSE 1978, (6). See also Sabel, C. "Work and Politics", Cambridge, CUP 1982.
- 89 Nichols, I. Review article in "The Sociological Review", Vol 25 No 1, 1977.
- 90 In a sense the very popularity of the labour process approach has led towards its demise, the "language game" has been over-played and for a number of industrial relations and industrial sociology practitioners labour process theory has become atheoretical, referring simply to the physical processes of work.
- 91 Storey, J. "The Means of Management Control" in "Sociology", Vol 19 No 2.
- 92 McGoldrick, J. 1982, op cit p2.
- 93 For example, Sohn-Rethel, A. 1976, op cit and Palloix, C. "The Labour Process: From Fordism to neo Fordism" in "The Labour Process and Class Strategies", 1976.
- 94 Zimbalist, A. (Ed) "Case Studies on the Labour Process", New York, M.R.P. 1979.
- 95 Burawoy, M. 1979, op cit.
- 96 Giddens, A. "Power, the dialectic of control and class structuration" in Giddens, A. and Mackenzie (Eds) "Social Class and the Division of Labour", Cambridge, CUP 1982.
- 97 Ibid pp44-45.
- 98 Friedman, A.L. "Industry and Labour", London, MacMillan 1977.
- 99 Thompson, P. "Crawling from the Wreckage. The Labour Process and the Politics of Production", Paper at the Aston/UMIST conference "Organisation and Control of the Labour Process", April 1986, p9.

- 100 Op cit pl7.
- 101 Neimark, M. and Tinker, T. "On rediscovering Marx: Dissolving Agency - Structure in Dialectical Unity", Paper at 4th Aston/UMIST conference "Organisation and Control of the Labour Process", April 1986.
- 102 See Ollman, B. 'Alienation' (Second Edition) Cambridge, CUP 1976, especially Chapter 3 and Appendix 1 and 2.
- 103 Neimark, M. and Tinker, T. 1986, op cit pl1.
- 104 Neimark, M. and Tinker, T. 1986, op cit Introductory Abstract.
- 105 In this way the work is far closer to macro accounts of industrial relations such as that of Colin Crouch "The Politics of Industrial Relations", London, Fontana 1979 than to the labour process account of Braverman.
- 106 Neimark, M. and Tinker, T. 1986, op cit pp28-29.
- 107 Thompson, P. "The Nature of Work", London, Macmillan 1983, p39.
- 108 Nichols, T. "The British Worker Question", London, RKP 1986, pp142-143.
- 109 Brown, R.K. "Sociologists and Industry - In search of a distinctive competence" in "Sociological Review", Vol 29 No 2, 1981, p224.

CHAPTER 2

Wear Shipbuilding in the Inter-War Period

Part I

In all shipbuilding communities the inter-war period and more specifically the 1930s are remembered as times of hardship. Very few standard histories of shipbuilding centres or individual yards would be complete without their chapter upon "The Grim Thirties" (1). Lack of orders, record levels of unemployment and the accompanying material hardship have tended to dominate such accounts. The intractability of the economic crisis gives a picture of workers bowing to the inevitability of the circumstances bestowed upon them, or as in the case of the Jarrow march (2), appealing to the powerful for help. However, in recent years an alternative account of shipbuilding in the inter-war years has been emerging. Such analyses look at the labour process in shipbuilding and far from confirming the impression of the powerlessness of the workers within the industry in the face of mass unemployment, they suggest that a great deal of power was exercised by the workers in:

" ... resisting at the point of production the expropriation of the control they have exercised over the labour process."
(3)

Indeed, so successful was this resistance seen to be that one author has felt justified to conclude, after a study of the inter-war period, and more specifically the fate of the Shipbuilding Employers Federation (S.E.F.) welding plan that:

" ... the U.K. Shipbuilding industry represents an example where "deskilling", as Braverman defines it, did not take place." (4)

A common thread running through the work of both Edward Lorenz and Jim McGoldrick is the emphasis placed upon struggle at the point of production over the introduction of new technology (particularly welding) and the retention of control (by the workers) of the craft basis of production. The work of both of these researchers is a valuable contribution in understanding the shipbuilding industry in this period; however both accounts appear to share some common problems. Firstly, whilst both authors make programmatic statements which appear to recognise the heterogeneity existing within the British shipbuilding industry, their empirical focus is largely restricted to shipbuilding on the Clyde, with the odd mention of the situation on the Tyne. Indeed as McGoldrick states, his study:

" ... takes the Clydeside area as representative of the types of problem the industry faced and the types of solution it used to resolve them." (5)

However, this claim should perhaps be treated warily for several reasons. Firstly, the very heterogeneity of the British shipbuilding industry ensured that the type of product produced on the Clyde, primarily a "specialised" class of liners and cargo liners, could not be seen as typical for other areas such as the North East coast and particularly the River Wear, which relied almost exclusively upon the production of "tramp" tonnage. The importance of this lies not only in the differing technical

requirements of the different types of product, but also to some extent the different patterns of demand for each type of ship. Thus in the 1920s and 1930s the industry in the North Eastern region was hit harder by the effects of slump than any other area. Not only were the effects of the slump more deeply felt, but also any "recovery" was slower in coming. It should be apparent already that to treat the Clyde as representative of the industry as a whole is perhaps a risky business. This view is reinforced when one considers the employment relationship and the actual form of the constituent groups of "capital" and "labour". If we are to avoid a structurally over-deterministic account the importance of the "local factor" within class culture must be taken into account (6). Such an approach then needs to formulate a study of the labour process as situated in its specific environment and realise that the full implications of a labour process analysis can be grasped only if such wider contexts are considered (7).

If the work of McGoldrick and Lorenz can be faulted for not paying enough attention to the specificity of the wider context, there is also to some extent an opposite problem. That is their level of analysis rarely "descends" to the point of production in other than aggregate terms. We are told of workers "resisting at the point of production", but are given little evidence of the complexity that such an assertion implies. All too often the "action" is seen to lie at the level of the formal stances taken

by the unions and the employers, and one feels that in the end little knowledge is gained of the doings and attitudes of the non-activist worker. This problem is compounded by an over emphasis upon the issue of welding and in particular the defeat of the S.E.F. welding plan, so much so that one is given the impression that "boilermaker" becomes the substitute for "British shipyard workers". This over emphasis upon the issue of welding is understandable given the apparently clear-cut division between capital and labour over the issue; however, and this is more true of the work of Lorenz than McGoldrick, we are left with a mere inversion of Braverman. The tendency towards deskilling (as an orientation of capital) is left intact, if the process is frustrated it indicates strong labour and weak capital. To this extent then the neglect of the specificities of the wider context and the details of "action" at the point of production has led to a neglect of the social relations of the workplace and the community. An understanding of these elements is vital if one is to appreciate the contours of the apparent paradox of British shipbuilding, the retention of the craft division of labour, and the absence of widespread "deskilling" even in the face of the high levels of unemployment within the industry in the inter-war years. Furthermore, it is important to understand this period in all its complexity and uniqueness in order successfully to compare and contrast that time with developments in the present day.

In order to develop such an analysis, this study restricts itself to the industry on the River Wear as an example which in some respects contrasts with the Clyde (and to a lesser extent with the Tyne). The aim in this chapter is not to undermine the conclusions of Lorenz and McGoldrick, but rather to complement their work with an infusion of issues and problematics arising from different levels of analysis and a different geographical (and therefore technical and cultural) location. Hopefully this will contribute to an enlargement of our understanding of the complexity and heterogeneity of the British shipbuilding industry.

Part II

In attempting to situate our object of study in its global context the overwhelming feature of the inter-war years needs to be grasped, that is the existence of economic crisis. In order to appreciate the centrality (and perceived inevitability) of this background to the industry we need to make what may appear as a slight diversion to consider the nature of developments in the inter-war economy.

In any consideration of the British economy of the 1920s and 1930s, the notions of depression and slump inevitably play a large part ⁽⁸⁾. Nowhere is this more true than in relation to the shipbuilding industry. Thus in Sunderland, a town heavily dependent upon shipbuilding, unemployment had by 1923 reached a

level of 14,000. By 1926 this figure had grown to 19,000, and whilst it improved in the late 1920s, by the early 1930s it was worse than ever (9). The general pattern to these developments was as follows. Britain experienced a short boom after the first world war and then slump particularly in the export field. Thus in the early 1920s the volume of British exports was only two thirds of that exported in 1913 (10).

The collapse of demand came at just the point where the capacity to supply had been enlarged, as A.J. Youngson suggested:

"In cotton, coal, iron and steel, and shipbuilding capacity was increased when money costs were high in order to meet a demand which was very largely temporary." (11)

Following the fall in demand between 1920 and 1923, average wages and prices fell by one third (12). The Government responded in a typical fashion, pursuing a policy of deflation following directly from adherence to the marginal productivity doctrine which, combined with the return to the gold standard at a pre-war parity in 1925, ensured that Britain's economy did not recover in the late 1920s to the same extent as those of some of her competitors. In this then the Government attempted to reduce the costs of production without devaluing the currency. This:

"... helped to keep unemployment high in British export trades in the later 1920s when other countries enjoyed an industrial boom. It exposed Britain more nakedly to the effects of the crash on Wall Street in 1929." (13)

The return to gold at the pre-war parity seems at first a rather strange thing to do, as it resulted in an over-valuation of the pound in the region of 10%, adding further to the problems of a

British export industry already struggling with relatively high costs. This seems especially so given that France could return to gold well below the pre-war level, and whilst avoiding any inflation supposedly following under-valuation, raise its exports from 32,549,000 metric tons in 1926 to 41,128,000 metric tons in 1928 (14). The reason for this move springs directly from the position Britain occupied in the World system. Furthermore the dominance of the fraction of finance capitalists over industrial capitalists, expressed through the interests of "the city", were more concerned that the balance of payments stayed in reasonable equilibrium rather than the fact that the balance of trade was highly unfavourable. Therefore, as David Thomson noted:

"It was a decision of the city, not of industry. The Bank of England, to prevent loss of gold, had to keep up high interest rates. This, in turn, kept up the burden of national debt charges, and so of taxation. It hampered enterprise. It ignored the structural changes brought about by the events of the previous decade." (15)

Similarly, Ron Smith suggested that:

"The return to gold at the pre-war parity was a City policy, based on their international financial interests; on their desire to discipline the working class; and on their political perception of Britain's world role. The cost of the policy was domestic stagnation, great damage to British industry, and high unemployment." (16)

We can see then that dominance of the interests of finance capital over industrial capital led directly to the policy pursued by the Government in the mid 1920s, and in this sense only is the return to gold at the pre-war parity understandable.

But, as E.J. Hobsbawm has argued, the outcome of relying too heavily upon finance capital was to become apparent.

" ... by the middle of the 1920s British overseas investments earned more than ever before and so, even more strikingly, did her other sources of invisible income - financial and insurance services and so on. But, the inter-war crisis was not merely a British phenomenon, the decline of a former industrial world champion, all the more sudden and sharp for having been delayed for decades. It was the crisis of the entire liberal world of the nineteenth century, and therefore British trade and finance could no longer regain what British industry lost." (17)

That Britain was enmeshed in the international financial system cannot be denied. The nature of this involvement was to prove of critical importance when following the Wall Street crash in the autumn of 1929, a period of world slump was initiated. In this respect Britain had two associated problems. Firstly, during the post war period Britain continued to build up long term investments overseas. However these were financed largely by short term borrowing from abroad. Thus a problem of liquidity was to arise once the demands upon the gold supply rose during the period of the crisis of confidence in the soundness of paper money beginning in 1929. A second related problem which grew as the 1920s progressed was that mentioned by Henry Pelling:

"Britain ... though a creditor of her allies to the extent of some £1,740 million (of which £568 million had been lent to Russia, and was now irrecoverable), in her turn could not afford to be very generous to her debtors without serious danger to her balance of payments." (18)

Similarly:

"By 1924 new lending had approximately made good the sale of overseas assets during the war. But whereas Britain's debts

were owing to sound creditors like the U.S.A., many of the new loans were made to countries whose willingness and ability to repay were at best dubious." (19)

We can see then that the basis of Britain's finance capital, for which so much was sacrificed, was not as solid as it may have seemed. Moreover the fact that it was necessarily enmeshed within the world financial system meant that when the U.S.A. retreated from its aid obligations to the defeated powers in order to attend to its own problems at home, the system of international debt and credit collapsed, and all the sooner in the first instance for currencies being tied to gold; Britain was bound to be affected.

Looking back over the twenties we can see that the performance of the British economy was affected both by external conditions and internal policy. Perhaps of central importance is the notion that the world system in the post World War I period had changed. Britain had emerged from the war with a weakened economy facing a world in which the powers not centrally involved in the conflict had developed their economies at a startling rate. For example, from 1914 to 1920 the industrial production of the U.S.A. and Japan had risen by 20% and 75% respectively and the U.S.A.'s share of world industrial production was to rise from 36% in 1913 to 45% in 1928 (20). The conditions for British hegemony over the world system had passed, failure to appreciate this led to the attempt to retain sterling as the predominant trading currency - an attempt which was ultimately bound to

fail, and result in further injuring British industry, particularly exports. Thus Britain was to enter the world slump of the 1930s with an industry which had already taken a battering throughout the previous decade (21).

The events surrounding the Wall Street crash of 1929 reverberated through the finance and credit systems of the world. There was a flight from paper money to gold, and once started it was inevitable that this movement would gather momentum and put further pressure on national currencies. By 1931 that pressure had become almost intolerable, and in May with the failure of the Creditanstalt, a large Vienna bank, a new twist to the crisis was underway. The failure of the Austrian bank had a profound effect on the already faltering German economy and increased the sense of panic in all European financial centres. The demand for the only truly international currency, gold, increased. Thus France, which had avoided any large financial involvements in central Europe, but did have large foreign exchange holdings in London, increased their withdrawals demanding gold. In order to attempt to counter this flight from the pound, and in order to recover, to some extent, gold reserves, Britain and the U.S.A., which was feeling similar pressure, began a large scale withdrawal of their short-term claims lodged in central European banks. This of course increased the problem to such an extent that by September 21st 1931 legislation was enacted in Parliament suspending the Bank of England's obligation to sell gold. The effect on the

pound was that it began to fall against the dollar, falling from 4.8665 dollars to 3.14 by 1932. The upshot of these movements, which tilted the balance of trade slightly in Britain's favour, was that by 1933 the U.S.A. devalued the dollar returning the balance back to what it was before Britain effectively abandoned gold. A further consequence of these moves firstly by Britain and then the U.S.A. was to ensure that world demand remained low because the external depreciation of both currencies discouraged imports, and as the prices of primary products continued to decline there was already a diminishing level of effective demand exercised in this quarter.

The real consequence of the financial crisis of 1929-1931 does not lie in the shifts of gold and currency across frontiers. Rather what is of importance is that the money form is the relationship through which the general form of commodity exchange is universalised (22).

"Money, by expressing all commodities as values expresses the domain of capital - the social relations which make all use-values into commodities." (23)

It was not then merely a financial crisis but also a crisis of the social relations expressed through the commodity form. Thus the shifts of currency had real effects upon the production and exchange of use values throughout the world. Whilst these disruptions were represented as direct consequences of the problems of financial management, the manipulation of tariff barriers and non-equilibrium in exchange rates, they had real

effect upon the lives of millions of people. The exchange dealers and speculators had by their actions encouraged and stimulated the cycle of depression and whilst it may have seemed that:

"The economic depression, like the two great wars, had a quality of fatality - an impersonal calamity as if it were not of human creation - which bred despair and intensified fears." (24)

it was nevertheless a result of social action past and present which creates and recreates anew the social relationships through which men and women live.

Perhaps the most important consequence of the withdrawal of credits and the raising of tariff barriers was the collapse of world trade. It declined from a total of 5352 million U.S. gold dollars in January 1929 to 1788 million in January 1933 (see Figure 1). With the decline in world trade came the decline in production especially within the export industries. So that whilst the index of production in Britain using a base line of 1929 as 100, fell to 84 in 1931 and was 93 in 1933, the fall in the amount produced by the export industries was a far greater percentage especially given the growth of the "new industries" which for the most part dealt within national boundaries:

"While imports were maintained, exports declined making for certain "depressed areas" where industry was especially dependent on the export trades, even when other industries, such as the building trades, stimulated by the housing boom were flourishing." (25)

If in the 1920s many of Britain's problems had been self inflicted, or at least worsened by the maintenance of sterling at

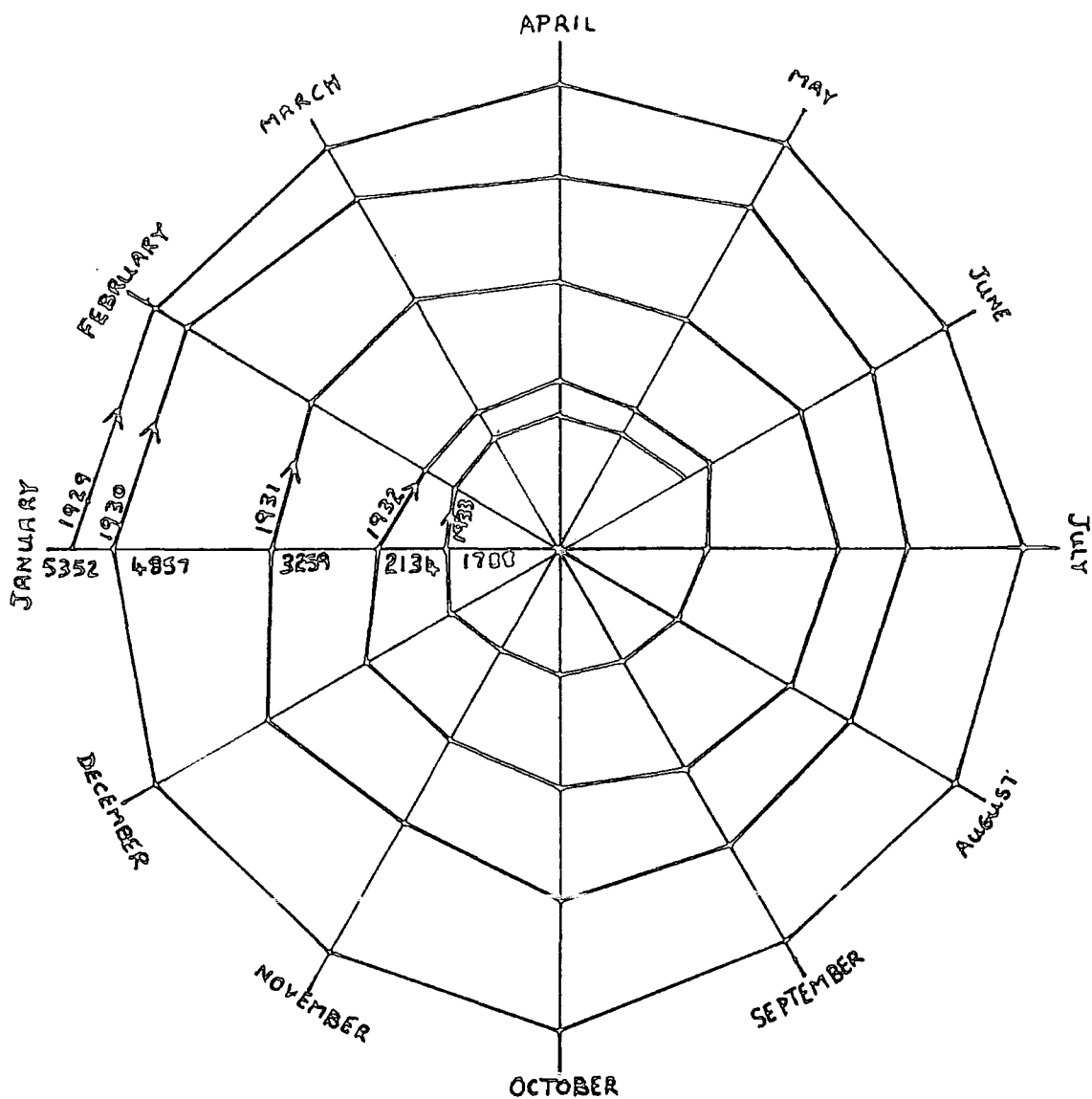


Fig 1

The contracting spiral of world trade, month by month, January, 1929, through June, 1933, in millions of United States gold dollars. (Source: World Economic Survey, 1932-1933, Geneva, The League of Nations, 1933)

an over-valued level, in the 1930s those same export industries were hit again by the collapse of trade, and as Pelling noted:

" ... the only fully effective path to recovery of world trade lay through genuinely world wide agreements. It was unfortunate, however, that the crisis had encouraged in so many countries, including Britain a spirit of economic nationalism. This was demonstrated in the spring of 1933 at the World Economic conference in London, sponsored by the League of Nations but also attended by the U.S.. The new American government of Franklin Roosevelt, intent upon its own internal problems and experiments, was unwilling to support any effective measures to initiate the recovery of world trade. Consequently little was done except to introduce some international schemes to restrict the production of primary commodities. Henceforward relaxations of international trading barriers were largely the result of bilateral agreements between governments. Long term international lending like international migration became a thing of the past and multilateral trade seemed to be growing obsolete." (26)

Underlying the crisis was the loss of Britain's role of exercising hegemony over the world economic system and the refusal of the only power which could then have assumed that role of dominance, namely the U.S.A., to do so. This effectively meant, for a short time at least, an attempted retreat from the expansion of the modern world system, a change in relative importance of industries producing for export and those catering for demand internal to national boundaries. The crisis, as well as expressing a change in the relative importance of particular countries in relation to world wide economic activity, also further developed those changes.

The relevance of this outline of the economic background can be seen in that, firstly it serves as a general context in which

to locate the industry. However of more importance are the direct effects that the events outlined had upon the industry. The fact that the shipbuilding industry is an export industry is obviously important here. Moreover of all the traditional export industries it is perhaps most sensitive to changes in the general level of its own commodities (ships) traded in themselves, but also those commodities are the primary medium through which other commodities are transported. Also the level of demand for the products of the industry profoundly affects the balance of power within the industry. Of importance here is the level of unemployment created through lack of demand, more generally what arises is:

" ... an environment which favours one side or other of industry." (27)

Specifically in relation to the British shipbuilding industry, the overwhelming dominance of the world depression meant that the problems faced by the industry were seen as lying almost solely within the disjunction between the capacity for supply and the level of demand for ships. This being the case, there was less emphasis paid by both employers and government to the nature of the division of labour than perhaps would otherwise have been the case. An example of what is meant is the approach of the Government (shared in different ways by both the employers and unions) which stressed aid to shipowners in terms of the "scrap and build" scheme of 1935 rather than direct aid to shipbuilders to modernise production in order to compete in the international

market for what orders were available. As will be argued, if the dominance of the problem of demand had the effect of diverting the attention of the employers and the Government away from the production process and the division of labour, it had the opposite effect upon labour within the industry. The existence of extremely high levels of unemployment necessitated the struggle to ensure that what work was available was available to you! At the level of the production process this meant asserting your right to a particular type of work. The agency through which these assertions were made in the shipbuilding industry were predominantly the craft unions. Thus in confronting the problems that faced them:

"Workers in a trade found it easier to combine to strengthen their individual labour power than to establish a sense of common self-interest with other workers in the same industry, let alone workers in general. The primary struggle of workers was not for the establishment of Socialism but for control of authority in the work-place."
(28)

Although this was written of workers in the 1800s it remained true of shipyard workers faced with the problems of the 1930s. Finally the need to understand the specific nature of the slump of the 1920s and '30s suggests itself at another level. There is a sense in which history is a totality, in this way there are real connections between the Wall Street crash, the failure of the Creditanstalt, and children of unemployed fathers begging any uneaten "bait" from men leaving Doxford's shipyard on the River Wear (29). The contexts are different, as are the

primary actors in the different situations and perhaps the extent of agency each can effectively initiate may be different, and yet they exist as they do because of their relationships within the world system at a particular historical point. Hopefully I have demonstrated some ways in which a consideration of the nature of the depression of the 1920s and '30s is relevant to a study of the shipbuilding industry on the Wear. Now we must look at some of the features of the industry itself to understand why the economic climate had such a devastating effect in general and on the River Wear in particular.

Part III

Given that we have already established at a theoretical level the importance of the inter-relationship of the moments of production and consumption, we now need to turn our attention towards some of the general features of the shipbuilding industry in order to locate these concerns in an empirical context. The first point to note is the construction nature of the industry in which:

" ... nearly two thirds of the final costs of a ship represent bought in materials and components." (30)

This clearly has implications for the analysis of the strategies of capital within the industry in as far as these attempt to maximise accumulation (31). One would expect concerns with external costs to feature largely in the preoccupations of

management. Also as the shipbuilding process lies as it were at the end of several labour processes, relative inefficiencies in these industries will have an effect upon the competitive position of shipbuilding itself. As one author has suggested:

"The shipbuilder assembles in his yard the finished products of many other industries - the steel-rolling mills, the foundry, the forge, the coppersmith, the engineering industry, the boat builders, the instrument makers, and so on." (32)

It is because shipbuilding in its totality is such an amalgam of other industries that some authors (even up until the late 1960s) have claimed that the health of the industry is indicative of the more general health of the economy. As House has noted:

"... shipbuilding in Britain is one of the best indicators of our general industrial competitiveness." (33)

Whilst this may be an overstatement, it is undeniable that the British industry has in the past been closely tied to the role of Britain as a world power. However historically, with the increasing decline of Imperialism in its specifically political form, the industry has seen the removal of the "buffer" of Empire consequent upon the loss of British hegemony within the World System.

On a more general level however, the industry has always been very responsive to shifts in world trade.

"It has long been recognised that the fluctuations of industry and trade, known as the trade cycle, have probably a more marked effect on the shipbuilding industry than on any other of our staple industries." (34)

Indeed as Parkinson has observed, the world output of merchant

ships during the period of 1886-1939 has fluctuated wildly:

"... before the First World War output might fluctuate in an extreme case from 50% below its trend to 50% above its trend in 2 years, while swings of 50% from slump to boom and back again were usual. In the inter-war period, output fell from the post-war peak of 150% above the average to 80% below in 1933, and there were considerable variations in other years." (35)

In some senses then, fluctuations in world trade are exaggerated in the demand for ships, entering the equation in two respects (relatively between national industries) as a capital good in itself and (absolutely) as the medium of transport of other commodities. As one other author has remarked:

"Shipbuilding is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in world trade. Shipping capacity cannot be rapidly adjusted to changes in demand and fluctuations in world trade are immediately reflected in the level of freight rates. Moreover, since the volume of new mercantile tonnage produced each year represents only a small percentage of the tonnage in existence, ship construction tends to fluctuate far more than in proportion to the changes in world trade." (36)

Here then the very scale of the product, and consequently the time taken in producing an individual unit, serves to ensure a disjunction between supply and demand:

"When during a period of booming international trade rates rise, shipowners place new contracts for ships; but as soon as the peak in rates has been passed and a downward trend sets in, the orders fall off very steeply. As the period of ship construction is long, however, the response of output to these changes in demand cannot be immediate. Both 1921 and 1930, years in which international trade, freight rates and new orders declined, were years of high activity as measured by the tonnage launched; for the shipbuilders were then engaged in dealing with orders placed during the preceding boom. This, a large number of new ships becomes available just when the demand for shipping space is ebbing fast; and this intensifies the depression in freight rates and increases the reluctance of shipowners to place new orders." (37)

One point to note however is that fluctuations in demand stemming from rising and falling freight rates do not hit all shipbuilding centres with the same severity. This is due to the nature of the specialisation of centres towards the production of different types of ship. Firstly one would not expect the demand for warships to follow the same pattern as that of merchant tonnage. Secondly, however, there is considerable variation within the merchant sector with various patterns of demand applying to passenger liners, cargo liners, tankers and tramps. In the inter-war years it was the North East's "specialisation" upon the general cargo vessel, the tramp, which ensured that when depression hit the British industry it was the region that suffered most. Thus for example whilst the relative share of the British market averaged 42% from 1919 to 1929, in 1926 the North East region held only 28% of the market share ⁽³⁸⁾. Again the importance of the heterogenous nature of the British industry is underlined even in the face of the common problems facing the industry in the inter-war period. However the point to be emphasised is the essentially interlinked nature of the relationship of the industry to wider issues of world trade, and in the case of Britain the historically specific conditions of its retreat from world hegemony.

If the defining characteristics of the market demand for ships in the inter-war period can be seen as generally involving cyclical fluctuations of the whole world market, then the

organisational and technological characteristics of British shipbuilding can be seen to be more specific. The key to these features of the industry is the reliance upon a craft technology and administration (39). In this context the importance of craft skills has been seen as paramount:

"The two essential features of the technology of shipbuilding are that the product is not standardised and that mechanisation and rationalisation have not proceeded to any great extent. For the most part each ship is individually designed, programmed and constructed. Lack of standardisation of product and the fact that shipbuilding is a construction industry have limited the extent to which there can be standardisation, rationalisation and mechanisation of the production processes. Even though a great deal of equipment is supplied by outside sub-contractors, the building of a ship depends essentially on the manipulation of tools and materials by men who have acquired craft skills over a period of years." (40)

In outlining these general features of the industry we must beware of the tendency to reduce a complex process to a simplistic overly static and technologically determined account. Whilst it is undeniable that the technology used in shipyards has a determining effect, within limits, upon the degree of "standardisation, rationalisation and mechanisation" of the production process, such technological determinism is not however a quantitatively uniform phenomenon. The specific form of the level of "standardisation, rationalisation and mechanisation" cannot be formulated purely as a function of the level of available technology or the non-standardised nature of the product. Rather, the nature of the production process in any one national industry is the result of complex mediations at both

local, national and international levels. In order to address these complexities we must shift the focus away from the general characteristics of the industry and towards the empirical context. In doing so we must locate our concern with the division of labour in its wider social context of the employment relationship which in turn necessitates an investigation which "leads outwards to consider the whole complex of social relations within which it (the employment relation) is situated" (41). In looking at the shipbuilding industry on the River Wear in the inter-war period the aim is to produce an "account" which in apprehending the industry in its context as an historical individual can nevertheless contribute towards an increased understanding of the complexities of the wider national industry and also provide a benchmark with which to assess the continuities and discontinuities within the industry on the Wear in the 1980s.

Part IV

In the previous section it has been suggested that there is a difference between shipbuilding centres, and one important feature of this difference is the type of product (i.e. ships) in which particular centres specialise. However, for our purposes, of at least as much importance as the type of tonnage produced are other differences relating to the specific nature of both capital and labour and the cultural traditions within which both of these groups interact (and create and recreate anew). In this

connection it is worth quoting at length one comparison made by the Reverend C.H.G. Hopkins, of the shipbuilding centres on the Wear and Mersey:

"During the seven years before I came to Pallion, I had been working at St. Luke's, Tranmere, a shipyard Parish in Birkenhead. From the streets of the parish you could see growing, day by day, on the stocks, such great ships as the "Mauritania", the "Ark Royal" and the "Prince of Wales". They were launched in the Mersey in Tranmere Bay, at a point where the river was a mile wide. On arriving in Pallion, to work in Sunderland, "the largest shipbuilding town in the world", I was amazed to see how narrow the River Wear looked at Pallion, in comparison with the Mersey at Tranmere. It seemed hardly credible that the fine ships for which Sunderland is famous, could be launched into such a small space ... However, that was by no means the only difference one noticed between the Wear and the Mersey. Immediately I was struck by the difference in the atmosphere of the place; in Sunderland there were eight shipyards of varying size, whereas in Birkenhead there was the one enormous shipyard - though there are, in addition, several repair yards. In Sunderland, nearly all the yards and allied engineering industries are family firms, of a size which makes personal contact between employers and workmen an everyday factor. As a result, the general tone of industrial relationships has been harmonious over a long number of years. Men who work in the various yards have mostly been in the same yard for a great many years; they are proud of it and of its achievements and traditions, and they refer to it as "our yard". (42)

This draws our attention to issues which are often overlooked by sociologists, namely the importance of the physical context of communities. Certainly in the case of Sunderland several authors have commented upon the physical location of the town, as lying:

"eccentric to the axial routeway of the North-East from Tees to Tyne." (43)

The importance of this is seen to lie in the contribution that such "isolation" has made to constituting the clearly demarked "character" within the town,

"Unlike the conurbations of Tyneside and Teeside Sunderland is a unitary compact city, one of the largest county boroughs in Britain ... Although only some 7 miles from South Shields and the Tyne ... Sunderland has kept a strong town character and individuality ... the dependence of the local economy on shipbuilding and repairing has traditionally been greater than on Tyne or Tees. In some respects overshadowed by Newcastle as a regional service centre and capital, Sunderland is more strikingly a Northern industrial town, with many of the legacies of industrialism writ large in its townscape ..." (44)

Others, whilst being equally guilty of an anthropomorphic portrayal, have attributed even greater importance to the sedimentation of the past in the character and attributes of the town, and more importantly the real sense in which the past is still "alive" in the attitudes of the present population. As one author writing in 1969 put it:

"Sunderland is a town which is living on the dwindling fat of its Victorian expansion. The legacy of the Industrial Revolution is apparent in its appearance, its industrial structure, its population growth and in a host of social and economic characteristics. Even attitudes are coloured by its past heritage. The Depression years, the final death spasm of the nineteenth century in a pre-Keynsian era, are still a real memory amongst much of the town's population and impinge upon the attitudes of the working population. This imprint of the past, rooted in a continuing dependence on heavy industry, is found to a much greater degree than in the towns of the Midlands or even Lancashire, since the spread of light manufacturing has had only marginal effects in the North East." (45)

The town of Sunderland as clearly demarked from other urban centres with a degree of dependence upon shipbuilding uncommon in other large towns was seen by one author to be largely a "closed community":

"Sunderland in 1926 was by no means a one industry town, but the fortunes of shipbuilding had for so long been the major

indicator of economic and social conditions on Wearside ... The rope making and pottery industries did not employ a great number, and coal mining was not as prevalent in the Borough as in the rest of the county. This separated Sunderland from the county town of Durham City, the focal point for miners within the Durham coalfield. Lacking the communications, prestige and diversity of Newcastle, only twelve miles away, Sunderland was very much a closed community, forever in the shadow of these two centres. Shipbuilding was at the heart of the industrial and everyday life at the mouth of the Wear." (46)

Here then we can see that the "character of the town" cannot be deduced solely from its physical location but rather location is one feature in a complex which includes past history and industrial structure. In order to unravel some of these complexities it is perhaps worthwhile to look at the early history of shipbuilding on the Wear (the coming together of the specific location and the historically specific forms of capital and labour) in as much as this legacy bestowed a character upon the culture of the local population.

For some authors the location of the industry is merely a function of the proximity of certain natural resources. Thus L. Jones has suggested that the shift in the importance of shipbuilding centres from the Thames to the North of England was consequent upon the change from wooden to iron steam ships and that:

"New materials also involved a shift in location. The Solent and Thames, near the sources of timber supplies, and with excellent launching facilities, were flourishing centres of wooden shipbuilding. The change from wood to iron, and sail to steam, in propulsion, had the effect of localising the industry principally in the North." (47)

Such a purely technical functional view of the shift in the

location of the industry would seem to be lacking in several respects. Firstly the move Northwards began before iron and steam were significant factors in shipbuilding. Indeed as early as 1835 Lloyds Register recognised that Sunderland was:

" ... the most important shipbuilding centre in the country nearly equalling as regards number and tonnage of ships built, all the other ports together." (48)

This was some ten years prior to the launch of the river's first steam powered ship and seventeen years before its first iron ship; the dominance of Wear shipbuilding was first established in the days of "wooden walls" (49). Secondly, such a view neglects:

" ... the point that it was not the location of coal and iron deposits under the soil that was crucial, but the development of local organisations of capital and labour capable of extracting and processing these raw materials." (50)

This approach, then, redirects our attention back towards the social processes involved in the development of industry. The superiority of such an approach is underlined when we turn our attention towards the growth of the shipbuilding industry in the North East region, where a purely technical functional approach can in no way account for the rise in the importance of the Wear shipbuilding industry relative to that of the Tyne and the Tees. Rather the explanation must be sought in the specific nature of capital and labour on that river understood as a complex historical individual.

The growth of the importance of Sunderland as a shipbuilding centre was a relatively sudden one, going from an output of some

3,951 tons in 1790-1, with such ports as Hull and Whitby launching considerably more, up to an output of 14,330 tons in 1814 as the premier shipbuilding port out-producing its nearest rival, Newcastle, by some 5849 tons ⁽⁵¹⁾ (see Appendix 1). The timing of this expansion owes much to the demand stimulated by the Napoleonic Wars, but the reason for the pattern of relative growth owes more to the peculiarities of Sunderland (or its rivals). One thing is certain however, the growth of Sunderland as a shipbuilding port was not predicated upon economies of scale of large yards. For an 1805 Admiralty survey provided a comprehensive overview of the structure of the industry in 1804 when:

"... 24 shipyards on the Wear employed 667 shipwrights, 60% of whom were apprentices and 6% over fifty years old. Two yards employed 7 and 9 men respectively and the three largest yards were those of Laing (53 men), Hall (52) and Robson (49). On Tyneside there were many much larger yards and these included ... R. Bulmer (181), J. Craster (138), S. Temple (121), Nicholson, Horn and Co. (70) and N. Fairles with 54 workers ... Thus, clearly the Wear shipyards were much smaller units than those on her sister river, which she was soon to lead in output." (52)

The importance of the role of the small(er) firm for "nineteenth century industrialisation" has been noted by Sabel and Zeitlin - they suggest that a concentration of small firms in an "industrial district" could and did lead to "flexible specialisation - one of the defining characteristics of which was that:

"Firms were not enduring units of production but rather temporary combinations of machines and skills directed to the achievement of particular tasks ... " (53)

Such a characterisation was true of many of the enterprises building ships on the Wear where according to the "Corder Manuscripts" there were approximately 68 cases of enterprises building only a single ship between 1790 and 1849 (54). That such enterprises were possible owed much to a lack of effective institutional barriers to starting such a business, and similarly little in the way of barriers to mobility within the labour market. Indeed it would seem that such a position was characteristic of the Wear rather than other centres. Thus for example the access to the shipbuilding industry on the Tyne was restricted in its formative period by the power of the freemen of Newcastle. Thus Robert Wallis had to fight hard to establish the first shipyard in South Shields:

"For in shipbuilding as in everything else connected with the River Tyne, Newcastle's freemen claimed and enforced a monopoly. The Corporation thus did everything in its power to hinder the construction of Wallis's first ship and he had to fight two legal actions, as well as ward off physical intimidation, before he succeeded in breaking Newcastle's power." (55)

The absence of such a restrictive power block on the river Wear not only meant easier access for individuals to a shipbuilding enterprise but it also tended to blur, to some extent, the division between capital and labour. This had implications not only for the structure of the industry but also for the development of trade unionism. For whilst:

"Many ports had well organised shipwrights' unions and, while Thomas Brown, a Tyneside businessman, regarded the absence of "combination" on the Wear as contributing to the port's success, he added, "a large proportion of the

shipbuilders are generally satisfied with mere wages; these shipbuilders being more of the character of operative builders for the wood importer." Since many ships were built "by persons ... barely above the position of artisans ..." he could "certainly" obtain cheaper terms than if the shipbuilders "had been capitalists". (56)

Similar appraisals of the nature of shipbuilding on the Wear were forthcoming from other sources. Thus in 1848 one Sunderland ship-owner commented that:

"... a great many of our shipbuilders are working men, perhaps they have very limited education, and ... are employed as shipbuilders by the Timber merchants ... (they) are men of small capital." This view was restated by the Lloyds surveyor, himself a shipbuilder for two years. "The shipbuilders in the Port of Sunderland are not generally Men of Capital." (57)

This form of industry would appear to conform to Sabel and Zeitlin's form of institutional framework described as "municipality". In this form the boundaries of the employment relationship are relatively fluid:

"Typically the movement of work in progress was co-ordinated by a merchant who supplied credit and raw materials." (58)

The importance of this "form" for the characterisation of social relationships lies in the lack of social distance or permanence between employer and employee:

"Aside from encouraging innovation the scope given to competitive ambition in these regions contributed to their survival by reinforcing in a roundabout way the solidary sentiments that kept the struggle for advancement within safe limits. Because those on top had often risen from the ranks and could fall back into them, they were less likely to mistreat their subordinates, both out of a knowledgeable sympathy for their situation and out of a fear that after an unlucky year they might again share it." (59)

In this view then, there is congruence between the specific form of social relationships and the regulation of relationships at work. Indeed it may be further suggested that such relations between employer and employee whilst not finally or absolutely sundered represents the source of many of the attitudes which were to persist regarding the responsibility of the individual worker for ensuring the quality of his own work.

Here then is the source of the Wear's peculiarity (and success), the legacy of which was to remain important in the inter-war period. An open labour market and the lack of any institutional power bloc or strict regulation of entry into business ensured that:

"... working carpenters, who had been frugal and careful, and had saved a few pounds, found little difficulty in commencing in shipbuilding." (60)

The lack of social distance coupled with the relative isolation of the borough from other urban centres interacted and helped in the development of what one researcher has referred to as the "politics of local loyalties" rather than the politics of class (61). Clearly in a sector such as shipbuilding with an historically increasing demand upon the minimum level of fixed capital viable for an individual enterprise, such "free" entry to business was likely to be characteristic of the early history of the industry in the era of competitive capitalism (62). In relation to the Wear the rise of monopoly capitalism from 1880 onwards came as the last wooden ships were being built. The

force of these two trends, towards monopoly capital and iron, ensured that the days of the worker employer were largely over. Many of the remaining shipbuilders by the turn of the century could claim several generations of their family as Wear builders. However, even by the inter-war period many of the attitudes of earlier times and in some aspects even the structure of the industry itself on the river still bore the imprint of those earlier days.

In terms of the yards themselves, those on the Wear remained smaller than those in the Tyne or Tees. Thus the largest yard on the Wear in 1931 (Wm. Doxford and Sons Ltd.) had a total of six berths, whilst the biggest individual berth (at Sir John Priestman's yard) could accommodate vessels up to 600 feet in length. The corresponding figures for the Tyne were 20 berths (Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Ltd.) and a berth for vessels up to 1,100 feet in length at Vickers-Armstrong Ltd.. On the Tees the largest yard of the Furness Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. had 12 berths in which vessels of up to 750 feet could be built (63).

Whilst Wear yards were relatively small in comparison with those on the two other principal rivers in the North East of England, it was nevertheless the case that the absolute and relative cost of opening a "shipyard" had grown enormously since the mid nineteenth century and therefore an identifiable "capitalist class" had coalesced. However it is important to understand the context and the historical continuities that persisted even with

the emergence of this class, in order to gauge the specifics of the interrelationship between the employers and workers within the yards and the community. Even with a largely working class/lower middle class population of around 160,000 in 1926:

" ... the political bias of the town up to that time was more a reflection of traditional loyalties than of adherence to a particular party line ... Local loyalties ensured that men such as Tory shipyard owner Sir W.T. Doxford, and Samuel Storey, proprietor of the popular "Sunderland Daily Echo" were elected (to parliament)." (64)

Moreover such local loyalties were to some extent maintained as a consequence of the employers devoting some of their fortunes to doing "good works" within the town. Such local beneficence again had a long history within Sunderland. For example one shipbuilder, John Hutchinson, in the mid nineteenth century was renowned for:

" ... the number and extent of his public charities. His name figured invariably at or near the head of subscription lists for philanthropic purposes, whether the Sunderland Infirmary, soup kitchens, or other similar objects. He was one of the best friends of such institutions as The Ragged School, to the children attending which he gave a dinner once a year, besides other donations in the shape of clothes etc." (65)

This "tradition" was maintained in the inter-war period, thus for example, Sir John Priestman owned:

" ... a prosperous well managed and profitable yard out of which a considerable fortune has been made which the owner is now spending over church, hospital and charitable works ... " (66)

The importance of doing "good works" in the locality cannot be understood in terms of direct paternalism, a concern of an employer with "their" employees, but rather must be seen as an

essential contribution to the politics of locality. It should not be thought that what is being argued is that the Wear employers were parochial. One of the enduring myths about shipbuilding employers is that they were men of little education with only practical knowledge; this may have been true in the early years of the "artisan builders" but by the inter-war period that had changed. Most of the employers and directors of yards had some form of higher education. Thus for example, R.C. Thompson, Managing Director of J.L. Thompson's, was educated at Marlborough College and gained an honours degree at Cambridge reading mechanical sciences ⁽⁶⁷⁾. Henry Short, Chairman of Short Brothers, was educated at Haileybury and Trinity College Cambridge, gaining a B.A. in Law ⁽⁶⁸⁾. Mr. F.W. Dugdale, from 1929 Managing Director of the Wear Dockyard of S.P. Austin and Son Ltd. was educated at Wellingborough and then read for a B.Sc. at Durham University. Mr. A.J. Marr, Director of Laings in the 1930s, obtained a B.Sc. from Durham University and Mr. R.A. Bartram, Chairman of Bartram and Sons was educated at Armstrong College Newcastle ⁽⁶⁹⁾. In business as well as education the horizons of Wear shipbuilders extended far beyond the borough. Many had connection with shipping lines as in the case of the Chairman of J.L. Thompson's, Sir R. Norman Thompson, who was also Chairman of Silver Line Ltd. of London ⁽⁷⁰⁾. Sir John Priestman was Chairman of two shipping companies, two coal mining companies, a Director of Phoenix Assurance Company and had also

built up very considerable investments in South African gold (71). The importance of such other business interests, especially in shipping lines, in the early inter-war period, was seen in its potential as a source of demand for ships. Thus for the period after the first World War, up until 1931:

"... it has been suggested to us by one authority that the Wear has maintained her proportion of North-East tonnage because of the existence of family connections between owners and builders." (72)

To the extent that this was true it was managed largely, and to a far greater extent than on the Tyne, within the corporate form of the private firm rather than the public joint stock company (73). Such family connections have been described by Sabel and Zeitlin as constituting a pattern based on the "federated family firm". The importance of such alliance lies in its flexibility, in that:

"... firms often found markets outside the family; but their financial and emotional ties to the lineage made them dependable partners even in difficult times." (74)

We can see then that in education and business interests the Wear employers often had connections extending far beyond Sunderland itself and often in the empirical case spanning the "fractions" of industrial and financial capital. In the face of these class attributes and the social distance they imply as between employer and employee, the question becomes how were the politics of traditional loyalties maintained, and more intriguing is the question as to how this paradox represented itself within the employment relationship in the individual yards?



So far the focus has been upon the continuity of the families representing the "personification of capital" within the industry on the Wear and the stability over generations of the "family firm" (75). It was not only the families of the employers who had a long history in shipbuilding however, as generations of workers also lived and worked in the area. The pattern of settlement was of particular importance here, with a stable band of working class housing emerging around the shipyards in the nineteenth century. Such districts were not comprised of homogeneous units of housing, however, and artisan housing of the type still visible today at Roker, Fulwell, Pallion and Millfield consisted of small cottages rather than the larger subdivided houses which were the homes of many of the poorer sections of the working class (76). It was in these districts that the shipyard workers lived, in "stable" communities whose boundaries (visible and invisible) were preserved in opposition to other areas in the town. Indeed patterns of locality and the networks established within them were often important in relation to securing employment at a particular yard.

The quality of the relationships between employers and employees, each with their "own" local traditions and loyalties, is often elusive. For, by the inter-war period, the industry on the Wear had acquired many of the wider characteristics which were notable by their absence in the early years of shipbuilding;

comprehensive trade union representation, and as we have seen shipbuilders who could be seen unequivocally as capitalist, the employment relationship had hardened into a structural relationship (77). In this situation some observers have put the retention of a non-radical workforce down to the quality of personal relationships in the yards, facilitated by the small size of each unit. Thus, as late as 1954 one author was claiming that:

"In Sunderland, nearly all the yards and allied engineering industries are family firms, of a size which makes personal contact between employers and workmen an everyday factor. As a result, the general tone of industrial relationships has been harmonious over a long number of years." (78)

Explanations of harmonious industrial relations based on the small size of firms should be treated warily and as recent research suggests there would seem to be little reason to think that size of firm in itself is any guarantee of such a situation; indeed in some ways the opposite may be the case (79). The situation is more complex than Hopkins suggests. The lack of social distance between employer and employee, characteristic of the early years of the industry, was retained in some yards as late as the turn of the century. In these situations the employer is often remembered as a "character". Thus one plumber interviewed during the course of this research had written down some stories told to him by other workers, during his apprenticeship in the 1930s. One concerned "Jacky Crown" and his personal supervision of the "coming of age" ceremonies of his apprentices:

"On their 21st birthday they were escorted down to the slipway at high tide and thrown in, with Jacky Crown lending a willing hand ... On his 21st birthday (the original storyteller) during the dinner break, he knew his mates were preparing to carry him out so he slipped into the store and slipped off his clothes, but before he could pull on an old pair of overalls Jacky and the mob appeared, and he was carried out stark naked and thrown into the slipway ... as ill luck had it, he was thrown in above the cradle and found himself under the hauling cable, head down and his backside up. The water was only about 5 feet deep, but he had swallowed half the water in the dock before the onlookers realised that he was in trouble, with the heavy cable over his neck. His legs and backside were above the surface. His version of it was that when he was dragged out half drowned old Jacky gave him the customary sum of money from his waistcoat pocket, a small tip to denote the end of his training, then said "You took your time about getting out." To which he replied, "So would you if you were held down by your head like I was." Jacky retorted, "My mistake, lad, I didn't realise that was your arse sticking up, I thought it was your head - you look better that way up" and then walked away laughing his head off." (80)

This account of the initiation into journeyman status in the 1890s with the help of the yard owner as "one of the lads" is replaced by the author's own account of initiation in the late 1930s. This particular "rite" involved immersion in a barrel filled with filthy water, but in this case the circumstances surrounding the "event" were very different:

"All this, of course, was done with one eye out for the foreman who was, in his turn, always mindful of the fact that a manager might witness the struggle. He knew what went on, but had to stop the skylarking and threatened suspension or other dire punishment for the sake of discipline and appearances." (81)

A general feature of the accounts given by the men interviewed in connection with this research who worked in Wear yards in the 1920s and 1930s is not the lack of social distance between employer and employee, but rather the reverse. Moreover a

deferential attitude is observed in some of the accounts given which stress the importance of acknowledgement across the social divide. Thus for example one plater began his account of working in a shipyard stressing the fact that he became known to the owners personally:

"I worked at Laings and Thompsons ... I knew Victor Thompson ... I've been at meetings ... different discussions I've had with him ... he thought the world of me." (82)

A similar account was produced by another boilermaker describing how he "knew" Cyril Thompson:

"Now then, that man never walked past me anytime in the shipyard, he always stopped to talk to me - always." (83)

From these and other accounts there emerges an overall impression of the importance of being known by a "significant other", in most cases this being the owner of the yard. However the view of the employers produced in such accounts approximates more to the modern media portrayal of Royalty than to any notion of the employer as "one of the lads". The essence of these views, which also betray a moral order, is summed up in the much heard phrase used to describe shipyard owners - that these men were "gentlemen". It is this phrase rather than any more precise description such as paternalism which captures the quality of the relationship between the workers and the owners of the Wearside shipyards in the inter-war period. To some extent the social distance between the workers and the "gentlemen" who owned the yards excused the latter from being seen as implicated in the day

to day conflicts which arose in the workplace - like Royalty they were almost "above all that".

Such a view was often true in a literal, geographical as well as an organisational sense. The day to day issues of the regulation of employment was the preserve of the foremen and managers, and this was the level at which most of the potential conflict would be articulated. Again here, the importance of the "occupational community" and the small size of the yards could be considerable. Thus one worker explained how he was able to move from one yard to another because of the similar movement of foremen and managers:

"They all passed (from one yard to another) the managers, the foremen they all passed, even the manager went down there, the foreman plater went down there - that's how I walked in you see." (84)

Even where supervisory staff did not physically move they could still assert their influence through an active social network:

"It was essential to try to keep a good personal reputation. Foremen did know each other, and passed men around from one yard to another. Fall foul of one foreman and a tradesman could find himself frozen out." (85)

In such a situation with the foremen as the hirers and firers of labour one can appreciate how the owners could in some senses be seen to be above the conflicts on the "shop floor" and remain as a significant other in the eyes of the worker - a "gentleman" who "thinks the world" of his workers as individuals. Back at the level of the production process however, the "harmony" in industrial relations was perhaps less the product of goodwill

between persons, but rather the pragmatic result of the balance of forces between workers and foremen articulated through the networks of the work and community situation. Clearly at this level "harmony" is often in the eye of the beholder, for as Weber has noted:

"Obedience will be taken to mean that the action of the person obeying follows in essentials such a course that the content of the command may be taken to have become the basis of action for its own sake ... Subjectively, the causal sequence may vary, especially as between "submission" and "sympathetic agreement". (86)

Being "obedient" to a foreman meant more than doing a satisfactory job at work - it meant also keeping a "good personal reputation" in a wider sense:

"You couldn't afford to have an argument with a foreman, what! If you upset one of them that was it, you were finished." (87)

Here again what is important is the physical concentration of the yards on the Wear and the relatively "closed" nature of the community; in a sense the physical density and structure of the occupational community served to produce a particular "moral" density. The importance of the "respectable" working craftsman was highlighted through both the pragmatic considerations of a very effective social network amongst foremen (in the face of a loose labour market) and was also encouraged by the moral density of the occupational culture stressing the politics of local loyalties (88). The importance of "respectable" (i.e. non radical) status was pointed to by the "carrot" of identification with the "gentlemen" owners and the "stick" - the power of and

the effective network between the foremen. This produced a situation in which those in exercise of the economic power of hiring and firing (the foremen) were because of community position very effective bulwarks against the potentially activist worker. However on the other hand, as will be shown later, the importance of the foremen in the recruitment and organisation of labour was dependent upon and refracted through their own backgrounds as craftsmen. This factor was one of several which was to serve as a retarding force in relation to any radical views of reorganising and/or deskilling the production process. It is within the contexts outlined so far - the interaction of physical and social locality and distance, the persistence of cultural continuity and the historically specific forms of the employer/employee relationship that the problems and opportunities of the shipbuilding industry on the Wear in the inter-war period were enacted. We must now look at some of the issues which became important during this time in order more fully to understand the specific content of the employment relationship.

Part V

It was argued in an earlier section that a major characteristic of the British economy in the inter-war period was that of crisis and slump, the effects of which were unevenly distributed across industries, with the traditional export

industries and shipbuilding in particular being the worst hit. However it has been argued by some that shifts in the level of world trade do not primarily define the notion of crisis and what is of more importance is the idea of the falling rate of profit and the devaluation of capital (89). This may be so if one is attempting to understand the large scale structural tendencies within the capitalist mode of production. What it cannot do is provide a link between these movements and the active initiatives undertaken by capital in its (personified) attempts to deal with the problems that they (individual capitalists) saw as facing them. In other words to reject the validity of analysing movements in the levels of world trade as a problem in itself is to render unintelligible the preoccupations of capitalists, and by and large those of the workforce also, who saw these very movements as comprising the central problem with which the industry had to grapple (i.e. lack of demand for ships). What this suggests, then, is that in order to deal adequately at the level of meaning with the actions of agents one must give a validity to their way of seeing the problems that confront them regardless of whether we see that approach as residing within the realms of mere ideology (90). To do otherwise and force "our" particular problematic wholly with little concern for the actions of the agents orientated towards "their" problematic is to risk distortion in our analysis. Whilst we may see "their" approach as residing in the realm of ideology we must nevertheless

appreciate, along with Gramsci, the "materiality of ideology" (91). So then, the starting point for the investigation of the inter-war period has to be the contours of demand, the point at which the general moves in world trade and the historical specifics of Britain's position interact with respect to the shipbuilding industry. The details of the amount of tonnage commenced, launched and under construction are tabulated in Appendix (2); what is important for present purposes is the view of the nature of the "crisis" as understood by those in the industry. It is in that sense that the fluctuations in demand are to be seen as important.

During the first world war 13 million gross tons of merchant shipping were lost due to enemy action, of which over 8 million tons were British (92). Given this state of affairs and the fact that many yards had been working solely on naval work during the war, it was expected that demand for new tonnage would be great in the post war period, so much so that many new shipbuilding firms were created. For example on the Wear work started in the early part of 1918 on two new shipyards, the Egis yard at Pallion and the Wear Concrete Building Company. As Smith and Holden noted,

"By the end of the summer three keels of cargo ships had been laid at the Egis yard, and the keels of two ocean-going tugs at the concrete yard." (93)

Similarly in shipbuilding centres throughout the country new berths were being created to produce for a demand which, as soon

became evident, was of a temporary nature. The rate at which new tonnage was built throughout the world was nothing short of staggering, so that by 1919 the tonnage in existence was 1.8 million tons greater than in 1914. The high level of demand did not last however, and freight rates began to decline in February 1920. That year represented the peak of the boom with British yards launching 2,040,000 gross tons, and even into 1921 tonnage under construction was 3,800,000 tons compared with a pre-war maximum of 2,600,000 gross tons. However when we look at the quarterly returns we can see how drastic the drop in demand was, as the tonnage commenced in the last quarter of 1920 was 506,000 falling to 393,000 in the first quarter of 1921, and then to a disastrous 69,000 by the second quarter. In Sunderland the effects of the fall in demand were felt immediately.

"Output in 1921 fell to less than half the figure for 1920; the position worsened in 1922, and in 1923 the figures dropped to 17 ships and 56,5222 gross tons. By July 1923, 14,000 men were out of work in Sunderland ... Wage reductions caused several strikes in the shipbuilding and engineering industry." (94)

The severity of the collapse of demand was such that many people in the industry saw that it was not due solely to the operation of the business cycle but was also caused by the changed circumstances consequent upon the end of the first world war. Thus William Lorimer, the General Secretary of the Boiler-makers Society, suggested that the depression in the industry in 1921 was:

"... mainly due to the conditions laid down in the Peace Terms with Germany, under which thousands of tons of the best of her merchant tonnage were handed over to the Allies and the further condition imposed upon her that they would each year for a number of years build ships to be also distributed among the Allies as part of the payments under the Reparations Agreement." (95)

It is true that the transference of tonnage as reparations was considerable. Between the years 1919 and 1922 slightly over 2 million tons were transferred, an amount equivalent to one and a half years of "normal" post war output (between 1919 to 1931) (96). Of more importance than this however was the increase in shipbuilding output from countries not centrally involved in the conflict, most notably the U.S.A., whose output rose from 228,000 tons in 1913 to no less than 3,580,000 tons in 1920, although this quickly fell back to an average of 95,000 tons between the years 1922 to 1926 (97).

Whichever factor one takes to be of greater importance, the result is nevertheless the same - the problem is defined first and foremost as one of overcapacity. This problematic was to remain the dominating theme throughout the inter-war period. The reaction to this situation on behalf of individual British shipbuilders was to enhance competitiveness by cutting costs and a traditional element in such a strategy was that of wage reduction. The declining level of demand in the industry was matched by rounds of wage cuts implemented by the employers. From the point of view of the workforce the withdrawal of recent awards provoked more outcry than the rescindment of special bonuses. Thus the

joiners' strike on the Wear, which began on December 1st 1920, was precipitated by the withdrawal of a 12 shilling a week advance which had been awarded as late as May 1920. The strike lasted until August 22nd, 1921, a reduction of 9 shillings a week to be phased in in two instalments. In other cases however wage reductions were accepted, however grudgingly by the workforce.

"By April 1921 the industry's new difficulties were beginning to emerge clearly. So too were the employers' demands that the workmen should play their part in trying to retrieve the position. They asked for a 6 shilling a week reduction in time rates and for a 15% reduction in piece rates to take effect from the end of April. The unions agreed as long as the reductions could take effect in two instalments on May 7th and June 4th ... (and) ... in the face of an almost total absence of orders employers gave notice that they were going to abolish the Ministry of Munitions war bonuses of twelve and a half per cent to time workers and seven and a half per cent to piece workers in three instalments from November 1921 to January 1922. Harsh though these measures must have seemed, the men agreed to accept them in a ballot." (98)

As well as reducing wages, as the slump continued the employers sought to gain greater flexibility with respect to their "variable capital". Thus by 1922:

"... the shipbuilding firms on the Wear ended their time honoured custom of their working by the day and established the new method of working by the hour." (99)

The importance of all these initiatives was that they were aimed at reducing costs, in these cases wage costs. Efforts were also made to obtain more favourable terms with suppliers, although by 1922:

"Costs remained high, despite cut-throat prices quoted by builders to obtain orders. Ships plates which cost £7 a ton before the war were now costing £24; coal had risen from 10 shillings to 40 shillings a ton." (100)

The concern with costs and the level of absolute demand dominated the concerns of builders on the Wear (and elsewhere), and the years of 1925 and 1926 saw the demise of two of the yards on the river: those of John Blumer and Co. and Sunderland Shipbuilding Company. Demand remained at a low level throughout the middle years of the 1920s (101). A rise in freight rates increased demand in 1927, especially for replacement tramp tonnage (102), and on the Wear demand rose up until 1930.

Changes in the production process throughout the 1920s tended to be piecemeal. On the Wear there was an extension in the use of pneumatic riveting, and in some yards the introduction of plate punching machines (103). The earliest mention of the existence of a welding squad on the Wear, doing primarily non-structural work, was during 1928:

"The first welder was a bloke called Sollie French, and he started that in Laings." (104)

The issue of welding will be considered in greater detail at a later point. The main thing to grasp here is that during the 1920s it was issues other than those concerned directly with the production process which were uppermost in the minds of the employers. This did not mean however that no questions were asked about British building techniques as part of the wider industry. Indeed during 1926 when a substantial order of five ships, for a British shipping line called Furness Withy, was placed with a German yard there was a public outcry. Suggestions in the Times

were that it had as much to do with the overall organisation of German industry and the prevalent corporate form as to any specific phase of the organisation of production.

"It is probable that one of the factors which makes for the ability of the German yards to compete is the complete "trustification" of material, from the mine to the fitted plate, from the financing bank to the sale of tickets. This system is not without its effect on wages, and the cost of living. When all these forces are turned into the same direction the margin for reduction in costs becomes very considerable." (105)

Commenting on the same event Leon Trotsky, writing on the British economy, drew a similar overall conclusion:

"There are, it is true, indications that the order for ships was placed with the Hamburg yard for the special purpose of frightening the trade unions and thus preparing the ground for bringing pressure to bear on them with a view to lowering wages and lengthening hours of labour. Needless to say, that manoeuvre is more than likely. But that does not in the least weaken the force of our general considerations on the irrational organisation of British industry and on the overhead expenses arising out of that organisation." (106)

It would indeed seem to have had the effect of "frightening the trade unions", for they agreed to participate with the employers in an inquiry into the nature of foreign competition. The inquiry found that workers in Dutch and German yards worked longer hours than the British workers and often foreign yards had more advanced equipment. The conclusions drawn from the inquiry differed markedly. The unions called for international influence to be asserted to restrict "unfair competition". The employers made more detailed recommendations and in as far as these related to the production process they called for a greater element of "elasticity" and "interchangeability", but importantly these

recommendations, amounting to some "fifty flexible practices", were to be achieved

" .. without infringement of the broad principles of craftsmanship." (107)

This indeed would seem to be the hallmark of the approach of the employers throughout the 1920s, considerations of the organisation of the division of labour were subordinated to the concerns of overcapacity and external costs. These issues were viewed through a perspective which stressed the normalcy of fluctuations in trade; to this extent the problem was seen as the absolute decline in demand rather than the changing pattern of what demand there was. In the face of such resignation to the inevitability of recurring slumps the owners did little to change production techniques. The complex of reasons as to why this was the case can best be outlined in consideration of the 1930s, and in particular in the case of welding.

The slump of the 1930s bore many similarities with the 1920s, but there were also significant differences. The severity of the collapse of world trade was all the more notable because it was not consequent upon the dislocations of production and consumption following a war, as in the 1920s. Again the nature of the product of the industry was such (the medium of transportation of world trade) that the effects of the decline in world trade were felt quickly, and on the Wear these effects meant that by 1932 there were only two ships launched.

"In these tragic years the depression was really unprecedented. Two small colliers in one year made the slump of the 'twenties look like a time of comparative prosperity." (108)

What is striking about contemporary commentaries of the development of the slump in the industry is the rapidity with which these changes took place, and also the shifting quality of the accounts from buoyant optimism to despair. It is perhaps useful to outline these developments as they relate to the industry in the North East, and particularly the situation upon the Wear.

The year of 1930 began bright enough with the output in the North East district being the best for nine years (109). Furthermore it was estimated that:

"The shipbuilding outlook on the Tyne, Wear and Tees for the current year is very bright, by reason of the large number of foreign orders secured towards the end of 1929." (110)

Only one week later the same observer introduced a note of caution into his earlier estimation.

"The middle of the first month of the year has not disclosed much new business locally in the placing of orders for new ships." (111)

It was noted that this was particularly true of tramp tonnage which "could not easily be made to pay". By March the seriousness of the situation was becoming apparent, and it was noted that in the North Eastern region as a whole:

"There have been very few orders placed this year and soon there will at least be some empty berths once more. Leading yards are better off than the smaller ones, but there are instances where firms are getting uncomfortably near the end of present contracts." (112)

By May, the feeling of crisis in the industry was largely

confirmed. The work in hand had dwindled to a very low level and the outlook for the rest of the year was black.

"In the course of the next few months there will be a marked change in the shipbuilding position on local rivers. Some yards are very near the end of present contracts and no fresh orders are being received. The Wear is worse off than the Tyne or the Tees. One Sunderland firm has put its last ship into the water." (113)

The position of the Wear continued to deteriorate, and a changed atmosphere on the river was seen to exist.

"Just now ship launches on the river have a significance rather different from those of normal times. They mark stages towards greater unemployment for shipyard men because fresh orders are so hard to get. At the present time there are less than a dozen vessels on the stocks; four yards are without work, and the remainder are getting very near the end of their contracts. (114)

It was becoming clear that the problem of orders would continue, and if the outlook at the beginning of the year had been "very bright" it was now catastrophic, especially in Sunderland, with "armies of workless" within the borough (115). Moreover,

"The winter outlook for shipbuilding on the Wear is worse than on the Tyne or Tees. A very few yards on the Tyne have sufficient work to carry them well into the coming year, and the Tees has some tankers, cargo boats and whalers to build; but on the Wear the contracts in hand appear to have dwindled to seven steamers and two hoppers. Five yards out of about a dozen on the banks of the river are without any work, and before the year ends there will be very little shipbuilding going on at all. As far as is known, no new orders have been booked for a considerable time." (116)

The crisis of the 1930s hit the Wear earlier and harder than the Tyne or Tees. But in the absence of a single large yard closing down in one catastrophic event the river gradually, but over a relatively short time period, ground to a halt. It is not

to be wondered then that it was the closure of Palmers at Jarrow that produced that most fabled event in inter-war working class history: the "Jarrow March", for if Jarrow was "the town that was murdered" (117), Sunderland appeared to have died of natural causes.

The shipbuilding employers however appeared to have learnt that the inaction that was characteristic of the previous decade had not helped the industry, and the free play of market forces had not resulted in the successful "rationalisation" of the industry. For as Sir Frederick Pyman, a Director of William Gray's yard at West Hartlepool, noted in a speech in October 1933:

"Shipbuilders die hard. They hang on in the hope that competitors may go under and that things will get better. In the privately owned yards, which must constitute a substantial proportion of the capacity of the industry, it is common to find the third, fourth, or even fifth generation at the helm. Family pride and prestige are at stake ... So there are forces at work which are pulling in opposite direction to economic forces. For nearly a decade the old shibboleth of laissez faire reigned and what happened? A mere handful of yards went into liquidation, and of these the best were picked up at scrap prices and reconditioned." (118)

Again the central problem of the industry was seen as over-capacity, and therefore as lying outside of the division of labour (119). The response of the employers to the developing slump was the formation of National Shipbuilders' Security LTD (N.S.S.) in February 1930. The aim of the company was to reduce shipbuilding capacity through buying up and dismantling redundant

yards. The company was formed of shipbuilders themselves, with capital of £10,000, and borrowing powers of up to £2.5 million, plus a 1% levy, paid by members, of the price of new tonnage. On the board of directors of N.S.S. were two people with direct interests on the Wear: Sir Alexander Kennedy, Chairman of William Doxfords, and Mr. R. Norman Thompson, Director of both J.L. Thompsons and Sir James Laing and Sons Ltd (120). The official statement of policy of N.S.S. made it clear that the problem which the firm was addressing was one related to "financial stability" rather than rationalisation of production as such.

"The British shipbuilding industry during the last two years has been steadily consolidating its position in world shipbuilding, in the face of unprecedented and subsidised foreign competition. It is now building over 50% of the world's tonnage. To enable shipbuilding to recover and maintain financial stability it has become imperative to secure a greater concentration of work available, thus obtaining considerable savings in the overhead and administrative costs and in rates and taxes." (121)

In this view the "rationalisation" would improve cost-effectiveness and not therefore lead to greater unemployment amongst "shop floor" workers.

"We do not think, when the new proposals are carried out, that there will be any additional unemployment in the shipbuilding trades. It is hoped that at least the same number of ships will be turned out each year, and it is possible that there may be even more ... Such reductions as will be inevitable are more likely to take place in the higher grades of staff and managerial departments." (122)

Similarly Sir Alexander Kennedy reported in a speech at Fairfields on the Clyde that:

"He had noticed that the fear had been expressed in certain quarters that the activities of the new corporation might

lead to the closing down of yards which formed the principal nucleus for employment in their respective areas ... He had no doubt at all that the correlation of producing capacity to the possible market demand could be accomplished with little or no disturbance to any particular shipbuilding area. Indeed if it was true, as he thought it undoubtedly was, that considerable saving could be effected by greater concentration of production than existed at present, then it should mean more work for shipbuilding and thus more employment. (123)

However it became apparent in the operation of N.S.S. that with the deteriorating level of demand such "rationalisation" would bring higher levels of unemployment for tradesmen. Its activities began to resemble solely the payment of redundancy money to employers. As one worker put it:

"I remember N.S.S. came up and we discussed it. "Oh," I said, "that's very good, and what percentage do the retired men that have been thrown on the scrapheap get? Is there any fund to recompense some of them?" Only the employers were getting the benefit, you see. The workers were getting nothing." (124)

Furthermore the form that the "rationalisation" took seemed to be rather arbitrary and based purely upon who was willing to sell out. On the Wear for example there seemed to be little consideration of the technical efficiency of the yards closed.

"The loss of Gray's shipyard was particularly resented. It was the most modern - in point of time on the river ... " (125)

At the same time that builders in Britain, with the encouragement of the Government and the Bank of England, were attempting at all costs to reduce capacity, the French Government was giving direct aid to their builders. By May 1930 the French Government had concluded that supplying maritime credits to shipowners was not

the best way to help their own shipbuilders as orders were placed abroad, primarily in Britain and Germany. So whilst they required the employers to launch a committee to formulate a program of concentration and rationalisation they also offered direct aid to builders in order to match foreign prices. In the mid '30s, when the British Government decided that the shipbuilding industry needed assistance, it was given directly in the form of the British Shipping (Assistance) Act of 1935. The scrap and build scheme enshrined in the act encouraged British shipping owners to place orders by scrapping old tonnage and subsidising the building of new. What the scheme did not do was subsidise British Shipbuilders directly; clearly the problem was not seen to lie in inefficiencies within the yards. The efforts of the N.S.S. were similarly orientated towards reducing capacity (building capacity rather than shipping capacity directly) and the establishment of market equilibrium at a lower level. The most pressing problem was clearly seen as lack of demand, or to put it another way, over-supply.

Given this situation the issues pursued inside the yards were orientated towards the reduction of costs in order to survive until market equilibrium returned. Moves were being made nationally in this direction by the Shipbuilding Employers Federation (S.E.F.). In a letter to the Wear Shipbuilders Association (W.S.A.) the S.E.F. stated that:

"At a recent meeting of the federation central board it had been agreed that, in view of the depression in the industry,

and the increase in foreign competition, it was essential that everything possible should be done to secure the most economical level of costs." (126)

Each local district was instructed to produce reports, the contents of which:

" ... should cover local agreements, arbitration awards, district and yard practices, and also the provisions of existing piecework price lists either for district or individual yards." (127)

The list is a comprehensive one; however it became apparent that the most important items on this list were not "district and yard practices" but rather aspects of wage rates. Again the concern is primarily with issues other than those arising directly from the division of labour. Another important feature of this S.E.F. initiative was the tension that arose between the W.S.A. and the national body. This was eventually resolved by the W.S.A. attempting to act unilaterally. It is perhaps useful to indicate the dimensions of these issues as recorded by the W.S.A.

On receipt of the district reports the S.E.F. wrote to the W.S.A. noting their concern about the piece rate prices, specifically the platers' list, on the river. The W.S.A. wanted to start local negotiations to reduce the rates. But the S.E.F. did not want them to pre-empt the forthcoming national negotiations with the Boilermakers. However the W.S.A. disagreed and recorded their view that:

" ... there was nothing to prevent the Association from instituting negotiations at once." (128)

Negotiations began early in December and the secretary of the

W.S.A. was instructed to write to the federation advising them of what was being done, and asking them if they approved of the action. Mr. Bartram, the W.S.A. delegate to the S.E.F., reported in March 1931 that the federation had reaffirmed its position that:

"... no questions should be raised by local associations which would lead to a dispute with the Boilermakers Society while national questions were under consideration." (130)

At the same meeting a letter from the Tyne Shipbuilders Association was presented which supported the S.E.F. position and asked the W.S.A. to cease negotiations. Ironically it was eventually the representatives of the workforce who put a stop to the local negotiations. Both "piece" prices and payments for "walking time" were being discussed, but the position adopted by the trades in the Federation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Trades was that:

"They had stated that they could not proceed with negotiations until they knew what was to take place on the national wages negotiations." (131)

On the other hand the Boilermakers were not party to the national discussions and would only deal with wage questions locally. The position adopted by the W.S.A. shows the tensions that existed between the employers born out of the different circumstances that prevailed upon different rivers. However there were also division within the W.S.A. during this period, as the resignation of W. Pickersgill and Sons from the W.S.A. in March 1931 demonstrates. The meeting of the W.S.A. on March 5th of that year noted that:

"Messrs. Pickersgill's resignation was particularly unfortunate in view of the present position of the industry when the need for complete unity among employers was absolutely imperative. Disunity among employers at the present time was tantamount to handing over the industry to the trade unions." (132)

The situation in which employers could not agree a national approach towards the unions had a long history in the industry where owners were proud of the individual standing and achievements of their own yards. The minutes of the W.S.A. during the early 1930s were predominantly concerned with wages and other cost issues, notable by its absence was any detailed debate over production techniques. Even the many entries in the minutes of 1931 and 1932 under the heading of "Revision of Onerous Agreements and Practices" refer primarily to altering rates of payment and removing the payment of extras (extra payments) for certain kinds of work. They do not refer to changes in the way the work is to be carried out. The theme of costs and wages is continued in one of the other issues to loom large during this period, and that is the concern with wage rates in other industries, particularly local authority workers.

On this issue the employers on the Wear followed the lead of those on the Clyde, who had begun to petition local councils in order to get them to lower their wage rates for manual workers. The disparity between workers in the "protected sector" and those in shipbuilding was thought to exercise upward pressure on wage rates in the industry. The W.S.A., finding that in 1931 a disparity of 7/6d existed between the wages of unskilled

municipal workers and unskilled shipbuilding workers on Wearside, initiated a letter to be signed by other firms in the town and then sent to the Council urging them to cut their rates (133).

The absence of any significant discussions in the W.S.A. minutes about changes in the production process within yards suggests that such issues were not seen as dominant, or, at the very least, were held to be the responsibility of the individual employer and not a suitable issue for a joint approach. It is with these factors in mind, the dominance of the issues of cost and wages and the apparent lack of concern with the direct production process, that we must now turn to a consideration of the introduction of the S.E.F. welding plan and the development of welding as it happened (or didn't happen) on the Wear.

The importance of the S.E.F. welding plan as outlined by Lorenz was that:

"The scheme marked the first attempt by employers to determine in advance through national negotiations the terms upon which new techniques would be introduced to the industry ... " (134)

The defeat of the welding scheme was taken as evidence that the British shipyard workers have indeed "characterised themselves by resisting at the point of production the expropriation of the control they have exercised over the labour process". The importance of the resistance which could be exercised by labour was also seen to be "the" factor restraining the employers from advocating a more "radical" scheme.

"After an initial, and misinformed, assessment that welding on the flat might require as little as two weeks training, the committee decided that between one and two years were required to train the average worker as a fully qualified welder. The S.E.F.'s final proposal however called for a five year apprenticeship and the training of welders with a general knowledge of shipyard practice. Any other proposal would have provoked a crisis in industrial relations, as it would have challenged the control the unions had been able to exercise over entry to the skilled trades through apprenticeship; the employers were evidently unwilling to confront the unions on this general principle." (135)

Furthermore the failure of the employers to act on the potential which it was seen that the welding process had, to facilitate a restructuring of the division of labour has been explained in terms of a conservatism among the owners themselves.

"... the industry ignored the significance of the importance of prefabrication and large scale sub-assembly, which welding rendered possible in the development of a basic "factory" system. An explanation for this perhaps can be found in the basic conservatism of the employers." (136)

The problem with these types of analysis as far as the introduction of welding on the River Wear was concerned, is that the whole issue did not appear to be as important on the Wear as on the Clyde or Tyne. The first mention of "Electric Welding on New Shipbuilding Work" in the W.S.A. minutes appears on July 18 1933, some three months after the presentation of the S.E.F. scheme (137). Moreover it becomes clear that there was a good deal of confusion amongst individual employers as to the potential for savings that could be extracted from the welding process itself, its technical efficiency and the desirability of greater amounts of "fabrication" which the process could make possible. So far as the Wear is concerned then, it would seem

that Lorenz's assertion that,

"The scheme marked the first attempt by employers to determine in advance through national negotiations the terms upon which new techniques would be introduced to the industry, an apparent indication of their unity ... " (138)

is somewhat of an exaggeration as the W.S.A. formally agreed to support the scheme at a meeting on the 12 September 1933, not only five months after its presentation but also after several unions had also rejected it! It is not an incidental piece of information that the S.E.F. welding scheme was fourth on the agenda at this meeting, being preceded by two separate problems relating to piecework rates.

Before looking in more detail at the reasons why this "precedent setting" scheme was neglected on Wearside it is perhaps useful to address some of the more general elements of "confusion" surrounding welding at this time. In an earlier reference it was noted that the skill content involved and therefore the required training period to undertake welding work was by no means self evident. In the previous decade however it had seemed obvious that welding was a skilled business. Thus in 1926 it was thought by one authority that:

"The reason why welding is not used to any great extent in shipbuilding is probably due to the fact that in the minds of most people it is generally regarded as being an operation carried out by hand and which ... cannot be economically employed on repetition work. Moreover, since it is performed by hand, to be successfully accomplished it requires skilled men and thus the semi-skilled or unskilled labourer cannot be employed on welding work ... in other words, the labour costs of the job are high." (139)

Even as late as 1930 it was still being suggested that welding involved a higher degree of skill than riveting.

"We have frequently drawn attention to the possibilities of using welding in place of riveting in the construction of ships, but while the advantages of the former system are recognised the fact must not be lost sight of that its success depends to a greater extent upon the skill of the operator than does the latter, and hence particularly for strength portions of the the hull, riveting is still generally preferred." (140)

The process did have its advocates however, and at this time Major James Caldwell of the Institution of Structural Engineers was clear as to the prime inhibiting factor:

... it is not so much that naval architects who would not adopt welding in ship construction as the classification societies who would refuse to authorise such methods until they had convinced themselves by long and repeated experiments that they could give their consent to such without any misgiving." (141)

It was not only the classification societies who were urging caution (142); it was felt by some shipbuilders and shipowners to be a more costly process if it was to be done correctly and quality guaranteed. Thus in reply to a suggestion that Britain was being left behind in terms of the application of welding to ship-building, the "Shipbuilding and Shipping Record" of August 20 1931 offered the opinion that:

" ... This question of cost is of course a factor which has decided shipbuilders and shipowners in this country against the extensive use of electric welding in spite of the obvious saving in weight which can be obtained.

The necessity of employing skilled workers has often been stressed, but one of the greatest difficulties of electric welding, and one which is responsible for a large part of the increase in cost, is the necessity of providing most careful supervision and inspection during the process of welding. This point is covered by the requirements of

the classification societies, who recognise that it is quite possible to produce a weld which is apparently satisfactory and the unsoundness of which cannot be detected unless the joint is tested to destruction. ... There is no doubt that the application of electric welding to the construction of the entire ship is quite practicable, but the course our British shipbuilders are taking in developing the usefulness of welding slowly, rather than undertaking the organisation required for what would at best be a costly experiment, is wise." (143)

The article went on to quote research undertaken in the aircraft industry which showed that only 25% of welded joints tested proved to be satisfactory. The technical efficiency of welded joints, undertaken in the less than ideal situation of the shipyard, remained problematic throughout the period of the negotiations over the S.E.F. welding plan.

Indeed up to twenty years later ships were still being lost due to the failure of welded joints.

"Between 1942 and 1952, about 250 welded ships suffered one or more brittle fractures of such severity that they were lost or in a dangerous condition, and 1200 more suffered small brittle cracks dangerous but not disabling." (144)

The point is then that a question mark hung over the welding process both as to its technical efficiency and its cost efficiency. This question mark had by no means been dispelled by the time of the S.E.F.'s struggle with the labour force over the introduction of the process. Indeed it was perhaps the case that in relation to the early use of welding in shipyards the owners were faced with a choice which was similar to the one confronting employers thinking of introducing Taylor's scientific management, where:

" ... it became apparent that in the face of an uncertain outcome his methods required initial increases in cost."
(145)

So it was with welding, for it necessitated investment in plant, reorganisation of plating procedures, the development of new training programmes for returns which were anything but precisely known. The decision of the S.E.F. not to pay piece rates would suggest that they were unsure as to how far their estimate of 12ft per hour for "downhand" welds was realistic, and as far as weight saving on the final product was concerned estimates varied between the 30% of deadweight displacement made by the manufacturers to the less substantial 7% estimated by naval architects. This uncertainty coupled with the heterogeneous "specialities" of different centres and the concerns of individual yards would suggest that a situation of less than absolute unity was likely to prevail, with individual yards being unwilling to risk disruption for the sake of a formal agreement over a process which may have remained of marginal interest for a number of years to come.

It is exactly these kinds of issues that must be borne in mind when considering the attitudes and behaviour of the Wear Shipbuilders Association towards the S.E.F. welding plan. The general impression given by the W.S.A. minutes during the period covering the introduction of the S.E.F. welding plan is that the "action" happened elsewhere. Furthermore the statements of unity in relation to such things as the prices to be paid for plating

work stand out as statements of principle rather than of practice, and many are qualified by reservations anyway. It has already been mentioned that the W.S.A. first showed interest in the welding plan a considerable time after it was first presented. However as the minutes record that Mr. Gebbie, the delegate to the S.E.F., went into the provisions of the plans in considerable detail it is possible that not all the employers at this meeting were aware of the details involved (146). Furthermore it is interesting that his main concern was with the prices to be paid for plating work under the scheme,

"... for unless a lead was given by the W.S.A. or the federation, British yards would find themselves at a serious disadvantage compared with foreign builders." (147)

Even in the midst of this "precedent setting" scheme the concern of the W.S.A. as articulated by Mr. Gebbie would appear to focus on wage rates. As we have seen the meeting of 12 September gave rather belated support to the plan, and also noted anxiety that piecework was being operated by some warship yards. Furthermore,

"It was suggested that as none of the firms in this district had had much experience in welding, it would be advisable to have some suggestions and advice for the firms drawn up as to what they should do in the way of organising yard operations for welding, and as to what they should pay for the operations that would be altered by welding ... Whether it would be possible to make new prices which would suit every firm on the river was another matter, (in relation to plating) some firms might shear and others might burn. And further some firms might desire to put semi-skilled men on certain work, if so it would obviously be better for all the firms to employ semi-skilled labour on that work, so as to preserve uniformity as far as possible." (148)

Again what is striking is the "tone" of these statements

implying that unity is fragile and can only be sustained "as far as possible". This meeting agreed to the setting up of the W.S.A. welding sub-committee to advise on the questions raised. The sub-committee met for the first time on October 17 1933, and it reported to a full meeting of the W.S.A. on 29 January 1934. It had completed half of its task but it is clear that its advice was not invested with legislative power. The committee

"... had drawn up a statement showing the class of workmen to be in charge of each operation on the all-welded ship. This was intended for the guidance of firms when work of that nature had to be done." (149)

In relations to the pricing of work it was recorded that:

"As far as possible it would be desirable to observe uniformity with regard to these matters though it might be difficult to do so." (150)

The question was raised as to whether the welding committee should advise on pricing, but the Chairman

"... thought it was perhaps rather early as yet to deal with the matter. As the process developed, the committee should meet frequently with a view to keeping in touch with the work in the yards and seeing that it progressed along the right lines." (151)

It is clear from this meeting that the deliberations are about practice some time in the future, and the exact details of the conditions for the implementation of the plan had not been concretised before the next notable meeting of the welding sub-committee on July 17 1934 where:

"Reference was made to the federation welding scheme which in the opinion of the committee had largely broken down owing to the fact that in the yards where the strikes had occurred on the introduction of the 60/- rate, the trouble had been got over by putting the men on piece. The

committee was however strongly of the opinion that the work on the Wear should be done as it came along at the time rate of 60/- with the appropriate rates for trainees, and that piece prices should not in any case be arranged without prior consultation with the association." (152)

That this assertive statement was more a statement of principle than practice did not become obvious until 1935, for that is when this type of work first "came along" on the Wear. In a meeting of the sub-committee on April 12 1935 it was noted that Doxfords and J.L. Thompson's were contemplating the introduction of piecework on welding as the situation was developing at Doxfords where workers would not accept the 60/- rate when men were getting paid more elsewhere (153). It is clear that when faced with the possibility of industrial action individual yards on the Wear capitulated on the issue of piece rates and indeed it would be difficult to see how they could have maintained the position outlined in the S.E.F. plan when other areas had already conceded the applicability of such rates.

On the other issue of denying the Boilermakers Society to represent welders as a class the W.S.A. were still reiteratively stating the formal position, even though the piecework issue had been conceded. Thus in reporting the current views of the S.E.F. on the proposed introduction of piece rates at a Wear yard in a W.S.A. meeting on 10 May 1935,

"It was reported that the question of piecework on welding had recently been considered by the Federation conference and works board, whose view it was that yards using different plant and electrodes must necessarily have different piece prices; each yard would accordingly have to arrange its own list. The Federation also agreed with the

firm and the Association welding committee that firms should negotiate only with their own workmen and not with any union or unions, as no union could, of course be taken to represent welders as a class.

After discussion the meeting agreed that in the introduction of piecework firms would have to proceed individually and the proposal of the firms concerned to introduce piecework was applauded." (154)

Again the statement about not recognising any union as representing welders as a class was largely a statement of principle, as the welders in both yards concerned, Doxfords and J.L. Thompson's, were all members of the Boilermakers Society. Given this situation any attempt to act in accordance with the statement could prove difficult as became clear at the W.S.A. meeting on July 22:

"On the question of piecework, one of the members stated he had arranged prices with their own men but the Boilermakers Society (of which all their welders were members) had prevented the men from working on piece. It appeared that the Society took the view that they should have more time and experience before going on to piece." (155)

The issue of representation was already settled then, and it was only a matter of time before the employers had to concede the point. In this sense the eventual solution of the issue would seem to vindicate the "strategy" taken by the unions.

The unions undertook to conduct the struggle yard by yard. Thus a direct national confrontation was avoided. It was left to individual employers to precipitate any disputes. Trade union members continued working normally so long as existing arrangements were maintained." (156)

However this view is, in some senses, a post hoc rationalisation of the strategy pursued which was the only possible course of action given the depleted funds of the Society; it is unlikely

that a national confrontation could have been sustained by the union. Furthermore with reference to the Wear there were, as we have seen, instances where Boilermakers did agree piece rates with employers; even if they obeyed instructions from the Society not to operate on these rates the point should not be overlooked that in the absence of instruction individual workers were less than consistent in their advocacy of the union's position.

In another sense it would seem that the S.E.F. welding plan was never forcefully applied in practice by the W.S.A.. Indeed from October 17 1933 until July 1935 the welding sub-committee of the W.S.A. only met six times. In terms of the training of welders the most important problem was not seen to be the potential union resistance, but rather the external state of trade.

"... there is no lack of potential labour supply, but the difficulty arises from the present state of the industry which it is considered will right itself in due course as the industry revives." (157)

It is the case then that the shipbuilders of the Wear paid less attention to the welding process than those of the Clyde and the Tyne. There are several reasons for this. Firstly the "specialised" product of the Wear was tramp tonnage which was not deemed to benefit from the use of welded joints as much as the larger liners or warships. Secondly, McGoldrick's assertion that

"... the concern with costs drove shipbuilders towards welding" (158)

must be treated warily as the specific structure of Wear firms

and the effect that the slump had upon them must be taken into account. That the introduction of welding meant an initial increase in cost (investment) cannot be denied. Given this situation, interest in practically adopting the process on the Clyde and the Tyne began in 1934 when the industry in these locations was reviving.

On the Wear, as we have seen, the slump began earlier, but also showed signs of improvement later:

"In 1932 the County Borough of Sunderland topped the unemployment league table for areas of high unemployment with a figure of 36.6%. The Commissioner for special areas lamented the fact that while unemployment figures for the whole of Durham and Tyneside area had shown a steady, if slight improvement since 1932, by 1934 the number of unemployed in Sunderland was 1,773 more than the previous year." (159)

Moreover, the Commissioner for special areas went on to note in 1934 that:

"Special attention should be paid to the case of Sunderland. The industrial area at the mouth of the Wear is in fact isolated from the rest of the North East coast, and has not shared in such measure of revival as has already come to the Tyne." (160)

In fact the industry revived very slowly on the Wear until 1936 where, with orders placed under the scrap and build scheme, output rose from 31,396 gross tons in 1935 to 138,791 gross tons, representing 8 and 36 ships respectively. Furthermore given the depth and duration of the slump, the scope for new investment was small:

"Wear firms, still privately owned, found difficulty in raising the capital necessary for ... re-equipment and re-organisation." (161)

Under these conditions it was not a concern with the relative costs of construction that dominated, but rather, in absence of orders, it was the absolute cost of overheads that mattered. On the Wear a concern with costs served to postpone initiatives for the introduction of welding.

The "struggle" over the introduction as envisaged in the S.E.F. welding plan was largely fought elsewhere. Nevertheless on a national scale the unity of the employers was in the main theoretical - a desire for the best outcome without considering the realities of the constraints operating in their situations. They were, as we have noted, divided by product specialisation which most importantly represented itself as a difference in timing for the projected introduction of welding. Thus the time that any individual employers were willing to sustain a strike, with only the theoretical backing of all the employers, and whilst remaining in direct competition with the same, was limited.

In the areas that did experience strike action over the introduction of the scheme, the diffuse concerns of the employers must be contrasted to concentration of those of the labour organisations. The only claim of the (primarily craft) workers to a share of available work was within the recognised "structure" of the craft division of labour. It was only the specific identity of occupation which gave one an improved chance in the (literal) labour market. In this sense craft status which

includes exclusive union organisation of a recognised trade underlay both the division of labour and to a large extent the local communities. However even in the national context it would be wrong to concentrate solely upon the "conflicts" in the yards. Rather a notion of the dialectic of conflict and co-operation is the important point. Up until the 1930s there was little evidence of consciously formulated managerial plans for the future development of the division of labour in the industry as a whole. The notions of traditionalism and self supervision of the squad system had a long history and were not going to be immediately exterminated by one technical change, especially when the details of its introduction were not, and, because of its inevitably uneven effect, could not be unanimously agreed in its practical application. That the employers had not before this time raised issues concerning the overall development does not mean that, in an inversion of Braverman, labour was omnipotent. For the existence of the labour intensive craft division of labour gave the employers considerable benefits as well as implying certain costs. "Inflexibilities" in the structures and practices within the division of labour were for a long period more than compensated for by flexibility of local labour markets, in the absence of alternative employment, and given fluctuating wage levels. In these circumstances the employers as well as the workers were, to some extent, willing to work within an ideology of craft (162).

To return to the Wear, then, it is clear that there were considerable pressures existing which militated against employers taking the S.E.F. plan too seriously as an immediately practical issue. Other issues were more important to them, primarily securing orders, reducing external costs, and ensuring that wages remained as low as possible. In this sense Tomlinson's concern (163) that much of the work done within the labour process tradition sees managers and owners as "monomaniacs" can be seen to be valid, and McGoldrick's assertion made in his study of interwar shipbuilding that:

"The central argument ... is that the solutions which capitalism will seek to the problem of crisis are to be found in production." (164)

can be seen to be overly simplistic. Moreover such an analysis of the "struggle" of capital and labour produces an over structural account and cannot accommodate the complexities arising where there is a disjunction between membership of "class" organisations and more particular concerns, such an approach produces a stereotype rather than an "ideal type" of worker and capitalist which if not handled carefully can flatten the complexities of an historical individual. This can lead to assumptions about the behaviour that will be followed by workers and capitalists because of their "essential nature", the wider questions of specific context can then be overlooked and the behaviour of individuals and groups is reduced to the posturing of "their class organisations". Unfortunately (or fortunately)

history is never this clear cut.

An example of the importance of the context of issues, and incidentally of not developing the tunnel vision of monomania, is available in considering several issues which arose around the status of the apprenticeship in inter-war shipbuilding. One of the reasons stated by McGoldrick for the degree of union opposition to the S.E.F. welding plan was that:

"The shipyard unions generally defined the welding scheme of the S.E.F. as an attempt at dilution, with its conditions allowing labourers to become tradesmen after only two years training ... " (165)

This was indeed true; however in another context there was almost an inversion of the positions adopted by the employers and the unions in this case. Ironically the period under consideration is the same as that for the introduction of welding, as the issue was a direct consequence of the practical problems encountered in the face of the depression. It concerned the status of workers returning to work after their apprenticeship had been interrupted for several years by unemployment. In these cases the problem arose when the returning worker was over the age of 21 years. If they were over 21 the unions considered that they should be treated as a time served craftsman, the employers on the other hand were of the opinion that they should continue to serve the period of their apprenticeship albeit on a slightly higher rate of pay than that of an ordinary apprentice. Furthermore,

"It was agreed that this scale, when approved by the Association should be circulated and put into operation by all the firms when they reopened, and that there should not

be any consultation with the unions, in view of the attitude which had always been observed by employers that the unions were not entitled to interfere in any way with apprentices." (166)

This would seem a curious position - the unions arguing that these men should be seen as journey-men in spite of, in some cases, only completing two or three years of apprenticed training, and the employers insisting on the necessity of serving the five year apprenticeship. At first sight if one only considers the control dimensions of these positions they seem nonsensical, for the two year training period, for men with shipyard experience, was precisely what the unions objected to in the welding plan. However we can understand the position of the employers when once again we emphasise the notion of costs. For the employers the insistence on completion of the training period had more to do with a wish to save on the wages bill by not paying the full journeyman's rate than any great belief in the efficacy of the five year apprenticeship. The implications of the stance of the unions on this matter was more complicated. Their case was that once a man was engaged as an apprentice he would, by the age of 21, become a journey-man. This view was tied to a wider perspective based in the community. It was widely held that 21 years was the time of "coming of age" - the point where the boy finally became a man and would then be legitimately entitled to take on marriage and family responsibilities. Plus, within the yards the pressures of the skilled/unskilled division made themselves felt, as the unskilled

workers automatically came on to the "man's rate" at the age of 21. Furthermore the revival in trade led to a special campaign by the Boilermakers in 1935 to recruit apprentices, for:

"During the slump very few apprentices entered the boilermaking trades in shipbuilding and the organisation of apprentices inside the society declined." (167)

The Society's potential to attract apprentice members would have been damaged by dogmatically pronouncing the sanctity of the five year training period. Moreover to accept such workers as journeymen after only two years of apprenticeship did not compromise the status of the craftsman, as the two year training provision in the S.E.F. welding plan did, for these workers would have become craftsmen if unemployment had not stopped their training. This clearly points to the importance of the social status of the craftsman and the non-technical content of apprentice training.

As with many other issues in shipbuilding there was no clear resolution to the problem, and the unions continued to take up individual cases of apprentices returning to work. In some cases the employers agreed to shorten the length of training period to be worked before journeyman status could be claimed. The advocacy of the position adopted by the unions was potentially problematic. However, they made clear that these cases developed in exceptional circumstances due to the severity of the depression and therefore could not be interpreted as any weakening in their defence of the craft apprenticeship.

The attention given by labour process theorists to the importance of craft and the problematic of the skilled worker, and the socialised identities of the latter as expressed through craft trade unionism, should not lead us to subsume the importance of individual workers under the focused concerns of the union. Again the issue of the movement from apprenticed to journeyman status can illustrate this point. At the empirical level the processes affecting the conferring of the status of craftsmen were negotiated and not always automatically assumed. For one worker in the Laings yard the boilermakers lockout of 1923 led to his accelerated recognition as a journeyman:

"We built two small ships (during the lockout) the "Don" and the "Dee" I think they were called. I had to do expansions and everything for frame bending ... Then they started back again and they still sent me working in the squad. Then I was about 20 years old. I was working in this man's place, he was taken bad you see. ... There was one man complained about an apprentice boy doing a man's job - I didn't take no notice of it, I wasn't interested. Anyway there was another man, MacAlpine was his name, he said, "How old are you Davey?". I said, "nearly 21", and he said, "are you in the boilermakers?". I said "oh aye, I've been in since I were sixteen years old." He says, "Right, ha-way with me." .. So he took me to the delegate of the Union, he was a plater. He says, "Geordie if I let this boy go on to the Journeymans job and he gets paid in the first class membership of the next months meeting will it be OK?" He says "By all means - get him in", that's how I became a Journeyman." (168)

The informality of the approach by MacAlpine, the foreman, to the boilermakers delegate and the reply received show the non-bureaucratic nature of relations at the point of production. The importance of the membership of foreman in the relevant union is shown in this case by the lack of scrutiny given to the request

by the union delegate.

The informality was facilitated on a wider scale by the lack of any strict and comprehensive rules governing terms of apprenticeship. An enquiry by the Ministry of Labour in 1926 into apprenticeship and training in the shipbuilding industry found that out of a national sample of 217 firms the average ratio of journeymen to apprentices was 6.7/1 and whilst 50.5% were apprenticed under indentures or other written agreements, 48.6% were apprenticed under verbal agreements, with 1.9% being classified as learners (169). Furthermore it was the case that:

"There were no collective agreements in the shipbuilding industry which included any regulations governing apprentices, the employers' associations regarded the conditions of apprenticeship as being a matter of individual arrangement between the employers and the apprentice and his guardian." (170)

The 1926 report found that the usual age of commencement of apprenticeship was 16 years old, but a significant number started between 14 and 16 years. The length of the apprenticeship was five years, although an appreciable number of driller apprentices served for a period of four years. Whilst there was no specific period of probation for apprentices admitted under a verbal agreement those who signed indentures were usually required to serve a six month probation; such arrangements were particularly prevalent amongst platers, riveters, shipwrights, joiners, electricians, fitters, plumbers, sheet metal workers and draughtsmen. As for training,

"Apprentices generally received their training by working with, or under, the supervision of a journeyman for about two years, subsequent to which they worked independently under the supervision of a foreman. Of the firms supplying information to the enquiry, only four employed a person exclusively charged with the duty of training apprentices." (171)

Again, this points to the non-bureaucratic nature of apprentice training during this period. Such a method of training puts at a premium the social relationships both at work and in the wider community. That apprenticeship cannot merely be equated with technical instruction is clear, and even in later studies of shipbuilding researchers have found that:

"Apprentices not only acquire skills during their training ... they also internalise certain standards of work and come to accept and cope with the far from easy working conditions of a shipyard." (172)

More recent work undertaken at Lancaster University similarly points to the importance of normative content of the socialisation into skilled identities, emphasising the close interaction between the older craftsmen and the younger apprenticed learner.

"This socialisation takes a strongly normative form and is cemented by the close interpersonal relations of craftsmen and apprentices. However, ... socialisation occurs prior to entry into the apprenticeship system at around the age of sixteen. This is because skilled craft work is highly prized within the manual working class...Apprenticeships are often filled by word of mouth and routinely involve sponsorship of a fifteen-year-old boy by an existing skilled worker. These informal structures lead to the selection into apprenticeships of a certain kind of boy - one who has a close relative in skilled work...This familial process of recruitment means that the apprentice will already know a considerable amount about the normative aspects of craft work. He will have heard discussions of fellow workers, various types of other workers and, of course, the nature of industrial management at home and in the wider community." (173)

The view of the importance of the wider community is especially applicable to the shipbuilding industry on the Wear in the inter-war period. As a Plater recalled, finding a job very much depended upon family.

"I went to McCalls and Pollacks, the boilershop and my Uncle was the boilersmith there, making the boilertops. After a few months he told my father to get me out, because they were going to close down, and sure enough they closed down, but I got out before they closed down. That was when I was about sixteen ... My brother was a plater in Laings, and he got me the job in Laings." (174)

These family connections at the intersection of community and industry were seen as particularly important by Marshall in his accounts of English industrial districts:

"... the mysteries of the trade become no mysteries; but are as it were in the air, and children learn many of them unconsciously." (175)

In Sunderland in the inter-war period such socialisation into the skilled identity was often overlaid with specific loyalties to local yards, or aversion to other yards. The basis of this was not only a wish to work amongst friends but also to work with foremen who would not demean the individual craftsman by allocating jobs beneath the "skill", and therefore dignity, of the individual worker. As a worker speaking of the late 1930s put it,

"I was forced to go to Shorts. I never wanted to go but I was forced to go by the Labour Exchange ... So I went to the foreman's cabin to see the head foreman - he was standing there - important with a plan under his arm - everybody thought you were the cat's whiskers if you had a plan under your arm - and he said what did I want? I said that I'd been sent from the Labour Exchange, - and then I find out he's only the foreman and he says have you got your green

card, so I gives him me green card and asks what he's gonna do and he says "I'm gonna give you a job "jobbing" - that'd be little bits of jobs y'know, tidying and straightening little bits up, - and I told him I didn't want that. He says "what do you want?". "Have you got a job marking the shell off or marking the deck off or something like that?", that was the top job. He said "Whaat! Do you think I'm gonna take one of my men off to give you a job?" and I said "No I don't but that doesn't mean I can't do it." He told me to see the Head Foreman and I said "I'm seeing no Head Foreman." So I went back to the Labour Exchange and they said "you haven't had your green form signed", and I said "I'm not straight with the Boilermakers - I owe the Boilermakers that much money they won't let me start till I get squared up." (176)

This statement illustrates several important issues: the importance of specific yard locality has already been mentioned; here we see however that in the absence of the direct knowledge of the individual worker the foreman attempted to assign the individual to the "skilled job" requiring the least skill. This draws our attention to the idea of the division of labour within an individual craft, typically this division arises spontaneously on the "shop floor" and is the product of a status hierarchy which is negotiated between the individuals within the craft and the immediate work group. The notion of the skilled worker then does not imply a totally homogeneous grouping (177). To some extent the possession of "skill" has been seen as inevitably involving a moral connection.

"A lifetime spent plying a particular trade will very much influence a man's personality and his approach to life, and it will be reflected in the cast of his countenance. If you talked to some of the middle-aged men who work in the ship-yards of Pallion, you would see at once that an intelligence and alertness, along with a sense of judgement and discernment, is reflected in their faces ... It would not do simply to butter people up, and I know that there are many

people to be found in shipyards - as there are anywhere - who are not particularly useful or ornamental; yet the fact remains that in Pallion, in the yards, you will find many a plater and shipwright and plumber, to mention only three of many shipyard trades, who are highly skilled men. They know they are skilled, and feel that the public is inclined to look down on these as mere shipyard workers." (178)

Whilst cast in rather "romantic" terms this account nevertheless alerts us to an important feature of the workplace that is often overlooked in much labour process writing: the fact that work is not merely the accomplishment of the aggregate categories of capital and labour, but also everywhere and at every time is the production of actual human beings with their own particular abilities and concerns. We need to realise that the aggregate category of "skilled worker" is only ever an "ideal type" and in "reality" it is (in this case predominantly skilled) workers acting at the point of production that determine (within limits) and express the concerns that are important in the labour process, conceived not only in its "objective moments" but also in its particular communal intersubjective form. We should ask what were some of these characteristics which defined the industry in the inter-war period on the Wear?

Firstly it is worth making the point overtly that accounts given by workers of their experiences in the shipyards do not distinguish between the technical and social aspects of production. Such a point may seem obvious, and yet is often overlooked in studies of the introduction of technologies, so that we are presented with a structural account of the positions

of capital and labour. So then, use of labour, machines and raw materials is never independent of the specific quality of social relationships (structure and action) at the point of production. This is what gives the production process not only a technical structure but also, for the individuals directly concerned, a moral significance. These factors, in oral accounts, must not be dismissed solely as "surface disturbance", but rather must be understood as part of a cohesive (if not always coherent) view of the experience of work. For example, when asking about the introduction of welding, usually the first piece of information imparted is which individual in the yard was associated with the process. This should not be interpreted as a lack of knowledge of the technical aspects of the process by the interviewee, but rather it speaks something about the priorities of this individual in relation to the experience of work. Thus,

"The first welder was a bloke called Sollie French (turns to wife: "You know who I'm talking about?" - "Yes") Sollie French and he started that in Laings." (179)

The point is then that the experience of the labour process at the point of production needs to be understood in all its complexity, including the personal relations of actors insofar as this qualitative feature has a bearing on the social relations surrounding the employment relationship. This is an important feature in relation to a differential potential for "management" control as exerted through the agency of particular foremen. One worker outlined the situation in the 1930s:

"The market (was) outside any shipyard gate, where there was work of any kind. All the tradesmen gathered there until a foreman came out and pointed at the men he wanted, then they followed him in for a day or two of work. I've heard it said that when some foremen were laid off for lengthy periods (they) ... tried to get their own dole queue so as not to rub shoulders with their former employees. ... (The) old shipyard foremen were all powerful and almost like kings in their power over the men who worked under them. An apprentice today can never imagine what it was like to work in a society with no rights at all. Most of the foremen on the river had been at the same yards for years. All of them, basically, were hard men, and ruthless, although some were just and fair, and if their men worked hard and well, left the running of the job to their chergemen and in general kept things ticking over quietly ... Other foremen, perhaps without the flair or organisational ability, relied on driving their men." (180)

The difference between the approach which allowed things to "tick over quietly" and "driving" the men cannot be understood fully in terms of the difference between direct control and responsible autonomy, for if the rate of work was controlled the exact way the work was to be executed was not. The squad system ensured that it was the tradesmen who decided how exactly to go about the work. A plater described the squad he joined when he started in the 1920s:

"... when I served me time everything was priced, everything was priced. You couldn't serve your time till you were sixteen but I was what you call a "marker boy" at fourteen. You worked with a Plater - wherever he went you had to be beside him to mark the walls and you had to tie the plates down ... you were learning your trade you see and you marked all yours and the plater - the platers in them days had to work three in a squad. You used to have a "marker" and a "puncher" - a man who punched holes in the plates, another man marked them and what you call a "hanger-up", he used to take the stuff down to the ship and hang it up you see, and put it on straight - it wasn't all prefabricated like it is now, it was every item was individually ... it wasn't put together - it was put up individually - even each frame of the ship ... the ribs ...

and everyone of them was put up single - shipwrights used to put the frames up, the platers used to build them ... there was no welders in them days, no welders" (181)

Within this division of labour the hierarchy existing between workers was of as much importance, and in some ways more, as the divide between "management" and workers. A plumber explained:

"A foreman would expect a full days' work from man and boy. If he saw lads larking about he would come down hard on the tradesmen for not keeping the boys employed. Today it's unheard of for a tradesman to abuse an apprentice. In the old days a boy was literally at the whim of every adult in the department with a thump or a kick from his mate if he was not up to his work. In between boy and tradesman was the labourer. Usually a hard working family man, and to a tradesman in the old days a good labourer who knew his job was irreplaceable. The difference between getting a job done quickly and correctly and taking longer over it and thus earning the displeasure of the chargeman." (182)

The "moral" nature of the hierarchy is apparent in the estimation of the "worth" of a "good labourer" to the tradesman. Similarly the worth of a good tradesman to a labourer could mean, within the metal trades, the difference between receiving the standard unskilled rate or a supplement of "blood-money" from the tradesman if a decent piece rate had been achieved. Our plater explained how the rate was worked out:

"When you were in the yards in them days you didn't wait until the buzzer started because if you didn't go to work ... you had to put a bill in for everything that you worked, everything that you done you wrote down. See you got a bill on Monday and you wrote every job down ... You had a "piece clerk" ... and he used to get these bills. Now everything in a shipyard, when it comes in, everything's weighed ... all the materials, I mean shell plates, thick see, 30 foot by 6 foot wide ... and you were paid by the weight of the material you were working with and that was so much a hundredweight that you got ... " (183)

The management of the squad was left largely to the individual craftsman, who not only had to ensure that the job would pay but also that the work was performed safely; sometimes these two requirements came into conflict.

"I always remember when I first started to hang the deck up, you as the plater used to go down and stand in the market long before the plans were drawn up ... then as time got on the plater went down and he used to pick his own squad because he was paying them part of his wages out of his piece work you see ... Anyhow I was hanging up these plates on the deck - it was hard work with a block and tackle so I said I was going to try and make it easier for them all - the derricks had a big iron ball on the top and a winch that takes the wire and everything - and I got a lot of plates that I wanted up to the top of the ship, and I swung the iron ball back and fastened the wire - I told them to heave, and they aren't moving and I looks down ... and when I looked he had the bloody ball off the other derrick (the wrong one) so I thought I'll have to go up and get the other bloody wire. And the next day they were heaving and I shouted "stop" I thought they had stopped, and then the ball passed my ear by about 2 inches, they were still heaving you see, - like a catapult and I thought that's it I'm not taking any more chances, we'll pull it up with the block and tackle." (184)

The point is then that the individual craftsman was at liberty to attempt a "change of practice" in relation to his own way of working as long as the work was done. This area of discretion over the physical process of work was in part the resource which both evidenced and reproduced the "skilled" status of the craftsman, and as seen in the last example which changes could not only lead to a drop in take home pay for other members of the squad but could even place people in life threatening situations.

That this discretion existed during the period, coupled with only very basic capital machinery (derricks rather than cranes,

furnaces and hammers rather than cold bending machinery) ensured to a great extent that innovations in the production in particular yards were more likely to flow from adaptations made by individual craftsmen or foremen to the particular problems that faced them, rather than by individual innovations developed more formally. In this sense the labour process did develop from "below" as suggested by Lorenz; however this was not just "through the resolution of conflicts in the yards" (185). To some extent such a view underestimates the scope of individual craftsmen to initiate change and the willingness of management to let them do that. In other words change did not only result from (or initiate) conflict in the labour process but rather given the extent to which the process developed from "below" such initiatives often had the implicit blessing of management as well as serving to remind the skilled workers of their responsibilities based on their "stewardship" of the industry. The extent of this latter attitude held, as we shall see at a later point, unfortunate implications for the maintenance of a united position of workers in the yards and the community in the face of the decline of the industry in the post war period. To return to the point in hand however, the extent to which workers in the industry held (largely unproblematically) "control" over the labour process should alert us to the dangers of reducing "all activity to struggle" (187).

The point is that in the face of widely fluctuating demand a division of labour which was highly labour-intensive suited the employers, who in times of slump did not have to bear high capital overheads. Underlying such a division of labour was the notion of the skilled workforce with the knowledge for self-organisation and discipline being in many ways an integral part of the "collective worker". Given that the employers in the industry were far from parochial, and were aware of such things as "scientific management" (188) it would seem that their lack of practical initiative to change the existing division of labour amounted to more than an implicit acceptance of it and in some cases bordered on enthusiastic advocacy. As Professor Hallsworth noted in 1932,

"There is ... a general impression among shipbuilders in this country, based on visits abroad, that foreign yards are, if anything, over equipped - in roofs, floors, tools and machinery, the upkeep costs of which will tend to be excessive...

Their method of working also differs from our own. An extensive use of what is called "Fabrication" or "Expansion" work allows much work to be done by semi-skilled or unskilled labour which in this country would be done by skilled craftsmen. Fabrication work in this country is increasing to a certain extent but the method in some cases involves slightly more expense ... It is probably true, too, that the administrative staff in British yards is smaller, and better organised, than in most continental yards; and that in the practical applications of science, in the facility of preparing new and better designs, in the more rapid construction of ships, and in the craftsmanship of the workers, this country is still ahead even of the best of her competitors." (189)

Again the belief that British yards could out-perform all competitors on the criteria of both technical and cost efficiency leads one to doubt that a sense of urgency existed in the period

as regards any radical re-organisation of the production process. The existent division of labour was seen to be both flexible and efficient, and "the" prime asset was seen to be the skilled workforce which included:

"... the aptitude of the British Workman for doing his job with the smallest number of tools and the least equipment."
(190)

Here then the perspective of British shipbuilders meshed to some extent with the belief of the workforce in the value of their own skills, and this is where the ingenuity displayed by individual workers, outlined below, fits in with some of the more structural concerns of retaining a "flexible" low capital division of labour in the face of widely fluctuating demand.

In one sense then the immediate problems facing the workforce in the inter-war period paralleled those of the employers, the lack of demand for ships which closed down so many yards on the Wear resulted in unprecedented unemployment both in total numbers and in the duration that such unemployment lasted. The problem of unemployment struck deep into the occupational community and its effects, as we shall see later, ensured that the political culture, as represented in the "politics of local loyalties", would not continue unchanged.

The slump brought home to workers in a dramatic way that local loyalties could not always sustain the community, and any pretensions of paternalism were flattened in the face of "objective" economic circumstances (191). The most important

feature of this was the outflow of population from Sunderland.

"... for the first time on record Sunderland's population began to fall, dropping from an estimated 188,200 in 1932 to 182,500 in 1939." (192)

These figures probably underestimate the total figure of temporary migrations from the town during this period. Shipyard workers who left sometimes attempted to work within the boundaries of their trade, although sometimes this could mean taking labouring work. Such a status was not naturally assumed by most craftsmen. As one worker explained in relation to the job he secured in Scotland, erecting structural steel work:

"I was off about three or four years (from the yards). I went away to work ... I was supposed to be doing labouring and I nearly got the sack the second day. Well, they were building a section over a section, it was a pit plant, the section was going to go up a height, and the steeplejack was going to go up - putting his tools in the bag - and I says to him, "If you're going up there to bolt that up you're wasting your time" and I didn't know the boss was standing behind me. He says "What do you mean by that?", I says "Just what I've said Mr. Holland, if you're trying to put that section up there you're wasting your time, the section you want is down there" - and the plan was laid out and I said "There, there's the section you want. That section belongs over there", and somebody gave him a dig ... Well the next morning when I went in he says "Come here I want you, you're too good where you're going to" he says, "there's a plan for you - go and do that job", and from then on I was practically leading hand on the job. ... I went from there to Nottingham and then back to Scotland ... all structural steel work." (193)

Other craftsmen took any job they could find:

"I went away, I went to Skegness, I worked as an ordinary cellarman in a public house." (194)

For the workers that stayed "at home" the situation was often serious:

"... things were very very bad. We were absolutely poverty stricken, destitute. I was on the dole. It was very little then. It may have been fifteen bob, maybe not." (195)

Unemployment had always been a feature of the shipbuilding industry but the depth and duration of the slump in the '30s emphasised the different social impact of the depression:

"The shipbuilding managers could live off their reserves or family fortunes accumulated in better times. The unemployed riveters and platers, joiners and plumbers were not so well placed." (196)

That this was the case on the Wear seems to be substantiated by the attitude of one owner:

"Sir John was fond of recalling with a chuckle how, in periods of depression which caused him to close down temporarily ... he and his manager used to play tennis in the empty shipyard much to the amusement of officials in a yard on the other side of the river who watched the games through opera glasses." (197)

For workers the reality was different:

"You got dole money for up to thirteen weeks after you lost a job, then you had to go on the parish. For a start you got less on the parish, and sometimes all or part of what you got was in vouchers which you could only use in certain shops. To get anything at all you had to go before The Committee on Monday nights and tell them everything about your family and what you had or didn't have. They'd come round and stick their noses in everywhere, sometimes literally, they'd smell your jugs to see if you'd had a drink in them." (198)

Such contrasts, and physical dislocation of the settled community, did serve to raise questions about traditional loyalties and, as will be seen in the next chapter, the apparent necessity of war to guarantee full employment shook these loyalties even further. However the point about the lack of demand for ships and the consequent unemployment is that it

served to direct the attention of capital and labour in different directions. For labour the unity of occupational identity (as an individual master status) with community interests represented itself through the traditional channels of craft exclusiveness and demarkation boundaries. In other words unemployment was seen to be best resisted by adhering to particular parts of the work process so that when work was available your particular trade was guaranteed a share in the activity. There was nothing new in this and what must be emphasised is that in this sense the position remained as it had done through other slumps in the late nineteenth century; thus to over-emphasise the assertion of craft control is to underestimate the degree to which this control represented an accepted status quo within the industry.

This is especially so given that the slump directed the attention of Capital to the crisis of profitability, producing a concern with all aspects of costs. This over-riding concern with costs became the filter through which all other questions were viewed.

Summary and Conclusion

In order to answer the first part of the central question, as to why during the inter-war period there was no radical re-organisation of the division of labour despite the apparent presence of the technical means to do so, in the form of the welding process and the potential that that implied for the extension of "fabrication", many things have been taken into account. The context that the industry had to work in included the severity of the slumps of the 20s and 30s. Whilst the first of these can be explained in part by the dislocation of production consequent upon the effect of the first world war, ultimately of greater importance were the more long-term changes in the capitalist world system. Of particular note here was the decline of Britain as the nation exercising hegemony over the world system and the resistance of the U.S.A. to assume that role. These tensions were considerably exaggerated by the reluctance of Britain to relinquish its former role and the rise of economic nationalism in most first world countries.

The exacerbation of the downturns of the trade cycle during the period must not be understood merely as "background" - its effects were present at all levels, as much in the qualitative aspects of the "micro politics" of production as in the more structured opposition of capital and labour. It is in this context that the particularities of the developments on the River Wear must be situated. Understanding this historical individual

necessitated the development of an approach which simultaneously situated the industry in its specific occupational community.

In this setting it was argued that the early onset of the slump in the 1930s and its severity did not lead to a radicalisation of the working class at the point of production or elsewhere. Rather the issues were refracted through the "politics of local loyalties". Sunderland was not the "town that was murdered", it appeared to be dying of natural causes. This view prompted a spirit of resignation which saw the effects of depression as the result of an impersonal force, largely to be endured until a revival came along.

At the level of production such resignation was largely shared by both capital and labour alike. The necessity of adaptation to these circumstances meant that for Capital issues other than changes in the divisions of labour were paramount, primarily reducing overheads to a minimum and seeking reductions in external costs. The concern with costs did not lead to the early adoption of welding, as others had suggested, for several reasons. Firstly the severity of the slump as experienced on Wearside, and the relatively late recovery ensured the attention of management was focused on other issues. This is particularly so given that the speciality of the river was "tramp" tonnage, which did not benefit from the application of welding to the same extent as larger vessels. Also given that such changes in technique, welding and prefabrication, had not been experimented

with to any great degree on the river it was indeed the case that any move in these directions would involve an initial increase in cost for uncertain returns. Furthermore the reliability of the welded joint could not always be guaranteed as the number of ships which suffered from brittle fracture demonstrated, and as we have seen some authorities were still urging caution in relation to the wisdom of adopting welding quickly. Finally, given that the maximum benefit from welding was to be realised ultimately through the wider use of fabrication techniques, what was being questioned in the final analysis was the "British way" of building ships. Many owners were of the belief that the British system was superior in terms of both technical and cost efficiency. Added to this was the "sedimentation of the past" not only in the physical work process but also in the organisational and managerial spheres; there was not an obvious alternative managerial structure to the craft administration of the division of labour.

All of these factors come together on the Wear in a particularly extreme form, so whilst the Wear Shipbuilders Association "supported" the S.E.F. welding scheme in theory, in practice they were almost indifferent to it. This is why on the Wear the "defeat" of the scheme is not to be equated with the workers "resisting at the point of production the expropriation of the control they have exercised over the labour process". The employers themselves did not take the scheme seriously as a

practical issue of imminent importance, and in fact drew some benefit themselves from letting the craft workers exercise control over the labour process, the "flexibility" of variable capital in the face of fluctuating demand, associated with lower overheads incurred through using less fixed capital. In such a situation employers were less than likely to make a practical stand on the issue of acceptance of the formal scheme, for practice sometime in the future, especially in the face of existing corporate structure and the need for individual firms to capitalise on any competitive advantage. The issue of the S.E.F. welding plan cannot be seen to involve above all else a clash between capital and labour. Rather as this study shows there were also technical and organisational questions which had not been answered, and above all the issue of costs served to ensure that on the Wear at least the issue remained of marginal importance during the period.

The wider implications of these factors have several dimensions. Firstly, the structural tendencies in labour process theory deduced from the sphere of production do not operate irrespective of the "moment" of consumption (i.e. demand). The invariant determinacy of the "marxist" model in relation to the increasing organic composition of capital is unacceptable. For not only is it the case that one cannot deduce the empirical orientation of the personification of capital and labour from such structural tendencies, but also one must beware of seeing

the relationship of capital and labour as identical with their aggregate class organisations. The rhetoric of unity and the "fact" of aggregation must not be seen as the total "reality".

The analysis developed in this chapter points to the importance of "taking apart" the solidity of the categories of "capital" and "labour". Thus the importance of the category of "capital" in this study is expressed at a number of simultaneously existing levels: the geo-political location in the world system, the "fraction" of industrial capital, the corporate form and the federated family firm, the changing status of the employer seen through the refraction of the "politics of local loyalties", the "delegation" of the control function to foremen and the "moral" hierarchy of the occupational community. For "labour" similarly the specific national and regional location, the industry subculture, the social and physical location both at work and in the community, the formal and informal hierarchy both with respect to inter- and intra-trade differences and accessibility of social networks are important.

Such concerns are complex not only in their range but also because of the non-uniform temporality which underlies them, and such temporal dislocations tend to transmute "action" into "structure" as the sedimentation of distance in both time and space. For these reasons the "labour process" in shipbuilding or elsewhere cannot be characterised through the study of one "typical" centre, nor can "it" be grasped by looking solely or

even partially at the leading edges of technology, or the "sharp points" of the class struggle.

For these reasons this chapter has been concerned to, in some ways, "go behind" the formal stances of the Unions and employers' organisations and attempt to begin an examination of the "micro-politics" of production as well as the wider setting. In doing so issues of routine take on as much importance as change, for both are dynamic properties. In order to develop these concerns further, as well as test some of the conclusions already formed in relation to the inter-war period, the next chapter will examine the situation as it developed during the period of the second world war and in its immediate aftermath. The importance of this period lies in the relatively abrupt changes brought about through the exigencies of war including the acceleration of technical developments and application, and problems consequent on the dislocation of the workforce. Also however the period of the second world war represented a watershed in relation to the development of the world system, and the importance of Keynesian economic management techniques ensured that the situation which confronted the industry on the Wear (and elsewhere) in the aftermath of the second world war proved to be profoundly different from that which developed in the 1920s and 1930s.

Notes to Chapter 2

- 1 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. "Where Ships are Born: Sunderland 1346-1946", Sunderland, Thomas Reed and Co., 1947 pp61-70.
- 2 Ennis, F. "The Jarrow March of 1936 and the Symbolic Expression of Protest", M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Sociology, University of Durham 1982.
- 3 Lorenz, E.H. "The Labour Process and Industrial Relations in British and French Shipbuilding: the inter-war years." Paper at SSRC Shipbuilding Seminar "Scottish and Scandinavian Shipbuilding: Development problems in Historical Perspective", 21-23 September 1980, ppl-2.
- 4 McGoldrick, J. "Crisis and the Division of Labour: Clyde-side Shipbuilding in the inter-war Period" in Dickson, T. (Ed) "Capital and Class in Scotland", Edinburgh, John Donald Ltd 1982.
- 5 McGoldrick, J. op cit pl.
- 6 The importance of the contrasts as well as the continuities in the constitution of class culture is clearly grasped by John Foster in his thought-provoking study of three industrial towns.
Foster, J. "Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution", London, Methuen and Co. 1974.
- 7 Such a shift from a perspective stressing the importance of internal factors within the firm to a wider conception of the importance of "economic-technical, political and ideological" factors for a labour process analysis can be seen in the work of Burawoy. See:
Burawoy, M. "Manufacturing Consent", Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1979.
Burawoy, M. "Towards a Marxist theory of the labour process: Braverman and Beyond" in "Politics and Society" Vol. 8, 1978.
- 8 This point stands even in the face of the evidence supporting the tendency in the 1930s for rising living standards. For as has been suggested the 1930s were a period of paradox. See:
Finn, R. "Social Conditions in the County Borough of Sunderland during the 1930s", unpublished B.A. dissertation, University of Durham, Department of Sociology 1985.
Yet for our purposes the dominant feature of the industry and region is one of depression. See also:

- Stevenson, J. and Cook, C. "The Slump", London, Jonathan Cape Ltd 1977.
- 9 Corfe, T. "Sunderland: A Short History", Newcastle upon Tyne, Frank Graham 1973.
- 10 Stewart, M. "Keynes and After", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1967, pp54-55.
- 11 Youngson, A.J. "Great Britain 1920-1970" in "The Fontana Economic History of Europe. Contemporary Economies 1", Glasgow, Collins 1976, pl36.
- 12 Stewart, M. op cit, 1967.
- 13 Thomson, D. "England in the Twentieth Century", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1965, p99.
- 14 Patterson, E.M. "An Introduction to World Economics", London, Macmillan 1948, p493.
- 15 Thomson, D. op cit, pp99-100.
- 16 Smith, R. "The Historical Decline of the UK" in Aronovitch, S. et al "The Political Economy of British Capitalism", London, McGraw Hill 1981, p75.
- 17 Hobsbawm, E.J. "Industry and Empire", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1968, p210.
- 18 Pelling, H. "Modern Britain", London, Cardinal 1974, p97.
- 19 Youngson, A.J. op cit, pl38.
- 20 Ashworth, W. "An Economic History of England", London, Methuen and Co. 1972.
- 21 As Andrew Gamble has noted it is ironic that Britain went to war with Germany in order to protect her position as the foremost world power and in the process lost that very position to the USA.
"Hence forward the British Empire, the pound sterling, and the very survival of Britain depended on American sufferance. The tariff reformers had enjoyed a belated triumph in the 1930s when the world economy fragmented into currency and trading blocs following the Great Depression. But the opportunity was already gone of turning the Empire from a strategic and economic burden into a source of British strength. The British state now began to acquire very different relationship to the world economy it had once

dominated and done so much to develop." - Gamble, A. "Britain in Decline", London, Macmillan 1981 p62.

Furthermore it was not only the USA and Japan whose industry grew whilst that of Britain stagnated during the conflict of World War I and then grew rather slowly in its aftermath. For:

"In Europe there were several countries which had only a small share in the world's manufacturing output but which were becoming industrialised to such an extent as made a significant difference to international trade. Between the two World Wars Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands all increased their manufacturing output much more than the general average and in proportion to their population attained a level of industrial output comparable to that of Britain at the time of the First World War." - Ashworth, W. "An Economic History of England", p309.

- 22 McLellan, D. "Marx's Grundrisse", London, Paladin 1973, pp70-75.
- 23 Cleaver, H. "Reading Capital Politically", Brighton, Harvester 1979, p163.
- 24 Thomson, D. op cit, p130.
- 25 Thomson, D. op cit, p144.
- 26 Pelling, H. op cit, p122.
- 27 Hill, S. "Competition and Control at Work", London, Heinemann 1981, p238.
- 28 Taylor, R. "Workers and the New Depression", London, Macmillan 1982, pp199-200.
- 29 This scene was remarked upon by my father, who at the time was in the care of Sunderland orphanage and therefore received regular meals.
- 30 Brown, R.K. and Brannen, P. "Social Relations and Social Perspectives Amongst Shipbuilding Workers - A Preliminary Statement" in "Sociology" Vol. 4 1970, p197.
Others have put the "external" costs of the industry at a higher level:
" ... the growing need for specialised components made ship-building increasingly an assembly industry, with perhaps only 20 per cent of the cost of the ship generated within the yard." - House, J.W. "Industrial Britain: The North East", London, David and Charles 1969, p168.

- 31 On this point Tomlinson has suggested that much labour process work sees managers as "monomaniacs" for whom:
"all enterprise strategies are subordinated to the strategy aimed "against" labour", and:
"Problems which govern the activities of most managers - marketing, cash flow, supply of components, quality control etc. - are striking by their absence because they are not readily assimilable to the assumed over-arching question of the management of labour." - Tomlinson, J. "The Unequal Struggle? British Socialism and the Capitalist Enterprise", Methuen 1982, pp23-25.
- 32 Hallsworth, H.M. "The Shipbuilding and Ship-repairing Industry" in "An Industrial Survey of the North East Coast Area", H.M.S.O. Board of Trade 1932, p256.
This point would seem to suggest that any attempt to analyse in the "moment of production" the relative (cost) efficiency of a national shipbuilding industry would of necessity, especially if the approach was linked to the labour theory of value, need to look at the labour processes within those supply industries.
- 33 House, J.W. (1969) op cit, p177.
- 34 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p254.
- 35 Parkinson, J.R. "The Economics of Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom", Cambridge, C.U.P. 1960, p74.
- 36 Jones, L. "Shipbuilding in Britain: mainly between the two World Wars", Cardiff, University of Wales Press 1957, p32.
- 37 Allen, G.C. "British Industries: and their Organisation", Longmans 1959, p163.
- 38 McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit, p26.
- 39 The final report on the research undertaken by R.K. Brown et al - "Orientations to work and industrial behaviour of shipbuilding workers on Tyneside" notes that:
"The management structure of the shipyard appears, therefore, to reflect many of the characteristics which Woodward has suggested will be typical of unit production firms: a reliance on line managers, who are themselves technically qualified or experienced, rather than on specialist staff; no clear distinction between "formal" and "informal" relations and procedures; close contacts between development and production; little written communication; and so on. In addition it reflects something too of the situation which Stinchcombe has typified as "craft administration"

specification by an external authority of the goals of production (i.e. what sort of ship is to be produced) but not of the precise way in which these goals are to be achieved; the control of pace, manual skill and effective operative decision are, to a large extent at least, left to professionally maintained occupational standards among members of the work crew." (p26)

- 40 Brown, R.K. and Brannen, P. (1970) op cit, p197.
- 41 Brown, R.K. "Sociologists and Industry - in search of a distinctive competence" in Sociological Review, 1981 Vol. 29 No. 2, p224.
- 42 Hopkins, C.H.G. "Pallion 1874 to 1954: Church and People in a Shipyard Parish", Sunderland, Wearside Printing Co. Ltd. 1954, p107.
- 43 House, J.W. (1969) op cit, p215.
- 44 House, J.W. (1969) op cit pp214-215.
- 45 Robson, B.T. "Urban Analysis: A Study of City Structure", Cambridge, CUP 1969, p75.
- 46 Brown, J.A. "The General Strike, 1926: Sunderland", undated and unpublished B.A. Dissertation.
- 47 Jones, L. (1957) op cit, p25.
- 48 Quoted in: Dougan, D. "The History of North East Shipbuilding", George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1968, p27.
- 49 The first steam powered ship launched on the river was the "Experiment" built by Thomas Rowntree and launched in 1845. The first iron ship built on the river was the "Loftus", a 77 ton rigged schooner, built by George Clark and launched in 1852.
Smith and Holden (1947) op cit, pp35-36.
- 50 Reid, A. "The Division of Labour in the Shipbuilding Industry", unpublished paper, date unknown, p26.
- 51 Clarke, J.F. "Shipbuilding on the River Wear 1780-1870" in: Sturges (Ed) "The Great Age of Industry in the North East, 1770-1920", Durham, Durham County Local History Society 1981, p81.
- 52 Ibid, p82.

- 53 Sabel, C. and Zeitlin, J. "Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets and Technology in Nineteenth Century Industrialisation" in "Past and Present" 1985 No. 108, p149.
- 54 The Corder Manuscripts: Volumes written in longhand by William Corder with un-numbered pages, which are held in Sunderland Central Library.
- 55 Dougan, D. (1968) op cit, p24.
- 56 Clarke, J.F. (1981) op cit, p85.
- 57 Clarke, J.F. (1981) op cit, p85.
It is interesting that in a book published by William Brockie in 1894 entitled "Sunderland Notables" the author lists none of the "notables" as shipbuilders. Insofar as he does mention shipbuilding employers it is in their capacity as "shipowners" even though their primary business interest had been in shipbuilding, as in the case of Thomas Burn and John Hutchinson. This would seem to imply that being a shipbuilder carried less status than being a shipowner.
Brockie, W. "Sunderland Notables", Sunderland, Hills and Co. 1894.
- 58 Sabel, C. and Zeitlin, J. (1985) op cit, p148.
- 59 Sabel, C. and Zeitlin, J. (1981) op cit, p155.
- 60 Potts, T. "Sunderland, a History of Town, Port, Trade and Commerce", B. Williams 1892.
- 61 Brown, J.A. (Undated) op cit, p2.
Not only did union formation appear later in Sunderland than in most other ports, but its form tended to be anything but radical. One of the two Shipwrights Union Societies existing on the Wear in the mid nineteenth century still included rules which:
" ... imposed a fine of 5/- in the event of any member, at a meeting, uttering unlawful or disaffected expressions against the King or Government."
Mitchell, W.C. "History of Sunderland", Hills 1919, p132.
- 62 On the notions of competitive and monopoly capitalism see: Mandel, E. "Marxist Economic Theory", London, Merlin 1972.
- 63 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, pp239-240.
- 64 Brown, J.A. (undated) op cit, p2.

- 65 Brockie, W. (1894) op cit, p344.
- 66 Corder, W. "The Corder Manuscripts".
- 67 Sunderland Echo 10-03-67, p1.
- 68 Sunderland Echo 27-03-61, p8.
- 69 Sunderland Echo 07-11-73, p9.
- 70 Sunderland Echo 02-10-51.
- 71 Sunderland Echo 06-08-41.
- 72 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p232.
- 73 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p232.
- 74 Sabel, C. and Zeitlin, J. (1985) op cit, p152.
- 75 Laings commenced shipbuilding in 1793.
Crowns: 1807.
Bartams: 1838.
Thompsons: 1819.
Doxfords: 1840.
Pickersgills: 1838.
Short Bros.: 1850.
S.P. Austin and Son: 1826.
- 76 Brian Robson, in his study of Sunderland, has suggested that one has to distinguish between two types of subdivided housing:
"... first the classic rooming-house area to which typically the single or young married, transient and mobile population is attracted and in which great social heterogeneity is found; and secondly, the more residentially stable type of area which contains families of manual workers and is of lower and homogeneous social status."
- In Sunderland at the turn of the century Robson identifies four principal areas of subdivided housing:
"To the south of the river, there is an area in Bishopwearmouth close to the centre of the town, and secondly there is an area to the east of it, in Hendon, which is of low class subdivided housing. To the north of the river, there is a small rooming area near Roker Park close to the sea, and secondly, a more extensive area of low class subdivided housing stretching to the west adjacent to the industry along the banks of the river."
- Robson, B.T. "Urban Analysis", Cambridge, CUP 1971, pp122-

123.
These stable areas of lower class subdivided housing tended to gravitate towards the river and surrounded the shipyards.
- 77 Understood as a structural quality of the "system" in Giddens' sense.
- 78 Hopkins, C.H.G. (1954) op cit, p107.
- 79 See: Rainnie, A. and Scott, M. "Industrial Relations in the Small Firm" in Curren, J., Stanworth, J. and Watkin, D. "The Survival of the Small Firm", Aldershot, Gower, 1986.
Also: Roberts, I.P. "Industrial Relations in Small Firms: In Search of a Framework", Paper at the Ninth National Small Firms Policy and Research Conference, Gleneagles 20-22 Nov. 1986.
- 80 Alan Bell served his apprenticeship as a plumber in the 1930s and in his working life has spent some time in every yard on the River Wear. He has recorded details from his working career and that of other workers he encountered in his unpublished "Shipyard Tales".
- 81 Bell, Alan "Shipyard Tales".
- 82 Albert Baxter, Plater.
- 83 David Richardson, Frame Turner.
- 84 D. Richardson.
- 85 Bell, A. "Shipyard Tales".
- 86 Weber, M. "The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation", London, Macmillan 1964, p327.
- 87 J. Roberts, Plumber.
- 88 Such local loyalties and the involvement of "gentlemen" in the Volunteer Service Committee to oppose the general strike on Wearside were seen by one scholar as part of the reason for the mild effect that the strike had upon the Town. The importance of footballing connections is a significant one in this respect.
"It (the committee) included as Chairman Mr. W. Miburn MBE, a respected architect in the town, the Town Clerk Mr. H. Craven as Food Officer, and Borough Engineer J.P. Collinge as Road Officer - clearly a set of men designed to impress strikers and non-strikers alike. Perhaps the most important member of the USC hierarchy was its Chairman of

the Haulage Committee, Major Joe Prior - a popular Director and later Chairman of Sunderland Football Club, the single most important interest for a large number of Wearside's working population. Major Prior's connections with the football club and influence as owner of a large haulage business were instrumental in the excellent response to the appeal for motor cars and haulage wagons, and undoubtedly played some part in the decision of the organisational Secretary of the Transport Workers to allow volunteers to handle food supplies and building materials, which was taken after discussions with the Major."

Hills, R.I. (undated) op cit, pp10-11.

- 89 McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit.
See also: Mandel, E. "Late Capitalism", London, NLB 1975.
- 90 On this point I am reminded of the "Poulantzas, Miliband" debate upon the "Problem of the Capitalist State". In taking seriously the notion of fluctuation of levels of trade in relation to movements in the business cycle I am, in Poulantzas' terms placing myself on the "terrain of the bourgeois ideologists" and "contaminating the appropriate (Marxist) "problematic" with opposed "problematics"". However as Miliband as suggested we need to analyse empirically both the motivation and action of actors in their own terms as well as an institutional analysis which on its own can lead towards a "structural super determinism".
See: Poulantzas, N. "The Problem of the Capitalist State" pp238-253, and Miliband, R. "Reply to Nicos Poulantzas" pp253-262 in:
Blackburn, R. (Ed) "Ideology in Social Science", Glasgow, Fontana 1972.
- 91 " ... which therefore is one's real conception of the world - that which is logically affirmed as an intellectual choice, or that which emerges from the real activity of each person and which is implicit in his or her mode of action?" p326.
In this way Gramsci suggests that ideology (historically necessary ideology, not ideology that is arbitrary, rationalistic or willed) has: "a validity which is "psychological"; they "organise" human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle etc."
in Gramsci, A. "Selections From The Prison Notebooks", Lawrence and Wishart 1971, p.337
- 92 See: Jones, L. (1957) op cit, esp. Ch.II;
Allen, G.C. (1959) op cit, Ch.VI.

- 93 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. (1947) op cit, p56.
- 94 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. (1947) op cit, p59.
- 95 Tuckett, A. "The Blacksmiths History", Lawrence and Wishart 1974, p205.
- 96 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p224.
- 97 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p225.
- 98 Dougan, D. "The History of North East Shipbuilding", George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1932, ppl55-156.
- 99 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. (1947) op cit, p59.
- 100 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. (1947) op cit, p59.
- 101 There was one notable exception to the dearth of new orders coming to the Wear. In November 1925 Silver Line placed an order of over £1,000,000 for six motor cargo vessels; three to be built at Laings and three at J.L. Thompsons - all six to be engined at Doxfords. The electrical and auxiliary equipment was to be supplied by Sunderland Forge and Engineering Company. As Smith and Holden suggested:
"The order was largely due to the efforts and influence of Sir James Marr, who was head of the three companies, Laings, Thompsons and Forge, and also Chairman of the Silver Line for whom the ships were built." - Smith and Holden (1947) op cit, p60.
- 102 "Freights rose substantially during the coal crisis, and it was realised that the tonnage of tramp shipping available was not so large as it had been thought to be. On 1 October 1926, when every available ship was pressed into commission to transport coal from America, there were 350,000 gross tons of British shipping idle, proof that much of the laid up tonnage, which it was thought constituted a menace to freights whenever they were inclined to rise, was obsolete and ineffective. Recognition of this fact stimulated replacement demand and 92% of shipping launched in 1926 and 82% in 1927 was built for replacement of old vessels."
Jones, L. (1957) op cit, ppl00-101.
- 103 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p269.
- 104 D. Richardson, Frame Turner.
- 105 The Times, March 10th 1926.

- 106 Trotsky, L. "Where is Britain Going?", London, New Park Publications Ltd. 1970, p6.
- 107 Joint enquiry into Foreign Competition and Conditions in the Shipyard Industry, June 1926.
Quoted in:
Pagnamenta, P. and Overy, R. "All Our Working Lives", B.B.C. 1984, pl32.
- 108 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. (1947) op cit, p61.
- 109 "Shipbuilding and Shipping Record" (hereafter S.S.R.), January 2nd 1930 (North Eastern Correspondant).
- 110 S.S.R., January 9 1930.
- 111 S.S.R., January 16 1930.
- 112 S.S.R., March 6 1930.
- 113 S.S.R., May 8 1930.
- 114 S.S.R., September 4 1930.
- 115 S.S.R., September 11 1930.
- 116 S.S.R., October 9 1930.
- 117 Wilkinson, E. "The Town the was Murdered - The Life Story of Jarrow", London, Left Book Club 1939.
Palmer at Jarrow was sold to National Shipbuilders Security Ltd. in the summer of 1934, and as David Dougan put it not only was there an institutional villain but according to Wilkinson also a personal devil in the shape of Sir James Lithgow. Here then the sense of injustice was perhaps intensified because the closure of the yard was obviously an act of human agency.
- 118 Quoted in: Jones, L. (1957) op cit, ppl30-131.
- 119 Observers of the industry were by this time even claiming that within the production process wage costs were low and that the cost of external supplies was a more significant problem. Thus the S.S.R. reported that two independent investigations of comparative costs between the UK and USA found that it cost 60% more to build a ship in the US than in the UK. Moreover,
"The curious feature about the comparison made is that while the wages of American shipyard workers are about double those of men in home yards, the average cost of

material is only about 20% greater than in this country. This finding is illuminating. Shipbuilders have been cutting down their charges and profits, and the wages paid are as low as they can become, but it is doubtful whether similar sacrifices have been made by those who supply the materials which the builders assemble ... Those who supply this material have the same tale, namely that they are selling at keen prices. Nevertheless, they are able to maintain a standard of cost which the shipbuilder would be happy to enjoy. If ships had a definite market value it would be more equitable if all those who contribute to the building and equipping of ships should bear alike their part of the depression."

S.S.R., May 1 1930.

- 120 As well as being a director of Doxford and Sons Ltd. Sir Alexander Kennedy was also Chairman and Managing Director of Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. Ltd. and Managing Director of Northumberland Shipbuilding Co. at Howden on Tyne.
- 121 "Official Statement of Policy of N.S.S. Ltd", reprinted in S.S.R., March 6 1930.
The year following this statement Britain's share of world output fell from 51.2% to 31.1%.
- 122 S.S.R., March 6 1930.
- 123 S.S.R., May 8 1930.
- 124 Quoted in: Pagnamenta, P. and Overly, R. (1984) op cit, pl36.
- 125 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. (1947) op cit, p64.
- 126 Minutes of Wear Shipbuilders Association, 9th August 1930. The records of the W.S.A. are held at the Tyne and Wear Archive, Blanford Street, Newcastle.
- 127 W.S.A. minutes, 9 August 1930.
- 128 W.S.A. minutes, 28 October 1930.
- 129 W.S.A. minutes, 10 December 1930.
- 130 W.S.A. minutes, 5 March 1931.
- 131 W.S.A. minutes, July 1931.
- 132 W.S.A. minutes, 5 March 1931.

133 In March 1931 unskilled council workers were paid 48/6d, compared to 41/- for similar workers in the yard. W.S.A. minutes, 5 March 1931.

134 Lorenz, E.H. (1980) op cit, p6.

The essentials of the S.E.F. Welding Plan were that:

"The scheme called for the creation of a new class of skilled worker, shipwelders, to be organised outside the existing union structure and to be recruited initially from the supply of shipyard workers and apprentices, but not necessarily from those displaced by the process. The allocation of welding between shipwelders and other trades was to be at the discretion of each firm. Remuneration was to be at the national uniform rate for skilled labour, 60/- per week in 1929. Trainees with prior shipyard experience, whether skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled, were to undergo a two year training period and to start at the rate of 41/- per week and advance to 60/- by equal half yearly instalments, though in the case of semi- and unskilled men progression to the 60/- rate was to be dependent upon the employers' assessment of progress."

135 Lorenz, E.H. (1980) op cit, pp6-7.

136 McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit, p50.

137 W.S.A. minutes, 18 July 1933.

138 Lorenz, E.H. (1980) op cit, p6.

139 S.S.R., May 20 1926: Article entitled "Welding in Shipyards".

140 S.S.R., 13 March 1930.

141 S.S.R., 13 March 1930.

142 The process was deemed acceptable by Lloyds in 1932, although they retained reservations about standards of workmanship.

143 S.S.R., 20 August 1931.

144 Fox, F.A. "The Brittle Fracture of Structural Steel", Science News 36. Quoted in: Parkinson, J.R. 'The Economics of Shipbuilding in the UK', Cambridge, CUP 1960, p114.

- 145 Bendix, R. "Work and Authority in Industry", University of California Press 1974, p281.
- 146 This is indeed possible as the information on which the S.E.F. relied for its understanding of the actual use of welding prior to developing the plan came from 14 firms, who were the only ones within the S.E.F. who were using welding and interested enough to reply to the enquiry. See: McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit, pp46-47.
- 147 W.S.A. minutes, 18 July 1933.
- 148 W.S.A. minutes, 12 September 1933.
- 149 W.S.A. minutes, 29 January 1934.
- 150 W.S.A. minutes, 29 January 1934.
- 151 W.S.A. minutes, 29 January 1934.
- 152 W.S.A. Welding Sub-committee minutes, 17 July 1934.
- 153 W.S.A. Welding Sub-committee minutes, 12 April 1935.
- 154 W.S.A. minutes, 10 May 1935.
- 155 W.S.A. minutes, 22 July 1935.
- 156 Mortimer, J.E. "History of the Boilermakers Society", George Allen and Unwin 1982, Vol.2 p231.
- 157 W.S.A. minutes, 10 July 1934.
- 158 McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit, p45.
- 159 The Sunderland Echo 2 June 1981: article on Sunderland in the Thirties.
- 160 Quoted in: Finn, R. "Social Conditions in the County Borough of Sunderland during the 1930s", unpublished B.A. Dissertation, University of Durham, Department of Sociology 1985.
- 161 Corfe, T. "Sunderland: A Short History", Newcastle, Frank Graham 1973, p105.
- 162 For an elaboration of this point see:
Roberts, I.P. "The Labour Process in the Shipbuilding Industry", unpublished B.A. Dissertation, University of Durham, Department of Sociology 1982.

- 163 Tomlinson, J. "The Unequal Struggle? British Socialism and the Capitalist Enterprise", London, Methuen 1982, p23.
- 164 McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit, p42.
- 165 McGoldrick, J. (1981) op cit, pp65-66.
- 166 W.S.A. minutes, 29 May 1933.
- 167 Mortimer, J.E. (1982) op cit, p263.
- 168 D. Richardson.
- 169 "Report of an Enquiry into Apprenticeship: 1925-26", Ministry of Labour 1926, p54.
- 170 Owen, A.N. "The History of the Education and Training of Apprentices in the Shipbuilding Industry in Sunderland", unpublished M.A. Thesis 1969, p35.
- 171 Owen, A.N. (1969) op cit, p34.
- 172 Brown, R.K. et al () "Orientations to Work and Industrial Behaviour of Shipbuilding Workers on Tyneside", Final Report to the Social Science Research Council, p14.
- 173 Penn, R.D. "Socialization into Skilled Identities: An Analysis of a Neglected Phenomenon", Paper at Aston University "Organisation and Control of the Labour Process" conference 1986, pp13-14.
- 174 D. Richardson.
- 175 Marshall, A. "Principles of Economics", London 1922, p271 - quoted in: Sabel and Zeitlin (1985) op cit, p152.
- 176 Albert Baxter.
- 177 Braverman has attacked the notion of "average skill" in aggregate terms relating to a given society as a whole. In a sense he did not take this critique far enough: to the micro level of production process, where the constitution of skilled work empirically can be seen to be partly an emergent property of the ongoing creation of the workers themselves. This is essential if the particularity of the construction of skill is to be understood in the empirical context.
See: Braverman, H. "Labour and Monopoly Capital", New York, M.R.P. 1974, especially Ch.20.

- 178 Hopkins, C.H.G. op cit, p110.
- 179 D. Richardson.
- 180 Alan Bell, "Shipyard Tales".
- 181 Joe Robinson, Plater.
- 182 Alan Bell, "Shipyard Tales".
- 183 Joe Robinson.
- 184 Joe Robinson.
- 185 Lorenz, E.H. (1980) op cit, p2.
- 186 This in the context of increased piece work earnings and increased output, drawing attention to the importance of the interplay of both antagonism and co-operation in the social relationships at work, under capitalism. On this point see: Cressey, P. and MacInnes, J. "Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour", Capital and Class 1980 No. 11.
- 187 Thompson, P. "Crawling From The Wreckage: The Labour Process and the Politics of Production", Paper at Aston/UMIST "Conference on Organisation and Control of the Labour Process", 1986.
- 188 Reports of lectures on scientific management attended by shipbuilders were periodically given in the shipbuilding press. Thus for example the Shipbuilding and Shipping Record reported a luncheon given by Mr. Seaborn Rowntree on 29 May 1930 where shipbuilders and industrialists listened to Mr. Wallace Clark, "expert on scientific management":
"There was a measure of encouragement in Mr. Clark's dictum that in production as in war, those who take and hold the offensive are the most successful. As long as the industrialist fights a defensive battle, defeat is inevitable. His only chance of existence is to take the offensive for a change."
S.S.R. 1930, p675.
- 189 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, pp249-250.
- 190 Hallsworth, H.M. (1932) op cit, p250.
- 191 Having said this however the point should not be overstated as in one interview: Miss Lavinia Foster remembered working in her aunt's shop outside the main gate of Pickersgills

shipyard at Southwick, noting:

"He (Mr. Pickersgill) was good to his men, the men used to wait for him coming down the bank to see if there was any work and sometimes when he came in the shop he would say to Aunt Bell "Give the lads a fill of baccy" and leave the money, yes he was good to the men."

192 Corfe, I. (1973) op cit, pl05.

193 D. Richardson.

194 Albert Baxter.

195 Joe Robinson.

196 Pagnamenta, P. and Overy, R. (1984) op cit, pl34.

197 The Sunderland Echo, 6 June 1941, Obituary article on Sir John Priestman.

198 "Them were the days - or were they?: Life in Sunderland's East End in the 1930s", East End History Project/Community Arts Project, Sunderland 1985, pl6.

CHAPTER 3

The War and After

Part I

Harmony and Conflict

The revival in demand for merchant tonnage which began in the mid 1930s showed signs of faltering by 1938. Whilst output in this year exceeded a million tons, tonnage commenced only amounted to 500,000 tons.

"Consequently, 1939 opened with the possibility of being one of the worst years in the experience of the industry." (1)

On the Wear,

"At the beginning of 1939 there were only nine contracts in hand and only four of the yards - Doxfords, Laings, Thompsons and Crowns - were open. The position became desperate again." (2)

However, given the tension increasingly developing in Europe the Government was unwilling to allow a decline in the British merchant fleet and a substantial package of aid was announced: some £2.75m a year for five years to subsidise tramp shipping and £10m for loans to shipowners to encourage them to build new ships in British yards. The response to this aid was immediate. Within six weeks, nationally, orders were received for 144 ships with a total gross tonnage of over 700,000 tons. The Wear got its share of this demand.

"The shadow of Hitler was over Europe: the safety and existence of the nation was felt to be in danger, and there was an immediate response to the Government's announcement. Orders began to flow in to the shipyards. Six were placed with Wear builders in the first week; 28 in a fortnight; and 40 in less than three weeks. The orders continued to come.

There was a great trek back to work in the shipyards and engine shops." (3)

Whilst the above statement underlines the importance of patriotism in the face of the "shadow of Hitler" it was only after the material incentive from the Government that orders began to flow.

Similarly, amongst those that began the trek back to the yards any enthusiasm for a patriotic cause was blunted by the recognition of other realities. As one contemporary observer noted, the view of the workers was coloured by past experience.

"Aye", they said, "we're back - you're only wanted when there's a war on - after this lot we'll be back on the scrap heap again." (4)

In the initial phases of the war the belief that nothing really ever changes was reinforced by traditional recruiting methods, and the power of locality remained. One worker explained how his father's return to employment was facilitated:

"Me father was a Priestmans' man, Priestmans closed down altogether around the 1930s. With them closing down it didn't leave him an opening anywhere else. The result was he was off right until 1939, Pickersgill's got an order, as it happens the chap that got the Foreman's job - he knew him, he was the same age as him, he went to school with him, and of course that was the magic connection. So when he went down he got a start and after doing one ship he was now a Pickersgills man." (5)

Another feature which served to re-emphasise the traditional vulnerability of shipyard employment was the persistence, until the end of 1940, of pockets of unemployment within the industry. Two factors contributed to this. Firstly, despite the growing level of demand for ships the effect of the technical requirements of the shipbuilding cycle still made itself felt in

fluctuating demand for particular trades at different times. Secondly there was a substantial number of unemployed shipbuilding workers who, because of age and/or physical condition, could no longer be usefully employed in the industry. Nevertheless the existence of unemployed shipbuilding workers served, as we shall see at a later point, to introduce a retarding effect upon the willingness of the trades unions to accept widespread dilution. However,

"By November 1940 ... only 4,000 skilled and unskilled shipbuilding workers were unemployed and many of these proved unsuitable for re-employment in the industry. The reserve was now very nearly exhausted." (6)

The importance of issues of both continuity and change is vital in an understanding of the effect of the war upon the shipbuilding industry. Thus the national emergency did not instantly put an end to unemployment nor could it escape the limitations of both the physical and organisational status-quo which had been the legacy of the inter-war depressions. The relevance of this sedimentation of the past is particularly important if we are to avoid an analysis which errs to the extreme of either an account which is overly self-congratulatory, manufacturing a view of total harmony within the relationships at the point of production, or an account which over-emphasises the degree of inefficiency and conflict. Both of these simplifications project the concerns of the "present" onto the past, ironing out the complexities of the empirical situation.

An example of the first approach is available in the standard history of shipbuilding on the River Wear in which we are informed of "a remarkably fine performance which it is hardly possible to overpraise", and furthermore,

"During the whole of the period of the Second World War no major stoppage of any kind took place in any of the yards on the river. The amount of time lost by any trade dispute was quite negligible.

In this respect the shipbuilding industry at Sunderland maintained a proud record which was perhaps not excelled, or even equalled, by any other industry or district engaged in war work during those six years of unremitting effort on the industrial front as well as on the battlefronts." (7)

Such a view has been worked up into a kind of folklore in Sunderland, where memories of the wartime working are often subjective. Accounts are produced of how men and women used to practically live in the yards for days at a time, working "all the hours that God sent". These stories and the claims of extraordinary levels of production which usually accompany them have achieved almost the status of legend. Moreover, whilst these claims are usually framed in a local context, in that one yard produced more than another or the Wear produced more than the Tyne (8), they nevertheless usually include a general assessment of the state of the nation. A spirit of "togetherness" is often stressed, as is the pride in being able to rise to the "test" that was imposed during the war (9). These features of wartime experience often tend to overdominate accounts of the period leading to such statements as "there weren't any strikes during the war" (10).

Such statements seem irreconcilable with the general picture

of wartime industrial relations which can be taken from other sources. As Allen Hutt notes in his book on British Trade Unionism:

"In the first three months of war there were forty local and factory strikes; and in 1940, the number of days lost in industrial action disputes was a low record, the total number of disputes was the third highest for ten years - strikes were small and short, in fact, but there were a lot of them." (11)

That strikes did take place cannot be denied, even though after July 1940 they were declared illegal under order 1305. In relation specifically to shipbuilding Henry Pelling has noted that demarcation disputes continued throughout the period.

"The worst trouble was as usual in the shipbuilding industry and at times during the war it seriously interfered with the efficiency of the shipyards." (12)

Strikes and disputes were unofficial in nature, the trade union officialdom having given their assent to such things as the "suspension of trade practices act" of 1942 as well as generally exhorting the workers to give maximum output in order to execute a successful "people's war". However as the war drew on and victory became more probable the incidence of disputes rose, so that by 1944 working days lost through disputes was in excess of any year since 1932 (13).

These observations go some way towards countering the more extreme versions of accounts of wartime production dwelling upon a perfect internal harmony. Divisions still existed at the point of production. Thus for example, February 1945 saw 500 boiler makers at Vickers Armstrong Ltd. strike over the use of semi-

skilled labour to operate a new gas cutting machine, and in another dispute on the same issue at the Walker Naval Yard in December 1945, 125 boiler makers were fined for taking part in an illegal strike. In the latter case the dispute dragged on for some time in which there were several sympathy strikes of small duration; the issue was finally solved only when the management withdrew the new machinery (14).

Such evidence has led one recent writer to conclude that the wartime shipbuilding industry represented "the Fossilisation of Inefficiency" (15), in which the "real culprits" could be identified.

"... for all the weaknesses of dim, old-fashioned and often elderly managers, it was the unions and their members who continued to be the real culprits in losing potential production." (16)

This then is the opposite account to the one stressing harmony. It still takes harmony in the face of war as the norm, however it concentrates on the "inefficiencies" in production and condemns the agency of working people for not achieving that "norm". What has happened in this account is that the very valid data drawn upon to suggest that the situation was more complicated than the harmony myth suggests is taken to characterise a polar opposite position. Again to concentrate upon only the sharp points of the class conflict is to risk distortion. For example the widespread use of the same strikes of boilermakers, mentioned above, by several authors to demonstrate the general problems of the

industry must be treated warily. Thus the trouble with the flame planing machine on the Tyne is used by Pelling to support his conclusion that "the worst trouble as usual (was) in the shipbuilding industry" (17), by Pagnamenta and Overy (18) and by Barnett (19) himself. The use of this same example over and over again suggests that perhaps such disputes were not as widespread as these authors would have us believe, and given that this dispute took place in late 1944 to early 1945, when victory seemed to be only a matter of time and more generally when:

"Fear of the many consequences of the transition (from war to peace) is the predominant feature of industrial life from the autumn of 1944 until well into 1946, but it is hardly mentioned in the official history as an industrial relations problem." (20)

it seems unfair to characterise the abovementioned event as typical of the behaviour of workers in industry throughout the war.

Barnett's condemnation of the Unions, and to a lesser extent the management, in the industry does not focus solely upon strike activities but also upon "inefficiencies" in the craft division of labour. The tone of this criticism is evident in his evaluation of the Restoration of Pre-War Trade Practices Act.

"This act of Parliament, by which the state formally undertook to restore all that overmanning and those absurd inter-union demarcations throughout all industries which had already done so much to hasten British industrial decline, was the price extracted from the wartime national government in 1940 by the unions for their kind consent, often enough dishonoured in the event, to the removal of these brakes on productivity while the nation was actually fighting for survival." (21)

This, then, is the alternative view to that stressing harmony and achievement in the industry during the period. Its reference is selective and irons out the complex of interests on either side of the employment relationship, casting the issues in a monolithic concern with the "national interest" as projected from the era of "post-Thatcherian populism". In neglecting the historical legacy of shipbuilding this author seeks to render the behaviour of those connected with the industry as irrational, if not downright treacherous:

"The record of the Second World War thus demonstrates Britain's great traditional industries to have indeed suffered from the same kind of weaknesses that brought about the collapse of the French Army in 1940, from outdated technology and doctrine to poor leadership and to morale so low as sometimes to verge on the mutinous." (22)

Somewhere between these two partial views lies an account which is not merely a "middle way" but is one that can deal with the data drawn on by both sets of authors. Such an account does not iron out the contradictory tendencies existing in the industry during the period but recognises both short and longer term continuities and changes and as such can serve to unify concerns of both structure and action. It is to the development of such an account that we must now turn.

Part II

Continuity and Change

As mentioned above, the workers who returned to the shipyards to meet the initial demands stimulated by the onset of war were often confronted with an organisation which had changed little since the depressions of the inter-war period. Recruiting strategies were the same, the position and indeed the personage of the foremen were very often the same, and, as we have seen, the uneven demands on labour of the shipbuilding cycle remained the same. The physical structure and conditions of the yards had in some cases remained largely unchanged from the nineteenth century. As an electrician beginning his apprenticeship in 1939 graphically described:

"When I started in 1939 the yard had been closed, and Pickersgills ... was very basic, and it depended purely on physical effort and manpower to get anything done. The cranes were all in fixed positions. There was no roads whatsoever in the yard, it was simply all dirt and in the winter the mud was over the top of your boots. The bogies that they used in them days, with iron wheels just churned everything up ... The steel was all brought into the yard on horses and carts." (23)

Moreover the neglect and decay of some of the yards in the inter-war years meant that the return to production could only proceed slowly.

"I started in the April, and yet my father didn't start until around about the June. It had just opened out and of course it had to gradually build up, I mean we didn't launch our first ship until well into 1939, you know, in spite of the war." (24)

Not only does this speak of the objective limitations involved - the "gearing up" of production, but also, despite much naval activity during the period of the "phoney war", a lack of urgency. The point to understand is that the declaration of war did not completely obscure the material interests of individuals, the yards were still privately owned and in the business of seeking profit, the "free" labour market was still in existence and therefore, not unnaturally, workers driven away from the industry during the depression years had little desire to return, especially when higher wages could be had elsewhere:

" ... in the early years of the war wage rates were relatively unattractive and people were not anxious to return to or to enter an industry where present conditions were unattractive and future prospects poor ... Even the recruitment of Ministry of Labour and Admiralty staff with the knowledge of the industry was limited by the shortage of technical and managerial staff." (25)

Initially however it was not an absolute lack of labour supply that was the problem, especially on the North East coast, but rather how many of those registered as unemployed shipbuilding workers could be usefully reabsorbed into the industry, and indeed as late as July 1939 some 20% of the 176,000 insured workers in the industry were unemployed. These then were some of the contradictory pressures exerting themselves upon the industry at the beginning of the war. Technical barriers to the production of maximum output as a direct legacy of the inter-war years combined with persisting unemployment, even in the face of projected labour shortages, and owners who were largely unwilling

to expand capacity without firm guarantees of profitability. This was the context in which the Admiralty and the Ministry of Labour had to set about the task of encouraging the development of maximum output from the industry.

This task was tackled in several ways, with changes being sought not only in the supply of labour but also in the organisation and operation of the division of labour. The first point to emphasise is that the yards were not organised for the mass production of tonnage. The division of labour and physical plant were organised to meet the needs of a bespoke product in what was normally a widely fluctuating market. In such a situation a premium was put upon the craft skills of the workforce and the cost effectiveness and flexibility of variable capital. The experience of the normal market conditions led owners as well as workers to doubt the "efficiency", both in its technical and cost dimensions, of a highly capitalised division of labour and lesser skilled workforce, even if orientated towards mass production. It will perhaps be useful to indicate some of these issues with reference to the industry on the Wear.

Firstly the technical changes sought by the Admiralty were designed to increase output with a labour force characterised by less skill than would be normal in peace time. To this end they sought to increase the extent of welding and prefabrication, a move further encouraged by a severe shortage of riveters on the Clyde, but not on the North East Coast (26). The rate of

adoption of the technique of welding proceeded very differently in different districts and individual yards. The crucial factor here was the supply of riveters. Where that supply was plentiful the adoption of the newer technique was slow, suggesting that the impetus to the change was the "push" factor of too few riveters rather than any "pull" effect of the inherent attractiveness of welding and prefabrication in themselves.

On the Wear, where there was a relatively plentiful supply of riveters, welding generally, and hull welding in particular, had not proceeded to any great extent. Returns gathered by the Ministry of Labour compiled in June 1942 (Table 1) show that in yards on the Wear a greater percentage of the skilled workforce were involved directly in hull construction. Thus when we look at the percentage of platers expressed as a proportion of the total skilled workforce we find that the average for the main yards on the Tyne and Tees was 10.9% (1533 Platers out of a total skilled workforce of 13,988) and 13.32% (423 Platers out of a total skilled workforce of 3174) respectively, whereas on the Wear the average was some 19.05% (968 Platers out of a total skilled workforce of 5090). To some extent the nature of the products produced on the different rivers can explain some of this difference. Thus the intense specialisation upon tramp tonnage on the Wear ensured that a greater demand existed for labour producing the ship's shell rather than a heavy demand for outfitting labour as was the case where more internally complex

ships were built, such as the warships and passenger liners which formed part of the traditional output of the Tyne.

However when attention is directed towards the numbers and types of riveters on the three rivers it becomes obvious that the Wear and the Tees were using more traditional techniques than the Tyne. Thus whilst hand riveters only accounted for 2.95% of the total skilled workforce (410 hand riveters out of 13,988 skilled workers) on the Tyne, the figure was greater on the Wear at 6.81% (347 hand riveters out of 5090 skilled workers), on the Tees the percentage was higher still at 7.62% (242 hand riveters out of 3174 skilled workers). However these averages conceal wide variations between yards on the rivers, and when such variations are taken into account individual variations between rivers can be greater. Thus on the Tyne Hawthorn Leslie and Co. Ltd. employed the greatest proportion of hand riveters, 5.6% of the total skilled workforce, amounting to 3.4% of the total workforce. On the Tees the Furness Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. employed hand riveters to the extent of 9.7% of the skilled workforce, 5.4% of the total workforce. On the Wear at Bartrams Yard 18.6% of the skilled workforce were hand riveters, amounting to 10.7% of the total workforce.

Given this concentration of hand riveters it is little wonder that workers on the Wear at the time can remember graphically the scene where:

"Right through the war you went to a shipyard, you could hear the noise miles away - and you looked along the deck

and all you could see was men - not pneumatic, but the hand hammers kneeling, squads of men kneeling, hundreds of them along the deck, bang, bang, bang, bang all the time." (27)

The corollary of such dependence upon less technically advanced processes was a disinclination to invest in and adopt newer technology. Thus in the case of welding, the percentage of welders as a proportion of the skilled workforce amounted to 5.22% (730 Welders out of a total of 13,988 skilled workers) and 5.79% (184 Welders out of a total of 3174 skilled workers) on the Tyne and Tees respectively, whilst on the Wear it was only 3.55% (181 Welders out of a total of 5090 skilled workers). Again the difference between individual yards on the three rivers with the highest proportion of Welders is considerable. On the Tyne and Tees Welders made up 8.5% and 9.3% of the skilled workforce at Swan Hunters Neptune yard and the yard of the Stockton Construction Co.. On the Wear at J.L. Thompsons Yard 5.4% of the skilled workforce were Welders.

With the inherent possibilities of the technique of welding clearly being insufficient an incentive for its widespread adoption, certainly on the Wear at least, the Admiralty attempted to push employers into increasing their welding capability. Thus a letter from the Admiralty of 13 November 1942 to J. Ramsey Gebbie, managing Director of Doxfords Yard, raised the issue of welding:

"I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to direct your attention to the instruction of the Director of Merchant Shipbuilding that by the end of March 1943, "all butts throughout the ship and all seams of tank top plating"

must as a minimum be all welded as normal practice thereafter, it is thus intended by concentration of your riveting labour force on other parts of the ship to speed up the output of merchant ships." (28)

In June 1942 Doxfords had the third highest concentration of welders, in their yard, on the River Wear. Nevertheless Gebbie's reply to the Secretary of the Admiralty of 16 November 1942 made it clear that these rather modest minimum requirements were unlikely to be met:

"Sir,

We are in receipt of your letter of the 13th ... with regard to Electric Welding and the training of Welding labour.

We are afraid we shall not be able to carry out the minimum recommendations of the Director of Merchant Ship-building by the date given, as we do not see any prospect of increasing our welding facilities sufficiently by that time. We are however preparing a scheme to increase our welding facilities, and we expect to have no difficulty in training all additional Welders necessary in our own yard." (29)

An important point to note about the Admiralty's approach is that it is orientated towards using welding as a method of freeing riveters to concentrate their efforts and thereby raise output. Welding is thus seen to be useful in as much as it is a partial solution to the perceived labour supply problem rather than for the technical efficacy of the process itself. In the empirical situation then the cost and technical efficiency of any new process is always to be related to labour supply and the conditions of the wider market demand. The importance of labour supply in relation to welding was pointed to by a worker from Pickersgills who remembered that in 1939:

"... there was three small welding machines, that was the total number that they had in the yard. Then the Admiralty allocated, about 1943, a certain amount of money and we jumped up to twelve six operators, 72 plants. They realised they had to get the welders (welding machines) in because you only had three, and you had more men trained for (them)." (30)

However overall the relatively good supply of riveters on the Wear ensured that the increased use of welding proceeded rather slowly. This cannot be reduced solely to conservative management and the "retarding effect" of the trades unions, as Barnett would have it. But rather it owes much to the constraints and continuing resource endowment of the industry in its empirical setting which, unlike some of the American yards, predated the onset of war. This point was well grasped by Smith and Holden when speaking of the Wear in wartime:

"Welding had been making steady progress as a new method of construction, but it was in nothing like general use. Riveting remained the principal method of putting a ship together, and it would have been worse than useless to have given up riveting and wasted the services of many thousands of skilled riveters while at the same time having to train them, or other men, as welders." (31)

If the exhortation to introduce elements of the welding process owed much to labour supply issues as a feature of both the continuity and change as between the pre-war and wartime situations, so too were the larger capital developments initiated during this time. In explaining the course of developments here, explanations based on employer conservatism explain little. Rather, what is important is the grounds for such conservatism involving both absolute objective limitations and perceptions of

the limitations of such developments in both the short and long terms, and particularly insofar as these relate to the expected disjunction between wartime and peacetime demand in terms of both type and quantity of product required.

An example of the issues involved can be seen with reference to the modernisation, including the provision of a new berth, at Bartrams Yard. Negotiations began between the yard's owners and the Admiralty during the summer of 1942 with various possibilities being suggested and costed, but Admiralty approval not being secured until 10 October 1943. One problem was the amount of money that the employers were prepared to invest, with several letters to the Admiralty in the course of the year reaffirming their original estimation that they could afford to spend no more than £17,000 on modernisation. Even to raise this amount they had to secure a loan of £15,000 from Lloyds Bank. The grounds on which Lt.Col. R.A. Bartram attempted to "sell" the idea of the loan to the Manager of Lloyds Bank are interesting:

" ... You will no doubt realise that the reason for our preference for this scheme is that it is first of all essential for us to keep abreast of modern shipbuilding improvements in practice, and quite apart from a wartime angle, which of course is the Admiralty's concern. From the point of view of meeting post-war competition, and possible difficulties in connection with the future supply of riveters, it is essential that we should be in a position to tackle (a) large scale welding and (b) the erection of pre-fabricated material, and this involves larger lifting facilities. The opportunity given to us now, of putting this work in hand with the advantage of a 60% grant from the Admiralty, as against having to meet 100% of the cost after the war, is of course obvious." (32)

Not only is the overt reference to a possible shortage of riveters worthy of note, but also the advantage of keeping abreast of modern shipbuilding improvements in practice did not apparently encourage the owners to attempt to raise more than £17,000. The reason for this lies firstly in the poor financial condition of the yard, the overdraft on working capital of £25,000 was fully extended. Therefore the Bank Manager required written evidence of future Admiralty orders to the yard, whereupon he agreed to advance the sum of £15,000 on the condition that a new account was created in order to deal with the money earmarked for the modernisation program. Secondly at that time it was by no means as clear as the letter to the Bank Manager suggested that pre-fabricated construction would be the cost efficient way to build ships after the war. As late as 1947 Mr. R.C. Thompson, a leading member of the Wear Shipbuilders Association and Managing Director of Thompsons Yard, proclaimed pre-fabricated construction an expensive method of building ships. Similarly a worker remembered the attitude of Mr. Pickersgill to the method of pre-fabrication by which the American "liberty ships" were built:

"He said about what was happening in America, he said, "It will never come here." He says "They'll never pre-fabricate here." That's what he thought at the time." (33)

Clearly the owners of other yards on the Wear had great doubts about the commercial viability of pre-fabricated construction in peacetime; we will return to this issue at a

later point. As Bartrams were only prepared to contribute £17,000 towards modernisation, considerable negotiation went on with the Admiralty before they sent a letter to the yard on 20 October 1943 approving a modernisation scheme costed at £163,151 (34). The arrangement was that the Admiralty agreed to pay 100% of the cost for certain items, most notably a new berth and shed, which were then to be leased to Bartrams. The final settlement of account was to be decided by assessment after the war. One other condition was that the Admiralty should hold legal entitlement to the ground upon which these developments were built. The lease of the land from Sunderland Corporation was duly transformed from Bartams to the Admiralty. The negotiations involved in this modernisation went on for over a year, not due to the conservatism of the employer or the retarding effect of the unions, but rather because the firm and the Admiralty were at pains to agree the right financial package; private ownership and the criteria of profit were not to be subordinated to the demands of war.

Again it must be emphasised that the leading edge of technology is not necessarily the best focus in order to understand the general nature of any particular division of labour. In the case of hull welding and pre-fabrication it was by no means obvious at the time of the Second World War that, when considered from the point of view of both technical and cost efficiency, such methods were superior to more traditional

processes. Not only were there doubts about the techniques as construction processes, but there was also concern about the product they produced.

Thus an all welded hull was thought not to be as strong as a riveted one. Experience of the American built "liberty" ships did little to change this view as an ex-Plater, who had done repair work on several of these ships, noted:

"... They made it across the Atlantic but that was about all. Because of brittle fractures we had to burn sections down the hull and put riveted plates in to allow some flexing to take place." (35)

In a similar connection, F.A. Fox noted that:

"Between 1942 and 1952, about 250 welded ships suffered one or more brittle fractures of such severity that they were lost or in a dangerous condition, and 1,200 more suffered small brittle cracks dangerous but not disabling." (36)

That the all welded hull was to prove viable in the future owed much to improvements in welding equipment, and the British development of the coated electrode should mentioned in this connection. But whatever the potentialities of such new developments, at the point of production things rarely conveyed the impression of unproblematic progress:

"There was problems with it. I remember a problem with Admiralty work with the armour plating they were trying to weld. They didn't have the right rods. The parts that they were welding over were just literally dropping off." (37)

That technical progress was made during the war cannot be denied. Not only were production techniques developed but also the product, the ships themselves were subject to more concentrated development, and there was a substantial increase in

top speeds of vessels. However whilst there were other technical developments during this period, as a general conclusion upon the rate and nature of technical change the Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer in 1945 pronounced these cautious words:

"Such has been the emphasis on wartime progress in plant, and methods of construction that there is, perhaps, too great an expectation of "things to come" by many outside the industry itself. What is perhaps overlooked is that such developments have, in some instances, been undertaken with less regard for cost than performance, and with a number of labour customs modified or suspended as a wartime measure."
(38)

The impetus to technical change initiated by the Admiralty was then only one strand in a wider attempt to raise the absolute output of the industry, in the context of labour shortage. As far as changes in labour practices themselves were concerned the two most important attempts at change were in relation to dilution and interchangeability between crafts. In the case of the former there was a direct relationship to some of the technical changes occurring: the substitution of welding for riveting, with consequently shorter training periods, has already been mentioned in this connection.

However, given the experiences of the inter-war period, the Unions were anxious to ensure that such changes were initiated only where genuine labour shortages existed. The maintenance of demarcation boundaries was suggested by Barnett to be one of the mechanisms by which workers practised the

"... skilled and dedicated avoidance of tiring activity."
(39)

Such a glib characterisation is hardly worthy of serious research; however it is true that considerable effort had to be expended in order to secure agreements upon interchangeability between the unions and the S.E.F.. Moreover such agreements were often limited in scope and could be rather bureaucratic in their (theoretical) operation. A memorandum by the Ministry of Labour in October 1943 dealing with interchangeability suggested that it was:

"... only permissible in existing circumstances in so far as it is expressly provided for in agreements which have been reached between the shipbuilding Employers' Federation and certain of the principal shipbuilding unions ... This method, however, is cumbersome and it is arguable that if the skilled labour force in each shipyard is to be kept continuously employed to the best advantage, a much more flexible method should be adopted whereby craftsmen could, where necessary, be transferred to skilled work in another craft where they are more urgently required even though it be only for a short period of a few hours at a time." (40)

Although it is possible to sustain a view which shows the unions as the main force retarding more flexible interchangeability between trades with reference to detailed National agreements, at the local level things were often more complex. Thus on the Wear in October 1939:

"(an) agreement was signed between the Wear Shipbuilders' Association and the Boilermakers', Shipwrights' and Joiners' Societies, by which it was agreed that for the period of the war there would be no stoppage of work through demarcation difficulties. The unions also agreed that where necessary labour should be interchangeable in different trades so as to avoid delays in production through acute shortage of labour in any particular trade." (41)

This agreement also formed the basis for the setting up of a joint committee of employers and union representatives, known as

the Labour Supply Committee. It was at a meeting of this committee on 9 July 1940 that the issue of interchangeability was again raised by Mr. W.L. Barker, the Wear district secretary of the C.S.E.U., and as the W.S.A. minutes recorded:

"It was also suggested from the men's side of the committee that greater use could be made by firms in some cases, of the local agreement made in October last year providing for interchangeability between members of the Boilermakers, Shipwrights and Joiners Societies, and it was agreed that firms should be reminded of the facilities provided by the Agreement and encouraged to make use of them where necessary." (42)

Here, then, it is the unions who raised the issue and actually advocated the greater use of interchangeability.

However of more importance than interchangeability as the war progressed and labour shortages became acute was the issue of dilution. Here again the experience of the past ensured that both sides of the employment relationship moved with initial caution in this direction. For the Ministry of Labour this could be frustrating, as one official put it:

"Whenever dilution is raised we seem to be brought up short against a ghostly army of unemployed boilermakers." (43)

Again it must be stressed that it was not solely the unions that frustrated early attempts to dilute the workforce, for:

"Nor was there much support from the shipbuilding firms, each of which was more interested in preserving its own skilled labour force at maximum strength than in providing surplus labour to be transferred to its rivals, and all of which (like the Admiralty itself) preferred to put up with existing practices rather than risk trouble with the unions." (44)

The reticence of the employers and the Admiralty was not based solely on fear of the unions, but was also predicated upon their belief in the efficiency of the skilled worker and the craft division of labour. This can be evidenced with reference to a correspondence which took place in 1942, on the interpretation of productivity figures, between the Managing Director of Doxfords Yard and the Admiralty. The publication of productivity figures appeared to show that output per man was lower at Doxfords Yard than other yards on the Wear. Stung into action by this, J. Ramsey Gebbie attempted to put forward a reason why this should be so. Without knowing the ratios of skilled to unskilled workers in other yards he suggested that the explanation of the low output per man perhaps was to be found in this ratio, and therefore asked the Admiralty if they could confirm this? Their reply of 8 May 1942 seemed indeed to support Gebbie's hypothesis:

" ... it is true that your total of semi-skilled and unskilled labour represents a larger proportion of the tradesmen than is the average condition throughout the yards. This may have the effect of reducing your average output per man somewhat, but it is because of this type of feature that we are anxious to stress that the tests taken out here are a first diagnosis. Whilst you may suffer to some extent from this comparative condition of a high proportion in the semi-skilled and unskilled classes, I think this is a matter upon which you are entitled to receive congratulations at the present time.

The logical ultimate result of a drive to increase output by taking on more men - recognising that the only men likely to become available will be unskilled, would be a falling off in output per man, but what we are after in the long run is tonnage, and it is that that is important." (45)

That this "logical ultimate result" of falling output per man should be accepted perhaps bears witness to the unsuitability

(and given other wartime constraints the near impossibility) of substituting on any large scale capital for labour. An added dimension to the debate over dilution was the move taken at first hesitantly to introduce women into the industry. This development is worth studying in detail, not only for the questions it raised in terms of the operation of the division of labour, but also because of the light it can shed upon issues of social relations at work as well as producing valuable insights into the nature of the occupational community.

Part III

The Case of Women Workers (46)

In his book published in 1894 entitled "Sunderland Notables" William Brokie noted that s shipowner named John White was:

" ... a wonderful man for looking after others, for their benefit as well as his own ... Having a number of workmen in his employment in various capacities, he took a pleasure and made it a practice to visit them all at their homes at least once a year, to see if their wives kept everything clean and nice." (47)

The perception of women as wives and homemakers was a view that lived on in traditional shipbuilding centres. So much so that at the beginning of the Second World War there seemed to be a "conspiracy" between the owners and the working men to bar the entry of women from the shipyards. Thus:

" ... in September 1939, the shipbuilders put on record the view, which was said to represent the consensus of opinion at the end of the First World War, that women could only be employed usefully in the yards in so far as they could be segregated within four walls and provided with a separate entrance. It would serve no useful purpose to employ them in open shops or in ships for, apart from their unsuitability for the work, any increased output obtained would be more than offset by loss of output from the men already employed." (48)

Similarly the unions were opposed to the widespread employment of women in the yards. This position was maintained as late as April 1940 when, in a meeting of the Admiralty on the 30th of that month,

" ... various suggestions were put forward including proposals to speed up the design and construction methods of shipbuilding. But while they were ready to consider and implement many suggestions, the unions were opposed to the greater use of women. They felt it was "a drastic departure from custom and practice"." (49)

However as the demands on labour power grew these positions were considerably modified; in the case of the unions only a month after their initial opposition was voiced to the Admiralty they accepted, in conference, the extension of women's employment in the yards, "subject to adequate safeguards being inserted".

This demonstrates an important disjunction between management and unions underlying their initial opposition to the extension of the employment of women. The management position as outlined in "The Shipbuilding and Shipping Record" focuses upon the supposed physical limitations of women.

"In the ordinary way there seems to be little scope for women labour in the shipyard ... It is true that the introduction of new tools and revised methods have reduced the amount of heavy manual labour, but nevertheless, shipbuilding is a heavy industry. It has been suggested that rather than employing women in the shipyards men engaged in lighter industries might be transferred to shipbuilding and their places taken by women." (50)

Here then the objection is primarily based upon a stereotypical view of women as the "weaker sex".

In the case of the unions, whilst they may have shared some of the reservations of management such gender based considerations were not the prime reasons for opposition to extending women's employment in the yards. Rather the issue of women workers was seen as one particular form of dilution and therefore was seen as a threat to the existing workforce. As an unpublished study of labour in the wartime shipbuilding industry, written for the Cabinet Office Historical Section, put it:

"... the expansion of the labour force was primarily at the discretion of the employers, some of whom were reluctant, partly because of the opposition of the unions, to dilute their labour force ... it is true to say that the yards were never quite as full as they would have been if all employers had been prepared to make the best use of what labour was available, including women, and the unions to agree fully to dilution." (51)

The importance of the differing concerns underlying the hesitance of management and unions to the employment of women is further demonstrated once such employment was accepted. The position for the unions was particularly difficult, for there were two contradictory concerns uppermost. Firstly, as we have seen, the unions were wary in case the employment of dilutee labour was used to attempt to undermine the position of the "skilled" worker. In order to avoid this situation the tendency was for the unions at local level to agree with management to a number of exceptions which women could not perform. However on the other hand insofar as women did perform skilled work the unions had to try and ensure that they were not employed as cheap labour, and were in principle paid the going rate for the job. The latter position prevailed in national negotiations between the unions and employers, with the unions putting forward the principle of "equal pay for equal work". The question was how should this principle be evaluated?

"On the face of it this sounds fair enough, and we hear that in principle no great objection may be made to it, so long as it is clearly understood that the work done by a woman is the same, both in quantity and quality, and is performed under the same conditions as that done by men. Indeed, the unions claim seems to be that it should apply to work which women can do equally well with men - whether it be skilled,

semi-skilled or unskilled - and that they should undertake the whole duty without additional assistance. The employers have pointed out, however, that as a rule, women would be unable to carry out the whole duty of the men, and a suggestion has been made that at first, at any rate, there should be a probationary period for new-comers at a lower wage, and that the full wage should only commence when the woman is able to undertake the full duties." (52)

The eventual agreement between the S.E.F. and the C.S.E.U. on 17 July 1941 enshrined the principle of equal pay for equal work but also specified a probationary period of 32 weeks before a woman over 21 years could be paid the "skilled" rate. The agreement between the S.E.F. and the C.S.E.U. was followed by agreements, all very similar in content, between individual unions and the S.E.F.. Thus for example the agreement between the S.E.F. and the National Painters Society reaffirmed the position in the earlier agreement:

"Women employed on work normally done by skilled painters shall be paid rates of wages in accordance with the agreement between the Shipbuilding Employers Federation and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions of 17 July 1941." (53)

However the statement of principle on wages at a national level cannot be seen as a guide to what happened at the local level, for the preceding point in the above agreement stated that:

"Arrangements for changes of practice shall be made between firms and their workpeople in consultation with the local Association of the Employers and local Officials of the Society." (54)

When one focuses on the local level it becomes apparent that the agreements between management and unions involved more complex

concerns than were enshrined in the reasonable demand of equal pay for equal work. On the Wear the final agreement between the W.S.A. and the Painters Society of February 1943 stated the position that women shall do all work that skilled painters do with the exception of:

" ... jobs of a dangerous nature such as masts and jobs on high staging ... In crews and officers quarters women do only the undercoats. Where there is two undercoats and one enamel, women do the first undercoat only; where there are three undercoats and one enamel, women do the first two undercoats only." (55)

The concern to include exceptions from the normal range of a given skilled occupation was accepted by the workforce as an extra guarantee that dilutee labour could not be used as a comprehensive substitute for skilled labour. The need for all available guarantees was clearly perceived by Ernest Bevin in a letter to the Minister of Production on 15 August 1942:

"I think ... it is quite visionary to think that any prejudice against dilution will be removed by further discussions between both sides of the industry. Prejudice against dilution exists, in my opinion, because the men remember what happened to them after the last war and do not trust the employers or the Government to prevent the same thing occurring after this one." (56)

The point to grasp however is that once the unions were prepared to accept, and indeed require, limitations and exceptions on the range of the processes that women could undertake within a given occupation, the objective basis upon which equal pay for equal work could be claimed no longer existed. An example of this situation was recorded in the minutes of the Tyne Shipbuilders Association on 13 February 1945.

In this case a claim made by the Boilermakers Society was put forward demanding that the adult male welders time rate plus bonus should be paid to all female welders over 21 years of age who had served the 32 weeks probationary period. The employers replied that such women welders were not skilled as they were restricted primarily to "tack welding". The union argued that this restriction represented the formally agreed situation between the T.S.A. and themselves, that was, that women should do the tacking in order to free men for other work. Whereupon the employers offered to pay the time rate for individual women judged "efficient" by a foreman. The unions did not accept this, arguing that women should be paid the full time rate unless judged "not capable", the employers rejected this and a conclusion of "failure to agree" was recorded (57).

The importance of this "background" is to be seen in relation to the prominence given to the wages issue in other accounts of women workers in the Second World War, and the suggestion that such wage differentials were in themselves the main buttress of gender division in industry (58). What is being argued here is that from the point of view of the unions the main problematic was that of ensuring that in the longer term dilutee labour could not be substituted for skilled workers. This predominant concern became enshrined in local agreements on work procedures which effectively undermined the potential for the realisation of the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Inevitably such a situation helped to ensure the maintenance of inequalities in levels of earning. Thus figures produced by the Ministry of Labour in July 1943 showed average earnings per hour in shipbuilding were 30.5 pence for men, 11.4 pence for boys, and 18.1 pence for women (59).

For the employers the local agreements provided loopholes through which wages lower than the full skilled rate could be paid. For the unions this presented problems, but not of such great magnitude that they were willing to risk the sanctity of the technical and social status of the craftsmen. Where unions represented unskilled women workers their advocacy of equal pay for equal work was often stronger, as in the case of unskilled women workers at Barrow Naval construction Works, who were successfully represented by the A.E.U. at a national arbitration tribunal in 1944 (60).

The point is then that the appearance of conspiracy between management and workforce against women in order to "preserve patriarchal authority" was nevertheless shaped by the enduring conflict between capital and labour in the industry which predated the expansion in the numbers of women employed. It is the dimensions of this conflict which operated in an ironic way to give the appearance that both capital and labour were united in attempting to exclude women from the industry.

It was against this background then that women were to enter the shipyards in the north east. Their introduction was a slower

affair in this region than in others with more acute labour shortages, and similarly between the rivers in the region they were introduced later and in lower numbers on the Wear than on the Tyne. Moreover in individual yards employers often had to be constantly badgered by the Admiralty to initiate the recruitment of women. Thus in the case of Doxfords several letters passed between Amos Ayre for the Admiralty and J. Ramsey Gebbie regarding the employment of women before Gebbie acted, and in a letter to Ayre on 22 July 1942 somewhat vehemently stated:

"I have provided accommodation for about 7% employment of women and ... we are starting to employ them next Monday."
(61)

The reservations of the employers were slowly abandoned, being based largely upon unreal expectations as regards the disruptive effect and sexist dogma which led them to believe they would not get a good return for their outlay in wages. The condescending tone remained however:

"... The modest figures of a year ago have doubtless grown appreciably, for the adaptability of women in industries previously thought to be beyond their physical capacity, and indeed, unsuited to their mental powers, has been among the striking discoveries of the war period." (62)

For the unions the worry over dilutee labour remained, but they realised that the best way to deal with the "threat" was to "represent" the women concerned and thereby ensure that they could not be used by the employers as a wedge of dilutee labour to be driven between the existing craft division of labour. If these represent the formal positions of capital and labour, the

empirical situation in any locality was often less clearly structured. The relationships between men and women workers inside the yards were often less subject to reservations based on sexist dogma or suspicion over potential functionality for management schemes. Rather these relationships were at once both personal and structural, the meeting of persons but in the context of both the workplace and the community, involving structured power inequalities stemming from both the employment relationship, gender division, and more "localised" social statuses. In order to grasp the subtlety of these experiences we need to turn to the accounts produced by the women workers and listen to them speaking for themselves.

Perhaps one of the most important differences between the employment of men and women in the war-time munitions industry and the shipyards was that in the latter industry the vast majority of women workers were recruited from the local community. The effects that living in a close knit occupational community had on social relationships within the workplace are hard to overemphasise, and to a large extent the moral order of the community spilled over into the workplace. This could be important not only for the regulation of gender boundaries within the yards, but also could be crucial in explaining why work was "sought" within the shipyard in the first place. For some women it was the case that relatives objected to the possibility of their going away, as a sign-writer at Greenwells Dock explained:

"My father wouldn't let us join up, he says "you're too little to join up", and he says "I'll get you a job where you'll not be called up", and this was how I came to get in." (63)

For others the decision to go into the shipyards was made on different grounds:

"Me father's mate, Charlie Ruskin, I used to say to him, "Ye I would love to be working in Doxfords - I would love it." - "No no, it is no place for you, tis no place for you." I thought God, there is a there place for me, and that's why I went ... and I thought I only want to work down Doxfords ... it was great, aye I loved it." (64)

For some women, especially where a husband was in the forces, the incentive was definitely the wage:

" ... for more money ... well I mean at that time when you only had your army pay, I was sort of glad of the wages to help with the bairns, 'cos - I mean, army pay you only got £2 odd a week you know." (65)

Whatever the initial reason for seeking such employment there were several channels through which women joined the shipyard. The importance of family ties has already been evidenced in the above quotations: fathers, brothers, uncles and in the later years of the war even mothers could "speak" for women wishing to enter the yards:

"You had to, more or less, have somebody to speak for you to get in, you know, which I thought was quite good, because of course my Dad ... was there for years and years." (66)

As time went on and the demands on labour became greater the more formal channels of local labour exchanges were used for recruitment.

"I went from the labour exchange because at the time you had to work - you had no family, so you had to work. So that is how I came to be in the shipyards ... I was sent as a

trainee electrician, a dilutee - a dilutee that's what they were called." (67)

The Ministry of Labour envisaged that employers would have to initiate changes in the way that some jobs were performed in order to realise the full benefit that the employment of women could bring. As a pamphlet published in 1942 suggested under the heading of "Jobs Needing Modification":

"Changes may be necessary in the case of heavy jobs where the physical effort required may be reduced by providing lighter equipment or lifting tackle etc.. In some cases two women may be substituted for one man, or more usually three women for two men. Certain jobs can be broken down so that the heavy skilled work is done by men and the finishing by women. In other cases men need give only temporary assistance or exercise general supervision. Subject to proper safeguards women have tackled really heavy work, especially in loading vehicles, trucks and machines." (68)

As we have seen the concerns which historically had dominated the division of labour in the industry made it unlikely that jobs would be "broken down" to facilitate the "efficient" employment of women. Indeed, as noted earlier, where such breakdowns were evident they were far more likely to be aimed at limiting the scope of dilutee labour rather than attempting to ease the application of female labour. What then were the jobs that women were allocated and how did they go about them?

It is perhaps useful to make a distinction between the women who attended a period of training in order to undertake "skilled work" as a dilutee and the far larger group who were to undertake unskilled work. It is important to note that such a division, whilst following naturally from the existing division of labour,

is often overlooked as an aspect of women's work in the yards. For women who were to undertake skilled work there were two avenues through which training could be undertaken, government training centres and centres inside the yards.

In relation to the Government training centres the general issue of women was confronted in the early years of the war. The official position was that there was to be no difference between the training of men and women. However as a letter from the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour to Divisional Controllers in December 1940 made clear, such an official position was not necessarily representative of the actual position:

"As the Deputy Secretary said, we are making no difference between the courses for men and women, which means that in all cases, it will be long term training ... I am not anxious to interpret this too strictly ... if a useful job can be done by training women in aero detail fitting, say, for 8 or 10 weeks at a minimum, I think we should be prepared to do it." (Letter dated 18 December 1940 held in P.R.O. ref: LAB 18/66) (69)

It is clear then that the official view prepared to be flexible in the case of women trainees. Thus a later letter from the same source indicated the willingness of the training centre to meet the demands of employers with respect to women trainees:

"There will be no general distinction between the training given to women and that given to men. The considerations ... dealt with (under) our general training policy will, however, apply here as elsewhere. Thus if in any area there is a demand for the training of women to be modified in certain respects in view of the work which they will be put to when placed, which does not apply to men, we should of course be prepared to introduce such modifications in the case of women." (16 January 1941: P.R.O. LAB 18.66) (70)

From the evidence gained in the oral histories it would seem that there was not such a close relationship between individual firms and the general training centres, indeed some women were directed to the training centres and trained in a skill unaware of where that skill would be practised. In this situation women often did receive a "comprehensive training".

"I went over to Wallsend ... that morning there must have been about 300 young girls and men, and a number of elderly people in a line and they counted "1, 2, 3 - you're a joiner; 1, 2, 3 - you're a fitter; 1, 2, 3 -" and I was a welder. It was as simple as that ... We learnt how to braze and how to weld zinc, ordinary welding, copper brazing, aluminium, you know - the whole range of everything that covered the whole lot." (71)

As with most forms of training there was a difference between theory and practice:

" ... I was rather amused about some of the early days; they would tell you: "now you have to be able to weld to a thousandth of an inch", which meant, good heavens, that you just got on with it, and did the best you could. I wasn't willing to try to work that out." (72)

On passing a series of practical tests the dilutee was then allocated to a particular firm. In some cases women who sought employment at a particular firm were then sent to the training centre at Wallsend. For women from the Wear the journey to and from Wallsend was often remembered as more difficult than the training itself, especially as shift work was operated:

"It was just getting there and coming back - that was the worst bit ... I forget what time you started - about 10 o'clock and you finished at 6 o'clock in the morning." (73)

As far as the course of training itself was concerned, much could depend upon the availability of instructors, as a welder

from Swan Hunters remembered:

"So we went to Wallsend training centre - we had a hilarious time there - it was great ... it was laughable actually because we started off with bench fitting you see. Well I got on like a house on fire. But they said the instructor was leaving so would we go into the welding thing. So I said "oh well I don't know that ... we'll try it."" (74)

Once the employment of women became a more routine occurrence individual yards started to do their own training. In these cases there was less standardisation than at the government training centres. Some women were given a formal training period:

"I was sent as a trainee electrician, a dilutee that's what they were called. And six weeks training in the shop first, and then down onto the ship." (75)

Similarly,

"I was the first caulker burner for the shipyard you see. So they started me off as an apprentice - they showed me how to light my cutter, and put the gauges right, you know, for the oxygen and that. And he showed me for about six weeks and I was on burning scrap. And then after six weeks he says, "Oh, you've got to go on a ship at the gut"." (76)

In other instances a less formal training was deemed sufficient, as in a case at Palmers where a cleaner who had worked in the Plumbers shop since 1939 was deemed to have learned enough to do "skilled work":

"Mr. Wright, me Foreman, asked us if I would like to ... he says "they're bringing a ship in, ~~mind~~ you it's badly damaged - the "Kelly"." He says, would you like to go on it, you've learned a lot of plumbing. I says "who's on it?" He says "Lord Louis Mountbatten". I says "who is he?" and he says "well he's something to do with the royalty." ... I was a plumber!" (77)

On other occasions also women picked up skills without a formal

training period. A rigger at Doxfords was taught splicing at home by her mother who worked at the yard, prior to her own entry into the workforce.

"Only me mother showed us. So I just went down there, and just walked in, you know, and started. I did the splicing with me mother." (78)

Having been "trained" for skilled work or just launched into unskilled work the women started working in what for many was a new working environment. For those practising "skills" many were, due to local agreements, restricted to only partial operations such as tack welding. However there were exceptions to this which could be the source of some conflict between individual skilled men and women.

"Well there was this one particular fellow ... I don't want to sound big headed, but I was rather proficient at my job, and I remember this fellow coming out, and I was going towards my work, and it was a rudder stem ... And this fellow came over and he says, "that isn't your job, that's mine". I said "oh no, I've been told to do it." "I tell you that is mine - there's no woman ever allowed to do that sort of thing." So I just looked, and I thought oh well honey you're 6'2", or whatever, and I'm not going to argue, so I merely walked over to our foreman and I said "Would you tell me what I have to do." And he said "Yes, that's your job." So I said, "Well you tell this gentleman that it is my job - that I'm capable of doing it, and just let him know this" you see. And he was furious - he was furious ... he was the only one that really ever quibbled." (79)

The role of the foreman was clearly of great importance in interpreting the actual operation of local agreements. Moreover for the women the foreman could be as important an authority as for the men. To fall foul of a foreman and incur his wrath could have serious results. As one fitter from North Eastern Marine

recalled:

"One day I actually fell out with the gaffer. So he said "right - you get no help, you set the job up yourself", took me half a day. The gaffer wasn't very nice to me you see. He used some nasty terms. I reported him to the Lady Supervisor in the "ladies shop". And of course she went up to the offices. And, of course, he stopped the men helping me to set a job up. And I mean the machine ... was a massive thing. And I had to stand on it with my two feet, and hold the top, and jump like that ... to shift it." (80)

In most other cases however the women could call upon their male colleagues for help or advice. Thus a lathe operator from Greenwells dock noted that:

"You sometimes found it a bit beyond you at times, you know doing the difficult jobs and that, on the lathes, but however I managed. And somebody would help, yes they would always help you." (81)

Most importantly such help from the male workforce could provide a guide to the actual standard of work that was required, rather than the theoretical standards given in training. Thus a burner was questioned as to whether she had to be very precise about her work:

"No ... well I did at first. I thought all the work had to be perfect until one of the caulkers came along - he says "oh don't be fussy - we do that" he says, "don't be fussy". Of course I thought everything had to be perfect with being on a ship." (82)

Learning acceptable standards of work and "short cuts" which can be taken to finish a job are, of course, part of the mysteries of craft that apprentices learn in their time spent with journeymen. For the dilutees such elements of the job had to be learnt quickly, and in most cases relied upon the goodwill of the

skilled men in the yard. As one electrician remembered:

"I was given a partner to work with. He was a qualified electrician, we worked on the "Diadem" - wiring junction boxes ... He showed me what to do - he kept me right all the time." (83)

If the "tricks of the trade" had to be learnt quickly, so too did the other "rules" governing the social division of labour in the yards. In this respect the women faced similar issues as did men who were new to the yards. As one woman commented in relation to working at North Eastern Marine,

"... when I first went in they asked me what religion I was. And, of course, I said "Church of England". He said, "well don't open your mouth in here 'cos they are all Catholics". And that was the way I was taken in." (84)

Some women interviewed appeared to have accepted unreservedly the perception of the skill hierarchy between trades from the point of view of "their" trade. Most importantly this represents itself as an enthusiastic advocacy of the skill content of their trade coupled with a denigration of others. In this situation gender identity was often^{seen} as secondary. For example in the estimation of one sheetmetal worker from Swan Hunters,

"Yes, there was no skill with women welders." (85)

Similarly a splicer from Doxfords was of the opinion that her work was very highly skilled whereas other women working in the yard:

"... couldn't do it, so they did the little jobs, like stick a bit of paint on or something. Aye, I wouldn't have bothered painting or owt. To me that would have been nowt." (86)

If loyalty to a particular trade was one aspect of the socialisation of women into shipyard life, another was learning the use of the "jungle telegraph" as an alert of approaching management.

"... if she (the women's supervisor) came on the deck ... she used to come on the deck now and again and the lads would pat their heads and say "hi-up, she's here" - well there was me standing gossiping like." (87)

The lack of direct managerial control and relative freedom of movement was one aspect of the work which several women mentioned as being particularly surprising:

"... of course we had a freedom, you know, you weren't sort of tied down, it was a freedom of getting on with your work. And funnily enough with welders, if you couldn't get on with that, or you felt you needed a break, then you were at liberty to move off the job and pull yourself together or whatever, you know." (88)

Another welcome feature of the labour process in the yards was seen to be the control that individual workers could exercise over the rate of work and application of machinery. This was particularly so where women had experienced other types of war work:

"I worked in Dunlop's factory in Birmingham ... but we were only in lodgings you see so I came back and started at the shipyard ... It was a bit dangerous in Birmingham ... I got me fingers jammed one day ... You see the difference between the sawmill (at Doxfords) and the factory - well in the sawmill when you are sawing you can ease off, when you are in the factory where they are cutting the rubber, well you can't ... you're not in control of the machine. A few narrow escapes there." (89)

As well as an appreciation of the specific nature of the control features of the division of labour the women also shared with the

men a degree of pride in their work:

"Oh, and the first time they said there was a launch ... I went down, I was so excited ... I was standing beside the platers, and all the men clapped ... "Oh," I said, "Tommy, look at all our work" - it had grown up they were going mad ... I thought "my God, look at that work and it's going into the sea," and it was away. Oh, if I live to be a hundred I shall never forget or feel anything like it." (90)

So far the importance of the continuities between the work done by the women and the men in the wartime shipyards has been stressed in order to point out how little the division of labour was altered in order to accommodate this new source of labour. The importance of skill, loyalty to a particular trade and the lack of tight controls over the rate of work and the physical movement of workers are elements which dominate most accounts. As far as more social elements of the employment of women in the yards were concerned there is considerable evidence of the way in which the moral order of the local community spilled unproblematically over into the workplace. This is one of the reasons why the "disruption" effect of employing female labour, expected by management, did not materialise. Unlike many of the munitions factories in the Midlands and elsewhere, the women workers recruited into the yards were local and given the importance of ties of kinship mentioned below, this helped to ensure that appropriate behaviour in the presence of the opposite sex was maintained. The unprompted mention by a majority of the women interviewed of the moderation of language used by the men is perhaps one example of this.

"The men ... you never heard them using any bad talk when the women was around." (91)

The unproblematic meshing of the values of the local occupational community and the workplace was one reason why the demobilisation of women working in the yards took place relatively smoothly, a majority of women interviewed leaving before they were required to by the restoration of pre-war practices. Most emphasised the resumption of domestic responsibilities as husbands returned or as marriage was undertaken; in some cases choice of spouse was a direct result of working in the yard.

"I left in July 1945, to get married ... and of the five girls that worked in the boiler shop they all married men out of the boiler shop. One got married in 1944 and I think there was two married before me, and we were married in the July; the other two got married shortly after that." (92)

The exigencies of war required that untapped sources of labour were called upon to work in the yards, and it was to meet this "emergency" situation that dilutee labour both male and female was called upon. Patriotism alone was never enough to ensure that the particular interests of capital or labour were totally subordinated to the task of maximum output. Moreover during the period both capital and labour shared the view that the abandonment of the strengths of the craft division of labour would not be the best way to raise production, and given that view and the legacy of recent past, dilution and interchangeability were almost bound to be problematic. During the war then, the labour supply problems were solved largely through

calling once again on the local communities, "industrial districts" in which the realities of shipbuilding were readily known by both men and, as this account makes clear, women as well:

"... it was part and parcel of my life, and living on the riverside - well ships, shipyards and rivers - well that was all part of my upbringing. But to get into a shipyard seemed the most natural thing in the world in war time. It wasn't like a girl from London going into a shipyard. Well I knew all about shipyard work all my life. You see I knew all about rivets and heaters and platers, and all the different trades." (93)

With the restoration of pre-war practices after the conclusion of hostilities, dilutees, both men and women, left the yards. Although there were exceptions among the male dilutees, as one worker remembered:

"I can remember about three that shouldn't have been kept in (the boilermakers). They had relatives who were secretaries of the union ... Oh it was flexible enough for that to be done. I even knew a lad that came out of the army and he got in the boilermakers, yet according to their rules you're supposed to start as an apprentice you know." (94)

Other than for those with the right personal connections the return to pre-war practice was accomplished soon after the war. The question that remained however was whether the wider economic conditions that were characteristic of the inter-war period would return? For, as we have seen, it was in relation to the pattern of demand characteristic of this and other periods, that of widely fluctuating booms and slumps, that the labour intensive craft division of labour was seen to hold advantage over that of a more capital intensive nature. That the answer to this

question was not obvious at the time is apparent when one looks at the immediate post-war period.

Whilst there had been no "quantum leap" in the principles underlying the division of labour in the shipbuilding industry during the war, it had, nevertheless, proved possible to build a large number of ships using a workforce who had less experience of shipyard work than would have been the case in peace time. Also some of the smaller yards and several of those left derelict after the inter-war depression had been used to assemble prefabricated units and therefore this technique was no longer only of theoretical interest to British builders. However the possibility of technological and organisational innovation was, in the minds of most builders, ultimately tied up with the question of demand, both in its quantitative and qualitative aspects. Would the fluctuations in demand characteristic of the inter-war period return and would shipowners continue to demand bespoke products rather than standard vessels? In some ways these questions were linked in that if high demand was maintained there was more possibility of a growing importance of the standard vessel in the situation of a rapidly expanding merchant fleet, whereas if demand did not remain strong, owners would be more specific and demanding over the specifications of ships that they did, on occasion, order. In this sense then the prospects for change within the division of labour were limited by the market and the perception of its future course. It is important

therefore to understand that in the immediate post-war position the effects on the industry of the war are not to be seen in the objective changes initiated during this period, but rather in the questions that these changes could pose if the wider post-war environment proved to be fundamentally different from that of the inter-war period. Thus in looking at the post-war position we need to look at various dimensions of the wider context in both its political and economic aspects.

Part IV

The Post-War Position

Alistair Reid in a paper on "The Division of Labour and Politics in Britain 1850-1920" has argued that the nature of the division of labour must not be studied in isolation from the state, and that:

" ... more attention (should) be paid to the internal dynamics of the state, and of politics in general." (95)

If this conclusion can be drawn from the period 1850-1920 then it should contain as much, or even more, validity for periods after 1945 with the extension of direct state intervention in industry. The State influences industry in several ways, however not all of them direct (96). As Stephen Hill suggests, the creation of a particular "environment" is of some importance:

" ... the state may have an effect on the structure of social relations and the balance of power within individual firms themselves. The totality of government's economic and social policies creates an environment which favours one side or other of industry, while policy in the specific area of industrial relations has a more direct influence on the manner in which conflicting interests are resolved." (97)

The importance of the creation of a particular environment is indeed great in the immediate post-war years. The Labour "landslide" victory at the polls, according to Peter Calvocoressi, represented the belief of the electorate:

" ... that the Labour Party would make great strides towards the elimination of absolute poverty and excessive inequality." (98)

The election of the Labour government is then usually seen as a change in the "mood of the country", as David Thomson put it:

"What was undoubtedly new ... was the change of national outlook and of popular resolve: and the spirit of the Labour party government, rocketed to power in the summer of 1945, chimed with this new mood ... men looked forward, damning the recent past perhaps too completely, and shunning so vehemently the errors of the past that they were apt to commit an entirely new set of errors of their own. Uppermost in their minds was the desire for fuller social justice, a lessening of class differences and greater security and peace." (99)

The theme is a common one in discussions of social history at the end of World War Two, people running at all speed from the past impatiently striving to embrace the future. However, more recent evidence suggests that this view is perhaps an overstatement. As Bill Williamson states in his book "Class Culture and Community":

"The dominant mood was one of relief ... However, there was no sense of a new world to be built. "Not in this village" said Bill when I asked him about the high expectations that some historians described. And Mary ... was more emphatic: "there was nothing to be optimistic about; we were making do and mend, making coats out of blankets. My mother says that she expected a major economic depression after the war." The result of the First World War had been depression; they did not think this one would be any different." (100)

Whilst this account is produced from a mining community there is no indication that such expectations were atypical, indeed a mood of pessimism, certainly in medium and long term economic affairs, was more prevalent in shipbuilding communities, predicated on earlier experience, than was a mood of optimism. As one worker recalled, the view in the yards was not one of optimism:

"They were worried definitely, and by 1947 quite a lot of the yards were very short of orders so things were looking pretty black by then." (101)

After the war, then, certainly amongst ordinary working people,

there was little evidence of:

" ... heightened popular expectations that the state can provide political solutions to economically generated problems; for example, that the state can abolish inequalities of wealth and income or restore the control that people lack at work." (102)

If there was continuity of expectations in relation to the economic sphere then there was discontinuity in the make up and political programme of the state. It is within this juncture of continuity and change of expectations and political forces respectively that the study of the change and the division of labour is to be situated. Of particular importance here is the changing role of Trades Unions and perception of that role held within the official trade union structure. For, with a labour government and the legacy of wartime consultation by government the trade unions had to some extent "come in from the cold". As one commentator has put it:

" ... for the two decades following the last war, the national leadership of almost every union remained committed to the same aims of "moderation" and "responsibility" and was, in general, successful in preventing any serious challenge to stable capitalist development." (103)

Walter Citrine placed a different emphasis on the changes when he spoke at the 1946 T.U.C. Conference. He suggested that the trade union movement had:

" ... passed from the era of propaganda to one of responsibility." (104)

This emphasis on responsibility manifested itself in some, at first sight, surprising ways. As Henry Pilling noted speaking of the trade union movement during the period 1939-51:

It became deeply committed to many of the processes of management, at the end of the period its representatives, who under Marshall Plan auspices had the opportunity of examining the best American practice, came back advocating union cooperation in the introduction of "scientific management". (105)

So far I have attempted to outline "the climate" within the country after the Second World War as far as the trade union officialdom and the expectations of ordinary working people were concerned. An essential part in understanding the significance of this climate is comprehending how it interlocked with the changed "nature" of the state. Whilst these relationships are only part of the myriad of connections implied in the notion of the modern state they are of central importance for this study of the division of labour. This condition and these expectations should be seen not only as a background within which to situate the (social) action, but are essentially present within the action surrounding the labour process appearing variously as both subjective reasons for certain lines of action and as objective limits to others.

If expectations of labour were pessimistic as regards the future of the industry, those of management were hardly any more optimistic. The expectation of a return to the pre-war conditions of boom and slump coloured their outlook, and whilst attempting to "stabilise their labour force" in the immediate post-war period (106) they also warned of the problem of over-capacity which would follow from the expansion of capacity during the war, and they clearly expected the level of post-war demand to turn

down sharply after losses had been made good.

The above argument about the persistence of pessimism should not be overstated, but should rather be perceived as an essential part of the consciousness of those people in the post-war ship-building community, predicated upon past experience of the inevitability of boom and slump in terms of demand for their labour or product (107). Whilst a "boom" period was in progress the workers would make demands for higher wages using to the full extent the existence of a tight labour market to press home their claims. And as McGoldrick has argued (108), the employers would quite often grant substantial rises, confident that once the demand for ships turned down the workers would, without too much trouble, accept wage cuts. Such a period of a short boom had followed the First World War and expectations were that the same situation pertained in 1945.

On the face of it, the position in which British ship-building found itself at the end of WW2 was an enviable one. The defeat of Germany and Japan had effectively removed them from the stage of international competition. The level of demand for ships was extremely buoyant following the mass destruction of wartime (109), the above average age of world tonnage (110) and the drop in carrying efficiency due mainly to longer turn around times in port (111). In this situation British shipbuilding was able to expand its share of the world market from the pre-war level in 1930-39 of 35% to an average of 50% for the period 1946-49 (112).

At the point of production however this period was anything but an easy one. The first problem to be faced was the changeover from wartime to peacetime production. This was a process which started before the end of the hostilities - its effects on the workforce in North Eastern yards was noted by "The Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer":

"Declining overtime work and occasional, if temporary, unemployment have combined to make shipyard and engineering workers in the North East acutely aware of the uncertainties which peace time conditions may bring. They have not forgotten their experiences during the depression of ten years ago." (113)

Such was the feeling of insecurity that the Tyne and Blyth confederation of the shipbuilding and engineering trade unions held a conference in Newcastle in April 1945 to discuss "post war employment and the provision of new work". It was agreed that maximum pressure should be brought to bear to ensure that any eventual decline in the shipbuilding industry would be offset by alternative opportunities for employment (114). The employers on the other hand were concerned that too much would be done to encourage new industry at the expense of shipbuilding. Thus, early in 1945 the Wear Shipbuilding Association made its feelings known to Sunderland corporation on the occasion of its development of post war plans for industrial development (115).

The problems of reverting to peacetime production were further exacerbated by several other factors. Firstly, as Mark Hodgson (116) noted, the surrender of Japan in August 1945, far

sooner than anyone had imagined possible, meant that the admiralty cancelled several orders already placed with shipbuilders. Secondly, some shipowners were not coming forward with new orders. There were several reasons for this. Initially shipowners were anxious to know, before placing new orders, whether the American reserve fleet would be put up for sale upon the world market at "knock down prices". Another reason was suggested in the Shipbuilding and Marine Engineer:

"Shipbuilders in the North East coast region have received a number of enquiries, but in a district where the majority of vessels operated are in the tramp class, owners for the most part are "marking time" until Government policy in regard to the replacement of tonnage lost during the war has been disclosed." (117)

In the same journal other reasons for holding back on ordering are apparent - in a report by the North East Correspondent:

"One Newcastle shipowner is not placing orders for new "tramps" due to high cost and because he could not forget the events which followed the last war; and, whatever might be said to the effect that there must be no repetition of such conditions, the possibility of a similar occurrence could not, in his view, be entirely ignored by shipowners." (118)

Memories of the past can be seen here to act as a real force upon the decisions of the present. The issue of price was perhaps predominant however, with the price of new tonnage in May 1945 being double and, for more specialised tonnage, more than double what they were in May 1938 (119). Whilst there was hesitancy amongst some owners to place new orders, this tended to be in specialised lines such as tramp tonnage. In general the main problem was not one of lack of orders, as most yards in the North

East were by June 1945 considering their programme for 1947 or beyond; the real problem was increasingly that of labour.

Apart from the general observations that the labour market was tight and therefore there were shortages in most industries, two main points should be made in relation to the shipbuilding industry. Firstly there was an acute shortage of labour in the outfitting trades, as by 1947 on the N.E. coast 1,500 men had been transferred or returned by the ministry of labour from shipbuilding to house building and repair. This situation was protested against by the Tyne Shipbuilders Association who, in a letter to the district Shipyard Controller in the Admiralty offices, Newcastle (6:2:1946) produced the following table showing the projected shortage in the "fitting out" trades:

TRADE	NO. AT PRESENT EMPLOYED	NO. DUE FOR RELEASE TO BUILDING TRADE	NO. REQUIRED AS AT AUG. '46 IN ADDITION TO PRESENT NO. EMPLOYED
Joiners	635	81	1400
Plumbers	263	27	250
Painters	229	67	180
Electricians	496	89	190
			(120)

The situation on the Wear was very similar as, for example, the Wear Shipbuilders Association protested in December 1945 that 35% of joiners in Wear yards were "building workers" - in some yards the figure was substantially higher (121). The serious imbalance in the workforce that these shortages caused would

result in delays in delivery times, it was argued. Further to this, the priority given to the building industry meant that there was also a shortage in such things as sanitary fittings, baths, washbasins and taps, upholstery material and certain electrical fittings.

The second point which should be made in relation to the labour force concerns the "metal trades". There was some unemployment within certain groups, specifically riveters, drillers and caulkers (122), whilst at the same time there was also a shortage of labour in other branches of the shipbuilding trades. This shortage is worth remarking upon as to a large extent throughout the period 1945-50 it can be accounted for by a reticence of boys to enter those trades whose only application was within the shipbuilding industry. The following figures from Boilermakers Annual Reports show the extent to which the decline of boys apprenticed to metal trades took place:

YEAR	NO. OF APPRENTICES	DECLINE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
1945	8643	- 903
1946	7537	-1106
1947	6928	- 609
1948	6004	- 924
1949	5917	- 87

(123)

The implications of these drops in membership were not lost on Sir Mark Hodgson, who suggested that:

"Unless we direct our immediate attention to the task of organising the young folk at our trade our future stability will be affected." (124)

The problem of recruiting boys to the metal trades was also remarked upon by the employers. Here, however, the emphasis was not only upon the lack of numbers of boys entering the trades but also the relevance of the traditional apprenticeships to changing construction techniques. Thus at a meeting of the W.S.A. on 23rd March 1947 the issue of the recruitment of apprentices to the metal trades was raised by the delegate from the Bartrams yard. The situation was unclear, he suggested, due to the investigation of new training methods being undertaken by the S.E.F. nationally. This investigation, he adds, was being undertaken:

"... in view of the possibility in the near future of a complete reorganisation of the steel work by the introduction of semi-skilled labour on various machines and the rearrangement of plating work etc." (125)

It is possible to argue that "the complete reorganisation of the steel work" envisaged by the employers was not as "complete" as the above statement may suggest. For, at a meeting of the W.S.A. only four months earlier, the issue of the future of shipbuilding at the corporation yard in Sunderland had been discussed. The issue had been raised initially after trade union pressure to keep the yard open. This yard had been opened during the war to help cope with demand; its specific importance lay however in its use of prefabricated parts for assembly. In addressing the future of the yard Mr. R.C. Thompson for the W.S.A. suggested that it was unrealistic to expect the yard to remain open, as:

"(The) yard was from the first intended only as a wartime establishment for the assembling of pre-fabricated parts -

which was in fact an expensive method of building ships."
(126)

The view that the use of prefabrication in the construction of ships was an expensive method was largely drawn from studies of the American industry which had pioneered many of these techniques. This conclusion was drawn from the experience of particular market conditions, those of boom and slump, in which greater fixed capital overheads and relatively high labour costs militated against profitable production. However in a perceptive article the N.E. correspondent of the "Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer" suggested that the prefabricated construction of ships could be undertaken profitably in different circumstances:

"One view is that should post war labour costs in the U.S.A. prove excessive in comparison with those elsewhere, American shipbuilding concerns might well feel disposed to establish new yards in the Far East when Japan has been defeated. Many of the prefabrication methods evolved or adopted during the war have come to stay. They are particularly well adapted to the semi-skilled labour which it is anticipated will be both plentiful and comparatively cheap in the Far East after the war." (127)

In Britain however the wholesale prefabricated construction of ships was generally considered to be an inefficient method in terms of cost, and in terms of the rearrangement of yards that such a development would call for. For, as R.B. Shepherd suggested in an article, "Developments in British Merchant Shipbuilding":

"The American constructional methods involving shipyards having ample area and crane capacity with a large available labour force, could not generally be applied to the U.K.."
(128)

The greatest change in constructional methods in the British industry undertaken during the war and immediately afterwards was the increased use of welding, which ultimately led to the demise of riveting (129). The perceived implications of the widespread use of welding varied. One suggested implication was expressed in an article in the "Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer" of July 1947:

"In the new era, the art of shipbuilding would tend more and more to organised accuracy and away from individual skill, and though individual skill and artistry would still be needed, it would be exercised at a higher level." (130)

This statement encapsulates several of the features of the deskilling position advocated by Braverman, notably the move away from skill being held by the individual craftsman towards its exercise at higher levels. Was the greater use of welding at this time perceived by the unions and workers as the greatest threat to their "skilled" position? It is possible to argue that this was not in fact the case, the reasons for which we will now address.

As we saw in Chapter 2, welding became established as a skilled trade, and more importantly integrated into existing constructional processes rather than being seen as a technique around which to restructure the whole division of labour. Welding as a technique was not feared in itself as the beginning of a vast deskilling programme. However what was new after the Second World War was its increased use on hull work and in an atmosphere in which prefabrication had been used successfully in

order to meet wartime demand. It was the prospect of prefabrication rather than the extended use of welding as such which was thought to present a threat to the skilled trades. This position was suggested in a letter sent by Dan McGarvey to the Boilermakers Monthly report supporting his nomination as Clyde (North Side) district delegate in which he notes:

"I have watched very closely the modernisation of our shipyards etc. and also the upward trend of the welded ships and increasing prefabrication in particular, and I fully realise that the employer is at this very moment making an all out attack on our members rates and conditions. The position of our members in relation to prefabrication needs the constant attention of our society ... " (131)

Other members of the Boilermakers Society saw the main problem similarly, that is an attack upon rates and conditions of skilled men, ultimately an attack upon the notion of craftsmanship in general. However the facilitating factor in this attack was not always seen to lie in changes in technique. Thus a letter to the monthly report from Bro. Joseph Boyd, who was worried by the Government's decision to sell 140 liberty ships to private enterprise, suggested that this move:

" ... does not augur well for the shipbuilding industry in this country, and talk like a slump in two or three years is common." (132)

This, it was seen, would lead to the emigration of skilled men and a further decline in the number of apprentices:

" ... and will ultimately lead to the dream of the "boss": the break up of organised unions, shop stewards and the introduction of unskilled workers to our various crafts." (133)

How far was the "dream of the boss" a real threat? If the example of the introduction of welding in the interwar period is looked at this dream may be seen to be exaggerated, for as has been argued elsewhere the employers were at this time to a large extent working within an "ideology of craft" (134).

However the issue of the legitimacy of the organisation of the division of labour along craft lines was raised in the aftermath of the war. The context was that in which pre-war practices had been restored, and the Labour government and trades union leaders were keen to demonstrate that they were "fit" to govern. Whilst the substance of the debate took place at a level above the shop floor, its importance lies in attempting to set the parameters of the debate within the industry insofar as these concerns were later to be accepted as part of the post war consensus (135). Most notable in these connections is the conscious defense and advocacy given to "the craftsman" by trades union leaders.

The "attack" upon the notion of craft came from several areas; however, perhaps a unifying thread in these attacks was the claim that the existent organisation of production was inefficient. Thus the "Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer" claimed that:

"Today the demarcations of labour in shipyards and ship-repairing establishments stands, in many respects, much as it has done for decades past, and, in relation to modern methods of production, it cannot but be regarded as restrictive in its effects on the efficiency of production. In the light of modern developments, many such customs and

practices are outmoded; and it could be readily proved that they have the effect of retarding and restricting efficiency in the construction and repairing of ships." (136)

Such attacks on demarcation of labour are common throughout the shipbuilding press and usually are not paid much heed by the unions. However in the immediate post war period the relationship between the unions and the state had changed with the election of a Labour government. Co-operation rather than conflict was stressed and there was a genuine commitment by the trade union leaders at least to get the country "back on its feet". In this task efficient production was conceived as the most important tool. Under these circumstances then, "efficient production" became, perhaps for the first time, a fundamental problem for the union leadership as well as management. As Mark Hodgson suggested in October 1945:

"Intensified effort is essential, I admit, and I am satisfied that the workers of this country will gladly bear the brunt and further tighten their already narrowly stretched belts. The restoration of our homeland and our contribution to the European salvation are problems which call for immediate attention." (137)

It was this concern with macro economics which made it impossible any longer for the unions to ignore the charges that it was the trade unions themselves which were responsible for restriction of output leading to inefficient utilisation of productive capacity. It became almost mandatory for trade unionists to reconcile their own demands for changes in working practices with the aim of increased output. Thus the agitation for a forty hour week took the form of claims that the reduction in hours would actually

increase productive output due to the greater intensity of work of which more "refreshed" workers would be capable. This position was exemplified in Mark Hodgson's speech at the TUC conference in 1945, in which he extolled the virtues of a forty hour week:

"If we as a nation are to undertake the task (of post war reconstruction) efficiently then the whole productive capacity of the people, tools and machinery of the nation must be intelligently applied ...

We maintain that with all the mechanical improvements introduced before and especially during the war, and with the intelligent use of all available labour and the scrapping of outworn ideas, greater efficiency and improved production can be obtained by the introduction of some degree of leisure calculated to fit the overstrained worker for a further substantial effort.

Our claim is that given a five day working week, a refreshed worker will produce at least as much in a 40 hour week as a tired worker will in 47 or 48 hours.

It is maximum output we want, and the fitter the worker, the better our chance of getting it." (138)

Similarly, by the same writer in the Boilermaker's Annual Report of 1945:

"The great need today is increased output of all necessary useful and beautiful things for the use and happiness of all ... Harder tasks and longer hours are not necessary but a more scientific application of machine power, giving the workers their rightful share of the advantages which science and machinery produce." (139)

The above comments are clearly situated within a discourse rich in ideas of consensus, and displaying a zeal for increasing production which hitherto was more characteristic of the employers than the unions. Such a concern with increasing output is perhaps more easily reconciled with the interests of Boilermakers, who for the most part were paid by the piece, than

outfitting workers mostly paid plain time rates. Nevertheless the emphasis upon the "scrapping of outworn ideas" and the "scientific application of machine power" seem to suggest that the outlook of the leadership of this union was perhaps more "progressive" in terms of changes in working practice than in the past. Continued support in the post war period for the National Production Advisory Council set up during the war is perhaps further evidence of the progressive spirit. And, whilst there was some degree of hostility and suspicion directed towards the Council from the shop-floor, the trade union leaders involved in the council took a less critical view:

"As a member of the National Production Advisory Council on Industry I can assure members that it is not the desire of this council to exhort workers to work harder, but instead to conserve energy by increased industrial efficiency. It has been proven in many industries that by bringing in consultants on motion study, production has increased and the energy of the operator has been conserved, thereby enabling him to earn higher wages without working any harder. There is scope for improvements in the industries we are connected with. Some shipyards and engineering shops have already been modernised, but there are many that have changed but very little over the past 50 years." (140)

At first sight these statements seem to embody many of the features of scientific management and appear to give support to the position suggested by Henry Pelling earlier in this article that the trade union movement "became deeply committed to many of the processes of management" and that they were advocating "union cooperation in the introduction of scientific management". However appearances can often be misleading, and certainly it is

possible to argue that in relation to the shipbuilding industry the "scientific application of machine power" or the use of "motion study" should not be understood in terms generally accepted by scientific management theorists. Indeed this is spelt out clearly at the end of the article quoted above:

"Let it be clearly understood that motion study mentioned herein has no relation to time study by stopwatch etc. as the Society would, at all times, resist any attempt to re-introduce Bedeauxism." (141)

As argued earlier the changes proposed have more to do with increasing piece work payments by raising output than with fundamental restructuring of the labour process. The use of the scientific application of machine power was conceived as a process to take place within the craft division of labour rather than as a basis for its extinction. Similarly the "motion" study was to be undertaken without an accompanying "time" study. In this way the knowledge produced by the consultants was seen to be a resource which could be used to maximise the piece earnings of the individual craftsman rather than as a technique management could use to increase output disproportionately to the reward given to the individual worker as in Bedeauxism.

That this view of the incorporation of science into the labour process was widely held by those concerned with the nature of craft in the shipbuilding industry can be further evidenced with reference to two general articles on the nature and future of craftsmanship. The first of these was a paper by J.W. Stephenson, Chairman of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and

Engineering Trades Shipbuilding Group Council, entitled "Science and Craftsmanship in the Engineering and Shipbuilding Industries" (142). In this paper an historical account of the nature of craftsmanship is given. It is asserted that in primitive society the roles of craftsman and scientist were united, "The crafts-man was in fact the original scientist." A separation of the two roles was seen to occur with the rise of urban civilisation. The craftsman who had been a "free agent in primitive society became a serf" with low social status which "confined him to his existing practices". On the other hand, "Scientific speculation was largely confined to the administrative sciences and was carried on by a limited class of people who had the leisure for it". The author goes on to suggest that the industrial revolution was the potential (as yet unrecognised) beginning of a return towards the increasing identity of these two roles, "The outstanding feature of the industrial revolution was the renewed application of experimental thought to the industrial crafts". And that, "although the social distinction between the scientist and the craftsman as professional worker and operative respectively has been inherited from the past, the technical distinction ... is largely a matter of degree and there are elements of each speciality in both".

However, Stephenson continues his analysis by asserting that hitherto the role of craftsmen in the shipbuilding industry has merely been to learn a large number of repetitive jobs,

"The historical development needs to set out because it is commonly considered that the mechanism and rationalisation which the application of science to industry entailed has led to the gradual elimination of the craftsman and to increasing monotony of work for those engaged in actual production. In fact the "mystery" of the old craftsmen largely consisted in the fact that he had to learn a large number of repetitive jobs by rote. Mechanisation has broken these crafts up into their separate units, each of which frequently requires only a very low degree of skill." (143)

However, it is suggested that the other consequence of mechanisation has been the creation of a number of new skills:

" ... concerned with the control of processes the design and fabrication of prototypes, etc. which are required to master the production of a growing range of increasingly complex goods. The characteristic of the new craftsman is increasingly that of versatility in the control of a scientific technique." (144)

So then the new craftsman is more skilled than the old one in this view, because he must not only learn a number of repetitive jobs by "rote", but must also display a versatility in the control of scientific technique. Thus the new craftsman embodies the old but also regains part of his lost simultaneous role as scientist. Moreover it is suggested that there are two further factors which impel a closer degree of identity between the scientist and the craftsman. The first of these is the increasing speed of technical developments which demands a greater amount of "feedback" between the research worker and the worker who applies the technique. Secondly and more important for our purposes is:

" ... the development of a new technique, "scientific management" so called, which in essence is concerned with the study of the act of work itself and the intent of which

is to make human labour more effective. This embraces a number of special techniques such as cost accounting and motion study which though they may be applied by specialists are not exclusive in character and can IN ESSENTIALS BE APPLIED BY THE WORKER HIMSELF." (145)

The importance of stating that the worker should apply scientific management to himself must not be underestimated as it suggests a conception of scientific management and indeed of workers which would be foreign to the followers of Taylor or Bedeaux. One should note that this account also mentions motion study as an element of scientific management, but neglects to mention time study as another integral part.

In his conclusion the author sees the relevance of the role of craftsmanship in these terms:

"Therefore science and craftsmanship are complementary and they are foolish who think that because some new material is used, some new method is devised, or a machine replaces a hand process, the day of craftsmanship is over. Rather does progress demand a clearer appreciation of the essential part that craftsmanship plays in production, and an increased recognition that the scientist and the craftsman are co servants of humanity both essential for the development of social well-being and human good." (146)

In a less sophisticated analysis Sir Mark Hodgson pursued a similar theme of the necessity of craftsmanship "for the development of social well being and human good". Here he insisted that the only way that Britain could regain her leading position in terms of foreign trade was to produce goods of high quality, and these could only be produced by good craftsmen. The main emphasis of his paper was not orientated towards economic arguments however; rather he suggested that craftsmanship developed:

"... the character of the people; and history, both ancient and modern, sets a considerable value on the quality of the citizens in any community." (147)

Moreover he pointed to the importance of ensuring a greater supply of "good craftsmen for the future":

In the industries which I am most closely connected with ... the war taught us a lesson. We had too few craftsmen and had to introduce dilutees - man and women with little or no experience, and since agreements provided that they should be paid craftsmen's rates, what this cost the nation cannot be easily estimated - but the cost was very great." (148)

Thus a need for more craftsmen was justified in terms of their use in terms of national emergency. Also Hodgson saw the craftsman as a progressive rather than a reactionary force in relation to the introduction of new working practices:

"Craftsmen who possess sound knowledge and skill are not easily daunted by new work and new problems, and men of this type will be a powerful influence in the expansion of British trade." (149)

The importance of the above two articles is that they seek to express legitimate grounds for the continued relevance of craftsmen to the modern shipbuilding industry. They emphasise above all the flexibility of skilled labour to deal with changing circumstances and thereby seek to present craftsmen as a progressive force within the industry. Hodgson goes so far as to suggest that more skilled labour is needed to operate machinery designed for semi-skilled operators. He argues that if the operation of such machines was a "skilled" task then skilled men would only undertake these operations temporarily and therefore would not become the mere appendage of the machine. Both

articles stress the importance of the notion of craft in giving a certain character and quality to the labour force.

The tension that existed between the advocacy of rigid craft boundaries and constantly extolling the virtues of expanded production was exploited by those seeking a more radical change in the production process and the organisation of labour. Whilst in general this ideological war was fought by the trade unions expressing their own commitment to improvements in output and stressing unity of purpose and consensus in this aim, there were statements which appear to adopt a different approach and seem to point to the conflict inherent in the capital labour relationship:

"The members will have noticed the references to restrictive practices in debates in the house of commons, and the Tories when debating the matter invariably use the exception to vilify such restrictions. We may have to look at some of the practices referred to, especially where they concern trades union membership; on the other hand, there are many restrictive practices in the industries we are engaged in that must remain until we are working and living under a socialist system of society." (150)

If the nature of craftsmanship was under question from within the industry and the press, the unions position was seen to be validated from other sources. Thus in the Boilermakers monthly report of May 1949 the words of the Superintendent of the City and Guilds of London Institute in relation to a newly proposed training scheme are quoted with approval:

"In drawing up this scheme, the advisory committee has had in mind not only that sound craftsmanship is an essential basis of the constructional steelwork industries, but also that the traditional pre-eminence of the nation in this

sphere will only be enhanced, or even retained, if efforts are firmly directed towards the encouragement of craftsmanship of a superior type, in which the intelligence and skill in the industrial arts, so characteristic of our population, may be given full opportunity for development."
(151)

On the whole, the period between 1945 and 1950 did not see a victory for those people advocating the ending of "craft" production in shipbuilding. On the shopfloor changes in yard layout during this time owe more to attempts to improve facilities for transport and cramage, which hitherto were positively primitive, than any attempt radically to re-alter the division of labour. Whilst welding was expanded, it was done so as a distinctively skilled process rather than as a technique of fragmenting skilled jobs. Where new machinery, such as profile burners, were introduced they were, generally speaking, manned partially by skilled labour or in some instances "blackened" by a workforce, so much so that in some instances they had to be withdrawn. It would seem that during this time continuity of the organisation of production is more characteristic than sweeping change. This continuity, or inertia, as some would see it, was not simply a result of the strength of the unions and a corresponding weakness of the employers, the situation was more complicated than that. Some employers genuinely believed that the highly labour intensive system of production based on a large number of craftsmen was more efficient than a highly capital intensive one. Some union leaders (and members) believed that the situation demanded greater production and more industrial

discipline, and made appeals in this respect:

"It is well that we should understand that under Socialism or Communism we will have to work and work to regulated hours, and I see no reason why we should not start right now to put our house in order in this respect." (152)

Conclusion

In many respects there is a great deal of continuity between the concerns underlying the division of labour in the inter-war period and that in the immediate post-war years. As we have seen the conditions existing during the period of hostilities were seen to be extraordinary in terms of a consistent demand for maximum output, a continuation was not expected or looked for after peace was concluded. Similarly the changes at the point of production were seen to be short term changes forced upon the industry, both capital and labour, by the requirements of war. However things were to change within the context of a sustained post-war boom. Although a realisation of the magnitude of these changes was to be only slowly realised, their scope was to encompass the whole world. These changes affected not only production techniques but were also the cumulative cause and outcome of other changes at the level of the occupational community. In relation to Wearside, as elsewhere, the period of the long term boom was to see changes in the social relations both within and between capital and labour.

And yet the British Shipbuilding industry during the period 1945-59 displayed many features characteristic of the industry at other times, its conservatism based on past practice affected unions and management alike. One dominating feature of the time was the belief in the inevitability of an imminent slump, predictions such as that of Mr. Marr of the W.S.A. made on 4 March

1949 were widespread:

"... by 1952 Wear shipyards might only need 50% of present workforce, thus, some 5000 men will be unemployed." (153)

Such predictions were wrong, however, for the situation that British shipbuilding found itself in was substantially different to that after the First World War. As several authors have argued, the sale of British investments overseas and debt incurred to the USA in the course of the war forced Britain to orientate itself towards an "outward looking economy" and export led growth as opposed to home led growth after the first World War (154). In this situation of a "seller's" market and with government encouragement the target for exports to reach a level of 175% of the prewar level was reached by 1950. However during this same period 1946-50 output in the industry rose by only 16% (155). The failure to expand capacity substantially was a result of objective limitations such as the shortage of men, materials and power, the difficulty of financing large scale developments (156) and an estimation of the inevitability of the return of cyclical fluctuations in the demand for ships. Moreover the existence of a state committed to full employment strengthened the bargaining position of labour and the success encountered in sustaining full employment further reduced the relative flexibility of variable capital. In this sense the period between 1945-50 was not a good time for the employers to attempt radically to restructure the division of labour and indeed evidence that they wished to do so is not conclusive. Capital

accumulation was not a problem for the employers during this period, with substantial profits being made despite substantially higher costs.

The nature of the future of craft was explicitly raised during this time however. The context was that of the dispensing of Marshall aid and growth in influence of the "economic imperialism" of the USA. The potential threat to the "craft" division of labour in shipbuilding was diffused by pointing firstly at the historically cost ineffective nature of shipbuilding in the USA and secondly by the apparent enthusiastic advocacy of several "management practices" by the trade union leaders. However as has been argued earlier the type of "scientific management" advocated by trade union leaders in the industry had the aim of increasing output and earnings proportionately within the established boundaries of craft rather than establishing a fundamentally different system of the organisation of labour.

The nature of "skill" suggested by the example of the shipbuilding industry during this period is not one predicated solely upon a notion of physical manipulation combined with a degree of mental dexterity but must also include the dimension of skill as a social status. For, as we have seen, the idea that semi-skilled operations were being performed (captured) by skilled men was advocated by the former leader of the Boilermakers. The essence of skill and craftsmanship presented by such men is that

of flexibility, the potential to be able to respond to changed circumstance or practice. This would seem to point to the importance of the distinction made by Burawoy between deskilled work and a deskilled worker (157). For indeed any one task performed in a shipyard, or any other industry, is unlikely to demand all of the skills associated with any particular craft, and as specialisation by an individual worker within a craft is not unusual his claim to be a skilled worker is predicated upon the potential skill needed by the craft as a whole. Therefore the skilled status of individual workers is, within an organisation as large as a shipyard, often based on a cumulative skill content of the "collective craft worker". Thus within the yards the technical change which occurred during this period was largely absorbed within the framework of craft production. The effects of the deskilling of individual tasks were largely neutralised by their incorporation into the totality of craft tasks. For the individual worker then the social status of being a skilled worker may be as important as the actual tasks he performs. Of importance for the craft as a whole however will be the claim to legitimately encompass a wide enough range of tasks to justify the craft status. In this way whilst changes in technology during this period may have simplified certain jobs they did not seriously question the craft status of "skilled" workers and there was no great move by management to restrict job autonomy or discretion in the carrying out of the tasks included

in particular crafts.

In the next chapter an attempt will be made to outline some of the more important changes consequent upon the conditions of the long boom. Hopefully such an account will render a possible comparative dimension between the inter-war and wartime periods and those of the 1980s.

Notes to Chapter 3

- 1 Jones, L. "Shipbuilding in Britain", Cardiff, University of Wales Press 1957, p117.
- 2 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. "Where Ships are Born", Sunderland, Thomas Reed and Co. Ltd. 1947, p68.
- 3 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. op cit, p62.
- 4 Hopkins, C.H.G. "The Moving Staircase: Sunderland 1939-1972", Sunderland, Wearside Printing Co. Ltd. 1972, p27.
- 5 Leslie Tait, Electrician.
- 6 Inman, P. "Labour in the Munitions Industries", London, H.M.S.O. 1957, pp94-95.
- 7 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. op cit, p79.
- 8 The output figures of new merchant construction on the Wear in the five years: September 1939 to September 1944 were as follows:

<u>Firms</u>	<u>Ships</u>	<u>Gross Tonnage</u>
Wm Doxford and Sons	71	481,601
Jus. L.T. Thompson and Sons	40	277,697
Sir James Laing and Sons	30.5	230,523
Short Bros.	27	179,002
Bartram and Sons	19	127,756
W. Pickersgill and Sons	20	116,814
S.P. Austin and Son	26	56,916
Shipbuilding Corporation	4	28,342
John Crown and Sons	8	3,688
Totals:	245.5	1,502,239

From September 1939 to the end of 1944 the total was 249 ships of 1,534,980 gross tons out of a total for Great Britain of 1,240 ships of 5,722,532 gross tons. The Tyne's contribution to this total was 130 ships of 709,317 gross tons; the Tees produced 49 ships of 269,330 gross tons and the Hartlepool's 78 ships of 369,387 gross tons.

Source: Smith and Holden, op cit pp70-71.

- 9 Arthur Mawick has suggested the effects on society of a twentieth century total war can be expressed in terms of four dimensions of war:

1. Destruction/Disruption: Including direct damage,

dislocation and disruption of peace time patterns of behaviour, but also as some "disaster" studies have suggested, involving a desire to rebuild better than before.

2. The Test Dimension which arises from the challenge war presents to society.

3. Participation in the national cause by hitherto under-privileged groups who thereby make social gains.

4. The Psychological Dimension: total war is a great emotional experience, and tends to reinforce "in group" feelings and, in general, to render change acceptable.

Mawick, A. "Class: Image and Reality", Fontana 1981, p214.

- 10 My mother often states this point. The same popular (mis)conception is challenged in Richard Croucher's book "Engineers at War: 1939-1945", London, Merlin 1982.
- 11 Hutt, A. "British Trade Unionism", London, Lawrence and Wishart 1975, p147.
- 12 Pelling, H. "A History of British Trade Unionism", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1979, p219.
- 13 Pelling, H. op cit, p219.
- 14 The Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer", February and May issues 1945.
- 15 Barnett, C. "The Audit of War", London, Macmillan 1986, Chapter 6.
- 16 Barnett, C. op cit, p121.
- 17 Pelling, H. 1979 op cit, p219.
- 18 Pragnementa, P. and Overy, R. "All our Working Lives", London, BBC 1984, ppl37-138.
- 19 Barnett, C. op cit, p122.
- 20 Croucher, R. op cit, p325.
- 21 Barnett, C. op cit, p115.
- 22 Barnett, C. op cit, ppl23-124.
- 23 Leslie Tait, Electrician.

- 24 Leslie Tait, Electrician.
- 25 Inman, P. op cit, p85.
- 26 The shortage of riveters on the Clyde was so severe that the Ministry of Labour proceeded with the opening of a training school for riveters in April 1942, financed jointly by themselves and the employers, without the agreement of the Boilermakers. The Jordanvale Training Scheme was beset with problems and up until March 1944 had a wastage rate of nearly 50%. See:
Inman, P. op cit, ppl22-125.
- 27 Alan Bell, Plumber.
- 28 Letter to J. Ramsey Gebbie, 13th November 1942, held in Tyne and Wear Archive (Doxfords Correspondence).
- 29 Letter to Secretary of the Admiralty, 16th November 1942, held in Tyne and Wear Archive (Doxfords Correspondence).
- 30 John Morris, Caulker, Pickersgills.
- 31 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. op cit, p71.
- 32 Letter to Manager, Lloyds Bank Sunderland, 18th November 1942, held in Tyne and Wear Archive (Bartrams Correspondence).
- 33 Leslie Tait, Electrician.
- 34 Letter to R.A. Bartram, 20th October 1943, held in Tyne and Wear Archive (Bartrams Correspondence).
- 35 Mr. B. Marley, who made these remarks, is now head of the shipbuilding and fabrication department at Wearside College in Sunderland.
- 36 Fox, F.A. "The Brittle Fracture of Structural Steel", quoted in: Parkinson, J.R. "The Economics of Shipbuilding in the U.K.", Cambridge, CUP 1960, pl14.
- 37 John Morris, Plater.
- 38 "The Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer", February 1945.
- 39 Barnett, C. op cit, pl21.
- 40 Quoted in: Barnett, C. op cit, pl21.

- 41 Smith, J.W. and Holden, T.S. op cit, pp79-80.
- 42 W.S.A. minutes, 9th July 1940.
- 43 Quoted in: Cole, M. "The Life of G.D.H. Cole", London, Macmillan 1971, p230.
- 44 Bullock, A. "The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin" Vol.2, London. Heinemann 1967, pp61-62.
- 45 Letter from Amos Ayre (Admiralty) to J. Ramsie Gebbie (Doxfords), 8th May 1942, held in Tyne and Wear Archive (Doxfords Correspondence).
- 46 The oral history material in this section was gathered as part of the project "Women Workers in North East Shipyards during the Second World War - an Oral History". The project was funded by the Nuffield Foundation and carried out between the summers of 1983-84. I carried out all the interviews of women who had worked on the Wear and it is primarily that material that will be drawn on here. Where reference is made to the Tyne, if the interview was not carried out by myself, the interviewer, primarily Frank Ennis, will of course be acknowledged. The other member of the team, without whom the project would not have gone ahead, was Professor R.K. Brown.
- 47 Brokie, W. "Sunderland Notables", Sunderland, Hills and Co. 1894, p?.
- 48 Inman, P. op cit, pl27.
- 49 Dougan, D. "The Shipwrights", Newcastle, Frank Graham 1975, p274.
- 50 Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 8th May 1941.
- 51 Quoted in: Barnett, C. op cit, ppl20-121.
- 52 Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 10th July 1941.
- 53 Agreement between S.E.F. and the National Painters Society, 29th January 1943. Held in the Public Record Office, Ref: Lab 8/629.
- 54 Ibid
- 55 W.S.A. minutes, 26th February 1943.

- 56 Quoted in: Barnett, C. op cit, pp115-116.
- 57 T.S.A. minutes, 13th February 1945.
- 58 See: Croucher, R. "Engineers at War", London, Merlin 1982, Chapter 5;
Anderson, K. "Wartime Women", 1981;
Douie, V. "Daughters of Britain", Oxford, George Ronald 1950.
- 59 Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 30th March 1944.
- 60 S.S.R., 16th November 1944.
- 61 Letter to Amos Ayre (Admiralty), 22nd July 1942, held in Tyne and Wear Archive (Doxfords Correspondence).
- 62 S.S.R., 2nd July 1942.
- 63 Painter/Sign Writer, Greenwells Dock, interviewed 10th October 1983.
- 64 Plater's helper, Doxfords, interviewed 27th September 1983.
- 65 Labourer, Readheads, interviewed by Frank Ennis, 1st December 1983.
- 66 Labourer, Swan Hunters, interviewed by Frank Ennis, 2nd February 1984.
- 67 Electrician, Hawthorn Leslie, interviewed 7th October 1983.
- 68 Ministry of Labour and National Service: "Wartime Employment of Women in Shipbuilding and Allied Industries", 1942, held in the Imperial War Museum.
- 69 Letter dated 18th December 1940, held in P.R.O., ref: Lab 18/66.
- 70 Letter dated 16th January 1941, held in P.R.O., ref: Lab 18/66.
- 71 Welder, Readheads, interviewed 9th March 1984.
- 72 Ibid
- 73 Lathe operator, Greenwells Dock, interviewed 5th October 1983.
- 74 Welder, Swan Hunters, interviewed by Frank Ennis, 30th

November 1983.

- 75 Electrician, Hawthorne Leslie, interviewed 7th October 1983.
- 76 Caulker, Readheads, interviewed by F. Ennis, 26th June 1984.
- 77 Plumber, Readheads, interviewed by F. Ennis, 2nd December 1983.
- 78 Splicer, Doxfords, interviewed 29th September 1983.
- 79 Welder, Readheads, interviewed 9th March 1984.
- 80 Fitter, North Eastern Marine, interviewed by F. Ennis, 22nd March 1984.
- 81 Lathe operator, Greenwells Dock, interviewed 5th October 1983.
- 82 Caulker, Readheads, interviewed by F. Ennis, 26th June 1984.
- 83 Electrician, Hawthorne Leslie, interviewed 7th October 1983.
- 84 Fitter, N.E. Marine, interviewed by F. Ennis, 22nd March 1984.
- 85 Sheet Metal Worker, Swan Hunters, interviewed by F. Ennis, 10th February 1984.
- 86 Splicer, Doxfords, interviewed 29th September 1983.
- 87 Labourer, Doxfords, interviewed 17th October 1983.
- 88 Welder, Readheads, interviewed 9th March 1983.
- 89 Sawmill labourer, Doxfords, interviewed 4th October 1983.
- 90 Plater's helper, Doxfords, interviewed 27th September 1983.
- 91 Sawmill labourer, Doxfords, interviewed 4th October 1983.
- 92 Driller, Wallsend Slipway, interviewed 5th January 1984.
- 93 Electrician, Hawthorne Leslie, interviewed by F. Ennis, 13th December 1983.
- 94 Leslie Tait, Electrician.
- 95 Reid, A. "The Division of Labour and Politics in Britain 1850-1920", Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge 1981,

unpublished paper, pp23-24.

- 96 "Industry" here should be understood as a complex term, including in any empirical example both capital and labour - and the nature of the relationship between the two.
- 97 Hill, S. "Competition and Control at Work", London, Heinemann 1981, p238.
- 98 Calvocoressi, P. "The British Experience 1945-75", quoted in: Marwick, A. "British Society Since 1945", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1982, p14.
- 99 Thompson, D. "England in the Twentieth Century", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1982, p218.
- 100 Williamson, W. "Class, Culture and Community", London, R.K.P. 1982, pp219-220.
- 101 Leslie Tait, Electrician.
- 102 Hill, S. op cit, p249.
- 103 Hyman, R. "Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction", London, Macmillan 1979, p135.
Similarly, Colin Crouch has argued that:
"The involvement of union leaders in government bodies was an ambiguous development ... àité enabled the unions to exercise influence within many areas from which they had previously been excluded; it gave them access to information about how the political and economic system worked; and it brought a new stature and acceptance to their position in society.
On the other hand, this involvement fell short of any bodies which exercised real control over the economy, or was limited to the token representation of trade unionists on organisations whose fundamental mode of operation remained entirely unaffected."
Crouch, C. "The Politics of Industrial Relations", Glasgow, Fontana 1979, p21.
- 104 Quoted in: Pelling, H. "A History of British Trade Unionism", Harmondsworth, Penguin 1979, pp230-231.
- 105 Pelling, H. op cit, p231.
- 106 McGoldrick, J. "Industrial Relations and the Division of Labour in the Shipbuilding Industry since the war", B.J.I.R. Vol.21 No.2, July 1983.

- 107 As we have seen, the existence of this consciousness goes some way to explain the "conservative nature" of British shipbuilders in terms of their willingness to hold to the established labour process. For the question of Capital accumulation was not experienced as a problem directly stemming from the organisation of the labour process, as it was in some other industries less prone to cyclical fluctuations (see: Edwards, R. "Contested Terrain", London, Heinemann 1979).
- 108 McGoldrick, J. "Crisis and the Division of labour: Clydeside Shipbuilding in the inter-war period", in: Dickson, A. (Ed) "Capital and Class in Scotland", Edinburgh, John Donald Ltd 1982.
- 109 During the course of the war 18 million tons of shipping had been lost, of which only about two thirds had been made up by new building. Pelling, H. "Modern Britain 1885-1955", London, Cardinal 1974, pl70.
- 110 "If the American reserve fleet is excluded, the proportion of world tonnage over twenty five years old came to nearly 25% in the years around 1950 compared with just over 17% in 1935."
Cairncross, A.K. and Parkinson, J.R. "The Shipbuilding Industry", Chapter in: Burn, D. (Ed) "The Structure of British Industry" Vol.2, Cambridge, CUP 1958, p97.
- 111 Estimated to be as large as 20% less efficient, than the pre-war average, between 1945-50. Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, United Nations Vol8 No.9, September 1954.
- 112 McGoldrick, J. (1982) op cit, pl.
- 113 The Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer (S.M.E.), April 1945.
- 114 S.M.E., April 1945.
- 115 W.S.A. minutes, 23rd January 1945.
- 116 Boilermakers Monthly Report, General Secretary's Remarks, September 1945.
- 117 S.M.E., March 1945.
- 118 S.M.E., July 1945.
- 119 S.M.E., May 1945.
- 120 Letter from T.S.A. to District Shipyard Controller, 6th June

1946, held in Tyne and Wear Archive.

- 121 W.S.A. minutes, 31st December 1945.
- 122 By October 1947 this unemployment in the northern region amounted to 2,000 men and youths normally employed in the industry. S.M.E., October 1947.
- 123 Boilermakers Annual Report 1945 to 1949, membership returns.
- 124 Boilermakers Annual Report 1945, General Secretary's Remarks.
- 125 W.S.A. minutes, 23rd May 1947.
- 126 W.S.A. minutes, 6th January 1947. Further to this it was explained that because of its temporary nature a number of facilities had been omitted from the yard, including:
 - Frame turning equipment
 - Plumbers shop
 - Blacksmiths shop
 - Drawing office, etc.
- 127 S.M.E., August 1945.
- 128 Shepherd, R.B. "Developments in British Merchant Shipbuilding" in "Shipbuilding and Shipping Record", 29th August 1946.
- 129 "With the co-operation of the Admiralty merchant shipyard manual welding plant ... was increased threefold between 1942-1944." Shepherd, R.B. op cit.
- 130 S.M.E., July 1947: "The Future of Welding in Ship Construction".
- 131 B.M.R. June 1949: Letter from Bro. D. McGarvey, dated 27th May 1949.
- 132 B.M.R. June 1947: Letter from Bro. J. Boyd Clydebank No.2.
- 133 B.M.R. June 1947.
- 134 See: Roberts, I.P. "The Labour Process in the Shipbuilding Industry", unpublished B.A. dissertation, University of Durham Department of Sociology 1982.
- 135 Colin Crouch has argued that:
 - "The pattern of industrial relations bequeathed by the extraordinary arrangements of war-time mobilization ...

contained a typical British patchwork of measures combining to form a new compromise between the classes. Labour's strength within polity and economy was considerably strengthened by full employment and, more ambiguously, by union participation in official machinery. The potentially disruptive implications of the former were held in check by the generation of a new national consensus (based on war priorities, the construction of the welfare state, the incorporation of the unions, the ending of party political conflict over industrial relations) which included union leaders who were, in turn, powerful enough to impose order on their members."

Colin Crouch (1979) *op cit*, pp27-28.

- 136 S.M.E., August 1947.
- 137 Boilermakers Monthly Report, General Secretary's Remarks, October 1945.
- 138 Mark Hodgson's speech at TUC 1945 on the 40 hour issue.
- 139 B.A.R. 1945, General Secretary's Remarks.
- 140 B.A.R. 1949, General Secretary's Remarks.
- 141 B.A.R. 1949, General Secretary's Remarks. It is significant that Bedeauxism rather than Taylorism is mentioned specifically, this reference has a double significance. Firstly as Craig Littler has argued, during the inter-war period "Bedeauxism became the most commonly used system of managerial control in British Industry". Secondly the reference to Bedeauxism embodies a polemical point in that the system was largely discredited during the war by Bedeaux's close links with the Nazis.
See: Littler, C.R. "The Developments of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies", London, Heinemann 1982, esp. Chapter 8.
- 142 Paper read before the North East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders, 11th January 1946, reprinted in S.S.R., 24th January 1946.
- 143 Ibid
- 144 Ibid
- 145 Ibid My emphasis. The reference to scientific management as a new technique is interesting and perhaps reflects its new found importance in the post war world as a technique advocated by the dispensers of Marshall aid.

- 146 Ibid
- 147 Hodgson, M. "The Outlook of the Craftsman", Broadcast on BBC radio Sunday 26th October 1947. Reprinted in B.M.R., November 1947.
- 148 Ibid
- 149 Ibid
- 150 B.M.R., May 1948, General Secretary's Remarks. From 3rd May 1948 E.J. Hill took over as General Secretary from Sir Mark Hodgson.
- 151 B.M.R., May 1949.
- 152 B.M.R., June 1948, General Secretary's Remarks.
- 153 W.S.A. minutes, 4th March 1949.
- 154 In this connection, see: Cipolla, C.M.C. (Ed) "The Fontana Economic History of Europe: Contemporary Economies - 1", Glasgow, Fontana 1976, and Eatwell, J. "Whatever Happened to Britain", London, BBC 1982.
- 155 Flinn, M.W. "An Economic and Social History of Britain Since 1700", London, Macmillan 1970, p399.
- 156 The difficulty in obtaining long term investment is situated by Aaronovitch et al within the fraction between finance and industrial capital as a specific feature of British Capitalism. Aaronovitch, S. et al. "The Political Economy of British Capitalism", London, McGraw-Hill 1981, esp. Chapters 6 and 7.
- 157 Burawoy, M. "Towards a Marxist Theory of the Labour Process: Braverman and Beyond" in Politics and Society, Vol.8, 1978.

Table

Percentage of workers, specified trades, in the major yards in the North Eastern Region: 1942.

RIVER Yard	Holders On		Riveters (hand)		Riveters (pneumatic)	
	A	B	A	B	A	B
WEAR						
S.P. Austin	6.45	3.5	14.4	7.8	0.5	0.3
Bartram	9.2	5.3	18.6	10.7	2.5	1.4
J. Crown & Sons	5.1	3.6	8.6	6.1	0.8	0.6
W. Doxford	8.2	4.3	1.1	0.9	12.4	6.6
J. Laing	10.1	5.9	4.1	2.4	5.7	3.3
W. Pickersgill	9.8	4.9	12.6	6.3	6.5	3.2
Short Bros	12.0	6.7	7.9	4.4	6.8	3.8
J.L. Thompson	6.7	4.0	4.4	2.7	5.2	3.1
TYNE						
W.G. Armstrong						
Whitworth	6.2	3.0	1.1	0.5	11.0	5.3
Hawthorne						
Leslie	7.4	4.45	5.6	3.4	5.5	3.4
Palmers	1.9	1.0	3.0	1.6	0.9	0.5
Readhead	7.95	3.8	3.7	1.8	9.3	4.4
Swan Hunter						
(Wallsend)	1.6	1.0	4.4	2.9	9.7	5.5
Swan Hunter						
(Neptune)	4.0	2.3	0.7	0.4	n/a	n/a
Vickers						
Armstrong	2.2	1.5	0.5	0.4	4.2	2.9
TEES						
Furness	6.4	3.6	9.7	5.4	3.2	1.8
Wm Gray & Co	7.6	3.9	8.8	4.4	7.4	3.8
Stockton Con Co	4.9	3.6	4.1	3.0	n/a	n/a
Teesside Bridge						
& Engineer Wks	11.1	5.7	6.5	3.3	8.7	4.4

Continued overleaf

Key:

A = % of skilled workforce

B = % of total workforce

Table (continued)

Percentage of workers, specified trades, in the major yards in the North Eastern Region: 1942.

RIVER Yard	Platers		Welders	
	A	B	A	B
WEAR				
S.P. Austin	15.5	8.4	0.8	0.4
Bartram	22.0	12.0	2.1	1.2
J. Crown & Sons	11.3	8.1	3.5	2.5
W. Doxford	20.7	11.0	4.2	2.2
J. Laing	21.7	12.7	3.2	1.9
W. Pickersgill	14.4	7.2	1.9	0.9
Short Bros	17.8	9.9	4.5	2.5
J.L. Thompson	18.7	11.2	5.4	3.2
TYNE				
W.G. Armstrong				
Whitworth	16.7	8.0	2.0	0.9
Hawthorne				
Leslie	13.95	8.4	4.1	2.5
Palmers	6.0	3.3	2.4	1.3
Readhead	17.9	8.5	5.1	2.4
Swan Hunter				
(Wallsend)	11.4	7.5	7.1	4.6
Swan Hunter				
(Neptune)	11.6	6.6	8.5	4.6
Vickers				
Armstrong	9.0	6.15	5.2	3.5
TEES				
Furness	14.4	7.9	4.2	2.3
Wm Gray & Co	15.5	7.9	1.8	0.9
Stockton Con Co	12.2	8.9	9.3	6.8
Teesside Bridge				
& Engineer Wks	10.7	5.4	7.4	3.8

Key:

A = % of skilled workforce

B = % of total workforce

CHAPTER FOUR

Towards the Eighties

Part I

Approaching the Long Boom

In the last chapter it was noted that for those connected with the shipbuilding industry the expectation was that after the war a slump in demand would follow a brief "boom" to make good wartime destruction, as was the case after World War I. This view was also shared by those taking a somewhat wider view of economic prospects. Thus the economist Samuelson predicted in 1943 the probability that for the U.S. economy, which was in a far stronger position than the UK, the post-war period would bring a

"... nightmarish combination of the worst features of inflation and deflation ... there would be ushered in the greatest period of unemployment and industrial dislocation which any economy has ever faced." (1)

A similar preoccupation with the developments that occurred after World War I led Joseph Schumpeter to suggest in 1945 that:

"The all but general opinion seems to be that capitalist methods will be unequal to the task of reconstruction. (It is) not open to doubt that the decay of capitalist society is very far advanced." (2)

However, with the benefit of hindsight it is easy to see that these views were mistaken, not because they were unrealistic at the time, but rather because longer term processes within the world system combined with specific forms of political action to ensure that history would not simply repeat itself. A key argument in an earlier chapter was that the ferocity of the

inter-war depressions was fuelled in part by the decline in British hegemony and the disinclination of the only other power who could have assumed that hegemony, the USA, to do so (3). In this situation there was almost a temporary retreat from the expansion of the modern World System as states "defended" themselves by measures of "economic nationalism" (4). In the aftermath of the Second World War the relative impoverishment of Europe and the indebtedness of Britain to the USA ensured that if the American economy was to avoid serious depression its only option was to become the "sponsor" of the growth of the world capitalist system.

This was not, as we have seen, self-evident by the end of the war, when as Armstrong et al have argued there were two possible options facing the USA:

"At one extreme was the option of exploiting to the hilt the position of economic dominance achieved by the United States. This would be reflected in insistence on absolute freedom of penetration of U.S. goods, with no attempt to help the reconstruction of production inside these countries. At the other extreme the United States could concentrate on the fastest possible recovery in these economies on the grounds that this would be the best guarantee of an expanding market for U.S. trade and investment in the long term." (5)

In the short term the former option was adopted with aid to Europe and Japan limited to emergency relief. The ending of the Lend-Lease scheme to Britain necessitated the negotiation of the "dollar loan" from the USA, and to a smaller extent Canada. But such was the relative strength of the USA both industrially and

fiscally that the loan was to little avail, disappearing as currency speculation rather than forming any basis for capital investment. Moreover the terms of the loan further exacerbated the problem of American (over)dominance:

"The terms were onerous, one currency could only be exchanged for another under strict control. The loan required almost immediate convertability of sterling, into other currencies without government restrictions, as a condition for its acceptance. The loan arrived in 1946, at the same time as Germany and other European countries were presenting the United States and the United Kingdom governments enormous problems with financing their imports. Once the pound was declared convertible, the entire dollar loan disappeared in exchange speculations." (6)

Britain could ill afford to "pay her way" in the reconstruction of Europe, having sold assets and incurred enormous debt during the war:

"War damage at home and to shipping amounted to some £3 billion. Overseas assets worth more than another £1 billion had been sold or lost and the income from foreign investments halved. The external debt had been increased by £3.3 billion. The export trade had been halved and exports were paying for less than a fifth of imports." (7)

By 1947 it was becoming clear not only that Britain could do little to regenerate the European economy but also that aid needed to be sought in order to reconstruct her own economy. Indeed the continuing problems of all European economies led to a realisation that:

"rehabilitation of the economic structure of Europe quite evidently will require a much longer time and greater effort than has been foreseen ...

... The truth of the matter is that Europe's requirements for the next three or four years of ... essential products - principally from America - are so much greater than her present ability to pay that she must have substantial additional help." (8)

The launching of the Marshall plan indicated the official recognition by American statesmen of their "de facto" role as the hegemonic world power, and whilst much has been made of the Marshall plan as a "Truman Doctrine in action" it was the economic self-interest of the USA rather than issues of ideological principle which forced the change of approach. However it should be noted that such economic self-interest was framed around and consciously addressed to a world within which a substantial non-capitalist bloc existed. As a senior US diplomatic officer stated at the time in commenting upon the prospects for Europe:

"If these areas are allowed to spiral downwards into economic anarchy, than at best they will drop out of the United States' orbit and try an independent nationalistic policy; at worst they will swing into the Russian orbit. We will then face the world alone. What will be the cost in dollars and cents of our armaments and our economic isolation? I do not see how we could possibly avoid a depression far greater than that of 1929-32 and crushing taxes to pay for the direct commitments we should be forced to make around the world." (9)

The USA had at long last begun to orientate itself towards the world not only as a state amongst others but as the global representative of capitalism. For as a contemporary US official put it,

"If the American program for world trade were to fail, its failure would hasten the spread of nationalization among the other countries of the world ... We cannot insulate ourselves against the movements that sweep around the globe. If every other major nation were to go Socialist, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to preserve real private enterprise in the United States." (10)

The solution to the problems of the US economy and those of the other capitalist countries was seen to lie, unlike during the inter-war period, in the rapid growth of international production and trade.

"The general interest of US business and finance in the post-war period, perceived as such from 1947 onwards at least, was that the capitalist world should expand rapidly, with as open access as possible for US commodities and capital." (11)

The rise of the USA as the state exercising hegemony over the capitalist world should not just be seen in terms of a quantitative rise in its importance and a fall in the importance of Britain. Rather the form of the basis of that hegemony had changed from a state enmeshed in the responsibilities of colonial administration to one whose domination was built upon economic imperialism without the attendant complexities of direct colonial government. This meant a change in the basis of "control" exercised through that hegemony; no longer was the detail inter- and intra-state cultural tinkering of the "divide and rule" tactic necessary, rather the monoculture of capital and commodity control would suffice.

The preconditions and implications of this state of affairs were profound. Not only could the "economics of imperialism" (12) be extended more easily than colonial occupation, but the rate of such expansion could become cumulative. In this way and effectively for the first time the "equality" before the market of all people of the non-eastern bloc world was a real potential.

That these changes were reinforced by and articulated through technical change cannot be denied. Such changes affected not only aggregate figures of economic growth but were experienced as rapid changes in lifestyle of millions of people. So great have the changes in the post-war world been that Margaret Mead has spoken of the supersession of the concept of migration in space with that of "migration in time". In this context she suggests that a profound change in the relationship between the generations has occurred; the changes she outlines are worth noting.

"Within two decades, 1940-60, events occurred that have irrevocably altered human beings' relationships to other human beings and to the natural world. The invention of the computer, the successful application of atomic fission and fusion in both military and civil fields, the discovery of the biochemistry of the living cell, exploration of the planet's surface, the extreme acceleration of population growth ... the breakdown in the organisation of cities, the beginning of man's destruction of his own natural environment, the linking up of all parts of the world by means of jet propelled flight and television, the building of the first satellites and man's first ventures into space, the newly realised possibilities of unlimited atomic energy and synthetic raw materials, and, in the more advanced countries, the transformation of the age-old problems of production into problems of distribution and consumption - all these have brought about a drastic, irreversible division between the generations." (13)

We shall return to the issue of the relationship between the generations at a later point, but the important factor to note about the last quotation is the magnitude of the changes outlined and the extent of the geographical penetration of such changes. It is clear that the effects of these changes go beyond advanced capitalist countries.

"In the 1930s, when one arrived in a New Guinea village, the first requests were for medicine, as someone came forward with a festering wound or bad laceration, and for trade goods - razor blades, fishhooks, salt, adze blades, cloth. The European was expected to bring material objects from the outside world and, if he stayed, to make it easier for the village people to obtain these goods. But in 1967 the first conversation went:

"Have you a tape recorder?"

"Yes, why?"

"We have heard other people's singing on the radio and we want other people to hear ours."

A major shift. Through the spread of a world culture of transistor radios and democratic theories about the value of each small culture, the people of Tambunam had heard New Guinea music, which it was now Australian-United Nations government policy to broadcast, and they had come to feel that they could participate, on an equal footing in this new world of broadcasting." (14)

The world system in the post-war world was to become much more than a system of the exchange of goods. However, we are getting ahead of ourselves. In returning to a consideration of the circumstances at the beginning of the post-war period we must now look at another of the ~~preconditions~~ of the long boom in the advanced capitalist countries, namely the labour force. In the reconstruction of Europe, American control of the "purse strings" ensured that in most countries the autonomous part played by the organisations of labour would be small.

"The Marshall Plan furnished the initial impetus for rebuilding the European economy, but it was only accepted at the cost of abstaining from socialist policies.

Such was the background to the reconstruction and the policies of the trade union and political organisations of the working class in the European countries after the war. They had more or less to fit into it, being too weak to play a determining role." (15)

The factors contributing to this weakness were various, and on

the whole ensured a degree of compliance with the policies of reconstruction which was largely absent in the wake of the First World War.

"The existence of the large potential reserve army of labour in itself reduced the bargaining strength of the working class, but this was combined with a variety of political factors. Fascism in Germany and Italy, and occupation by the Nazis in other European countries, had weakened labour movements, as had the high unemployment of the inter-war years. The Cold War ideology, Stalinism, and the consequent split between the communists and other sections of the labour movement also weakened the working class ... The terms on which the working class cooperated with capitalism varied from country to country ... but the pattern of compliance and the dominance of social democratic strategies among the working class was general." (16)

Where such compliance was not forthcoming coercion could be and was applied. Where industrial and/or political action was threatened by the working class, the economic climate was created in which capitalist control could be reasserted. In Germany strikes swept through the Ruhr in 1947; initially the issues concerned housing and food but over time the issue of nationalisation also came to the fore. At its height the strike wave involved 350,000 workers and as well as mass demonstrations Miners operated an effective "go-slow" when at work. During the strike wave the US Governor Newman said in a broadcast:

"In the US Congress there is a distinct inclination to oppose further shipment of food to Germany. This can be traced back to rumours of strikes, threats of strikes and a certain resistance in behaviour to the authorities. Strikes which endanger the policies of the occupying powers, or interfere with their plans will not be tolerated ... I have the power to cut the rations of anyone involved in work unrest ... this would be drastic and extend for an indefinite period of time." (17)

In Italy a deflationary policy period from 1948 onwards effectively quelled industrial unrest. In France, the autumn of 1947 saw a general strike to which the government responded by introducing legislation carrying penalties for "interfering with the right to work". They also called up 80,000 army reservists and Police broke up picket lines and occupied Paris' power stations. At its peak the strike involved three million people, but by December this had fallen by a third and on the 9th of that month the strike was called off. In Japan a nine point stabilisation programme was launched under the supervision of American banker Joseph Dodge. As a direct result of the retrenchment measures 700,000 workers were sacked. Dodge noted at the time that:

" ... the standard of living has probably been permitted to go too high ... (higher unemployment) ... will in turn lead to increased efficiency of labour and increased production."
(18)

In the USA itself there was a strike wave in early 1946 and wages rose by 15%. However by May 1946 Truman initiated legislation which gave the government powers to induct strikers and union officials into the Army. This was supplemented in June 1947 by the much more comprehensive Taft-Hartley Act. In all these countries, then, there was clear evidence of an offensive against labour, in some cases by both government and employers. In those countries occupied by allied forces there was often direct evidence of Marshall aid being tied to concessions which were to be extracted from labour. The one country which appeared to

provide an exception to these developments was Britain. As Armstrong et al have argued,

"Despite the anticommunist witch-hunt, and the control exerted by the right-wing leadership, employers in Britain never launched a frontal assault on the labour movement comparable to those in France, Italy, Japan or even the USA. This may actually have weakened the employers in the long run. Complacent, with their markets carved up at home and in the Empire, they failed to launch the kind of "rationalization" drive against the labour movement that was a precondition for the investment booms of the fifties in continental Europe and Japan." (19)

The reasons why no such "assault" on labour was forthcoming are more complex than complacency alone. Firstly the labour surpluses evident in most countries which had experienced occupation of one sort or another were absent in Britain. As one historian has suggested, the slow rate of demobilisation had a double consequence:

"While defense expenditure remained a substantial proportion of gross national product and of the government's budget, the economy was acutely short of labour." (20)

A tight labour market is clearly not the best time for employers to initiate an attack on the conditions of labour. Added to this "objective" factor is also the psychological dimension of "victory" and the changed nature of the state. In continental Europe all of the belligerent powers had at some point been occupied by the enemy, a sense of defeat in both the capitalist and labouring classes made submission to the will of those promoting reconstruction under the Marshall plan more likely. Of more importance than this however was the changed nature of the

state. Nowhere was Marwick's third dimension of war, "participation in the national cause by hitherto underprivileged groups who thereby make social gains" (21), truer than in relation to Britain. The condition of this participation were the incorporation of the representatives of labour and those sympathetic to the "cause" of labour into the state apparatus. Two of the most important features of this incorporation were the co-option of Labour politicians into the coalition government and secondly the increase in importance of those sympathetic to labour in the civil service. In the latter case within the treasury the rise from opposition to orthodoxy of the personage and ideas of J.M. Keynes readily springs to mind. But there were others of more "radical" temperaments who were also to be inducted into the civil service. G.D.H. Cole "found himself, somewhat to his surprise, a temporary civil servant in the Ministry of Labour" (22) organising the "Manpower Survey" of 1940.

It would be wrong to overstate the influence of such "participation" as purely a wartime contingency. However the election of a Labour government in 1945 ensured the continued relevance of a more radical outlook within the state than had been the case in the inter-war period. Certainly in the case of Keynes, his influence remained paramount for most of the period of the "long boom". Underlying his approach to practical economic issues was a philosophy which condemned the "love of

money" as the "moral problem of our age", and thus:

"Keynes's efforts at making capitalism work more effectively had as an ultimate aim, paradoxically, the supersession of capitalist values by higher and more satisfying ones. As he saw it, the real benefit of the almost inevitable advance of abundance was that it would dethrone wealth and material possession as dominating ends of life." (23)

Given all these factors it was unlikely that a successful assault upon the labour movement and conditions and practices at work could have been put together; the "environment" created by the state and the problems of a tight labour market coupled with the dependence of many employers upon government contracts and the "cost plus" system militated against an employer's offensive. However it would be wrong to conclude in the absence of such an offensive that the unbridled aspirations of labour dominated the period of reconstruction. The particular nature of the State and balance of class forces created a self-imposed discipline in the sphere of consumption during the period of austerity. Economic "health" was restored to the nation by sacrifice in the realm of consumption, particularly imported goods, rather than "rationalisation" of production itself. A favourable export market existed enabling the government's initial target of 175% of pre-war levels to be achieved by 1950 (24). There were however limits to the duration to which working people were prepared to give their voluntary consent to austerity, and pressures from this quarter, combined with those bemoaning the burden of taxes as a stifling of incentive to enterprise, reduced the Labour Party's majority at the general election of February

1950 and was a large element in its defeat in the election of 1951.

With the change of government was to come an eventual change of emphasis. The controls on individual consumption were to be lifted, the consumer boom based on, and giving form to, the long upswing of the post-war world economy was about to begin. In this movement Europe was to follow in the footsteps of America.

"One of the most notable features of the present upswing in Western Europe is the great increase in purchases of consumer durable goods. The expansion of the West European motor car industry was largely destined for European markets, and concurrently there has been a growing sale of furniture, electrical appliances and other durable household goods which, when added to the increase in purchases of motor-cars constitutes a veritable wave of consumer buying."
(25)

The long boom was to enable the continuation of consensus policy in both the political (26) and industrial relations (27) spheres. It would appear then that the "historical compromise" of the English class system had once again become the defining quality in this period of change (28). We shall return to the market conditions for shipbuilding during the period of the long boom in the next chapter. Now however we must address ourselves to the changing nature of the working class, specifically upon Wearside but with inevitable reference to wider contexts.

Part II

One Side of the Employment Relationship

There is a difficulty for anyone attempting to outline qualitative, as well as quantitative, changes in the lifestyle of the working class. It is an irony that this difficulty is often consciously acknowledged by writers as problematic and then, it would seem, almost ignored in their substantive material. Perhaps one of the best examples of this whole problem is available in the classic work of Richard Hoggart, "The Uses of Literacy". The author states on the first page of the first chapter that:

"... difficulties of definition are less troublesome than are those of avoiding the romanticisms which tempt anyone who discusses "the workers" or "the common people", and these romanticisms deserve to be mentioned first. For they increase the danger of over-stressing the admirable qualities of earlier working class culture and its debased condition today. The two over-emphases tend to reinforce each other, and so the contrast is often exaggerated." (29)

Having noted this pitfall the author goes on to outline the "core of working-class attitudes":

"The more we look at working class life, the more we try to reach the core of working-class attitudes, the more surely does it appear that the core is a sense of the personal, the concrete, the local: it is embodied in the idea of, first, the family and, second, the neighbourhood ... Where almost everything else is ruled from the outside, is chancy and likely to knock you down when you least expect it, the home is yours and real: the warmest welcome is still "Mek y'self at 'ome"." (30)

These traditional virtues are at a later point contrasted to the processes that are increasingly "ensuring that working-people are culturally robbed":

"Inhibited now from ensuring the "degradation" of the masses economically, the logical processes of competitive commerce, favoured from without by the whole climate of the time and from within assisted by the lack of direction, the doubts and uncertainty before their freedom of working-people themselves, are ensuring that working people are culturally robbed. Since these processes can never rest, the holding down, the constant pressure not to look outwards and upwards, becomes a positive thing, becomes a new and stronger form of subjection; this subjection promises to be stronger than the old because the chains of cultural subordination are both easier to wear and harder to strike away than those of economic subordination. "We are betrayed by what is false within", by our common weaknesses ..." (31)

The theme of loss of something valuable in the face of increasing material prosperity is one that is repeated in many accounts of the working class in the post-war period. From sophisticated versions which viewed the working class from a distance to more "folksy" portrayals in the classic mould of Hoggart there seemed to be emerging the potential for a consensus that the working class had become and was increasingly becoming not like it once was. The causes of these changes were not agreed upon. For Marcuse changes in technology and the labour process were the material basis upon which a change in consciousness was affected:

" ... Changes in the character of work and the instruments of production change the attitude and the consciousness of the labourer, which become manifest in the widely discussed "social and cultural integration" of the labouring class with capitalist society. Is this a change in consciousness only? The affirmative answer frequently given by Marxists seems strangely inconsistent. Is such a fundamental change in consciousness understandable without assuming a corresponding change in the "societal existence"? Granted even a high degree of ideological independence, the links which tie this change to the transformation of the productive process militate against such an interpretation.

Assimilation in needs and aspirations, in the standard of living, in leisure activities, in politics derives from an integration in the plant itself, in the material process of production. It is certainly questionable whether one can speak of "voluntary integration" (Serge Mallet) in any other than an ironical sense." (32)

Blackwell and Seabrook argue that the "damage" done to the working class cannot be seen to stem directly from the material gains made by the class in the post-war period. Rather,

"The question is not whether certain life-enhancing or labour-saving objects and artefacts lighten people's lives (they most surely do) but what other function, other than their ostensible useful purpose, they serve? That is, what else is sold alongside, within and under these products? What concealed pains and forfeits are involved in their production right from the moment when the raw materials are extracted and processed until they appear in all their shining innocence in the world of goods." (33)

The effects of such changes lead the authors to conclude that "what can be said with some certainty is that a moment which offered certain possibilities has definitively passed" (34). Whilst others have situated these changes differently, for example Martin sees changes in the post-war culture of the working class as representing the ritualised realisation of a move from "control" to "liminality" (35), the implicit question in all these analyses is "What Went Wrong?" (36).

This question is central and forms the negative basis upon which many analyses of the post-war working class have been developed. It can be found not only within the sophisticated ruminations of sociologists and other social theorists but also within more localised studies.

"The question was asked, "What went wrong?". If in 1939 and

earlier, before the break up in the pattern of working class life, the heroic women ruled the roost, how do you account for the transition to the notorious bingo women who neglect their children and who have allowed family life to go to pot on the large new housing estates in Sunderland and elsewhere?" (37)

Is the question fair, given that its basis is a negative one? Are we as the apologists of Socialism or the gatekeeper of moral values adopting a role similar to that ascribed by Gouldner to Howard Becker as the "zoo-keeper of deviance", in which Becker's school of deviance

" ... expresses the romanticism of the zoo curator who preeningly displays his rare specimens. And like the zoo-keeper, he wishes to protect his collection; he does not want spectators to throw rocks at the animals behind the bars. But neither is he eager to tear down the bars and let the animals go. The attitude of these zoo-keepers of deviance is to create a comfortable and humane Indian Reservation, a protected social space, within which these colourful specimens may be exhibited, unmolested and unchanged." (38)

In the place of the deviant is the pre-war working class made exotic by its "migration in time". Nevertheless the zoo-keeper tag would seem relevant given the negative appraisal apparent in the terms of the question. The species appears to have escaped from (or is it entered?) its "iron cage" and, in pursuance of its libidinal urges, has lost its purity and produced mongrel offspring. Metaphor can be taken too far however! In order to appraise the changes that have come about in the post-war working class, and especially in so far as these changes relate to the division of labour, we must return to the particular situation of Wearside and chart those changes historically.

In Chapter 2 it was argued that the occupational community of shipbuilding workers in the inter-war period on Wearside was "reproduced" in relatively stable physical boundaries, which were structured hierarchically and through which networks existed which ensured local loyalties with respect to individual yards in times of loose labour markets. In its operation the physical density of the shipbuilding community served to ensure a particular "moral" density amongst the workforce and their families. It will be useful to retain these characteristics of the inter-war community in mind whilst we outline some of the changes in the post-war community.

Physical Location and Housing

Whilst the local authority had pioneered some attempt at slum clearance in the late 1930s, it was in the post-war period that a massive house building programme was initiated. In 1945 the council made immediate plans to put up nearly 1,000 temporary homes and within two years to build some 3,000 permanent ones. By 1947 a vast programme was under way:

"More than 20,000 houses in spreading estates were built in the twenty years after the War, acre upon acre of red brick stretching over the green fields and farms that had once surrounded the town. Sunderland almost doubled its built up area, and the change was recognized in the extension of the borough boundaries that took place in 1951 and again in 1967." (39)

Whilst initially many of these houses were to replace the 12,800 (40) homes destroyed or damaged by German bombing, in

later years their availability meant a decrease in population density in central areas and areas adjoining the river:

"In the 1951-61 period, therefore, even though the population of the whole town showed a small increase, eleven of the eighteen wards showed a decrease in population and all eleven were centrally located. By comparison the peripheral areas clearly show two rings of expansion: with greater rates further out and lesser rates closer to the centre." (41)

These changes can be seen graphically in tables (i) and (ii). Of particular importance is the outflow of population from the wards bordering the river, Monkwearmouth, Deptford, Bishopwearmouth, Roker and Pallion in which were particular concentrations of shipyard workers. Added to this is the rise of structurally separate dwellings in all these areas. In other words there was an absolute outflow of population from these "shipbuilding" wards accompanied by a relative dilution in the physical concentration of the population remaining in these areas.

The significance of these changes goes far beyond a simple change in the location of dwellings. Rather, changes were wrought in the ecological structure of the community itself. One of the most important of these emerges from Brian Robson's study. He mentions in passing what for him is merely a methodological problem but which for our purposes indicates a development of far greater significance. This is the effect that council housing has upon the relationship between social class (as measured by the Registrar General's categories) and rateable value.

"... the inclusion of the council sector robs ... rating valuations of much of their diagnostic value." (42)

Robson goes on to show that the reason for this is the lack of correlation between social class and rateable value in the council house sector. He does this by dividing the census enumeration districts into three groups: those which include 90% or more of private houses (Private); those which include 90% or more council housing (Council) and those which include less than 90% of either type (Mixed). A high correlation between rating values and social class can be observed in the Private sector but this breaks down in the Council sector:

Correlation between rating values and Social Class

a) Private sector	r=0.870	
b) Mixed sector	r=0.767	d) Whole town r=0.606
c) Council sector	r=0.210	

As Robson suggests,

"The coefficients for the private and mixed sectors are significant at the 1% confidence level whereas that for the council sector is not significant even at the 5% level. Thus, while social class may vary quite markedly from one council estate to another, rating values show little if any change and what variation does occur is not necessarily associated with the social composition of the estate." (43)

The author might have added that this decoupling of social class and rateable value occurred not only between estates but also within estates. In other words the skilled shipbuilding worker (Registrar General's category III) moving from privately rented accommodation in Pallion to a council house in Hylton Castle could find himself living next door to an unskilled worker (category V) with a larger family and therefore larger house (44). In such a situation then not only was the shipbuilding

worker confronted with a community in which there was a far smaller density of other shipbuilding workers but also the geographical structuring of socio-economic groups was no longer directly established, via the market, in residential patterns. Both these locational and residential changes made the maintenance of occupational identity as the master status, and the specific moral density of the locale, problematic. Given this development Hopkins is in one sense mistaken when he suggests that:

"While provision of housing for those who needed it was an urgent priority, very little building was allowed for owner-occupiers. This was understandable, but it had two results; the very large council estates were socially monochrome in colour; there was very little social mix and very little provision for the kind of houses that managerial types would want when new industries were attracted to the town." (45)

The estates were composed primarily of manual workers, but in terms of the very important divisions between such workers the social mix was perhaps greater, in residential patterns, than in the more hierarchical patterns of the older occupational community. It is exactly this social mix, indicating a potentially heterogeneous moral order, which people were concerned about in Dennis's study of opposition to slum clearance in 1965:

"It all depends when we go an where they put waa. When they pull it down you got to go where they say. There is that many people mixed up! Half of them are making slums of them already. You can't pick and choose. They dinnit seem to bother. They seem to mix the good 'uns with the bad 'uns."

"We hope we'll get amongst nice clean people - but we won't! We'll be put among dirty people to give them an

example!"

"We know the new houses are nice, but its who you get beside." (46)

The moral overtones of "clean" and "dirty" people, good 'uns and bad 'uns, of "many people all mixed up" are obvious and point to one of the features which is less popular amongst the champions of the pre-war working class, namely its basis in hierarchy. The hierarchy of occupation, of residential location and the moral division between "respectable" and "rough" were all symmetrically located in the occupational community which dissolved the boundaries of home and work. The dilution of the density of the shipbuilding occupational culture, particularly amongst those moving out to the new estates, put a question mark against the occupational identity of a worker as the master status for himself and his family. The moral order of the community was no longer symmetrically located within the tight geographical limits of the physical "occupational" community.

The pattern of residential location was further complicated as the "stability" of the long boom became evident to workers themselves, who in increasing numbers sought to buy their own homes. This development was noted by Hopkins in commenting upon the vast extension of public authority housing in the immediate post-war period:

"Then, it was not expected that a time would come round about the early 'sixties when quite large numbers of newly married people who stemmed from well established Sunderland artisan families would no longer want council houses. In many cases it could almost be said that the bride-to-be could insist to the draughtsman, young technician or skilled

worker that they must go into an owner-occupied house immediately after the honeymoon. At this time there were very few houses available for buyers within the County Borough; houses between Durham and Sunderland could be had for nearly a whole thousand pounds less, and so it was that, in the sixties, a very large number of the most promising young men and their wives went to live at Shiney Row, Belmont, Carrville, Houghton-le-Spring and Penshaw. The men, and in most cases their wives too, continued to work in Sunderland, but of course, their rather well turned out children would be educated by the County, and Sunderland was left without any social mix on its housing estates." (47)

The move out of the immediate locality of the workplace was also facilitated by the availability of transport. In the initial phases of council development the provision of adequate bus services became one important issue for those opposing the slum clearance programme. A survey by Sunderland Corporation Transport Department found that amongst families transferred from the Dock Street clearance area to Town End Farm estate total weekly journeys increased by 231% (48). The later move towards private housing ownership was accompanied by a massive increase in car ownership.

"The expansion in car ownership began in the fifties, but accelerated rapidly in the early sixties: 2,307,000 cars and vans in 1950; 3,609,000 in 1955; 5,650,000 in 1960; 9,131,000 in 1965; 11,802,000 in 1970." (49)

It is no coincidence that the period in which private car ownership "took off" was also that in which Hopkins noted the increasing tendency towards owner occupation of private housing. The continuation of the long boom had lasted through a period from which the initial financial benefits had gradually become associated with changes in attitudes; the rise of consumerism

took place in a context in which boom conditions began to be seen, especially by the post 1945 generations, as normal. However we are getting ahead of ourselves. The importance of changed attitudes will be dealt with later. The main point to stress is the fragmentation of residential locality as a central element in the occupational community. Furthermore in the case of Sunderland such geographical dispersion had two distinct moments (phases and aspects), the first being the expansion of council housing and slum clearance projects, the second being the increasing inclination towards home ownership amongst the skilled working class. If the allocation of council property in some senses jumbled up the social "structure" of location, the move towards private housing re-emphasised divisions between manual workers by putting far greater distance between skilled and unskilled than had hitherto been the case. Moreover private home ownership opened up divisions other than those based solely upon locality.

"The increase in home ownership sets up new divisions within the wage-earning population: between those who thus acquire a small stake in the rising value of land and those who, as council or private tenants, are the victims of this inflation." (51)

Neither of these two changes were conducive to the retention of work-based identity as a master status and therefore to the continuance of a specific occupational community. The shifts that occurred in residential location ensured that there was no longer any guarantee of the unproblematic integration of the work

and non-work spheres of life. Increasingly the distance between the "small life worlds" of work and the ecological community presented the possibility of larger "gear shifts" within this multi-world existence (52).

Attitudes and Social Change

There is a series of problems associated with talking about the attitudes or consciousness of the working class. Firstly, is a class a suitable "subject" or "object" in which to locate a specific consciousness? This problem is associated with a further conundrum - that in speaking about changes in the consciousness and attitudes of a given class, one might ask "what is the benchmark from which the "change" has occurred?". Finally one should consider what might be construed as evidence of specific consciousness and attitudes. These questions are all pertinent given the continuing debate about the nature of the post-war working class, a debate fuelled by changing economic and political circumstances, the long boom and its collapse, consensus politics and the creation of Thatcherism.

On consideration our first problem turns out to be a false one. For it is not a question of whether class is a suitable subject in which to locate a specific consciousness; class, as we saw in the critique of Braverman in Chapter One, is never just comprised of an objective moment. In reality class always implies a consciousness, as:

"... a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness." (53)

Again in reality the consciousness of the working (or any other) class will be far less unitary than any ideal typical formation of "true" class consciousness. The notion of false consciousness

is too often used as a bucket with which to bail out a "leaking theoretical vessel". The complexities of class and consciousness point to the fact that not all attitudes and action are dictated solely by class position (54). This implies that any attempt to portray a "generic" outline of working class consciousness will necessarily assume the status of an ideal type, a one-sided accentuation of "the essential characteristics and tendencies of the phenomenon in question" (55). This is not to say that such views do not contain certain elements of reality, but rather that in the empirical situation the totality of individual and collective agencies involve elements which will often be self-contradictory.

The second problem of speaking of change in the working class is eased once we realise that any generic conceptions are likely to be ideal typical. Given this, our benchmark can be outlined with reference to evidence internal to our individual study, as in our consideration of the inter-war position and the importance of the "objective" position of the physical occupational community, and/or externally, with reference to the wider literature. However it is perhaps easier when, as in this case, the ideal type is referred to an empirical example. Focusing on shipbuilding workers on the Wear gives us the potential to use critically the wider accounts of the changes in the post-war working class.

This empirical reference point is particularly important in relation to our third problem, of what is to count as evidence for class attitudes and consciousness. The problem is often one of the meaning of social action. For example, is strike activity always an indicator of "true" working class consciousness? As will be argued below, the meaning of such social action can vary widely with context. Therefore any purely objective indices of class consciousness are likely to obscure as much as they reveal. In order to understand the meaning and significance of action as an indicator of consciousness, one must get closer to the subject and attempt to "re-cover" the inter-subjective significance of action and perception. Such a move, when compared with more general accounts of the consciousness of the working class, can provide a dialogue out of which hopefully something of significance can be constructed. In attempting this task I will actively use my own biographical experiences, in as much as these are suggestive of problematics and avenues of inquiry (56).

Firstly, however, it is perhaps useful to look at some of the terms of the debate which have shaped the discussion as to the (changing) nature of the working class in the post-war world (57). Eldridge has suggested that the search for the "new working class":

"... is growing to be as long and tortuous as the quest for the Holy Grail." (58)

That such a search has been a constant preoccupation of sociologists in the post-war period should not obscure the

changes in the terms of the debate from the "first wave" surrounding the embourgeoisement thesis and the more recent formulations of Gorz and Seabrook (59). The background of rising affluence has given way to the collapse of the long boom, and to some extent the focus of the debate has changed from centering upon the working class at work to the working class in the political sphere and "what went wrong?" to the extent that Thatcherism has achieved three terms in office.

Of course the view of the working class will differ if the focus is shifted from work to the non-work situation, and more importantly the actual changes in the priorities between these spheres within the class itself, will produce different outlooks. The importance of a growing dissonance between these two spheres, as far as the shipbuilding workers of Wearside are concerned, will be outlined below. However to return to the "first wave" of debate over the post-war working class it is perhaps useful to suggest that this debate was less conclusive than it might have been because of the time at which it developed.

There are two elements to this view. Firstly the apparent stability of the post-war boom as viewed from the early 1960s led some theorists to link too closely and in a mechanistic way the notion of the qualitative change within the working class with the continuing rise of affluence, so that one of the key axes of the debate became the integration of the class on the basis of rising consumption.

" ... the prospects of containment of change, offered by the politics of technological rationality, depend on the prospects of the Welfare State. Such a state seems capable of raising the standard of administered living, a capability inherent in all advanced industrial societies where the streamlined technical apparatus - set up as a separate power over and above the individuals - depends for its functioning on the intensified development and expansion of productivity. Under such conditions, decline of freedom and opposition is not a matter of moral or intellectual deterioration or corruption. It is rather an objective societal process insofar as the production of goods and services make compliance a rational technological attitude." (60)

That such views failed to appreciate the historicity of their own epoch is now, with hindsight, obvious. A second element which served to complicate the "first wave" of the debate about the post-war working class is that quite often the focus on "the worker" disguised the fact that he or she was only post-war in the sense of occupying the "present". Many workers in the 1960s grew up through the experiences of the inter-war period and had presumably carried much of their "world view" (61) forward from that period.

These considerations were particularly important in communities which traditionally had been dominated by a single industry such as shipbuilding. The necessity is pointed to of understanding that qualitative changes arose not only from individual consumerism, but also from the changed context of the community, and that the timescale of changes is longer and more uneven than in many accounts. In considering what changes have occurred one must beware of confusing the ideal typical

construction of the "traditional proletarian worker" for a description of an actually existing past reality. For if this confusion occurs almost any changes will appear as involving some degree of embourgeoisement. As we have already established in Chapter Two, the working class shipbuilding workers on Wearside in the inter-war period were characterised by the politics of local loyalties as much as any wider proletarian consciousness. The complexity of this base line must be kept in mind whilst we attempt to outline some of the general developments in the post-war period.

Firstly, as we have already noted, the physical occupational community was to become increasingly dispersed, and such movement opened up the potential for an increasing "gap" between the world of work and the worlds of the community. Such developments did not however lead to the privatisation of the shipbuilding worker and his family, rather the basis for sociality became less work-based, although the importance of locality remained. Thus for example those workers moving out to the council estates were more likely over time to give their allegiance to the local working men's club than to continue to travel to the area of the former physical occupational community. Similarly for the wives of such workers the locality became (or remained) the dominant feature in sociality; the importance of good neighbours, the local shops as a meeting place, and increasingly the experience of work in their own right served further to exacerbate the distance between the

shipyard worker's family and the specifically occupational community.

If privatisation was not characteristic of those undergoing relocation on Wearside in the post-war period, what about some of the other elements of the embourgeoisement thesis, that both "political" and "industrial" integration would result from the harnessing of technological advances to mass consumer production. It is possible to argue that such a position is fundamentally mistaken and in order to do so we must look more closely at the political and industrial relations "consensus" as it appears in our empirical reference point.

Firstly, it is indeed the case that many of the preoccupations of the inter-war period carried on into the post-war years. We have already noted the expectation that a slump would follow a brief replacement boom. This uncertainty combined with higher than average unemployment in some shipbuilding centres to ensure that defensive action to attempt to preserve jobs was more characteristic than action orientated towards purely economic aspirations. In this sense Wearside appears to represent an extreme example of these concerns. The immediate post-war years brought problems with supplies of materials leading to both layoffs and disputes.

Thus in the winter of 1947 Mr. R. Cyril Thompson complained of the shortage of steel, and warned that:

"The situation will inevitably lead to wholesale unemployment unless it is quickly remedied." (62)

The situation was not to improve quickly however, with the shortages being experienced throughout the 1950s. These shortages and the layoffs they caused were a constant source of friction, and served to remind the workforce of the precarious nature of employment in shipbuilding. Disputes arising out of a shortage of materials were relatively frequent. Thus on 19th August 1952 the Ministry of Labour in the region recorded a strike at Bartrams involving twenty riveters and seventeen holders up. The cause of the strike was recorded as:

"Shortage of steel: some squads could not be absorbed." (63)

However the report went on to comment:

"Failure to absorb all squads occurring for some time: Strike coincided with visit of Mr. A.W. Digby, Civil Head of Admiralty on a fact finding tour of N.E. yards, Bartrams first item on itinerary.

"It may be the walk out was merely a gesture of protest about the steel shortage." (64)

This may have been the case, as the strikers returned the following day even though "some squads still remained unabsorbed"; however "discussions with management" were taking place. It is unlikely that management could offer anything of substance to the riveters as the problem was clearly one of scarcity of supply which had been "occurring for some time". It was not only steel which was in short supply and causing problems. On 26th March 1947 fourteen rivet heaters went on strike causing 28 riveters to be laid off. The cause was reported:

"The coke being used by the Heaters was becoming exhausted and was, for the most part, small and dusty. The heaters complained of this and the firm promised to have this riddled (i.e. the dust shaken off) if they use it until sufficient supplies were received, delivery was expected during the next two days. The heaters complained that this was not satisfactory to them and decided to cease work ... Mr. J.J. O'Donnell, Wearside Delegate of the Boilermakers Society, is aware of the dispute, and states that he is endeavouring to get a resumption as quickly as possible." (65)

Again problems relating to coke supply were not solved quickly, so that by May 1952 there was an almost identical account of a strike, in which fifteen Rivet heaters ceased work, laying off a further fifteen riveters, fifteen holders up and four apprentices.

"Poor quality coke - stock of coke nearly exhausted: heaters complained too much dust in it. Coke riddled and heaters came in 20th only to complain coke too large." (66)

It is important to understand that the quality of coke was the decisive factor in being able to attain and keep the correct heat in the rivet fire. Failure to do this caused frustration and delay not only for the heater but also for the rest of the squad, and thereby led to a fall in piece earnings. Therefore the frustrations felt were real enough, and certainly in the above case could not be put down to over-zealous shop stewards, for as the strike report noted the heaters were "unorganised".

"Only 2 heaters in N.U.G.M.W. - union official (as far as can be ascertained) is not doing much about it." (67)

The continuance of "lay offs", whether induced through shortages or the traditional cyclical fluctuations in the demand for labour, emphasised that action to preserve employment was

still a relevant consideration, and was particularly so where local labour market conditions were loose. This is one factor outlined by G.C. Cameron to account for the fact that between 1946 and 1961, whilst on the Tyne demarcation strikes accounted for only 3% of all strikes, a total of two disputes, on the Wear demarcation strikes accounted for some 43% of the total (68). Linking demarcation to labour market conditions seems a potentially useful strategy, although in relation to Wearside Cameron's suggestion that vertical demarcation occurs when "local unemployment is very low" and that horizontal demarcation occurs "when the level of local unemployment was high" (69) cannot be substantiated. This is so for two reasons. Firstly due to the uneven concentration of demarcation disputes between Wear yards, "two firms employing approximately 25% of the total area labour force accounted for 55% of all Wearside demarcation strikes"(70), therefore the conditions of the local labour market do not operate as a force irrespective of the situations existing within individual yards. Secondly and more importantly however is the fact that the empirical data do not show a distinct pattern or phasing of the two types of demarcation dispute. Thus for example at Bartrams yards horizontal disputes occurred during 1950, 1954, 1958 and vertical disputes at the same yard during 1954 and 1956. At other yards on the Wear vertical disputes took place in 1953, '54 and '56, interspersed with horizontal disputes during 1954, '56 (3), '57 and '58 (2).

Indeed it is hard to sustain the view that vertical disputes were part of any managerial strategy aimed at dilution, or that they represented a response to intractable problems of labour supply. This is particularly so given that 75% of such disputes were settled in under four days and the remaining 25% within seven days (71). Moreover the context of such disputes was often that of meeting a short term contingency. Thus for example a dispute involving 55 welders occurred at Austin and Pickersgills, Southwick yard, on 7th March 1956, where the cause was recorded as:

"Management's refusal to employ a skilled welder on welding operations which were being performed by an apprentice who usually assisted a skilled worker who was absent owing to sickness." (72)

A full return to work was forthcoming the following day, whereupon:

"Assistant District Delegate of the Boilermakers Society (achieved) amicable understanding with employers over dispute." (73)

The context of the dispute was then one in which a skilled worker had "gone off" sick and the dispute was solved quickly. Similarly at Greenwells Dock twenty platers walked out without consulting Management or Delegate on 25th May 1954 following a revelation that during the previous weekend's overtime a general labourer had removed some material from a ship. However as the report stated,

"A demarcation issue. It was ascertained by the platers that a labourer, during the weekend, had performed operations proper to their craft without consulting the

management or Trade Union Officials." (74)

Again the idea of the vertical demarcation dispute as the response of management to labour shortage is not substantiated.

However the point to grasp is, as Geoffrey Roberts has suggested, that rather than seeing demarcation as being directly linked to levels of unemployment it is rather employment insecurity, of which the unemployment level is only one factor, which is of more importance (75). Certainly this would seem to be so with respect to the general level of industrial disputes. Thus when a contraction of orders affected the smaller yards in the North East (i.e. those on the Wear) (76) during the late 1950s the level of man-hours lost as a result of strikes and stoppages of work on the Wear rose dramatically above those in the Tyne district, so that during 1958 and 1959 the number of man-hours lost on the Wear was 91,000 and 24,000 respectively, whereas in the Tyne district the comparable figures were 43,000 and 21,000 (77).

The continuation of employment insecurity, unemployment and the preoccupation with occupational protection on behalf of the workforce ensured that in the shipbuilding industry generally, and perhaps on the Wear in particular, the objective conditions for worker affluence were by 1960 still largely absent. Therefore any discussion of the effect of affluence on the attitudes of these workers would have to take account of the relatively late percolation of the objective conditions of affluence, with

as much emphasis to be put upon continuity of employment and therefore income, as upon a weekly wage.

In pointing to the continuities with the inter-war period in terms of employment insecurity, one should be careful not to give the impression that nothing had changed at all. The fact was that such employment instability persisted in the face of, until the late 1950s, growing demand. Thus by the end of 1956,

"... the Wear had 140 ships on order or under construction worth about £120 million and guaranteeing work for four to five years ahead. "It was a period of almost unexampled prosperity"." (78)

Indeed the following year the high level of demand continued in spite of the fifteen day National strike in March, thus:

"The Wear received the greatest number of orders in its history in a single week period with orders for 11 ships worth £12,000,000 ... " (79)

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the industry had this contradictory character about it. Prophecies of impending doom interspersed with buoyant optimism, the major "problem" facing the industry being seen variously as a declining order book or a shortage of labour with which to meet launch deadlines and thereby cope with the timetabling of a full order book. Both of these views expressed partial truths. The pattern of demand for ships followed not only from the fluctuations of the replacement cycle, but from the less isolationist policies of the major powers and the opposition of the two power blocs of East and West. This coupled with the accelerating expansion of the capitalist world system ensured that rapid relative decline of the British

industry was not immediately translated into absolute decline.

These meta-contexts had a direct effect at the point of production, ensuring that at several important junctures action at the level of nation states militated against any drastic downturn in demand for shipping. In this connection the importance of the Korean war beginning in 1949 can be seen in as far as it turned what was developing into a slump in demand into a boom. Another example of perhaps more importance was the Suez Crisis of 1956, which revived the freight markets in a dramatic way, a development which as we have seen was translated directly into orders for ships (80).

The effect of such indirect "aid" to the industry, coupled with more direct measures such as the Government's £65 million credit aid scheme of 1964, ensured that the terrible slumps of the inter-war period did not re-occur. Moreover in the 1960s the wider economy was also enjoying boom conditions. The balance of power between capital and labour began to swing to the latter's advantage. However if moves towards employment stability and affluence for shipbuilding workers were more hesitant and uneven over time, this very fact seemed to speak of the meanness of the employers who constantly "cried wolf" of the imminent slump of orders, which because of other contingencies did not occur in a general way for another two decades.

How then did these developments represent themselves at the point of production? The first point to stress again is the

uneven and at times contradictory nature of developments. Employment security did not emerge overnight, and the complexity of the moves towards this situation left their mark upon the workforce. However it is possible to indicate some of the changes which began to develop during the 1950s and continued into the next decade.

Whilst the late 1950s saw the continuation of the demarcation dispute as a form of "realistic conflict" (81), the period nevertheless saw the emergence of other types of action concerning some issues which would have been unthinkable in the inter-war period. The first of these indicates the changed position of the foreman and thereby suggests a different balance of forces at the point of production. Thus, for example, a dispute began at Bartram and Sons on 23rd March 1952 which directly involved 72 platers and laid idle another eighty helpers. The cause of the stoppage was recorded as "Attitude of Foreman" (82). It is perhaps worthwhile to quote in full the developments in this dispute until its resolution on 29th March:

"Friday, 21/3/52

Marshland (Wear Shipbuilders Association) unaware of dispute but since has been in contact with manager of the yard who was away yesterday.

Cause of stoppage - - attitude of a foreman, but yard manager not notified of complaint. Platers attended yard this morning but after a meeting amongst themselves decided not to resume work, and the shop stewards were unable to influence them.

Cook (District Union Official) in touch with management. Further meeting of men 4.30 today at which Cook will be present to try to effect a resumption.

24/3/52

Complete resumption following meeting of men with Cook and shop stewards.

Yard conference afternoon of 24/3/52, and indications that management will take disciplinary action against foreman.

26/3/52

Men give management ultimatum that unless foreman removed they would leave the Firm on Friday night.

At a yard meeting, 24/3/52 (Cook, shop steward, management) management (Marshland) at first inclined to take disciplinary action against foreman but after full inquiry decided that this was not warranted and no solution was forthcoming.

Shop stewards and men held meeting 25/3/52 afternoon and decided by 52 votes to 9 that unless foreman removed withdrawal of labour on Friday.

Cook - men are adamant - but if men strike it will be unofficial.

If during discussion Mr. Mellenby, Manager of Yard, had suggested some way out of the impasse such as removing the foreman to another department temporarily until the present discontent blew over, he (Cook) felt he would be able to avert a stoppage. No such suggestion was forthcoming, however, and he did not want it to come from him. I asked him whether a limit would be given to Mr. Marshland and he welcomed the suggestion: I thereupon informed Marshland of what Cook had said.

Marshland hopeful of a meeting before Friday - Cook says he is available.

Other shop stewards in yard asked for a meeting with Mellenby tomorrow.

Understood that other workers in yard "not entirely in sympathy with the boilermakers' action".

29/3/52

Cook - several meetings with Management, shop steward and Cook, as a result of which strike threat lifted.

Management agreed to restrict authority of foreman and have warned him that any further complaints against him will be regarded seriously." (83)

This dispute is interesting for it is one of the earliest examples of recorded action being taken over the "attitude" of a foreman. Also worth noting is the effort put in by the district official to avert a further stoppage even though he did not wish

it to be known to the men that the compromise solution was originally suggested by him. Finally the outcome of the dispute is worthy of note, for given the approach of other shop stewards in the yard suggesting they were not in sympathy with the boilermakers, this actually served to increase the pressure upon management to reach a prompt solution. Whereupon the management restricted the authority of the foreman and gave him a further warning in relation to his future conduct, despite their earlier position that disciplinary action against the foreman was "not warranted".

Such action against the attitudes and actions of chargehands and foremen played an increasing part in the negotiation of order at the point of production. Sometimes the outcome of such disputes was less clear than in the above example. Thus when 67 riveters and holders up went on strike, laying off a further 25 rivet heaters and 19 rivet-catchers, at Greenwells on 25th November 1957, the cause was recorded as "objection to the attitude adopted by a charge-hand". The stoppage lasted only for one day, and again the district delegate of the boilermakers was instrumental in its solution, arguing that such a grievance did not warrant strike action.

"Comments

The return to work was reported as unconditional. No further trouble was anticipated. The District Delegate of the Boilermakers, Mr. Cook, advised them to return to work, told them that their complaint should be notified to the management and that it was not one which justified strike action." (84)

However the willingness of the workforce actively to challenge the decisions and demeanour of immediate supervisors and foremen was a notable development of the post-war period. It speaks both of the growth of the objective resource of a tighter labour market and a change in the moral hierarchy existing both at work and in the wider community. Such action could be directed at individual decisions of foremen as well as at the wider focus of their attitudes and increasingly such action was successful from the workers' point of view. For example another dispute at Bartrams of 12 rivet heaters, laying off 22 riveters and holders up, on 18th September 1957, was solved in a day when management reinstated a rivet heater dismissed by a foreman (presumably for a disciplinary offence)⁽⁸⁵⁾.

The incidence of such objections to foremen and charge hands is higher than strike reports alone might suggest. One Plumber recalled an occasion at Doxfords in 1960 when a disagreement arose between the Plumbers and a foreman over the calculation of bonus payments.

"It was always the same, as you were working on a ship Harry Hunter had a graph of how the bonus was going. Early on it would be really high and towards the end he would play with the figures and the line would plummet. Anyway this one time we decided we'd had enough so we were walking out, up the bank. Halfway up we saw Benny Tewit the yard manager coming down - "Where you going, lads?" he said ... Well, we were all together, you know - brave like ... so we said "we're going home." "What are you going home for?" he says. So one lad, I'll always remember, said "I don't know but we're not coming back till we get it!" Anyway we goes back into the shop and he got Harry Hunter. He could have took him into the offioe but instead he was ranting and raving at

him in front of us. He was saying "it's 1900 and so and so not 1800 and so and so". He gave him a right talking to. It wasn't right really, 'cos Harry Hunter was canny really, even a bit soft. But aye, right in front of us." (86)

The tone of this account is interesting for there is no "celebration" in the "victory" over the foreman. In fact quite the opposite, the humiliation dealt out to the foreman was seen as a regrettable thing. An important point to be made about conflict at this level is that it necessarily involves a moral dimension and is inextricably bound up with individual identities. Conflict at work is rarely only experienced as a structural conflict between employer(s) and workers. Again these changes must be seen in relation to the decline of employment insecurity. Nevertheless such a change did not have an even effect upon the perceptions of all workers, as the account of another Plumber pointed out:

" ... in the post-war years of full employment, a change came over the yards. Most of the older foremen retired, and once some of the younger men felt secure and the uncertainties of unemployment were removed, they lost their fear of the foreman. The older men never did. They continued to live and work by the old standards." (87)

An important feature of the loss of authority by foremen during this period is that there was little evidence of the emergence, on the management side, of any other features of micro control in the spheres both of the performance of work and discipline. It would seem then that on this issue the balance of forces at the point of production began to move in favour of the workers.

Similarly when one looks at the incidence of redundancy and unemployment during this period, the evidence suggests that the labour market was beginning to tighten as redundancy itself became a harder issue for management to handle. As was argued in Chapter 2, in the inter-war period cyclical unemployment was accepted by the workers as a "fact of life" within the industry. In the post-war period this gradually began to change. Not only did disputes arise about the basis of decisions as to whom should be made redundant, especially when suspicion of the victimisation of shop stewards was involved, but also disputes began to occur over redundancy pure and simple.

There are several examples of the first type of dispute occurring in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some were of a relatively short duration such as the strike at Greenwells on 18 June 1958 when 24 riveters and holders up came out after the laying off of ten men including a shop steward. Work was resumed on the 23 June when the steward was re-engaged (88). Others were of longer duration: at Austin and Pickersgill action was readily taken over redundancy with alleged victimisation. On 19 March 1958 thirty welders and six apprentices went on strike after eight welders including one steward were made redundant. There was a full resumption on 1 April with the district delegate Cook negotiating for the re-engagement of the shop steward (89). At the same firm on 15 January 1960 329 platers walked out over the laying off of five platers, one of whom was a steward. Although

they returned the following day there was a series of token one day stoppages over the following month, with eighty platers striking on 22 February (seventy workers laid idle), 81 platers on 29 February (66 laid idle) and 150 platers and welders striking on 7 March (90). The outcome of these token strikes was reported by the Ministry of Labour as "no result known" (91), with the workers ending the action on 14 March.

One feature of these disputes worthy of note is the relatively long period for which they were sustained, and the relative frequency of disputes over dismissal and redundancy on the Wear (10% of all disputes between 1946 and 1961) compared with that on the Tyne (4%) and the Tees (2%) for the same period (92). This again draws attention to the vulnerability of the labour market on Wearside and the uneven and problematic "drift" towards "full employment". But the message was beginning to become clearer to both management and workers that the vast fluctuations in employment levels in the inter-war period should no longer be seen as inevitable. For the workers especially it became evident that action could be successful in preventing redundancy. Thus for example when thirteen boilermakers withdrew their labour at Greenwells on 8 May 1961 over the redundancy of eight men, the redundancy was cancelled by the following day, "Due to other work becoming available" (93).

Redundancy was becoming much harder to handle. Thus even as Ken Douglas, the Managing Director of Austin and Pickersgill, was

quoted as saying of the Wear district,

"There are no grounds for criticising our labour relations because we have the edge on many other districts. In Sunderland we have the ability to settle our problems and maintain a spirit of co-operation" (94),

the maintenance fitters at J.L. Thompson's had begun what was to be the longest strike on the Wear for twenty years. The strike was to last for 118 days, and:

"The cause of the dispute was the dismissal of the fitters' shop steward under a redundancy scheme. The men alleged that there had been unfair discrimination, a charge which was strongly denied by the management." (95)

Gradually then, there began to develop a tendency towards the stabilisation of work forces, and despite Dougan's characterisation of the period between 1961 and 1965 as representing "The Struggle to Survive" (96), this continued throughout the period. In this connection it is perhaps useful to trace some of the comments about the industry on the Wear in order further to illustrate this process and the precarious basis upon which the greater "affluence" of the workforce was built. There are several aspects to these developments. Firstly, the vulnerability seen by some as underlying the full order books in the short term did not become apparent at the point of production during this period, and a feeling that employers were "crying wolf" was shared by workers and to some extent unions too. Secondly, such problems as did underlie the changing pattern of demand were seen to lie with unfair competition from abroad, subsidies and credit terms, and as far as the workforce were seen

to be a problem by management, wage demands and reduction in working time were initially seen to be perhaps more serious than inefficiencies in the labour process. Thirdly there was little evidence of forward planning by management as to how the demand for specific types of tonnage would develop. Most serious in this direction was a failure to appreciate how big tankers and some dry cargo ships would become. This fault necessitated a continuous "ad hoc" form of modernisation of berths, and with continuous outlay of capital to achieve this the workforce could scarcely believe that the situation was as serious as some employers sometimes suggested. The irony that during the period of one of the fastest relative declines in the importance of a national industry the workers had "never had it so good" should not be lost on us.

The annual outlook for Wear shipbuilding compiled by Colonel R.A. Bartram in January 1962 listed two main problems facing the industry: firstly the lack of long-term credit available and secondly "the continued rise in wages". Of the latter he went on to say:

"Last January shipbuilding trades got 3.5% in wages. Trade Union leaders might point to orders booked since and say it made no difference. In fact it possibly was largely the cause of Britain's percentage of world orders dropping so severely during the past year." (97)

The drop in the percentage of orders was seen by some to imply an imminent decline in the fortunes of the industry. Thus in September of the same year Roland Vidal, Sunderland Corporation's

industrial development officer, was predicting that 1,000 shipyard and marine engineering workers could be out of jobs over the next year (98). This mood of pessimism was carried into 1963 when Sunderland Junior Chamber of Commerce stated in a report published in November that the Wear workforce could be expected to drop from 12,000 to 8,000 over the following ten years (99). However only one month later a "Brighter outlook for the Wear" was pronounced as it was revealed that the river had booked more than 40% of the £75 million worth of orders placed with British shipyards under the Government's credit aid scheme (100). Also it was noted that whilst completions were low, nevertheless for the third successive year.

"The Wear is second to the Clyde in production among British shipbuilding centres." (101)

Furthermore Mr. Cyril Thompson announced his intention to have a bigger berth built:

"We have the space to build another large berth and the space for new pre-fabricating shops to double our output and the number of employees." (102)

These indicators and the fact that most yards on the river had orders to last until the end of 1965 indicated that immediate pessimism was misplaced. However some have argued that the "signs of decline" were apparent on the river at this time. Thus John Spence has suggested that:

"In January 1964 Shorts total workforce of 300 went on the dole when the yard ran out of orders." (103)

We must be careful not to confuse the demise of an individual firm with the fortunes of a wider section of the industry. The failure of Shorts did not necessarily indicate an absolute lack of orders but also reflected on the management of the yard over a number of years. For as Hopkins noted,

"The yard had not been modernised during the war. This had to be undertaken in the late fifties and early sixties and financed out of current profits; eventually it seemed that a family firm could no longer survive under modern conditions without large capital resources." (104)

Indeed Mr. John Short, Managing Director of the company, in an article entitled "Why Shorts Yard is Closing", acknowledged the limitations of his individual yard in which the biggest berth could only cope with vessels of up to 22,000 d.w. tons.

"We simply have to face the fact that our berths are just not big enough to accommodate the bigger class of general cargo vessel now in demand." (105)

Again this technical limit was felt despite modernisation "in recent years" which:

"... involved the construction of a new fitting out quay, the extension of one of the berths and the provision of new shops well equipped to undertake prefabrication and pre-assembly. These schemes, it is estimated, cost about £750,000." (106)

Moreover another important feature of the closure of Shorts was that the 300 workers went to other yards on the river rather than "on the dole". As the Shipbuilding and Shipping Record commented in January 1964,

"Six months ago, when it became evident that a rundown of labour was inevitable, arrangements were made for other shipyards to absorb redundant craftsmen. This arrangement has worked smoothly." (107)

whilst one observer noted that during the last two months of the yard,

"John Short spent endless hours on the telephone getting jobs for the men he knew so well." (108)

It would nevertheless seem that the absorption of workers did go smoothly, for by February it was being stated that:

"The closure ... will not lead to more unemployment on the river, for other yards are absorbing the 300 manual workers and technical and administrative staff." (109)

Even after the absorption of the workers from Shorts the demand for labour was maintained, with Laings attempting to increase its workforce to 500 in April 1964 to cope with the influx of work gained with the assistance of the Government's credit scheme. It was further planned to increase the workforce to 900 within "the next few months" (110).

However a note of caution was struck later in the year by A.J. Marr, Managing Director of Laings and President of the Shipbuilding Conference. He drew attention to the increasing threat of Japanese competition in export markets.

"The threat in this connection is, of course, the continuing expansion of the Japanese shipbuilding industry, whose share of world orders is now approaching the 50% level. Their price advantage is such that no amount of modernisation or further increases in shipyard efficiency can close the gap. This is a problem shared by shipbuilders throughout the western European countries." (111)

Marr saw this problem as stemming from the credit terms and interest rates available in Japan and not from inefficiencies in the division of labour. Anyway how could warnings of decline be

treated seriously by the workforce when in the following month Laings began another extension programme, this time to their number 3 berth to enable them to build ships up to 50,000 d.w. tons (112).

As the prophecies of impending doom continued the terms of the problem were seen to change and throughout 1965 it was labour shortage which was mentioned as the most pressing problem. Thus in January, Clem Stephenson, chairman of the Wear Shipbuilders Association, warned of the possible return of recession and perils of wage rises and reduced hours, and then went on:

"... the gradual rundown by the shipbuilding industry had resulted in the departure of traditional shipyard craftsmen to other industries and even if maximum shipbuilding orders were forthcoming there were not enough skilled shipyard workers to meet this demand." (113)

This view would seem to have some substance for in July Mr. Cyril Thompson, Chairman of J.L. Thompson and Son, explained the three month delay in the launch of the 34,500 d.w. ton tanker "Kirriemoor" in terms of labour shortage. He suggested that:

"... urgent attention must be given to the labour shortage if the future of Sunderland as a shipbuilding centre was not to be seriously and perhaps permanently jeopardised." (114)

Furthermore the berth on which this ship was built, "a modern berth completed only a few years ago", would no longer be used for shipbuilding. In future he said that only their new big berth would be used. However,

"Even on this basis we are short of every class of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labour." (115)

So the tendency towards the stabilisation of workforces was

completed under the pressure of labour shortage. A shortage exaggerated not only by the boilermakers' ban on apprentices, but also due to the increasing labour market opportunities elsewhere, for example the structural steel and pipe work involved in the expansion of the chemical industry on Teesside was mentioned by several workers in this respect. Also the expansion of contracting firms such as Steels and William Riddie's was seen to exacerbate labour shortage and to put upward pressure on shipyard wages (116).

For workers at this time the maintenance of steady employment and the amount of building going on seemed to indicate that all was well in the industry.

"Things ran very smoothly, at Doxfords they used to have up to 3 ships moored side by side in the river and I would do the tank testing, bump, bump, bump from one to the other. Things were very predictable, you knew what you would be doing not weeks ahead but years ahead, it almost used to get boring sometimes." (117)

However work in hand did not always indicate the financial health of an individual yard.

"Wages were rising and managements, in some cases, took on work at a loss rather than have empty berths with heavy overheads to maintain. In these days, a yard without work or credit would close for ever. In the slump between the wars a yard would close, employ a watchman and a skeleton staff, and then open up again when an order came along." (118)

Problems of profitability and the declining share of world tonnage built in British yards led not only to the Shipbuilding Inquiry Committee, chaired by Geddes, but also, in its aftermath,

to a concern by both Employers and Unions to improve the situation. Indeed less than three months after the publication of the Geddes report in February 1966 Dan McGarvey, President of the Boilermakers Society, was quoted as saying:

"We have given a firm declaration today that there will be no more stoppages of work over the demarcation disputes." (119)

This declaration is not as startling as it may seem, for demarcation disputes had already dwindled to a low level given the arrival of "full employment" and the amalgamations of the Blacksmiths and the Shipwrights with the Boilermakers in the early sixties. Although the removal of employment insecurity must be seen as the major factor here, for as McGoldrick has pointed out, at earlier points disputes between different sections of the Boilermakers were relatively common (120). McGarvey's statement was made at a meeting of employers and Unions at York in the context of the "new realism" in the industry in the aftermath of Geddes and the Labour Government's increasing involvement with the industry; as such it was an attempt at reassurance on a public platform that the unions were "reasonable people".

Of more importance however were the subsequent moves towards the relaxation of working practices. In understanding the limitations involved in these developments it is necessary to re-emphasise the context in which they took place. The disappearance of immediate employment insecurity and a tight labour market ensured that in spite of the Government's advocacy of

changes similar to those involved in the Fairfield experiment, the prime concern of the employers, on the Wear at least, was not with these changes as an element in reorganising the division of labour as such, but rather insofar as they would help overcome immediate labour shortages. This was the intention of the individual agreements arranged very quickly after Geddes in the yards at Bartram's, Laing's and Thompson's, where it was reported that:

"Platers, Welders and Shipwrights are to relax demarcation. The platers will allow shipwrights to work in their department provided they are under the direction of a foreman plater, and welders will permit the upgrading of a number of tack welders. Also Laing and Bartram platers and shipwrights will be able to do some of the Platers' work in the fitting of brackets, for example." (121)

The same factors were important in determining the attitudes of the trades unions towards these "changes" in working practices. Thus a speech on 16 February 1967 by Don McGarvey was reported in the Shipbuilding and Shipping Record where the issue of labour shortage was linked to the possibility of changes in working practices (122). Furthermore at a conference in Newcastle in June, McGarvey suggested that restrictive practices were to be seen as equivalent to "property rights" to be sold by workers and bought by employers. Moreover,

"Mr. McGarvey stressed that appropriate compensation must be given to workers when they surrendered practices based on long training and experience and designed to safeguard their security against economic hazards." (123)

In the face of greater employment stability the unions then agreed to bargain over working practices. However in some senses

this does not demonstrate the importance of issues springing from the division of labour but rather the opposite. In the context of the tight labour market the unions' decision to let the employers "buy the book" (124) had the beneficial effect of showing them as "responsible people" and yet also allowing them to pursue what was becoming the almost exclusive bargaining issue, higher wages. In the event, in the short and medium terms, such agreements did not radically alter working practices. For as McGoldrick has suggested,

" ... agreement on paper did not necessarily mean agreement in practice. The Boilermakers, for their part, exacted a high price for this lease on their birthright, and this in turn proved costly in terms of the outrage to other groups of workers who saw the Boilermakers' R.O.W.P. as the extension of existing differentials. But more importantly the agreement was a poor one, in which the prescription of specific items of flexible working meant that more general flexibility was lost. The disputed interpretation of the key phrase "progressing own work" meant that "more flexibility was paid for than was achieved in practice." (125)

The prominence of the short term concerns variously felt by employers and unions as labour shortage and the search for higher wages served to obscure the longer term aim, as promoted by the Labour Government. And yet this position of change in theory but not in practice meant that when the Commission on Industrial Relations reported on the shipbuilding and shiprepairing industry in 1971 a sense of "deja vu" was forthcoming. The power of the workgroup and the extent of craft sectionalisation was contrasted with the small impact of the changes forthcoming as a result of the R.O.W.P. negotiations.

"The extent of independent control probably appears less from inside the industry than from without. Management would assert that it is managing the work of the yard and the workforce in it. Yet ... many decisions about recruitment, demarcation, manning, the hours actually worked, overtime and so on are actually made independently by the union or the work groups. Management has not agreed, in any formal sense, that this should be so, but it allows it to happen; it preserves a pretence about the real situation." (126)

However the agreement of the Unions to endorse, on paper, elements of flexible working and the small returns that such agreements gave to the employers ensured that:

"... the question of job control, which had been at the centre of industrial relations since the mid nineteenth century, became secondary to a formalised system of collective bargaining." (127)

This was true at the level of formalised bargaining, where wage issues increasingly played a very large role. The promotion of the importance of the wages issue would seem to accord with Taylor's account of the potential that full employment afforded:

"Full employment was a necessary prerequisite for the maximisation of labour power and in the post-war period we can see a loosening of former rigidities and austerities. Workers began to think and act like capitalists and the values of acquisitiveness became almost universal." (128)

We must beware of overstating the case however, and whilst workers may indeed have shown great enthusiasm with regard to wage rises this does not necessarily indicate a change in priorities from issues of job control to those of wages as McGoldrick implies. For as we have seen in relation to the Wear in the inter-war and wartime periods, the evidence for workers "resisting at the point of production" expropriation of control

over the labour process is not too convincing. Indeed the evidence of any serious attempt to expropriate such control was not forthcoming. The preference of employers for flexibility in the face of fluctuating demand was of course a vital element in their acceptance and in some cases advocacy of the existent division of labour. However in the post-war period these fluctuations were not forthcoming as demand was maintained, and, as we have seen, the consequences of this and the wider boom in the economy led to the solidification of variable capital and the disappearance of the option of closing yards as a method of not incurring heavy overheads. The objective value of a labour intensive division of labour and the craft organisation of production would seem to have passed, and yet the employers achieved little practically in terms of changes in working practices. This is even more surprising apparently, given the ideal prerequisites of the pre-fabricated assembly of ships.

"The rise of large-scale and capital intensive shipbuilding diminished the importance of flexible access to a highly skilled, mobile workforce. The larger volume of production of individual yards and the greater standardisation of output provided a firmer basis for continuously employing workers with specialised skills, while greater mechanisation increased the amount of semi-skilled machine-tending work. The shift to prefabrication led to a division of labour more industrial in character, based on location in the flow of production as opposed to type of activity or craft, which increased the possibilities of imparting skills through simple systems of on-the-job training associated with upgrading or internal promotion." (129)

Even if some of the more objective rationalisations of the craft division of labour had disappeared by the mid 1960s the

"skilled" definition of the work lived on together with the craft administration of the production process (130).

These features of the labour process were no longer located symmetrically across a moral order which, while complex in the details of its hierarchy, spanned both the contexts of work and non-work. Rather the changes in the locations and structuring of the manual working class had served initially to confuse a moral order based upon the symmetry of hierarchy in work and non-work spheres focused upon occupational identity as a master status. Subsequently the non-work patterning of residential locations was re-established via the growing market of private housing, creating in a more stark form a kind of residential apartheid. Both these developments served to deepen certain divisions within the working class and were to spell the end of the occupational community both in its physical form and as a morally cohesive (or viewed differently, coercive) force. The basis of craft control at work was increasingly less supported unproblematically within the non-work sphere. Yet in spite of these far-reaching changes in the community, technical changes in the industry and formal agreements over changes in working practices, there appeared to be some dimensions of control over the work process which seemed invulnerable to change. The next chapter will outline some of the dimensions of this entrenched control and seek to explain why, two decades later, that control apparently evaporated with minimal resistance from the workforce. An understanding of this

problematic will illuminate not only the nature of shipbuilding and the employment relationship, but will also allow us to address the question of the changed nature of the working class in an empirical context.

Notes to Chapter 4

- 1 Samuelson, P. "Full Employment after the War" in Harris, S. Post-War Economic Problems, New York, McGraw Hill 1943, p51.
- 2 Quoted in Armstrong, P., Glyn, A., Harrison, J. Capitalism Since World War II, London, Fontana 1984, p23.
- 3 In this sense Wallerstein's assertion that "The mechanisation by which the capitalist system ultimately resolves its recurrent cyclical down-turns is expansion: outward spatially, and internally in terms of the "freeing" of the market ... " cannot be seen to operate other than through the collective "structural social action" of states. "It" on an ontological level "resolves" nothing and does not "act". The world system cannot be separated from the actions of individual states. The "system" nevertheless has a "reality" as the historical outcome and precondition of the located action of such states.
Wallerstein, I. "A World System Perspective on the Social Sciences", B.J.S. Vol. 27.
- 4 Trotsky for one expected the U.S.A. to assert quickly its dominance over Britain resulting in armed conflict between the two. The pace of the economic eclipse of the latter by the former was not as rapid or as determined in form as Trotsky foresaw:
"In retrospect both the realism of this analysis and the errors of perspective stand out clearly. Trotsky did not imagine that the British could escape an armed conflict with the United States, although he himself had shown convincingly that such a conflict would have been suicidal folly for bourgeois Britain ... he could not envisage that the British would "peacefully" and "to the end" surrender their supremacy to the United States. And he saw the decline of British power as a cataclysmic collapse, not as the chronic and long-drawn-out process it was to become."
Deutscher, I. The Prophet Unarmed. Trotsky: 1921-29. Oxford, O.U.P. 1970, p218.
- 5 Armstrong, P. et al, Op.cit. p50.
- 6 Vaizey, J. The Squandered Peace, London, Hodder and Stoughton 1983, p52.
- 7 Calvocoressi, P. The British Experience: 1945-75, London, Bodley Head 1978, p10.
- 8 General George C. Marshall, 5th June 1947, quoted in:
Gregg, P. The Welfare State, London, George G. Harrap and

Co. Ltd. 1968, p77.

- 9 Jones, J.M. quoted in:
Armstrong, P. et al (Op.cit.) p108.
- 10 Armstrong, P. et al Op.cit. pp111-112.
- 11 Armstrong, P. et al Op.cit. p227.
- 12 See: Barratt-Brown, M. The Economics of Imperialism, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1974.
- 13 Mead, M. Culture and Commitment, New York, Anchor Books 1978, p63.
- 14 Mead, M. Op.cit. pp5-6.
- 15 Abendroth, W. A Short History of the European Working Class, London, New Left Books 1972, pp127-128.
- 16 Smith, Ron "Patterns of Growth in World Capitalism", Chapter 12 in:
Aaronovitch, S. et al The Political Economy of British Capitalism, London, McGraw Hill 1981, p162.
- 17 Quoted in Armstrong, P. et al Op.cit. pp84-85.
- 18 Quoted in: Kolko, G. and Kolko, J. The Limits of Power: the World and U.S. Foreign Policy, New York, Harper and Row 1972, pp522-4.
- 19 Armstrong, P. et al Op.cit. p153.
- 20 Vaizey, J. Op.cit. p84.
- 21 Marwick, A. Class: Image and Reality in Britain, France and the U.S.A. since 1930, Glasgow, Fontana 1981, p214.
- 22 Cole, M. The Life of G.D.H. Cole, London, Macmillan 1971, p230.
- 23 Wiener, M.J. English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1982, p91.
"Emerging from the "tunnel of economic necessity, we shall be able to afford to dare to assess the money-motive at its true value. The love of money as a possession ... will be recognised for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease."

Quoted in Wiener Op.cit. pp91-92.

- 24 Although clearly the offensive against labour in other countries did pose a problem of legitimacy for trade union leaders, as we saw in Chapter 3, in the shipbuilding industry the legitimacy of the status of the craft worker was raised by union leaders themselves.
Pelling, H. Modern Britain 1885-1955, London, Sphere Books 1975, p172.
- 25 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe quoted in:
Armstrong, P. et al Op.cit. p164.
- 26 David Thompson has argued that the Labour Government between 1945 and 1951 achieved what Churchill had achieved in war "a national solidarity and sense of community".
"It made impossible any sense of alienation from the community on the part of the workers. The British State was now "theirs" as much as anybody else's - dedicated to the interests and welfare of every citizen, however humble."
Furthermore the post-war consensus was built upon shared ideals:
"The real revolution was a psychological one, marking reaction against the inter-war class strife."
Thompson, D. England in the Twentieth Century, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1965, p229.
- 27 Colin Crouch sees five elements as dominating the creation of the post-war consensus upon industrial relations:
i) The existence of full employment;
ii) the involvement of trade unions in government policy-making bodies over wide areas of the economy;
iii) acceptance by all major political parties of a policy of trying to keep industrial relations out of political controversy;
iv) a similar acceptance of a commitment to construct a welfare state.
Dating from slightly earlier was:
v) the emergence of a centralised trade union leadership which was prepared to reach understandings with governments and which then had the power to enforce acceptance of the results on its membership.
- Crouch, C. The Politics of Industrial Relations, Glasgow, Fontana 1979, p19.
- 28 The importance of the mediation of the English class struggle by aspects of religion and nationality have been pointed to by Tom Nairn; the historical roots of the creation of a working class which is "for itself in itself"

lie in the circumstances in which:

"Capital did not have to resort to self-wounding excesses to establish its reign in England; it could hide behind the Bible, and make of practically everything "national" an instrument direct or indirect of domination."

Wairn, T. "The English Working Class" in Blackburn, R. (Ed) Ideology in Social Science, Glasgow, Fontana 1978, p194.

- 29 Hoggart, R. The Uses of Literacy, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1958, pp13-14.
- 30 Hoggart, R. Op.cit. pp33-34.
- 31 Hoggart, R. Op.cit. pp243-244.
- 32 Marcuse, H. One Dimensional Man, London, Sphere Books 1972, p37.
- 33 Blackwell, T. and Seabrook, J. A World Still to Win: The Reconstruction of the Post War Working Class, London, Faber and Faber 1985, p52.
- 34 Blackwell, T. and Seabrook, J. Op.cit. p51.
- 35 As the author states,
" ... the expressive imperative has undoubtedly gained ground in quite fundamental ways ... As a cultural style it contains elements which are increasingly appropriate to a complex, mobile and privatised system in which ego rather than any natural "tribal" group forms the basic unit. ... the crucial mechanism by which the old culture of control was broken open to the possibilities of change was the counter-culture of the late 1960s, with its vision of permanent liminality, a boundary- and rule-free Utopia."
Martin, B. A Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change, Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1981, p236.
- 36 Seabrook, J. What Went Wrong?, London, Victor Gollancz 1978.
- 37 Hopkins, C.H.G. The Moving Staircase: Sunderland 1939-1972, Sunderland, Wearside Printing Co. Ltd. 1972, p9.
- 38 Gouldner, A.W. For Sociology: Removal and Critique in Sociology Today, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1975, pp37-38.
- 39 Corfe, T. Sunderland: A Short History, Newcastle, Frank Graham 1973, p122.

- 40 Corfe, T. Op.cit. p121.
- 41 Robson, B.T. Urban Analysis, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1971, p97.
- 42 Robson, B.T. Op.cit. p133.
- 43 Robson, B.T. Op.cit. p134.
- 44 In early 1960 my own family made such a move from a first floor privately rented flat in Pallion to a two bedroomed house with a garden, in Cheltenham Road, Hylton Castle.
- 45 Hopkins, C.H.G. (1972) Op.cit. p9.
- 46 Dennis, N. Op.cit. pp261-262.
- 47 Hopkins, C.H.G. Op.cit. pp9-10.

This account of the decline in social mix on the council estates is more convincing than Hopkins' earlier assertion that there was little social mix on these estates from the beginning. Moreover it would appear that such migration of skilled labour from council estates in Sunderland has persisted up until the present. In my own experience both of my family and others such a move from the council estate to private housing was initiated by the post 1945 generation and then copied by their parents, perhaps suggesting an example of what Mead has called the prefigurative culture in which the older generations learn appropriate forms of behaviour in unfamiliar circumstances from the younger generations. A similar view is outlined by Blackwell and Seabrook, speaking of the working class in the 1960s:

"Those intimate and familiar landscapes which had offered some shelter, however inadequate, became places to get out of as soon as you could scrape up the deposit for a house. As the working class no longer appeared even to itself in public discourse as a class, its members were increasingly obliged to make their own arrangements with Capitalism. They moved out in order to be nearer "a good comprehensive", where their children would have a better chance than they had. With what understandable eagerness people explored their mortgaged houses, where they would no longer have to get permission from the Council to paint their front door the colour of their choice. They felt like refugees from streets scarred by neglect, potholed roads, vandalised street lights, tinned up front parlours and grass growing through the cracks in the broken paving slabs. Those who left became more and more sharply differentiated from those who had to remain: the elderly, the poor, the migrant, the single parents, the unemployed."

- Blackwell, T. and Seabrook, J. A World Still to Win: The Reconstruction of the Post-War Working Class, London, Faber and Faber 1985, pl20.
- 48 Sunderland Corporation Transport Department People and Transport, Sunderland 1964, pp29-30.
- 49 Marwick, A. British Society Since 1945, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1982, pl21.
- 50 This is especially so over two or more generations of private home ownership.
- 51 Westergaard, J. and Resler, H. Class in a Capitalist Society, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1976, pl13.
- 52 Benita Luckman has spoken of the worlds of work and the ecological community as constituting two of the three basic omphalic small worlds, the other being that of the family. Luckman, B. "The Small Life-Worlds of Modern Man" in: Luckman, T, (Ed) Phenomenology and Sociology, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1978, pp275-290.
- 53 Thompson, E.P. The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1968, p9.
- 54 This is an important point underlined by studies which point to the variability of class relationships in different cultures and even regions in the same country. For a useful study in the variations between national labour movements see:
Kendal, W. The Labour Movement in Europe, London, Allen Lane 1975.
For variations in the form of class relationships within Britain, see:
Foster, J. Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, London, Methuen and Co. Ltd. 1974.
Finally for a more micro study of the variations of working class attitudes to education in Sunderland see:
Robson, B.T. Urban Analysis, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1977.
- 55 Zeitlin, I.M. Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory, London, Prentice-Hall 1968, pl20.
- 56 In this sense the re-analysis of my own upbringing in a "shipbuilding family" can be seen as an element of participant observation. However it is important to realise that a degree of "distance" lies between myself and my past. Insofar as this distance can be maintained I can beware of shaping the account purely as a participant.

- 57 A useful summary of some of the arguments is available in: Eldridge, J. Recent British Sociology, London, Macmillan 1980, especially Chapter 13.
- 58 Eldridge, J. Op.cit. p182.
- 59 Gorz, A. Farewell to the Working Class, London, Pluto 1982. Blackwell, T. and Seabrook, J. A World Still to Win, London, Faber and Faber 1985.
- 60 Marcuse, H. One Dimensional Man, London, Abacus 1972, pp51-52.
- 61 Howard Davis has denied that the working class display any aggregate of attitudes which approximates to an "image of society" as a whole. However one should not confuse lack of coherence with a lack of any "totalising" approach at all, especially insofar as such issues impinge upon practical as well as discursive consciousness. See: Davis, H. Beyond Class Images, London, Croom Helm 1979.
- 62 Quoted in Dougan, D. (1968) Op.cit. p194.
- 63 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Bartrams 19/8/52.
- 64 Ibid
- 65 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Bartrams 26/3/47.
- 66 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Bartrams 20/5/52.
- 67 Ibid
- 68 See: Cameron, G.C. "Post-war Strikes in the North East Shipbuilding and Ship-Repairing Industry", British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. II No.1, 1954, p5.
Also:
Eldridge, J.E.T. Industrial Disputes, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1968, pp100-103.
- 69 Eldridge, J.E.T. (1968) Op.cit. pp102-103.
- 70 Cameron, G.C. Op.cit. p5.
- 71 Eldridge, J.E.T. (1968) Op.cit. p102.
- 72 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Austin and Pickersgill 7/3/56.

- 73 Ibid
- 74 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, T.W. Greenwells and Co. Ltd. 25/5/54.
- 75 Roberts, G. "Demarcation Rules in Shipbuilding and Ship-repairing", Cambridge, C.U.P. 1967, ppl2-13.
- 76 As Dougan has argued, during 1958, " ... for the smaller yards at least orders were getting perilously low." Dougan, D. (1968) Op.cit. p199.
- 77 S.E.F. Ref: 3164: "Man-hours lost as a Result of Strikes and Stoppages of Work: 1957-61".
- 78 Dougan, D. (1968) Op.cit. p198.
- 79 Spence, J. "Industrial Relations in Wearside Shipbuilding 1945-1981" in:
Potts, A. (Ed) Shipbuilders and Engineers, North East Labour History Society Newcastle 1987, p83.
- 80 The Suez Crisis illustrates well the importance of the two bloc model of international relations and the effective dominance of the U.S.A. over the U.K.. Britain's withdrawal from Palestine in 1948 has been seen, by Thompson, as leaving a void between the two blocs, and thereby occasioning the development of a Soviet diplomatic offensive to gain influence throughout the Middle East reaching its zenith in 1955. This, coupled with the agreement between Egypt and Czechoslovakia (arms in exchange for cotton and rice) was enough evidence of the growing importance of economic imperialism (aid for ideological allegiance). Further to this the withdrawal of the American offer of assistance to Egypt in order to build the Aswan high dam ensured, in the light of Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, that Britain's options were limited. This was especially so given Eden's obsession with the image of Nasser as a second Hitler. Again what is ironic is the position that Britain's (and France's) military intervention, whilst it unintentionally ensured healthy demand for (British and foreign) tonnage, further weakened the international position of the British economy, with gold and dollar reserves falling by 84 million dollars in October 1956 and a further 279 million in November. See:
Thompson, D. England in the Twentieth Century, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1982, esp. pp251-257.
- 81 See: Eldridge, J.E.T. (1968) Op.cit. ppl24-125.

- 82 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Bartrams 20/3/52.
- 83 Ibid
- 84 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Greenwells 25/11/57
- 85 Ministry of Labour: regional strike data, Bartrams 18/9/57.
- 86 J. Roberts (Snr), Plumber.
- 87 Bell, A. "Shipyard Tales", unpublished and undated, ppl-2.
- 88 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Greenwells 18/6/58.
- 89 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Austin and Pickersgill 19/3/58.
- 90 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Austin and Pickersgill 16/3/60, 23/2/60, 1/3/60, 9/3/60.
- 91 Ibid 9/3/60.
- 92 Cameron, G.C. (Op.cit. p5.
- 93 Ministry of Labour: Regional Strike data, Greenwells 8/5/61.
- 94 S.S.R. Vol. 99, 1962 (Jan-June) p290.
- 95 S.S.R. Vol. 99, 7th June 1962, p767.
- 96 Dougan, D. (1968 Op.cit. p199.
- 97 S.S.R. Vol. 99, 11th Jan 1962, p60.
- 98 S.S.R. Vol. 100, Sept, p386.
- 99 S.S.R. Vol. 102, Nov. 1963, p666.
- 100 S.S.R. Vol. 102, Dec.
- 101 Ibid
- 102 Ibid
- 103 Spence, John "Industrial Relations in Wearside Shipbuilding 1945-1981" in:
Potts, A. (Ed) Shipbuilders and Engineers, Newcastle, North East Labour History Society 1987, p83.

- 104 Hopkins, C.H.G. (1972) Op.cit. p33.
- 105 S.S.R. Vol. 103, Feb. 1964, p284.
- 106 Ibid
These points would tend to confirm Lorenz's view that,
" ... with few exceptions, British firms failed to invest adequately just after the war in the new vintage technology based on welding and prefabrication that was being adopted abroad. Rather than adopt this new technical base in a wholesale manner, most British yards invested in welding and burning plant, longer capacity cranes, larger berths etc. in a piecemeal fashion adapting them to the existing layout of their yards."
Lorenz, E.H. "The Labour Process and Industrial Relations in the British and French Shipbuilding Industries from 1880 to 1970: Two Patterns of Development", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge 1983.
- 107 S.S.R. Vol. 103, Jan. 1964, p106.
- 108 Hopkins, C.H.G. (1972) Op.cit. p33.
- 109 S.S.R. Vol. 103, Feb., p236.
- 110 S.S.R. Vol. 103, April, p507.
- 111 S.S.R. Vol. 104, 5th Nov., p596.
- 112 S.S.R. Vol. 104, Dec., p728.
- 113 S.S.R. Vol. 105, 7th Jan., p5.
He went on to say that the situation on the Wear was aggravated by the five year ban on apprentices by the Boilermakers. The ban was eventually lifted later in the year. It was estimated that due to its operation 600 boys had been denied apprenticeships. The ban, begun in February 1959, was the response of the Boilermakers to unemployment amongst welders in that year. See:
Spence, J. Op.cit. p83.
- 114 S.S.R. Vol. 106, 15th July, p99.
- 115 Ibid
- 116 The growing importance of the relatively large contracting firms is a subject that deserves greater attention as the higher wages and need for geographical mobility of workers suggest the possibility that such firms may have tended to

attract the more young "affluent" worker ideal type from within the traditional shipbuilding workforce.

117 J. Roberts, Plumber.

118 Hopkins, C.H.G. (1972) Op.cit. p34.

This view encapsulates the problem alluded to by Sohn Rethel in his Dual economics of transition, where he suggests that:

"The modern plant economy has made production inadaptably to the postulates of market economy" (p31). However the inflexibility of the shipbuilding industry at this time was compounded, for the demand for tonnage was still there, it was the price of new tonnage that presented the problem in these circumstances. To shut production down would have been suicidal. The inflexibility was a product of the shifting contours of international market demand as much as any rigidities arising from a more capital intensive division of labour.

119 Quoted in: S.S.R. Vol. 107, May 1966, p651.

120 McGoldrick, J. "Job Control, Industrial Relations and the State; Changes in British Shipbuilding since Nationalisation", Paper at King's College Research Centre Colloquium "Job Control and the State", 27th-29th September 1982, p12.

121 S.S.R. Vol. 108, July 1966, p4.

122 S.S.R. Vol. 109, Feb. 1967, p210.

123 S.S.R. Vol. 109, June 1967, p893.

124 Eldridge, J.E.T. (1968) Op.cit. p124.

125 McGoldrick, J. (1982) Op.cit. p9.

126 Commission on Industrial Relations Report No.22 Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing, London, H.M.S.O. Cmd 4756 1971, pp105-106.

127 McGoldrick, J. (1982) Op.cit. pi.

128 Taylor, R. Workers and the New Depression, London, Macmillan 1982, pp48-49.

129 Lorenz, E. and Wilkinson, F. "The Shipbuilding Industry 1880-1965" in: Elmbaum, B. and Lazonick (Ed) The Decline of the British Economy, Oxford, O.U.P. 1968, p118.

- 130 See: Brown, R.K. et al: final report to S.S.R.C. of the Project "Orientation to Work and Industrial Behaviour of Shipbuilding Workers on Tyneside", ppl8-30.

Table i

Population Change: Sunderland CB Wards 1951-61 (1961 Boundaries)

Ward	Population 1951	Change 1951-61	Percentage Change
Central	13,133	-7,086	-54
Bridge	10,247	-3,874	-38
Hendon	10,808	-2,920	-27
Monkwearmouth	15,501	-3,996	-26
Deptford	11,779	-2,900	-25
Bishopwearmouth	9,429	-1,529	-16
Park	12,610	-1,697	-13
Roker	9,952	-1,226	-12
Colliery	11,038	-1,249	-11
Pallion	11,579	-1,055	-9
Humbledon	11,113	-732	-7
Thornhill	8,682	-59	-1
Fulwell	8,495	1,339	16
Southwick	7,545	1,727	23
St. Michael	8,972	2,112	24
Pennywell	12,828	3,802	30
Thorney Close	7,807	12,892	165
Hylton Castle	47	14,616	31,097

Source: Census 1961: Reprinted in Dennis, W. People And Planning, London, Faber & Faber, 1970, p170.

Table ii

Structurally Separate Dwellings Occupied: Sunderland CB Wards
1951-61 (1961 Boundaries)

Ward	Dwellings 1951	Change 1951-61	Percentage Change
Central	2,449	-744	-30
Bridge	2,650	-482	-18
Hendon	2,908	-342	-12
Southwick	2,651	19	1
Roker	2,819	138	5
Pallion	2,979	204	7
Colliery	2,741	290	11
Thornhill	2,592	408	16
Humbledon	2,612	465	18
Park	2,275	460	20
Fulwell	2,700	684	25
Bishopwearmouth	1,815	583	32
St. Michael	2,415	1,074	44
Pennywell	2,539	1,193	47
Monkwearmouth	1,553	1,821	117
Deptford			
Thorney Close	1,775	3,552	200
Hylton Castle	n/a	3,826	-

Source: Census 1961: Reprinted in Dennis, W. People And Planning, London, Faber & Faber, 1970, p171.

CHAPTER FIVE

Craft Workers, Crisis and the Collapse of Control; or a demoralised lament? - "We knew it couldn't last".

Part I

In the last Chapter it was suggested that in spite of the technical changes implied in the move towards pre-fabrication and the formal agreements over the relaxation of working practices, there was again little movement towards any radical restructuring of the division of labour which would herald the forthcoming demise of the craft apprenticed "skilled" worker. As others have noted some employers were still supportive of the craft system of production, even if the meaning of craftsmanship was seen to have changed:

"... from implying a mastery of technical mysteries to being a promise of competence in a variety of exacting conditions and circumstances." (1)

The importance of such an analysis, which stresses a multi-faceted view of skill, must be understood if we are to avoid the pitfalls of suggesting that skill is totally socially created. Thus for example in an otherwise useful treatment of the concept of skill Charles More singles out the shipbuilding industry as an example of where apprenticeship was used to delimit skill in an "artificial way" (2). Whilst we may accept that the whole period of a five year apprenticeship may not be taken up with the imparting of the mastery of technical processes, and a similar

point could be made for most courses of "professional" training, the period was seen as one in which the "rules of conduct" of the yard could be learnt together with the more informal "tricks of the trade" (3). Further to this the employer's "support" of the craft division of labour lay in exactly those features of apprenticeship identified by More himself:

"It seems reasonable to suggest that apprenticeship has retained an economic rationale as a period during which adolescents can spend time not on productive work but on the training necessary to make them productive in the future, "paying" for this training by foregoing the higher earnings they might obtain elsewhere." (4)

Perhaps of greater importance however than More's estimation of riveters as being "not in reality highly skilled" is the realisation that hierarchy of and fluctuations in the skill level of individual trades are, in the context of shipbuilding, a natural aspect of a complex and changing division of labour and do not by themselves indicate the purely social creation, or maintenance, of the craft division of labour. Thus the important point is that even into the 1970s authors could claim that:

"Despite very considerable changes which have taken place over the years a shipyard can still fairly be described as having a craft technology." (5)

The craft technology and the associated craft administration had rendered any abrupt reorganisation of the labour process unlikely. This is not to say that some of the managers within the industry were not considering the possibility of radical change. As one Wearside Manager wrote in 1969:

" ... the inevitable course of industrial advance common to all industries should also be adopted in the shipbuilding industry. One has seen that advancement of modern industry is based not only on technical development but also on a more intelligent division of labour." (6)

And again at a later point:

" ... the author feels that from this study one conclusion stands out above all other findings, viz. that shipbuilding is not as unsuitable as generally accepted when it comes to the possibility of introducing scientific management, the reasons why it has not been applied to a larger extent being put down to measures of conservatism and traditions." (7)

The unsatisfactory nature of concluding that what exists in "the present situation" can be put down to "conservatism" and "traditions" should, by now, be obvious. Moreover the author's emphasis that scientific management is "generally accepted" to be "unsuitable" in the context of shipbuilding indicates that his is a voice crying in the wilderness. It would seem then that even into the 1970s, and notwithstanding changes in technology and attempts to change working practices, the legitimacy of the craft division of labour was accepted either pragmatically or in principal by a majority in the industry.

Given the lack of any general attempts radically to restructure the craft division of labour it followed that attempts to raise labour productivity would necessarily have to take account of the realities of craft technology and administration as well as the context of international competition in which, as we saw in the last Chapter, there was a belief that no amount of modernisation or further increases in shipyard efficiency could close the price gap with the Japanese.

In this sense changes in working practices were to be seen as only one element, and not necessarily the most important one, in an attempt to close the gap. In such a context the potential divergence between the outcome of the two levels of the negotiation of control outlined by Brown (8) is great.

In this account the two levels are seen thus:

"In the first place negotiation can obviously be observed to take place through "official" channels, between employers or their representatives and the Trade Unions, and through slightly less "official" channels between managers and workers, or their representatives, the shop stewards ... Secondly, however, there is negotiation in the sense implied by Strauss and his colleagues when they describe an organisation as a "negotiated order". This refers to the ways in which the behaviour expected of the employer and his representatives in the authority structure of the firm and of the worker is "negotiated" in the daily interaction between manager and worker, worker and worker, and manager and manager. My contention is that there is no clear break between this sort of negotiation and bargaining about industrial relations as commonly understood." (9)

It must be understood that divergence of aim and outcome at these "two" levels does not imply a break between the two sorts of negotiation, but in fact confirms the opposite. It is important then not to separate these two levels, as McGoldrick does, into the duality of theory and practice (10) or any other distinct localities such as micro and macro. The locality of the two types of negotiation can vary with the level of analysis. Thus in the empirical context the outcome of the official negotiation over Relaxation of Working Practices was the agreement outlined in the last Chapter. That this agreement achieved less in practice than on paper owed much to negotiation through the "slightly

less official" channel of managers, shop stewards and workers as well as through the daily negotiated order of the workplace.

The overlapping nature of these "two" types of negotiation are illustrated well in Tony Elger's study, part of which looked at the Marine Engineering section of Doxford and Sunderland Ltd. (11). The empirical study in this research was carried out between 1968 and 1970 and attempts to give an account of the rationalisation scheme launched in the engine works, which was addressed in part towards helping to solve the crisis of profitability and in part as an attempt to secure government funds under the auspices of Wilsonian modernisation. The account is sophisticated and brings out well the complexities of the craft ethos and individual differences between the skills and social positions of the workers. Within the context of rationalisation Elger points to the fact that

" ... Doxfords management patrolled the boundaries of craft organisation and the division of labour without any concerted attempt to attack those boundaries ... " (12)

Thus the centrepiece of the rationalisation became the pay structure. The replacement of payment by piece to one based on merit was an attempt to return some power to the foremen. The payment system amounted to measured day work with several bands of achievement in three areas, those of Efficiency, Industry and Accuracy.

"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." (13)

It would seem that the potential power of the foreman was not, or could not be, realised in practice for Elger noted that assessments produced only a narrow range of scores clustered towards the top end of the range, and a noticeable drift into the top merit level over time.

"These results appeared to be a consequence of both a reluctance on the part of 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 ... 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." (14)

The willingness of workers and shop stewards to go through the "slightly less official" channel and challenge management scores combined with the elements of "negotiation" implied in the foreman's unwillingness to award low scores served to frustrate the realisation of the aim involved in the rationalisation of wage scales. This is a useful account then as it covers the two types of negotiation outlined by Brown. However it leaves largely unanalysed the intensity of the moral dimensions of the employment relationship, the extent to which the enduring forms of worker control are partially located in an essential identity of the skilled worker, the dimensions of which owe as much to practical as discursive consciousness. The importance of under-

standing this level of reality, not in isolation but in as far as it relates to, supports and is supported by other levels, is crucial.

It is within this multiplexity of levels that the tenacity of the day to day craft "control" of the division of labour in the shipbuilding industry lay. A setting relatively more complex than that confronting the single occupational group of "turners" in Elger's study. Within a shipyard the wide variety of distinct occupational identities has been seen to interact with the physical (and therefore locational) complexity of the workplace and historically different payment systems to encourage the development of a workforce whose attitudes and "images of society" have been characterised more by "paradox ... than pattern" (15).

The heterogeneity characteristic of the orientations and images of the shipbuilding workforce outlined by Cousins and Brown are seen to be influenced most importantly by the immediate social context, particularly the objective market and work situations, and are therefore historically contingent. From their vantage point of the early 1970s they suggested that changes in the industry (16) would increasingly lead to a realisation of a "latent proletarianisation" and therefore a relative rise in the importance of collective as against sectional action, thus implying a relative shift towards more "official" forms of negotiation. Their argument is worth quoting at length.

"These changes (see note 16) have meant that increasingly shipbuilding workers on Tyneside - and elsewhere - have come both to share common market and work situations, and to be aware that they did so. Particularism in relations between management and men is increasingly giving way to universalism - in larger and necessarily more bureaucratic organisations. Because of the need, in management's view, to secure mobility of labour between jobs and yards a deliberate attempt has been made to break down demarcation lines and to secure greater all-round flexibility in the use of labour. But this can only be achieved at the cost of creating a much more homogeneous and potentially unified workforce. Shipbuilding workers now more nearly share the same market situation and have fewer chances to pursue particular individual strategies in their pursuit of pay and security; collective action against a common employer is the most obvious possibility for them. They are now more likely to experience the same range of work situations - and to have fewer, if any, chances of escaping from deprivations and grievances in one yard under one employer by going to another employer; collective action is again the most obvious strategy. If men's social consciousness is influenced by their immediate social context, and if we are right in stressing the importance of the market and work situations as influencing consciousness, then, one must expect "proletarian" social perspectives to increase in importance." (17)

It will be argued as one of the themes of this Chapter that the above view, whilst a reasonable projection when originally formulated, is in fact deficient in a number of respects. Firstly it underestimated the tenacity of the "non-formal" negotiation of order and thereby treated the implementation of formal agreements and the translation of change at the corporate level onto the shop floor as relatively unproblematic. Secondly it offers a vision of the change between sectional and collective action as primarily a question of the qualitative expression of the contradictions inherent in the employment relationship. In both of these respects the analysis fails to take adequate

account of the wider fortunes of the industry insofar as this implies a changing balance of power between capital and labour. Thirdly, and in some ways most seriously, the analysis of images of society of shipbuilding workers largely on the basis of questionnaire data treats as unproblematic the relevance of replies about the numbers of "classes" in society as this relates to potential action at the point of production. The dangers of mistaking action primarily motivated by a temporary "instrumental collectivism" for more solidaristic and class wide action must be guarded against.

In the next section an attempt to rectify some of these shortcomings will be made by outlining some of the diverse forms through which the day to day negotiation of order was accomplished in the yards in the period prior to 1979. Such a "static" account of some of the processes of control and identity will be supplemented at a later point with reference to the historical development of the industry in general but with specific reference to the Wear.

Part II

The Context, Control and Co-operationa) Physical Location and Control

One of the hardest features of the shipbuilding industry to convey to people who have never seen a shipyard is the sheer complexity and size of the physical workplace. Even in relatively small yards such as those on the Wear the absence of a single workspace is compounded by a multiplicity of activities occurring in differing vertical as well as horizontal planes. The dizzying effect of this complexity and size I remember well from the Monday morning early in September 1975 when I began work as an apprentice plumber at the Deptford Yard of Sunderland Shipbuilders (formerly Laings). It is perhaps useful to outline some of the observations I can recall from that first day of participant observation, of the most direct kind, in order to attempt to convey some of the complexity of the physical layout of the yard.

A friend and I walked the three miles or so from Hylton Castle Estate to the yard that first morning. On crossing Queen Alexandra Bridge we turned left down the bank towards the yard. The first large building encountered was the joiners shop actually outside the yard gates. The double doors were flung open and the sight and sound of circular saws in action dominated the immediate interior of the shop. Down at the gates themselves, opposite the Saltgrass pub, other new apprentices

were gathered. We joined them and sat on the path waiting for the training officer to take us into the yard (18). While sitting there on the ground I remember looking up at one of the two massive pre-fabricating sheds. Its proximity and size dominated the view and reminded me of a secular version of Durham Cathedral without the ornamentation.

The training officer arrived and we began the walk through the yard towards the canteen. Groups of blokes were walking about or standing talking, some gave "wolf whistles" and shouted various comments about apprentices. We walked past the offices round to the left, past the second pre-fabricating shed and more men, some of whom appeared to know me.

"There's another bloody Roberts"; "Hey, I know your father and he's fucking crackers". (19)

After a "pep talk" from the training officer which largely consisted of telling us how lucky we were to have got an apprenticeship and how if there was any nonsense we would be out because for every one of us in here there were fifty lads outside the gate who would gladly take our place, we went on a tour of the yard. This started in front of the offices where the general layout of the yard was explained. From there we zigzagged through a maze of cabins down to the berth and from there into one of the pre-fabricating sheds. The noise was deafening and the air was thick with fumes. It wasn't the wide open space inside the shed that I had expected. Instead there were cabins two storeys high and several partitions which restricted a wide

view. This was compounded by the sections being fabricated, again their size and angular construction blocking an overall appreciation of the "space" in the shed. We wandered across the shed dodging in and out of the vertical girders and round several partitions and emerged out of a door on the far side. Outside there were a number of buildings, stores and "shops" including the plumbers shop. We were split up and sent off in separate directions according to our designated trades. I and three other lads went to the plumbers shop. It was very warm inside what was a rather ramshackle building, with ancient-looking machinery and tools lying about everywhere. Our journey to get here had taken several hours with what seemed like miles walked, up and down steps through a myriad of little connecting doors and passages or walkways, turning through 360° so often that any sense of direction evaporated. For that first week, before we were sent to Wearside College, the confusion was such that plenty of time had to be allowed for toilet trips to ensure finding the correct location before desperation set in! All this in what was a relatively small yard. Moreover as new apprentices we were not allowed on the ship, where we were assured things could be even more complicated. An abiding impression left by these experiences was not only the conception of spatial complexity but also of physical movement, men walking everywhere, individually or in small groups, or standing talking or was it waiting purposefully for something? As a new recruit this wasn't clear

to me and furthermore by the reaction of the training officer or some of the other managers it was not clear to them either!

Within such a complex physical setting the managerial problem of the physical control of labour is immense. There are several dimensions to this problem. Firstly workers can use the size of the yard or a ship simply to hide. As Brown et al found in their study of shipbuilding on the Tyne when talking to a manager,

(Prompt) "I've noticed on the ferries little stickers on the cabins. I gathered this is a new scheme which has been introduced?"

"This was done for a specific reason on the ferry because as you will appreciate there are a lot of cabins on there - there are about 320 cabins. On a normal ship there are about 50 cabins ... In the past the ships have been such a hell of a mess through lack of information, lack of drawings. lack of equipment that all the cabins are wide open till the very last day. Every single cabin on the ship there is somebody working in. You will appreciate that with 320 cabins you can't afford to do this. So what I did was sectionalised the ship in such a way we closed up about 20 cabins a week, starting at a certain time. This was ideal that we should have everything into that cabin, complete, washed out, painted, locked up on a certain day.

I did a preliminary inspection to make sure that all the work was finished behind the ceilings to get the ceiling up and then a fortnight afterwards to get the cabin locked. I do an inspection on a Friday of these two sections, one of the ceiling work and one of the cabin work. But as I said before some days we would be very short of plumbers on this ship, I found on inspection of the ceiling that the plumbers just hadn't finished behind the ceilings. And it is possible they're a week late and consequently the cabin was out a week or a fortnight. Perhaps it wasn't exactly finished in a week, but I don't object to this provided that I can see the ship being closed up regularly as it did happen. You can't be so very rigid in shipbuilding and the scheme has worked. And by doing this method we've closed up the sections, got people out of the cabins where they tend to hide and into passageways where you can keep them moving

and the ship is being closed up."

(Prompt) "Into the cabins where they can hide?"

"Well if you get a man into a cabin he can shut the door behind him and he can make the work last if he wants to, but if you get a man out of the cabin he's got nowhere else to go so he's got to get on with his work in the passageways." (21)

In the absence of cabins other parts of the ship can be used not just as a place to "take a breather", but also for a multitude of other activities, of a greater or lesser degree of illegitimacy, which comprise elements of "leisure in work" (22). Thus one worker recalled how when he and the "mate" he was working with started to "feel the cold" on a refrigeration ship on which they were working,

" ... we used to knock off and go into one of the refrigeration units ... it was like a big room all covered in cork tiling - very warm. And we would start - you know, first of all just throwing light punches, but then we would get carried away and really start lacing into each other. In the end Ronnie always used to get the better of me - he'd end up with my left arm caught under his and he's give me rights to the side of my head. I'd shout "right, we're warm enough now, we'd better get back to work"." (23)

Being the tradesman had the advantage of being able to determine when work should interrupt the boxing!

Another more extreme example of using the "company's time" creatively was given by a plumber working at Greenwells who remembered one labourer who would go missing to melt down and steal the lead insulation from electric cables (24).

The ability to cease work when desired was not only the prerogative of those who would go and hide, for the complexity of

the production process offered plenty of opportunity to come off the job for "legitimate" reasons. One of the most common of these is to go in pursuit of either tools or equipment. Once away from the area of "direct supervision" of an individual foreman, a worker could if desired "go walk about". The length of such excursions was limited only by the plausibility of the story the worker could think of to tell the original foreman. Such plausible stories were not hard to come by, for often delays could have basis in fact. Thus in some cases the hunt for equipment could take several days, and in one case a worker recounted an experience at Shorts yard in the early 1960s where after waiting a fortnight for a foreman to supply a welding set he became so bored that he left and went to another yard. The search for tools and equipment does not exhaust the battery of semi-legitimate reasons for leaving one's work; visits to the ambulance room for everything from indigestion tablets to sticking plaster to keep spectacles on are combined with trips to perform one's natural functions. Indeed the culture of the toilet usually features very large in most accounts of working in the shipbuilding industry. Furthermore absenting oneself from the job is only one strategy - others can include delaying tactics in starting in the first place (about which more will be said later) and even under certain circumstances going home after clocking in. This latter attempt at "working a flanker" could be tried when contractors were working in a yard. If they were

working overtime it was sometimes possible for a night shift worker to leave when they did having made the requisite arrangements for "clocking out" (25).

b) Of Foremen and Workers: The Interpenetration of Personal and Industrial Relations

In the situation where yards had amalgamated and the simplistic management structure of the family firm was replaced by the more bureaucratic structure of professional management, and with less reliance on piecework, the importance of the foremen to ensure that work was being done grew. For as personnel were transferred between yards and the rate of turnover of managerial staff increased (26), together with the use of contract labour, this ensured that the days when the owner or senior management knew the trade of all the men in the yard had gone for ever. Increasingly it was only individual foremen in direct "control" of groups of workers who had any idea of who should be doing what. Ironically however it was also during the period of the long boom, as we saw in the last Chapter, that the coercive force of the foreman declined.

If ensuring that workers were in the right place at the right time was a problematic feature of the foreman's responsibility, then even more so was their responsibility for the effort expended by the workforce. For as Brown et al argued,

"So far as control of workers is concerned, this tends to be the responsibility of the foremen. Control of effort and pace of work largely depends on direct supervision." (27)

However these same authors quote to good effect three managers whose views of how foremen achieve "control" differ.

" ... the management and foremen do control this (the pace of work) whether by getting men to do more work or putting more men on the job - they control pace."

" ... craftsmen do set the pace of work: you need to have one supervisor per man to do otherwise. You feel like that sometimes."

" ... the foreman doesn't have to stand over them. He may have the matter of ten men working for him. He'll detail each of them off to a job and he'll follow that job. He'll go round and lets the men see he knows he's on the job and watching the job and this acts as an incentive for them to work. He doesn't interfere with them in any way, just asks them how the job is going; if he's stopped, can he help him in any way; and so on." (28)

Another paper based on this same research suggests that the last quotation may be a realistic portrayal, as 72% of workers questioned said they never experienced time checks with the figure being as high as 90% of platers and 88% of plumbers (29). In this sense the above authors are correct to stress the importance of the internalisation of standards of work of the craftsmen themselves.

There are several important features which stem from this realisation. Firstly, due to the decline in the coercive power of the foremen, itself based upon the wider changes in the economy and the labour market, the importance of those internalised standards as an element in the effort bargain grew in the period of the long boom. Secondly, following from this shift away from the "objective" determinacy of the wider labour

markets towards the "intersubjective" regulation of the standards of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay", the effort bargain was potentially more volatile as a direct creation or negotiation of intersubjective agency. Thirdly this implies a growing importance of the non-coercive aspects of the relationship between foreman and workers and to this extent the particularistic form of that relationship is to be understood in both its moral and economic contexts. It is to this issue that we will now turn our attention.

In attempting to confront these issues we are faced with the problem that there does not seem to be any well-developed framework for their analysis. Where efforts have been made to recognise the validity of these issues, they often end up merely by restating the problem or stopping short of a move which they see (wrongly) as propelling them towards elements of individual psychology. Thus for example two authors were not prepared to go any further than noting:

"Many of the responses to the workplace are individualistic and escapist." (30)

This is not to deny, however, that some useful attempts have been made to capture the complexities of the negotiated order at the point of production. The work of Burawoy and, preceding him, Donald Roy, did tackle some of these questions in the context of a machine shop. In describing the control of the labour process the importance of the notion of "making out" is seen to lie in the fact that such a system:

" ... inserts the worker into the labour process as an individual rather than as a member of a class distinguished by a particular relationship to the means of production. Workers control their own machines instead of being controlled by them, and this enhances their autonomy.

... The system of reward is based on individual rather than collective effort. Second, the combination of autonomy with respect to machines and dependence with respect to auxiliary personnel has the consequence of redistributing conflict from a hierarchical direction into a lateral direction, in which individual labourers face one another in conflict or competition. The constitution of the worker as one among many competing and conflicting others masks their common membership in a class of agents of production who sell their labour power for a wage, as distinct from another class of agents who appropriate their unpaid labour." (31)

Here then the objective character of the labour process is used to explain the fragmentation of the workers at the point of production. However such fragmentation as an element of organisational integration has been noted in industries with labour processes far different to those of the machine shop, indeed as we have seen in the work of Brown et al division amongst the workforce in shipbuilding is possibly more characteristic than wide solidaristic stances. Clearly there is a need to situate these problems in a more general context than that of an individual labour process which cannot accommodate all the aspects of the negotiation of order in the workplace.

This realisation was implicit in the work of Donald Roy, who concluded of his own research that:

" ... attention has not been drawn to intragroup role and personality variations in intergroup relations. Such additional discriminations and the questions that they might raise in regard to the study of institutional dynamics must be left for future discussion." (32)

Similarly Burawoy himself bemoans the lack of a Marxist psychology which can extend the understanding of the production of consent. Thompson acknowledges this problem, suggesting that:

"An analysis of the existential aspects of the production and reproduction of identity must therefore be situated in the "theoretical black hole" between capitalist/patriarchal structures and individual action. This is indeed necessary, but indicates why a Marxist psychology will not be the vehicle. Such concerns with individual identity do not enter the Marxist analysis of capitalism. Therefore the conceptual tools cannot be generated from within Marxism." (33)

In attempting to contribute towards a theory of the "missing subject" we must beware of restating the vexed dualism of individual and society. What is missing is not a psychology, Marxist or otherwise, but rather an understanding of the interpenetration of structure and agency such as that sought by Philip Abrams outlined in Chapter One.

"... the process of identity formation and the process of social reproduction are one and the same. Insofar as we can understand personal identity and social structure not as distinct states of being but as elements of a single process of becoming; historical sociology is freed from the spurious dualism which puts knowledge of the individual beyond the reach of social science. But the bases for such an understanding are to be found not in general assertions of its desirability but in the empirical study of the "becoming" of identities and societies." (34)

The question cannot then be reduced to one of "individual psychology", and yet "individualistic" responses are often a crucial element in what is more than merely a fragmented labour force. The tendency to polarise collective (class) stances to individualistic (psychological) response is fundamentally inadequate. In most situations the employment relationship and

the contradictions inherent in it are produced and enacted by people who bring far more with them to work than purely a class position. The terrain on which the contradictions are lived out is often moulded as much by moral concerns as any more purely structural locations. In other words we have to give attention not only to the importance of individuals as constitutive of collectivities (and vice versa) but also to the importance of technical and affective rationality insofar as this leads to the interpenetration of private and public statuses, of personal and industrial relations.

As far as the relationship between foremen and workers in the yards is concerned, I wish to stress two aspects of the mutual relationship, those of strategies and sociability. Again these two aspects are not often distinct in the empirical situation; their division is more a discursive device than representing any more fundamental divisions. Strategies then are pursued by both foremen and workers (35). Typically the objectives of such strategies are manifold and overlapping. For the foreman elements involved may include getting enough work done so as not to incur the wrath of his own superiors, whilst also not being seen to be too "bossy" by the workers who could also make his life awkward. Such a balance also includes dimensions of the production and reproduction of identity, to both his "superiors" and "subordinates" he must not be seen as too "soft" but particularly to the latter group he must attempt

to encourage the belief that he is "fair" (36). Individual workers must also avoid being seen as soft or as too much of a "willing horse", but also as craftsmen it is often important for it to be known that one can perform most of the tasks of one's trade if one feels like it. The importance of these individual elements of identity differs between individuals and it is upon these differences that the strategies adopted often depend. Again it must be stated that such differences cannot be reduced to individual psychology, as identities are created and recreated socially, and often historical contingencies can play a major role.

For example, it was noted in the last Chapter that some older workers retained their fear of foremen based on their experiences of the inter-war period. However this only represents a small potential group which foremen can "encourage" to work in a direct way. For others different strategies will be used. Identification of "willing horses" can be an element which foremen can use to good effect. There are those in the yards who in spite of everything do not internalise group norms over pace of work (37). The appeal to the "willing horse" can take different forms. Thus one plumber recalled how a foreman used to encourage one worker in the group shop to undertake jobs no-one else wanted.

"He would come out onto the shop floor with a sketch and would announce that he had an impossible job, maybe a big eight inch diameter pipe with loads of offsets and bends.

As soon as Morris would hear this he would grab it and put it with his other jobs. We would all laugh and Vincent would return to his office smiling. This happened all the time." (38)

In this case then the foreman, and almost everyone else, knew that this individual worker liked to rise to a challenge, as long as the job was "almost impossible" this worker would grab it. The importance to this worker of being seen as the most highly skilled worker in the shop was used well by the foreman. In other cases foremen would use reason, cajole, scorn or threaten workers with transfer of location or shift in order to ensure at least a minimum performance of the group as a whole, with the willing horses taking most of the flogging. However given the possibility of thwarting any direct pressure by disappearing or "botching up" jobs, many foremen rely on the internalised standards of the craft workers themselves. In this respect much effort is expended on retaining convivial relations with individual workers, and in some cases attempting to elicit feelings of sympathy for a difficult position.

"Sometimes he would come over like a big daft labrador - he would say "Jim, we've still got these jobs to finish, and I've been getting a lot of flack from Charlie (the head foreman) 'cause we're not getting through them quick enough. Do you, do you think you could manage another one?" And I'd say, "oh all right then", and he would walk away saying "thanks Jim"." (39)

Some workers were even beyond this sort of appeal. On several separate occasions the account of the plumber who did the tank tests at Thompson's was mentioned. This was a man that all the foremen were frightened of.

"He had his own shed and one of them (a foreman) would poke their head round the door and say "will it be alright for you to do this?" and just leave the paper and get away quick." (40)

Apparently the individual concerned had been in a Japanese prisoner of war camp with the head foreman and it was believed that "he had something on him", either that he had taken beatings on behalf of the foreman or "knew something dodgy about him". Anyway what ever the reason this worker was treated very warily by all the foremen.

This is perhaps an extreme case, however in other accounts there were references to the existence of a high degree of "negotiation" between foremen and individual workers with reference to the allocation of particular jobs. It is important to note not only that the worker evaluates the job but also the identity of the foreman and the way the foreman asks the worker to do the job. The issue was rarely one of worker refusing to do the job, (although some individuals could get away with this), that kind of direct opposition would provoke a crisis whereby the foreman could operationalise the formal inequalities of power in the employment relationship and refer the matter to a manager. Rather the opposition to a job would take the form of "cocking it up" or not performing to the best of one's ability. Thus one worker, in assessing his own ability at his job, went on to conclude:

"I was fairly capable of doing what I was asked to do. Probably wouldn't always do it to the best of my ability,

depending on which way I was asked to do it."

(Prompt) "So from that point of view would personalities come into it?"

"Oh certainly yes, if you were approached the right way you would probably do a job and make a good job of it. Whereas if somebody spoke to you as if they were talking to a dog - if you like, you could gamble there would be something wrong with the job like." (41)

Such a response would seem to lie somewhere between Dubois' categories of "instrumental sabotage" (with limited objectives) and "demonstrative sabotage". It has an instrumental (defensive) element in that it aims to change the behaviour of someone in authority and yet its focus is the demeanour of an individual not a collective stance of management. Thus it is not demanding a change in "working conditions" that could be legislated by management (42). Whilst it shares this feature with "demonstrative sabotage" it diverges from other features that type of sabotage.

"Demonstrative sabotage is not demanding any improvement in working conditions - but this does not mean that it is simply gratuitous. It is expressing a real discord, a class enmity. It may be sheer vengeance, the only thing left to do when all else has failed, a cry of despair, a last gasp: "The boss has attacked us, and we are having revenge on his goods". It can also be a way of indicating that the interests of owners and workers are at variance: "Why produce good quality, work enthusiastically, economise on materials, do all that is laid upon us, why bother, in short, for a boss who is simply exploiting us?" (43)

In our case the response is not expressing "a class enmity" in any direct sense. Surely the hierarchical ordering of the division of labour is a central aspect of the structural ordering of statuses of domination and subordination, but this is not felt

by the worker to be the central problem. Being treated like "a dog" is the problem, one which depends largely on how one is approached. In the context of the complexities of the labour process in shipbuilding then with the potential porosity of the working day ⁽⁴⁴⁾ characteristic of non-machine paced work, one of the main centres of negotiation of the effort bargain becomes the moral ground of individual sociability. Dyadic interaction which is nonetheless structured by formal inequalities deriving from the employment relationship become the centres of negotiation. The elements of such relationships go further than any facile notion of the "human relations" approach, at one level they are "structured" by the inequalities of the employment relationship with its formal statuses of domination and subordination, whilst at another level they include evaluations of individual identity which introduce an asymmetry in what individual foremen can "get away with".

On the latter point the assessment of identity of individual foremen by workers includes both occupationally relevant and non-relevant features. A foreman is evaluated both in terms of his past and present mastery of his craft. Sometimes there is a feeling that a foreman has really been "demoted upwards" - in other words was a lousy craftsman on the tools. Others are held to be competent craftsmen whose knowledge can be trusted when help is needed. Indeed in particular situations foremen can gain much in the eyes of workers by demonstrating high levels of

expertise. In this sense one worker gave an account of an accident on a ship at Doxfords when a fire in the shaft tunnel killed several men:

"The firemen arrived and were just standing, they didn't know how to get in, if there was a short cut or anything. But then Charlie Kirkham worked out if they cut into the tail end of the after end tank they could get into the tunnel. It was just that knowledge that nobody else seemed to have - he chalked on the sections ... everybody else was just standing ... I didn't like the fella mind, he was like a bull in a china shop, but sometimes you need that to get things done." (45)

Other elements in the identity of foremen which do not relate directly to work based issues can play a part in how much an individual worker will put up with from a foreman. Thus one worker explained how during a prolonged period of his daughter's illness and subsequent death one foreman who "was a right swine" had "gone easy on him" and thus demonstrated that he was "really a gentleman". Whilst such demonstrations of "humanity" would occur in most work places, the point is that given the lack of machine pacing, technical control, payment by results and the potential to subvert directives, such positive evaluations assume a direct importance in the creation of consent.

All of this becomes of prime importance when it is realised that some jobs within a craft are considered to be worse than others, and also that specialisation within a trade tends to occur as a "natural" process of negotiation. It is when a bad job needs to be done that a foreman has, as one option, to rely on his authority as seen by individual workers.

"You found over a period of time blokes would tend to get the same job on the following ship; if they made a reasonable job on one particular ship they would probably get the same job to do on the next one. Therefore you would get blokes that was always used to fitting air pipes because they did them on the last boat. ... It was good in some respects and bad in others, depending on what particular job it was. If it was a job where you were working in confined spaces - in the double bottoms and what not, which there wasn't very many people keen on doing, you wouldn't be very happy to do it every ship. So it was a case of if you made too good a job of it you were going to get it on the next boat, so if there was a few leaks introduced in the pipes the chances are you probably wouldn't get the job on the next boat." (46)

In relation to such bad jobs and cases where "botched jobs" had to be put right, or jobs required the application of surplus skill, foremen often relied upon more than their own authority. The principal element in such situations was the negotiation of "perks". The approach of the foreman on such occasions were characteristic of someone "asking a favour":

"The foreman would approach you and ask you, "hey, will you do that job for us?" and you could gamble that if a foreman approached you with a "will you do us a favour" attitude that it was a bit of a horrible job. So you would say "What's in it for me like? Like if I do it as fast as you want it doing what am I likely to get out of it?" you know ... be it a half shift booked in for you or whatever, or a job and finish which as soon as you'd finished the job you could get away home or whatever." (47)

The importance of the use of devices such as these is that the negotiation of the effort bargain extends beyond the scope of the employment contract and involves the illegitimate use of overtime payments or time off. It should be emphasised that many such jobs occur on each ship and are therefore, to some extent, routine occurrences which nevertheless are seen to require the

use of "perks". Moreover there was a clear belief amongst workers that higher management colluded in these negotiations, between foremen and workers, by their "knowledge" of these processes.

(Prompt) "Did the upper management know that this went on?"

"Well I think they did but ... I think it was for "kidem stakes" - they used to make it try and look as if it was just between the foreman and the man on the shop floor - so you didn't bring management into it. Yes they probably knew about it, it was a case of "oh give the lads whatever you need to, for to get the job done", aye." (48)

The idea that higher management colluded in these practices is underlined by the fact that once control of yard exits was tightened up, foremen were still willing to issue written pass outs for workers with whom they had agreed a "job and knock" (job and finish).

(Prompt) "If you were given a job and knock how would you get out of the gate?"

"At one time earlier on you could just walk out. Later on you would get a pass out, the foreman would present you with a pass out." (49)

Again this points to the lack of any controls over the workers in terms of the negotiation of the effort bargain or their physical presence, other than those stemming from the foreman and importantly the internalised standards of performance, both quantity and quality, of the workers themselves. This element of self control is of particular importance, for as we have already seen, attempts at direct control by foremen can be subverted by "botching up" or going missing. Both of these tactics carry some risks to the worker however. If attempted too often or in too

overt a manner, their oppositional intent becomes manifest (50). This can result in either formal disciplinary procedures being invoked, or more usually the individual is branded a trouble maker or a "barrack room lawyer" and transferred between sections and workgroups. The stability of status of trouble maker then tends to become solidified in a process not unlike that of the "looping effect" described by Goffman, where the expectations of those in authority of "further deviance" are matched by the assumption of an immediate defensive stance on behalf of the individual. This wariness is then interpreted by those in authority as evidence of the correctness of their original expectations, and so on (51). The initial expectations of the foremen are usually formed through information passed within their own ranks. Thus during a period of several days spent with the training officer at Doxfords (Pallion Yard) in 1981 I was witness to a discussion between a foreman plater and my "host" (52).

We entered a shed on the floor of the covered-in yard, whereupon the foreman ordered about three other people out, closed the door and began a diatribe against an individual who had just been transferred to his squad. Amidst the cursing and references to "barrack room lawyers" were appeals for the training officer to ask other foremen about the man. "They know what he is like". Halfway through this diatribe the foreman noticed my presence and broke off mid-sentence. Stabbing a finger in my direction he demanded,

"Who the bloody hell's he?"

The training officer replied, "It's alright, he's from Durham University". Whereupon the foreman continued to fume. The ferocity of his outburst was remarkable. However the training officer reassured him that:

"You know you won't be stuck with him for long."

That such individuals are kept on the move is well recognised by the workers themselves. As one shipwright put it,

"I'm sick of it. I get shunted about all over, I've been to Thompsons (North Sands) and Laings (Deptford) - they even sent me to Smiths Dock on Teesside. When I came here (Doxfords, Pallion) the foreman just walked up to me and said "I know about you"." (53)

Given the pitfalls of being seen as a trouble maker, the realisation of how far you can go in opposition to particular foremen becomes part of a stock of knowledge on the shop floor. Some strategies used do not carry as great a risk of being seen as oppositional (both to authority and the individual) as others. One such approach seeks to prompt the foreman, or further encourage him into excursions of self indulgency. Here the knowledge of the interests and temperaments of individual foremen is crucial. Thus in one case,

"All you had to do was go in and start talking about (tropical) fish. You would say, you know: "Jacky, I was in Armstrong's Aquatics with the bairns on Saturday and we saw this fish, it was sort of black and swam funny - you know, like this - do you know what it was?" If it worked he'd start asking if it had fins here or did it swim on the bottom or top or whatever. Once he started you could be there for hours, talking about how they breed and what illnesses they get - it was all interesting, mind." (54)

In other cases a more collective attempt to encourage the self indulgency of a foreman would work, and examples of these occasions are fondly remembered and retold to others involved, particularly where a certain arrogance can be detected in the foreman, such as pretentions at being a great orator:

"Harry Hunter, he used to have this bench outside his office in the Plumbers shop. Every now and again he would come out when everybody had just got in and he would stand on the bench with his hands on his lapels. "Now then, men" he would say, and we'd all start to gather round, "Now then, I'm sorry to have to announce the death of brother so and so at the age of 80 odd who worked in this yard 40 odd years man and boy." Then he would go on about what jobs this man had worked on and what ships he'd been on. By this time we'd crowd round tighter and especially if it was raining or we didn't want to go out we used to offer up useful comments, "Wasn't he the bloke that used to grow leeks?" or something like that, and he'd go off on another tangent. All the time we'd be whispering to each other out of the corner of our mouths "go on Harry, go on Harry" - by this time half the morning shift could have gone by." (55)

Many of the tactics of indulgence and avoidance incorporate elements of behaviour which have direct parallels in the school situation. It is therefore perhaps not merely a coincidence that Corrigan's perceptive study of working class boys' experience of school was, given the findings, based in Sunderland. Here the author suggests that the "major single point" to be learnt from the research is:

"... that it is impossible to extricate the behaviour of the individual from the power situation. "Carrying on" represents at one and the same time taking no notice of the teacher, being aware of the teacher's power, and doing what the teacher doesn't want you to do. The only link between these three is that the boy is asserting his right, in the given power situation of the classroom, to take part in whatever action he feels like. That action is not dominated by values of a pro- or anti-school nature; instead it is

about the power situation perceived and experienced in that school. Given that for the boys the teachers are "big-heads", and they try to rule you, the boys are presented with a problem of initiating their own action. To start using the analogy of a guerilla struggle, "carrying on in class" represents the ability of the boys to continue their normal way of life despite the occupying army of the teachers and the power of the school, as well as their ability to attack the teachers on the boys' own terms." (56)

The analogy with the school situation is an imperfect one, for the role of the foreman involves important contradictions, which will be developed later, and cannot be seen as approximating to that of the school teacher. However where managerial action was forthcoming, to increase or rather enforce direct control, resistance which is sometimes recounted as almost "prankish" could be forthcoming. Thus one worker told of how periodically a particular manager would attempt to prevent workers leaving the ship 15 minutes before "knocking off" time:

"He would arrive at the end of the gang plank about twenty minutes before the buzzer. When we got mind of what he was doing we started to come off half an hour before finish, and so on. On a few occasions he would see someone he thought should be somewhere else and chase them. I remember one time when he was chasing all of us round and round the sheds." (57)

It ought to be pointed out that those involved in such chases were not just the "young and daft" element in the yard, but included men right up to retiring age, some, as in the case of this individual, mature men with teenage or adult offspring much taken to talking of "common sense" and "respect". Clearly for the craftsmen the imposition of direct control of this kind was taken as an attempt to treat them in a "childish" manner. If the

response could be seen as in some respects adequate to this challenge then the explanation lies in the context rather than purely in the psychological characteristics of the individuals concerned.

Again the point should be made that such frustrations of managerial objectives stops short of overt refusal to perform, hence the "prankish" nature of some of the avoidance strategies. Where non-performance cannot be hidden, attempts to neutralise potential sanctions of foremen are made. Such attempts often call for the use of skillful "patter" in order to introduce humour into the situation. Thus an example was given of where a degree of "mucking about" had resulted in a pipe going over the side of a ship. The dialogue between the "chief patter merchant" and the foreman then went as follows:

"Why isn't that pipe in yet?"

"Oh Gordon can I ask you a question ... If you know where something is have you lost it?"

"What are you on about?"

"Just that ... If you know where something is, have you lost it?"

"Of course it isn't bloody well lost if you know where it is."

"Oh I'm glad about that, because I know where the pipe is, it's down there - (pointing over the side of the ship)."

"Yer daft bugger, go and get another one." (58)

In this case the potential row between the foreman and the plumber has been deflected by the skillful use of discourse. The

use of humour as a defensive strategy amongst the British Working Class has been pointed to by Michael Mann, who suggests that it re-emphasises "a strong cultural sense of group identity" whilst also providing:

" ... a way of apparently overcoming, but in reality accommodating to, the threat and the vulnerability." (59)

In the yards the ability to incorporate the foreman into the "cultural sense of group identity" stems from his contradictory position of being on the one hand an agent of management and yet on the other a craftsman whose authority is based, in part, on being "one of the lads".

The importance of establishing authority as one of the lads rather than a more raw exercise of power is of course historically contingent. The emphasis upon the importance of sociability as an element in the negotiation of the effort bargain became of increasing importance in the post-war period, and from a managerial point of view such negotiation was seen as problematic. As Hopkins noted in 1971,

"It is well known that industrial relations are not as good as they used to be; on the other hand, people assert that in former times, the situation was firmly held by the fear of want of a drastic sort." (60)

This realisation is important, for the existence of the objective constraints of the "fear of want" outlined in earlier chapters served to confuse issues of authority and power. Thus Hopkins' assertion that the "worsening" industrial relations in Wearside shipbuilding can be seen as a breakdown in a previous

moral code, a loss of pride in craft and the bureaucratisation of the work situation does not compare like with like. Given the degree of constraints and power inequalities in the employment relationship in the pre-(second)war period one must be careful not to confuse issues of consent and acquiescence at the point of production. For as Weber noted,

"Obedience will be taken to mean that the action of the person obeying follows in essentials such a course that the content of the command may be taken to have become the basis of action for its own sake ... Subjectively, the causal sequence may vary, especially as between "submission" and "sympathetic agreement". (61)

Given this, the intriguing question is not the moral decline of the working class but rather, given the tactics available to the worker of "going missing", "botching up", "indulging the foremen", "negotiating perks" and "the humour of patter", why any ships got built at all? Despite the tactics available to workers foremen do still make a difference and importantly individual craft workers themselves show internalised standards with respect to both quantity and quality of work. As Brown et al concluded in their study of shipbuilding,

" ... control over effort does appear to depend very much on the foreman and on the internalised standards of the worker himself, especially in the many situations on the berth or ship where a worker inevitably spends long periods of time out of sight of any foreman or manager." (62)

Moreover,

" ... the control of quality of work during production rests very much with foremen and managers, and again with the workers himself, insofar as he has internalised certain standards of craftsmanship." (63)

Given the decline of the objective content of coercion (i.e. loose labour markets) it would seem that in the period of the post-war long boom the importance of "responsible autonomy" as a feature of the mobilisation of labour grew. However we should beware of committing an inversion of the failings of Hopkins. The growth of the importance of responsible autonomy was relative and not absolute. This feature of the regulation of the effort bargain in shipbuilding is indicated in both the craft process of production and the craft administration of labour. Its existence cannot be reduced purely to a "strategy" of management. The tenacity of responsible autonomy as a feature of the labour process in shipbuilding leads one to doubt that its existence is as contingent upon labour market forces as, for example, Friedman suggests:

"The Responsible Autonomy strategy requires secure employment. It may be possible to persuade workers to behave responsibly while employed, but it is difficult to get those workers to behave "responsibly" in accepting lay-offs without a struggle." (64)

The evidence from the shipbuilding industry in the inter-war period, when lay-offs were accepted as part of the "natural order of things", suggests that this view is mistaken. Moreover it reduces behaviour to strategies, in this case managerial strategies, and to an extent underestimates the degree to which both management and workers were acting "in good faith". There is an important sense in which a degree of responsible autonomy has historically been given or allowed, and taken or accepted by

craftsmen in the British shipbuilding industry as part of an existential identity. This feature should not be underestimated in as far as it has contributed to the tenacity of the craft division of labour. Again, elements of organisational and moral categories become interwoven to the extent that their analytical separation inevitably produces distortion.

In this way the craftsmen become responsible not only for the operation of their own autonomy, but also for the work rate of the ancillary workers, "their mates". In this respect skilled workers more easily identify with foremen or "white collar" engineers than unskilled workers. Thus Braun and Fuhrmann quoted a time served craftsman and engineer:

"Blue collar workers have to do a bit more manual labour, but I don't think there is any difference in the economic situation. And that's as it should be. And I can't think of any differences (in the styles of life). For that matter, there are no differences in the way they think. At least not in respect to craftsmen. But a simple labourer, he hasn't developed himself intellectually, so naturally he thinks differently. He can't see how things are connected, and if someone tells him something, he parrots it. But an intellectually alive person thinks his own thoughts, independently of whether he is a blue or white collar worker." (65)

Similarly perceived differences in the technical, intellectual and moral capacities of craftsmen and unskilled labourers in the Wear shipbuilding industry survived into the 1980s (66). One incident in the Deptford yard in 1979 serves to illustrate the symbolic importance of the hierarchy between skilled and non-skilled workers. In this case a squad of plumbers were working overtime to complete fitting out for sea trials. The foreman

sent out for suppers, as was the norm when excessively late working occurred, ordering the "errand boys" to get:

"Fish lots for the craftsmen, Pattie lots for the labourers." (67)

This caught the imagination of the rest of the workers in the yard, the tale has passed into "legend" and to this day labourers are sometimes referred to as "Pattie lots". The point is that the inferior status of labourers serves to bolster the identity of the craftsmen as a responsible worker. Historically the notion of the labour aristocrat implied both autonomy and "responsibility".

One should not however overstress the importance of "responsibility" as an aspect of ensuring that a certain amount of work gets done. Other more mundane factors also play a part. Firstly the coercive effects of boredom are often overlooked as a spur to do some work, thus the frustrations felt by workers waiting for tools or space is often real enough. Secondly the organic nature of the production process ensures to some extent that, unless in dispute, sectional groupings of workers are anxious to complete their work, and be seen to do so, as it fits into the wider production process. This form of self-discipline is indeed an essential part of the craft division of labour, and in this sense the upper level of output is set by social rather than technical limits. Indeed in the changed circumstances of the U.C.S. work-in:

"... so great was the enthusiasm that a major problem became the restraint of production to pre-occupation levels." (68)

In the more "normal" circumstances of a shipyard, however, where "fatalism" (69) towards the social organisation of industry is perhaps more characteristic than attempts at radical change the craftsman, as Sabel argued, sees technical mastery as an important element in individual identity. Thus,

"What counts for him ... is technical prowess, not place in an officially defined hierarchy of jobs: Titles are not important, savoir faire is." (70)

Clearly such prowess can only be demonstrated by doing work. Moreover as we have already seen, such good work pays dividends in being able to negotiate further autonomy in terms of perks etc. Thus it is important to realise that for workers in shipyards control can be manifested as much by performing work as avoiding it, this again emphasises the craft nature of the production process. Finally, without wishing to labour the point, work, including the physical activity of labour, is a source of satisfactions as well as deprivations. As Studs Terkel noted work is not only about the scars, "psychic as well as physical":

"It is about a search too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying." (71)

Whatever the exact combination of these factors in individual cases, the point remains that whilst demand for ships has existed the workforce in the yards has been prepared to work. Some harder and technically better than others, and, as a whole,

rarely as hard as management would wish them to. Nevertheless the craft division of labour in shipbuilding has proved to be tenacious enough to last into the second half of the twentieth century, often enough with the "support" of the employers as well as the Unions.

In the next section I will attempt to outline the context in which those "controls" dealt with earlier in this chapter became seen to be problematic by management, not just in an ideological sense, but as a practical problem to be effectively dealt with at the point of production.

Part III

When the Courtship was Over: Court Line to Nationalisation

So far in this Chapter I have been concerned to explicate some of the features of the production and reproduction of control at the point of production in the post-war period. I have avoided looking at the issue in terms of specifically trades union development not because this is unimportant but rather because the issues have been well dealt with elsewhere (72). In general terms the shipbuilding industry displayed a pattern similar to most other large industries in the post-war period. On the basis of the long boom, the inter-war period pattern of relatively strong localised union representation remained, although supplemented (and sometimes contradicted) by strong (both financially and increasingly as a negotiating centre) central organisations. At the point of production the importance of the shop steward was acknowledged by most workers. Some pointed to the growth of health and safety functions as well as wide ranging bonus negotiations as evidence of greater union activity in the post-war period. In another case a worker joining the Deptford yard from the building trade in 1972 spoke of his amazement at the level of union organisation and the authority of the shop stewards.

However another constant theme, in the non-activist workers' view of the trade unions within the yards, was the increasing sense in which the union was seen as an external body. There

were several levels to such views. Firstly the division between the official union structure and the less official post of shop steward was emphasised particularly as this represented itself in relation to unofficial action. Thus there was almost universal condemnation of examples where union officials had ordered men to resume work after their action was deemed unofficial (73). At another level some workers displayed resentment over the practice of periodically having to show their union cards in order to prove that they were fully paid up members. Such showing of cards amounted to almost a ritualistic display and for some emphasised an individual subordination in the face of the union's external authority. At another level workers were suspicious of the motives of individuals who sought the role of shop steward. The position could be "used" by the ambitious as a springboard into management. This was particularly so in the post-war period with the growth of professional management functions, as Hopkins noted of the Wear:

"The experience gained by a really able shop steward resulted in quite a number of them going into personnel work." (74)

And even earlier,

"During the war I remember Jack Gibson, in Doxfords, being made "Labour manager" when he ceased to be Chairman of the Shop Stewards." (75)

As the labour market tightened during the long boom and stewards were afforded more facilities, the position was seen to offer the potential for the realisation of "ambition" of a different kind.

"Some worked it as a cushy number, they could openly walk around all day talking to their mates, if anyone said anything they were on Union Business." (76)

The recognition made by, amongst others, the Donovan Commission (77) that a distinction between the union and workgroup should be made needs then to be supplemented by an understanding that the workgroup cannot be reduced to their "unofficial" union representative, the shop steward. The individual worker himself could be out of sympathy with both the official union and the workplace representative, and on a day to day basis find himself occupying a stance of "desubordination" with respect to both Management and Unions (78). It should be emphasised that this does not mean that workers in the yards were or are opposed to trades unionism in general, for, as will be demonstrated later, workers saw unions as necessary and, in relation to management, the unions are evaluated in positive terms. But such general appreciation is not always transformed into an uncritical endorsement of day to day practice in the yards themselves.

As illustrated in relation to the "career" potential of the shop steward's role, such issues are situated historically. Similarly the increasing division between the national union and local representatives and the drift towards national bargaining has been well captured by McGoldrick (79). The other side of this coin however has been the changing nature of the corporate form in the post-war period. On the Wear the post-war period has seen the demise of the family owned firm and the rise and fall of the

conglomerate ending in the Nationalisation of most yards on the river in 1974 with final nationalisation of Austin and Pickersgill in 1977.

The Changing Corporate Form

Such changes are important for several reasons. Firstly the tendency towards the agglomeration of individual capitals has been seen by Marx as an inherent structural imperative within capitalism itself (80). Thus, as Aaronovitch has argued,

"There is no more familiar story than the evolution of the firm: from the entrepreneur who owned and directly controlled the enterprise, through various forms of partnership and associations, to the full development of the modern joint stock company, which has become the dominant form of the organisation of capital in all advanced capitalist economies." (81)

Secondly, and of more importance for our purposes than the empirical expression of a general structural tendency, is the fact that changes in the corporate form can imply shifts in the qualitative aspects of capital as well as the purely quantitative agglomeration. These changes are of particular significance insofar as they affect the capital-labour relationship. Again there can be both quantitative and qualitative aspects to these changes. Thus the agglomeration of individual capitals can imply a fundamental change in the relative resources of capital and labour. The workforce located at an individual organisational level has now to contend with multidivisional capital. This presents the workforce with the problem of the growth of the

strategic resources of capital as well as a growth in their absolute power (resources) (82). Furthermore changes in the corporate form may provide not only the objective resources with which to carry through a change in management strategy towards labour but under certain circumstances may also provide a crucial change in the willingness of agents of management to carry through such changes. In other words such changes underpin the extent to which the specific form of managerial control strategy in a particular situation is the outcome of both the objective resource endowment of capital (and labour) and the agency of management (and workforce).

In order to illustrate the relevance of these considerations we must return to the empirical level and follow the changes in the corporate form and managerial strategies as they occurred on the Wear. Whilst the demise of the shipbuilding company as a wholly privately owned (stock) firm belonged in general to an earlier era, the retention of family control of the voting stock and thereby actual control of the organisations survived in some yards on the Wear into the post-war period. However "family" yards came under increasing pressure and with the closure of the two smallest remaining yards, Crown and Shorts, the attractions of amalgamations were heightened. Whilst there had been a long history of informal co-operation between individual yards and more formal connections in terms of overlapping directorships, the pressures now indicated a need for formal corporate

amalgamations. In the two decades after the war there were several moves in this direction. Austin and Pickersgill merged in 1954 and the Sunderland Shipbuilding Dry Docks & Engineering Co. Ltd. was formed with the amalgamation of Sir James Laing & Sons, T.W. Greenwell & Co., the Sunderland Forge & Engineering Co., John Lyon & Co. and the Wolsingham Steel Company. Eventually two groups emerged on the Wear, the Doxford & Sunderland group, formed in 1961, and with the post Geddes incorporation of Bartrams, the Austin & Pickersgill group. In the case of the former grouping, individual yards had largely kept their own identities and existing management teams. The amalgamations in this group had, on the whole, been associated more with developing a more secure (i.e. larger) financial base than with any widespread or radical changes in product range or organisation of production. As far as the control of labour was concerned at Doxford and Sunderland, continuity was more characteristic than change, the craft administration of labour was not challenged and control of work was largely a feature of the self regulation of the craftsmen on the one hand, and the influence of labour market conditions, insofar as this shaped the context of the relationship between the foremen and the workforce, on the other.

In the case of the Wear, then, the agglomeration of capital can be seen as a necessary but not sufficient factor in determining managerial and organisational change. The

"character" as well as the size of capital unit needs to be taken into consideration. In the other Wear grouping, Austin and Pickersgill, the acquisition of a majority share in the company by London Overseas Freighters in 1957 (and a share buy-out in 1970) resulted in changes on the board and a shake up of top management. Perhaps as a development of this the company became more innovative in product design and more aggressive in marketing, as evidenced in their eventual success of their replacement "liberty ship" the SD14, first launched at Bartrams yard in 1968. A change in managerial strategy towards labour was forthcoming in the Doxford & Sunderland group, following its takeover by the Court Line group. Importantly such a change occurred as part of a wider strategy of change both in terms of market orientation and production techniques. It is these changes upon which we will now concentrate.

On Monday 8 May 1972 the Sunderland Echo reported that there was speculation in "the city" that Court Line would soon make a bid for the Doxford and Sunderland group. The evidence for such speculation was given as Court Line's review of the Wearside firm and the fact that already the firm's shares were rising in the stock market, indicating the presence of an interested party (83). On 17 May a £10 million bid for the company was announced by Court Line. Despite losses made by Doxford and Sunderland of £1,249,000 in the 1971-72 financial year the Managing Director of Court Line was optimistic that the firm

could be made profitable. The context for such an attempt was seen to be one of change. Change in market strategy, in production techniques, in relations with the workforce and importantly in the full integration of existing and proposed production sites. As Court Line's Managing Director put it:

"We are convinced that with the backing provided by the Government's regional development plan and the co-operation of the trade unions we could make Doxford and Sunderland Ltd a very profitable business ...

... We are confident we could help increase productivity in the existing yards to the benefit of all concerned. It would also be our intention to construct a new covered shipyard to provide at least 1,000 additional jobs in Sunderland as soon as possible." (84)

The improvement in co-operation between management and workforce was seen to be a cornerstone of Court Line's project on the Wear. Indeed Jim Venus, the man Court Line were to put in charge of the Wearside development, had already achieved success in the development of the covered yard at Appledore in Devon. In relation to that success he laid great emphasis upon:

"... the co-operation between management, employees and trade unions that has made this development (Appledore) possible." (85)

After an initial hesitation on behalf of the unions, and worries that the Court Line bid would lead directly to a single group on the Wear (86), they eventually were persuaded that the take-over would be beneficial to their members. Thus on the day that the Doxford and Sunderland Directors advised acceptance of a slightly improved Court Line offer the "Echo" lead with an article entitled "Court Line Backs Wear Against the World" in which:

"Mr. Henry Wilkinson, district secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, welcomed the news today. He said Court Line would inject much-needed capital investment into the area.

The company was progressive in its outlook and made a point of involving its workers in all aspects of development. He regarded the situation as the beginning of a new era for shipbuilding in Sunderland." (87)

The initial outline plan of Court Line involved considerable changes in the function of all the yards in the group to create an integrated product line. The most radical change was to be the construction of a covered in yard. The Managing Director of Court Line, Mr. Young, said that Greenwells would be the site of the new covered in yard which was to have an area of 250,000 square feet and be capable of building vessels of up to 30,000 tons. Moreover,

"He envisages the yard concentrating on smaller highly specialised ships of around 4,000 and 5,000 tons built two at a time, slightly larger than those built at the Appledore covered in yard." (88)

Each of the other yards was to concentrate on a particular specialised type of tonnage. At North Sands (Thompsons) with its single large berth giant natural gas carriers of up to 150,000 tons were to be built, with its former forte of bulk carriers being "left to foreign competition". The Deptford yard (Laings) was to build ships of up to 70,000 tons, particularly specialised tonnage for the transport of chemicals and refined oils. Finally the Pallion yard (Doxfords), which was in the process of being run down, was to be used for "barges, rig platforms and other complex and unorthodox structures for drilling rigs." (88)

Following a feasibility study it was decided that the covered in yard should not be built on the site of Greenwells dock, but rather that the Pallion yard should be the site of the new development. To this end a loan was secured, the first to a major shipbuilding company, under the selective assistance provision of the 1972 Industry Act. The loan of £9 million depended upon Court Line itself supplying a further £3 million. Work began on the construction of the covered in yard at Pallion in October 1973, and was eventually finished in December 1976. The investment in the covered in yard was not the only capital expenditure that the firm committed itself to, so much so that by the time of the demise of Court Line in June 1974 a £22 million investment programme was under way.

The Court Line takeover of Doxford and Sunderland was done in an atmosphere of confidence. People were encouraged to draw direct parallels between the success of the Appledore yard and the plans that the company had for the yards on the Wear. The welcome given to the takeover by the Unions was shared by the workforce. The programme of capital expenditure was seen as firm evidence of the long term commitment of the company towards the yards. Other features of Court Line were seen as beneficial too. Ironically, as it was to prove, the size of the firm was seen to indicate that a greater degree of security existed than in the days of "local" owners. There was even a rumour which developed at the time that the firm would provide, through its other

interests, free holidays for the workers. The mood of optimism for the future had rarely been as evident.

This buoyant mood was further encouraged by changes occurring within the yards. The provision of amenity blocks and cabins close to the berths were appreciated by the workers.

"We got toilets with wash hand basins, soap and towels, and hot water! It had never been heard of before." (89)

"It was at this time that safety gear was introduced, ear defenders, hard hats and what-have-you. Overalls, we were given overalls for the first time, before that we had to come in our own work clothes - just, you know, your old clothes ... " (90)

In looking back at the Court Line period there is almost universal agreement amongst workers that a kind of "golden age" appeared to have dawned. Importantly, it was not just the physical environment that was seen to have improved.

"When Court Line came into being there was an easing off period inasmuch as there was nobody leaning on you as much as there had been previously. When Court Line appeared you started getting different amenities - cabins and such like, places where you could sit down and eat a meal rather than sort of sit on a block or crouch down somewhere to eat your meals ... When Court Line came along, from the bloke on the shop floor's point of view everything seemed to pick up, everything seemed that much better .. Control eased up but I wouldn't say output eased up, I would say there was probably as much work done from a work point of view because people were happier, there was nobody actually leaning on you then. There didn't seem as though there was the pressure upon people (that there was) prior to Court Line coming in ... there was a more relaxed atmosphere." (91)

For the first time it seemed that a strategy of "responsible autonomy" was being pursued enthusiastically by management rather than being granted grudgingly as the inevitable outcome of a

craft technology. The change was noticeable not only at the non-activist level but life also became easier for shop stewards. One ex-steward spoke of the difficulty of restraining a "grin breaking all over your face" when one went in to ask management for something, confident in the knowledge that they would usually deliver.

"Once we even got the steward to raise the issue of the water being too hot in the wash block, it was dangerous - you could scald your hands ... they regulated the temperature, no problem." (92)

Not everything was applauded, however; the increase in managerial personnel was, at this point, greeted with a degree of bemusement.

"That was when all the different coloured hats started to appear. There was green ones, red ones, white ones, that was when the place started to look like a bloody billiard table." (93)

Moreover when the benign policies had a control implication these were quickly spotted and dealt with. Thus for example whilst the company's policy on issuing boilersuits was, in general, well received the fact that different trades were issued with different coloured boiler suits was seen as a "dodgy move". Rather than promoting a pride in one's craft it resulted in men from different trades swapping garments and thus neutralising any potential that colour coding had for control over the physical movement of labour within the yards.

When the plunge in Court Line's share prices was reported in the Sunderland Echo on 20 June 1974 it took Wearside by surprise

despite the fact that Court Line's difficulties had been reported to the Secretary of State for Industry as early as February of that year (94). Following the suspension of dealing in Court Line's shares on 21 June the Labour M.P. for Sunderland North, Fred Willey, gave guarantees over the future of the yards after talking to Industry Minister Tony Benn (95). By 27 June the future of Court Line's shipbuilding interests were sealed, they were to be wholly Nationalised. The impact of the Court Line crash on Wearside was considerable, and even now workers are at pains to point out that it was the holiday side of the company which brought about its demise, not the shipbuilding section (96).

Nationalisation on the Wear

The context of the nationalisation of Court Line's interests on the Wear was not as straightforward as the speed of its execution might suggest. Whilst the Labour Party were returned to office in February 1974 with a policy of nationalising the industry, support for this move locally was less solid. As the Sunderland Echo was at pains to point out,

"Last November when shop stewards and union officials met the then Minister for Trade and Industry (Mr. Christopher Chataway) to discuss the final development plans for Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd., the unions gave Government a "hands off" warning on behalf of all the shipbuilding workers on the Wear.

Men in the Austin and Pickersgill Group also passed on the the Government their opposition to Nationalisation." (97)

In the same article, two days before Tony Benn announced the

nationalisation of the group, the district secretary of the A.U.E.W., Mr. Henry Wilkinson, suggested that whilst there would be government intervention he expected it to be "in the form of partnership (rather) than direct state control." After the Nationalisation plans were announced some local politicians displayed great enthusiasm for the move. Thus in a Council meeting on 27 June Councillor Robert Kirby noted that:

"I cannot put into words the despondency that was going around the yards. But when they heard the news you would have thought they had won the football pools." (98)

However Fred Willey displayed a more defensive attitude towards the move, emphasising the pragmatic issues and distancing it from any wider ideological standpoint.

"The fact is that Sunderland Shipbuilders is going into public ownership because there is no other bidder ... Lack of interest in Sunderland Shipbuilders had nothing to do with any Government nationalisation plans ... it was because the company was committed to a £22,000,000 investment programme.

No-one but the Government was prepared to make any kind of offer to Court Line, said Mr. Willey." (99)

Another issue in the muted response of the workers and the unions to the nationalisation package was their enthusiasm for the Court Line management teams in the yards. This concern was again voiced by the district secretary of the A.U.E.W.:

"Of the future of Sunderland Shipbuilders Mr. Wilkinson said he was sure the vast majority of workers would wish the present senior executives to remain in control. "I know they would get the full support of the workers because they have a good working relationship with the employees and the unions", he said." (100)

However the local M.P. pointed out subsequently that there could be no guarantees on this issue.

"Mr. Willey also warned that State ownership of Court Lines interests on the Wear did not carry any guarantee that there would not be changes in management. Court Line had not hesitated to change the management structure when it arrived on the Wear." (101)

Despite reservations Henry Wilkinson of the A.U.E.W. endorsed the idea of the nationalisation of the yards, saying that

"Now we have gilt edged security with the finance to carry out all that is necessary ... I think it will be of supreme importance to this town." (102)

Workers' responses were mainly characterised by relief that the yards would not close. With hindsight some of them have developed a more critical view of the "rescue" package, comparing favourably the situation under private enterprise and describing Court Line's collapse as "the worst possible thing that could happen".

The Court Line period is for the most part remembered positively by the workforce. The spirit of co-operation displayed by the management amounted to the adoption of "responsible autonomy" as a management strategy rather than a technological implication of the division of labour. However it would have been interesting if the company had survived to see if this spirit could have been maintained in the face of changes in working practices to bring them into line with the modernisation of plant that they initiated. As it happens the demise of Court Line occurred at the very point when demand for tonnage slumped

dramatically. On a world scale the tonnage of ships on order fell from 120.7 million g.r.t. in 1974 (128.9 million g.r.t. in 1973) to 82.3 million g.r.t. in 1975. In Britain new orders fell dramatically from a high point of 4.4 million g.r.t. to 0.9 million g.r.t. in 1974 and only 67,000 g.r.t. in 1975. This then was the context in which the newly nationalised yards on the Wear faced the world in the Autumn of 1974.

Before going on to look in more detail at the continuities and changes on Wearside after nationalisation, it is perhaps useful to take a wider look at the world market in the demand and supply for ships. No attempt will be made here to address the notion of the "crisis" in shipbuilding, rather general historical patterns will be referred to insofar as these are relevant to the pressures that were to be exerted upon the division of labour and working practices in the yards.

Part IV

The Shifting Contours of World Shipping

Speaking of the British Economy between 1870 and 1914 Peter Mathias has noted that:

"Shipbuilding has been mentioned as one area where British world hegemony and technological leadership remained unchallenged." (103)

Similarly J.R. Parkinson has written that:

"In the second half of the nineteenth century the British Shipbuilding industry eclipsed all others in its rate of growth and, in the fullness of its competitive power, overwhelmed all markets until it produced for a time over 80% of the world's ships." (104)

The conditions of this dominance have been well researched by others (105). However attention should be drawn to the fact that the industry in Britain benefited by the headstart given to "The First Industrial Nation". This was so not in terms of a direct headstart for the metal shipbuilding industry but rather stemmed from the historical consequences of that "headstart" in other areas. A first consequence of this was the favoured access to a largely protected market built upon colonial expansion. Secondly the emergent technologies in earlier "engineering" industries ensured a supply of relatively skilled labour for the industry as it emerged. Given this element in its success some relative decline in the standing of the industry was inevitable as other nations developed their industrial strength. And indeed this proved to be the case from the beginning of the twentieth century until the Second World War. The development of German, U.S.,

French, Dutch and in the latter part of the period Japanese ship-building industries reduced the British share of world output to a figure consistently below 50%.

Those who point to the fact that the British share of the world market has consistently declined (with temporary resurgence at some points) since the 1890s fail to appreciate that the external conditions of the wider world system have changed dramatically over the period. This fact makes the search for a single pathogenic factor in the decline of the British industry overly simplistic. Moreover the changing international location of the industry involves implications for competitive productivity which, even in the absence of the complicating factor of subsidies, go beyond the immediate labour process.

As noted above the relative decline of the British industry up until the Second World War could be seen in some ways as a "natural" process of dethroning the monopoly position of the first industrial nation. The decline was relative to other first world nations. In the post-war period Britain's relative position declined at an increasingly faster rate, even in conditions of a massive absolute increase in world tonnage up until 1973.

The features of this accelerated decline are complex, for as was argued earlier the construction nature of the industry and the fact that the majority of the cost of a ship is bought-in means that it was unlikely that any improvement of efficiency within the yards could overcome the inefficiencies occurring in

supply industries. In this sense the fortunes of the industry were inextricably tied to the wider fortunes of the British manufacturing industry and performance of the economy as a whole. On these wider issues it has been convincingly argued by John Eatwell that in the post-war period Britain became firmly entrenched within a vicious cycle of cumulative causation. It is through the process of these effects, rather than any static comparisons, that the competitive potential of states is to be appreciated. Thus,

"It is the dynamics of the principle of cumulative causation, rather than in the static idea of comparative advantage, that an explanation of the structure and development of trade between the manufacturing countries is to be found. The self-reinforcing dynamic of industrial expansion will ensure that competitive strength is maintained and enhanced. In the longer run, the location of competitive strength may be altered by new institutional arrangements, or by an inability to adapt to the changing market conditions inherent in major inventions, or by the rise of competing nations. But fundamentally the free market works to strengthen the competitive advantage of successful economies and weaken the position of the unsuccessful. The successful will tend increasingly to dominate trade, while the unsuccessful decline." (106)

At the level of the national economy then, the decline of Britain as a manufacturing centre provided one context in which the shipbuilding industry has to be located. Accounts focusing upon the industry itself have detailed the way in which the specific division of labour which was the source of the industry's strength in the nineteenth and early twentieth century became increasingly inappropriate in the post-war period. As Lorenz and Wilkinson have noted,

"We have argued that the failure of the British response in shipbuilding can be understood only by considering the particular technical and market conditions in which firms operated, and the ways these conditions interacted with the system of industrial relations. The fragmentation of output in small-scale yards and the system of craft specialisation it spawned, hallmarks of nineteenth century success, led to competitive failure in the twentieth century." (107)

Several authors have stressed the primary part played by workers in "resisting at the point of production" the potential for change in the division of labour (108). This study has demonstrated that on the Wear it was the reticence of employers rather than the actual reticence of the workers which acted as a brake on the transformation of the division of labour. Such resistance was of course based on far more complex and substantial issues than a certain "conservatism" amongst employers. This view avoids the pitfalls of a "labour-led theory":

"... that is, the sort of theory in which labour is not only seen to be able to affect productivity outcomes, through the strength of its organisations, but is assumed to be actually in control, and able to determine the overall pattern of capital accumulation and investment as well." (109)

Ironically it could be argued that one of the factors involved in the employers' reticence to invest in a "modern" division of labour in the immediate post-war period was not primarily the strength of labour at the point of production, but its institutionalised weakness in the wages sphere contributing to a low-wage economy. As R.B. Shepherd argued in his review of the prospects for welding and mass production techniques in shipbuilding in 1946,

"The reason for the relative backwardness of some sections of industry in this country and for the reluctance to convert monotonous processes into fully mechanised jobs is that human labour is still relatively cheap." (110)

This directs attention to the strategy of management and employers:

"... unless perhaps, through some alienated logic, U.K. workers are to carry the can because, by virtue of putting up with low wages, they have failed to make their managers invest more." (111)

If the division of labour in British shipbuilding became increasingly inappropriate to meet its competition in the post-war period, the evidence from Wearside is that the primary responsibility for this lies with the owners and managers of the yards. If the policies of the employers and managers handicapped the industry relative to their European competitors, more structural and locational change was to decrease further the decisiveness of the effort bargain at work as the final arbiter of competitive success.

The processes involved here have been well described by Charles Sabel in his book Work and Politics. Of interest for our purposes is the point that the relatively consistent and large growth in demand during the post-war long boom fostered the development of capital intensive divisions of labour using mass production techniques. However given the associated growth and penetration of the capitalist world system outlined earlier, the stability of the mass market and the advantages of mass production techniques meant that manufacturing industries could

become internationally foot-loose.

"Consider the way mass-production industry in the core industrial countries is being crowded out of markets by pressure from formerly or currently low-wage competitors on the periphery, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Mexico, and Eastern Europe. The industrialisation of these countries is doubly linked to the triumph of Fordism in the United States and elsewhere. For breakthroughs in mass production techniques in some countries not only make industrialisation an urgent matter for the others, but provoke successful competition with the leaders as well." (112)

If Britain was being increasingly left behind in the ship-building industry by the more capital intensive industries in continental Europe and Japan then the entrance of the newly developing countries into the industry added a new twist to the story. The disadvantage of Britain's low-wage, low capital and therefore low productivity industry relative to the high-wage, high capital and therefore high productivity industry of continental Europe (and to some extent Japan) became compounded with the arrival of the low wage, high capital and therefore high productivity and low cost industry of the newly developing countries. It should be noted that the aggregate effect of individual industries with such a profile in newly developing countries is that low wages between individual workforces and employers are associated with a very low social wage. In other words the cost advantage of these countries lies both at the level of the firm and at the more macro level of the reproduction of the labour force. The implications of this for Britain and other first world nations is either that they have to make up the

cost difference, not only at the level of the firm but also at the level of the social reproduction of the labour force, by superior productivity or they have to avoid direct competition with such countries.

This development in the second half of the twentieth century found even countries that had modernised their division of labour at a disadvantage compared to the newly developing countries and in relation to the (now) enduring market leader, Japan. Furthermore with the collapse of world demand in the early 1970s and then again in the late 1970s and early 1980s even some of the most technically advanced shipbuilding nations found the pressure of cost competition unbearable.

"Sweden's retreat from shipbuilding illustrates the danger to the core countries. In order to minimise the disadvantage of high labor costs, the Swedes concentrated on the construction of relatively unsophisticated large ships in series by automated methods. In the early 1970s Sweden was the second largest shipbuilder in the world. But shipyards in Brazil, Korea and Spain soon adopted the new techniques, and paid their workers at rates a quarter or less of what Sweden's were earning. When the world market for merchant ships began to collapse (launchings dropped from 35.9 million gross tons in 1975 to 15.4 million in 1978), Sweden was unable to hold its share of the declining orders for standard ships. Beginning in 1977, one major yard after another was taken over by government. By 1980 there remained only two private shipbuilders, and Sweden ranked eighth in the world league tables of launchings." (113)

Increasingly, as we have seen in the case of Court Line, Britain adopted a market strategy of attempting to avoid direct competition with countries producing unsophisticated large ships to concentrate on less standardised higher value tonnage (114).

The net effect of this strategy of attempting to establish a market niche was to accept the position as a marginal producer. The problem with this is that marginal producers become particularly vulnerable to overall fluctuations in demand. As their "product line" is small, large rises in overall demand tend to produce proportionally smaller rises in "specialised tonnage". Moreover the acceptance of the role of marginal producer ensures that there can be little movement towards capturing part of the more mass market in times of boom. However in times of slump marginal producers come under pressure from market leaders who can attempt to retain an optimum use of their plant by diversifying into more specialised areas. With the collapse of world demand in the second half of the 1970s it was this latter scenario which increasingly materialised. Thus for example the growth of the South Korean industry between 1975 and 1982 was matched by a diversification into ever more complex tonnage so that they "moved into" the market in which Britain was competing. Symptomatic of this position was the placing of an order, in 1982, on behalf of the Central Electricity Generating Board. This was for a cable laying ship with a Korean yard. The question was one not only of the efficiency of production within the yards. Material and wage costs were lower in Korea, and the presence of state subsidy and below cost tendering were seen as issues.

"There has been a rapid growth in the Korean yards in recent years from a negligible base in 1975, to second only to Japan in merchant ship building. In 1982, South Korean yards

produced 1.6 million g.r.t. of shipping. The yards of Daewoo and Hyundai have been undercutting European prices by as much as 35% - as can be seen from the C.E.G.B. order. Korean wages are much lower than those prevailing in European and Japanese yards and Korean steel is also significantly cheaper. However western shipbuilders feel that these factors do not account for the price differences, and claim that the Koreans are quoting prices below cost to secure the orders needed to fill their vast new shipbuilding capacity." (115)

This then was the developing context in which the yards of Sunderland Shipbuilders were nationalised in 1974. Over the coming years the issue of Government attitude towards the industry was to prove crucial. For it seemed unlikely that the solutions to the "crisis" facing the British shipbuilding industry could be found at yard level alone. Ominously for those working in the yards, if Government should prove unsympathetic the chances that what had been lost in other spheres could be recaptured with change in the division of labour seemed unlikely.

However in the immediate aftermath, very little changed within the yards.

"It happened that fast, it changed overnight and it was all just the same people after the event. There was no line drawn and said "this is before and this is after" you know. Everything continued on the same. The same workforce and the same management." (116)

What had been affected however was the optimism which was evident under Court Line. Whilst some drew solace from the fact that it was not the shipbuilding side of the corporation which had caused the collapse, others were more cautious. However, even in the face of collapsing world demand, there existed an underlying scepticism as to whether things were as bad as some said.

Moreover a belief did exist to some extent that public ownership would ensure that jobs could be preserved. Thus in my own case on coming up to leaving school in 1975 with little idea of what I wanted to do, my father advised me that getting a trade in the yards was about the best that could be hoped for. He explained that the outlook for the yards was probably no worse than it had been at other times, and it was better to be working outside than to be shut in an office all day. The careers officer visiting the school enthusiastically endorsed my decision to apply to the yards, and on finding that my father and brother worked there eagerly crossed my name off the list and refused my request for information on a career with the Forestry Commission. That skilled work in the yards amounted to "a good job" was emphasised by the jealous references of some of my contemporaries to the fact that I had relatives to "speak for me" (117). In 1975 there was then no shortage of applicants to work at Sunderland Shipbuilders, a point reinforced by the training officer's disclosure that for every one of us successful candidates there were another eighty unsuccessful ones.

If there was little change in management personnel during this period, there was nevertheless a feeling, in retrospect, that during this period the momentum established under Court Line had been lost. A long term strategy appeared not to exist (118). This situation was to change with the Nationalisation of the whole of the shipbuilding industry in 1977.

Part V**The Industry Nationalised**

By the time the Labour Government's nationalisation plans for the industry, developed during the period 1970 to 1974, came to fruition on vesting day, July 1st 1977, the market demand for ships had declined dramatically. More generally the objective conditions underlying the "long boom" had changed. Economic problems began to emerge as an immediate and overt challenge to the post-war industrial and political consensus. These changes were to set the context for the shipbuilding industry in the coming years. As Hogwood has noted,

"This change in demand altered the prospects of the U.K. industry from those expected when the Labour opposition drew up its nationalisation proposals in conjunction with the unions, and it seemed inevitable that the proposed nationalised body would have to preside over the contraction of British Shipbuilding." (119)

At once these wider contexts placed a question mark over another of the main aims of the nationalisation: the promotion of industrial democracy. This aim amounted to an attempt to promote and develop a consensual approach to industrial relations issues. As the British Shipbuilders corporate plan of 1978 pointed out,

"The Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act placed upon the Corporation the obligation to promote industrial democracy in its undertakings and the undertakings of its wholly-owned subsidiaries. British Shipbuilders believes that the main objective of industrial democracy is to create a climate which will enable the performance of the industry to be raised." (120)

The prospects for such a consensus approach to industrial relations were unlikely to succeed in the face of mass redundancies which would result from the adoption of any three of the four options facing the industry outlined in the corporate plan. These options were presented as follows:

Option 1 - Maintenance of Capacity and Employment

Under present marketing circumstances, the most optimistic strategy which could be considered is to maintain the current capacity level of 630,000 c.g.r.t. and employment of 33,300 in merchant building.

The total subsidy requirement to support 630,000 c.g.r.t. depends on the assumptions made on price levels, but it is reasonable to assume that in a deteriorating market, the subsidiary would be very high if all capacity were to be filled by "buying in" work.

Option 2 - Maintenance of Market Share

This option assumes that capacity would be reduced in line with anticipated world demand, with a traditional aggregate market share being maintained. It must be further assumed that yard closures, but not major profit centre closures, would be inevitable to qualify for (E.E.C.) Intervention Fund and to provide a sound base for future improvements.

Option 3 - Naval Support plus Competitive Yards

Option 3 considers a reduction in capacity to a level of 330,000 c.g.r.t. at the anticipated trough in demand in 1980/81. This figure is commensurate with maintaining a small number of internationally competitive merchant building yards, along with the "mixed" yards whose continued involvement in merchant and naval work is regarded as strategically necessary.

Option 4 - Naval Support

Option 4 sets out to meet the national strategic objective identified earlier - namely, to have sufficient yards within

the "mixed" groups involved in merchant shipbuilding such that capacity exists to protect national interests in times of crisis. This option represents the situation wherein 250,000 c.g.r.t. of capacity would be retained, but it assumes that many of the merchant yards would not survive a continued depression in ship-building demand (121).

After considering the consequences of all four strategies the report made the following recommendation:

The Proposed Strategy

From the preceding discussion it can be seen that Option 2 goes significantly further than Options 1, 3 and 4 towards adequately meeting the objectives set for the merchant shipbuilding sector.

The cut-back in capacity required for Option 2 would itself improve the efficiency of the Sector if the closure of some yards with an historically poor productivity record were effected; but a strategic aim of British Shipbuilders must be to improve productivity to a level comparative with European competition. For this reason, the Proposed Strategy will be to reduce capacity to the 430,000 c.g.r.t. level by 1980/81, as in Option 2; but thereafter a 25% improvement in productivity will be sought over the last two years of the plan whilst holding manpower levels constant. This will result in higher levels of output than shown in Option 2 and a larger market share than historically obtained. The Proposed Strategy will thus be to achieve the following capacity and employment levels; and to incur the following support costs:

	78/79	79/80	80/81	81/82	82/83
Capacity	632	530	430	475	530
Employment	33,300	27,000	21,000	21,000	21,000
Intervention Fund £m (at 430 cgrt level)	85	110	110	85	50

British Shipbuilders proportion of world output will rise from 3.1% in 1980/81 to 3.3% in 1982/83. (122)

The possibility of pursuing this option was compromised by the fact that the analysis of market trends was hopelessly optimistic. Instead of British shipbuilders increasing their market share of Merchant tonnage to 3.3% of world output by 1982/83 with a workforce of 21,000, it declined to 1.3% and the workforce was cut to 14,505 (123). In subsequent years the decline continued so that by April 1988 the total workforce of British Shipbuilders amounted to some 6,000 employees (124) compared to a total for the merchant sector of 41,659 immediately after nationalisation in July 1977 (87,309 for British Shipbuilders as a whole) (125). This massive decline in employment within the nationalised industry obviously had an effect upon workers' perceptions of the worth of nationalisation. On the Wear where, as we have noted, enthusiasm for nationalisation even as early as 1974, and in the context of a "bail-out", was muted, the lesson that nationalisation was no friend of the working man was hammered home. As one worker wrote in 1982,

"Nationalisation, once hailed as the only means of getting better working conditions in the old days, has become reality. The civil servants got to work with their pruning knives - railways and collieries first, pit closures, talk of uneconomic mines then the closure of railway lines. Coal routes which had all led from local collieries to the Lambton and South Dock staithes were closed - teamers and trimmers made redundant, a reduction in collier fleets; no new tonnage ordered and the small yards which catered for coal owners went to the wall. A river with a capacity to build dozens of ships a year, with enough personnel to man the yards now found that not enough work was coming in from other sources. Now we have a nationalised shipbuilding industry and it is happening again. The civil servants want a further reduction in manpower, early redundancy for older men and no replacements ...

... Our yards were always able to compete favourably with their rivals and I am certain that if many of our local yards were not nationalised many of our local men would be employed. I may be wrong, and I have no doubt that the shipbuilding emperors who dictate policy to the industry will deny it, but politics come into it. Our destiny is decided and policies formulated away from Wearside. Many Wearsiders believe that if a yard, for instance in Scotland, was uneconomic and had no orders and if the political climate was uncertain with closures and pressure from the Scottish Nationalists on the cards, an order won by a Wear yard would be diverted to Scotland. Certainly I believe that the Tyne has some considerable political pull." (126)

It would be wrong to conclude from such statements that workers on Wearside saw private enterprise or the old owners in a very positive light; rather the choice is seen to be one amongst lesser evils. As another worker put it,

"In the past it was really bloody bad. I mean I hate them, I hate them families, I hate the Thompsons and the Marrs on this river. I think there's a hell of a lot of hatred for them. Yet I hate even more the breed which came up after it was nationalised - and from that time the decline went (on) - you could see it going. First of all you got more managers, every manager wanted someone underneath him, the fellow underneath him wanted somebody to help him out. Before you knew where you are you had a personnel officer with about fifteen assistants!" (127)

The terms in which these workers condemn the nationalisation are qualitative as well as quantitative. Their reservations are based upon very personal experience, not only of the redundancies but also of the changes in working practices which have been forced through in the face of union impotence and even their acquiescence. Changes objected to both in their content and form, the former in as much as they imply a deskilling of the craft worker and the latter in the way that the management of these

changes have been seen as an assault upon the dignity of the worker as a human being. Moreover in the eyes of the workers these assaults are seen to be directly connected with the managerial problem of producing enough "voluntary" redundancies given the position adopted by the unions that there should be no compulsory redundancies (128). The following sections attempt to give an account of these changes as they unfolded on Wearside. The context of the crisis in British shipbuilding is inescapable, but my focus is more specific; it attempts to understand the behaviour of the workers at the point of production in their own terms, and render intelligible the apparent lack of collective resistance by the workforce. In doing so it inevitably has to resume the analysis of wider issues such as the changing nature of the relationship between work and the community, relations between generations and indeed the whole area of the nature of the working class.

Part VI

Working for British Shipbuilders

The importance of paying proper attention to industrial and human relations in any plan for a viable shipbuilding industry cannot be overstated, as success depends upon the commitment of all parts of the workforce from senior management to tradesmen. From the outset British Shipbuilders has worked for improvement in these areas, and the process is ongoing." (129)

The period of uncertainty which had been the hallmark of the position of Sunderland Shipbuilders from the collapse of Court Line in 1974 was ended with the nationalisation of the whole industry in 1977. The development of the corporate plan made one thing certain in the future: there would be redundancies. The certainty was hardly easier to bear than the uncertainty. A feeling of despondency was widespread in the Wear yards, amongst managers and workers alike. In this atmosphere of doom, managerial control of the work process slackened its already loose grip. Moreover the responsible autonomy of the workers became less and less "responsible" as morale worsened.

Aspects of sociability at work flourished during this period, the usual pastimes such as card schools became only one strand in an increasing array of leisure pursuits including everything from fishing to film shows. At the Deptford yard for example the "porno king" brought in cine films and with the incorporation of foreman the cabin was open for business most afternoons (130). It was on night shift however, where managerial control was traditionally at its least, where the

collapse of the moral self regulation of the craftsmen was most evident.

The system of work allocation involved a number of jobs detailed on dockets being left for distribution by the foremen. At the end of the shift uncompleted jobs were replaced in wallets to be returned to the dayshift. There seemed to be little in the way of a control system over the amount of work expected or done. Indeed, the only pressure being mentioned by workers was that exerted in the form of animosity from workers on day shift at the "lazy sods" on nights. In this situation, then,

"The foreman was over the top if you did anything. He would be happy if you fit just one pipe, anything." (131)

Again pressure to end "leisure pursuits" was more forthcoming from external agencies than from management. This was the case at the Deptford yard in relation to salmon poaching. It is interesting that even in relation to this example there is a high degree of sectionalism evident. Thus it is unclear who started the poaching, the plumbers claiming they did, the joiners claiming they did and both of these groups claiming that the boilermakers didn't. Salmon were poached in nets and then disposed of to a local pub. All went well, according to one plumber, until the "loud mouthed" boilermakers joined in. They were intent on netting the full width of the river and to this end used a rubber dinghy to get the net across to the far side, with half a dozen men holding a rope tied to the dinghy in case

of trouble. The competing groups of "fishermen" must have drawn attention to themselves for one night the police launch approached at speed with spotlights glaring. The boilermakers put their retrieval plan into operation. The dinghy skipped back across the river. In the darkness one of the "ropemen" fell into a hole and broke his leg. All the men escaped but the nets were captured. The police complained to management the following day and dire warnings were issued, the men having already decided to cease activity for a while.

Perhaps the commonest non-work activity on night shift at this time was sleeping. Indeed my own father regularly went to work with sleeping bag and alarm clock. It was usual to "show willing" by working for three or four hours of the shift beginning at nine o'clock and then at around midnight to "get your head down" until six or half past the following morning. Finding a good place to sleep could be a problem. However the "irrational" fears of some workers could be used to good effect by others. Thus at Deptford several huts gained a reputation for being haunted. This enabled a select band of men not frightened of ghosts to "get their full stretch" in sparsely populated cabins whilst others attempted to snooze in crowded cabins amid the noise emanating from card schools.

At North Sands (J.L. Thompsons) there again grew up rumours of hauntings, although these were strangely given greater authority than the "hauntings" at Deptford even by those not

fearing "the ghost" at the latter yard. At North Sands a practice grew up among night shift workers going to the medical room for very large doses of "Benylin" to help them sleep. Even on dayshift where control could be tighter there grew up "games" amongst workers to see how long one could go without actually doing any work. In the context of decline where every new order was qualified by the thought that it could be the last, workers were acutely aware that they could be working themselves out of a job.

This is not to say that workers were happy that they could take their regulation over the pace of work to an extreme extent. Many did work rather than face boredom after the initial amusement that they could "get away with murder". For a minority the situation could be used to express a "capitalist ethic", the idea of the greatest return for the smallest input. However a more general conclusion upon this period is that of unease. The traditions of self regulation did not easily die even in this context of decline. The unease could be clearly detected in accounts given by workers. After detailing the latest leisure pursuits or how little work they had been doing, there were increasingly comments that the situation was getting out of hand.

"... No seriously, it's getting too bad down there now ... Somebody's still building the ships but it's hard to see who it is." (132)

"It's serious, you almost get embarrassed, how little work's getting done." (133)

These feelings coupled with the expectation that it could not

last suggest that Hughes' objection to the use of the term "restriction of production" may be ill founded. He suggested that:

"This term contains a value assumption ... namely, that there is someone who knows and has a right to determine the right amount of work for other people to do. If one does less, he is restricting output." (134)

In this case the "right amount of work" was seen to be, in part, a function of the stocks of knowledge of the workforce themselves who increasingly were beginning to feel guilty at the extent to which they were restricting output. The expectation that things could not go on as they were goes some way towards explaining an initial hesitancy to reply to what was to become a managerial attack on working practices. To some extent, in its initial phases, the assertion of control by management was seen as legitimate in view of how much had been "got away with" during this period.

The option advocated by British Shipbuilders placed prime importance upon reducing capacity and employment during the years between 1978 and 1982. Thereafter the plan envisaged increasing productivity whilst holding manpower levels constant. This did not happen, the reduction of capacity and employment continued and it was in this context that moves towards increasing labour productivity occurred. Moreover the election of the Thatcher Government in 1979 held direct implications for the shipbuilding industry, both in terms of the absolute level at which the

industry would be maintained, and the concept of an integrated naval and merchant state sector. In a wider sense, however, the policies of the Conservative Government were to have a direct effect upon the balance of forces between capital and labour.

The collapse of the long boom growing apace throughout the 1970s signalled the end not only of the industrial relations consensus, but as the election result of 1979 indicated, the political consensus which had dominated British politics since the war. It must be noted that this change was not only one of emphasis. As Roger Simon suggests,

"... by the end of the 1970s British capitalism entered a period, not only of economic crisis, but also of organic crisis in Gramsci's sense of the term. The system of political representation, which had served to ensure the hegemony of the capitalist class for the previous fifty years, began to disintegrate, and an intensive search for a new system, a new alignment of political and social forces, was pursued." (135)

The triumph of Thatcherism then not only presented problems for an increasingly polarised Labour party leading to the emergence of the S.D.P., but its policies had very direct implications for industry. For two of the main strands of Thatcherism involved:

"First, it rejected the Keynesian methods of running the economy with the aim of securing full employment that were followed by Labour and Conservative governments alike during the long post-war boom. Instead, it adopted an extreme form of monetarist doctrine: the government was not responsible for what happened to the economy but only for maintaining sound money, free competition and the security of property and contract; the source of economic prosperity was individual enterprise, and government activities should be reduced to a minimum. Second, since trade unions obstructed the free working of market forces, their legal rights had to

be severely curtailed in order to shift the balance of bargaining power in favour of the employers; the system of corporatism was to be ended." (136)

Not only were the legal rights of unions curtailed as an element of shifting the balance of bargaining power, but perhaps more importantly rising unemployment contributed to what some saw as a "new realism" on the shop floor. As Nichols points out, soaring unemployment in 1980 was associated with a fall in industrial disputes to a post war low, and a decrease in male absenteeism on the grounds of ill health, and that:

"... whether consideration is given to the fall in trade union membership or to the very marked decline in the extent to which official trade unionism had the ear of the government, it is not difficult to argue that at the outset of the 1980s the trade unions had been weakened." (137)

The effect upon workers was suggested by Ron Todd in 1981:

"... we've got three million on the dole, and another 23 million scared to death." (138)

The apparent inability of the Labour movement to respond effectively to the new situation exposed the "Myths of Trade Union Power" (139), and led a former head of the Treasury to suggest that:

"What has emerged in shop-floor behaviour through fear and anxiety is much greater than I think could be secured by more co-operative methods." (140)

Whilst this general scenario was characteristic of the early years of the 1980s, a note of caution should be introduced, the mediation of this general context in relation to shop floor behaviour is complex and as Nichols suggests we must be aware of the ideological terrain on which we are moving:

" ... such is the potency of the "new realism" as an ideological force that it always threatens to lure us into accepting simplistic assumptions. Prominent among these is the idea that there was one shop-floor world before Thatcher and that this was subject to a radical transformation after - the change being such that, according to Thatcher herself, and Howe, even by the years 2T and 3T the changed work practices and effort levels on Britain's shop-floors had already translated into dramatic improvements in labour productivity." (141)

With this point in mind we must return to a consideration of the issue of control at the point of production and see how the increasing managerial offensive attempted to break new ground by challenging the traditional status of the craftsman as a representative of a particular trade. This offensive also attacked, largely for the first time, the craft administration of labour itself.

In these developments the positions adopted by the unions are important and have been well analysed by McGoldrick (142). He points to the desire of the unions to move from sectionalism towards collectivism in terms of a common wage rate for workers in the industry. This desire was fuelled by the "responsible" position adopted towards the industry in the light of Nationalisation, but also drew on the practical lessons learnt during the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in and the debacle over the Polish order.

The eventual agreement between the C.S.E.U. and British Shipbuilders, "Wages and Salaries Restructuring, Harmonisation and Productivity" (W&SRHP) was completed in the light of the

manpower plan agreed in August 1979 in which the Government:

" ... more or less extended existing policy and finance for another two years, within which time they expected to see a turnaround in the industry's losses and a "rapid attainment of high levels of efficiency and productivity"." (143)

The W&SRHP agreement envisaged a national uniform wage scale, but the retention of local agreements over working practices, although these were increasingly guided by national definitions. The situation seemed in some respects to resemble an inversion of the position in the inter-war period where, over the introduction of welding, the national structure of the Unions had been able to capitalise on the local divisions amongst the employers. The monolithic structure of British shipbuilders now confronted unions divided between shipbuilding centres and individual yards. On the Wear especially Austin and Pickersgill's yard had been run as a separate entity from Sunderland Shipbuilders - wages at Austin and Pickersgill were higher but working practices had been sold to achieve this. The tension implied in this situation was brought out at the delegate conference convened to formulate attitudes to what was to become the W&SRHP agreement. Thus a delegate from Austin and Pickersgill said that they had already achieved "full interchangeability":

"We have consolidated allowances, we have got nothing left to sell, we have sold the lot for £103.00 ... " (144)

The question then was could the employers use the leverage that such disparities in working practices between yards implied in the same way that the unions had exploited those differences

to force the employers' hand in the inter-war period? More generally the question remained, as ever, could agreements on changing working practices achieved on paper be translated into actual changes on the shop floor?

In the yards that comprised Sunderland Shipbuilders in the period up until phase four of the W&SRHP agreement, it started slowly. A change of attitude began to manifest itself in the form of a tightening of control over work allocation and time. Gradually the job content in the "job and knock" negotiations assumed a larger proportion. These processes occurred unevenly between locations and shifts. The traditionally looser form of direct control on night shift remained, but even here men complained of not being able to "get their head down" as much as they used to. Similarly, control in "shops" tightened up more appreciably than on the ship. This meant that simultaneously there existed different forms of the effort bargain at different locations within the same yard. Thus on a night shift in the Deptford yard in 1982 whilst one group of plumbers on the ship were still negotiating "job and knock" another section of plumbers in the "group shop" were working for almost the full ten hours. The work pace differed accordingly in the two locations. On the ship a hectic pace was the norm in order to finish as soon as possible, whereas in the "shop" the pace was more sedate:

"I don't hurry at all, I just plod because you know when one job is finished there's always another one." (145)

Similarly the covered yard at Pallion was looked on as worse than

Deptford and North Sands from the point of view of the degree of control exercised by foremen and managers (146).

An interesting feature of this period was the lack of resistance offered by the workforce to this increase in managerial control. The attitude was that there was an inevitability about this tightening up. Whilst these moves were not particularly welcomed, they were seen to some extent as legitimate, given that by their own standards things had previously begun to get "too bad". However as time passed the managerial offensive continued until it started to encroach on areas clearly deemed illegitimate by the workforce. Thus even on night shift the foreman announced that men would not be allowed out (of the plumbers shop) twenty minutes before knocking off time to turn their cars around "for a quick getaway", as had traditionally been the practice. This was seen as going "a bit far" by the men. During this period discussions of the changes usually included comments upon the extent to which foremen appeared to be "living in fear", and much sympathy was evident for their predicament.

However as the tightening up continued, that sympathy began to wane, as frustrations built up. The position in which some men could get away with more than others continued however, and could be a source of light relief at times. One incident recalled fondly at Deptfords involved a foreman trying to prevent workers leaving a ship some twenty minutes before "knocking off"

time. One man, a plumber called Gordon, came down the plank first. The foreman said:

"I'm sorry Gordon, but if you leave the boat I'll have to put your name in the book" (for a written warning).

The reply was to the point:

"You put my name in that book and I'll rip your fucking spine out." (147)

He then pushed past the foreman who tried to retrieve the situation by shouting that the worker was desperate to go to the toilet and, amid the roaring laughter of the other workers, that no-one else could leave the boat.

The feeling among the workers was now that the management were trying to go too far, a feeling apparently confirmed by the video that the management commissioned and then showed to the workforce. The substance of the video was the amount of working time lost by late starting and early finishing. The film began by noting the different levels of productivity between British and Japanese shipbuilding workers (148). It continued by showing scenes of the Wear yards with men standing talking or drinking coffee, repeatedly returning to a shot of a clock with a voice asking, "Why are these men still here? Work should have begun twenty minutes ago", etc.

The response of the workers was one of outrage. If the film was intended to increase their commitment to work it could not have had a more opposite effect. Questions were asked as to what management spent their time doing? And why they started at nine

o'clock when everyone else started at 07.30? A feeling was rising that management had decided to act daft and the only response that individual workers could initiate was to act twice as daft. The position of the shop stewards became impossible, with workers raising more and more grievances and management becoming less and less responsive. Many stewards gave up their posts or volunteered for redundancy, the work having become "just too much hassle" (149). This exacerbated the problem, for replacement stewards, when they could be found, were inexperienced in a situation which demanded the maximum of negotiating skills. Research on Tyneside showed that in one ship-building group the constituency size of shop stewards grew from a ratio of 1:40 in the 1970s to 1:65 in 1984 (150), indicating a decline in the level of shop floor organisation in the yards. It is likely that a similar decline took place on Wearside.

It is hard to exaggerate the levels to which feelings rose in the yards of Wearside during the first half of the 1980s. Union response was almost totally disabled by the deteriorating employment prospects within the industry. Thus by the beginning of 1983, 26,000 jobs had been lost within the industry since nationalisation in 1977. A further 3,000 redundancies were announced in the first month of 1983, followed in quick succession by 9,000 more in April of that year.

Part VII

Redundancy

The first mention of 9,000 redundancies was made in "The Times" industrial notebook on 20 April 1983. The figures announced by the outgoing chairman of British Shipbuilding, Sir Robert Atkinson, were seen to imply the "devastation" of shipbuilding communities, and the paper questioned whether the Government could allow this to happen?

"In an election year, can Mr. Jenkins really afford to see more communities, admittedly not in Tory strongholds, devastated and the country subjected to another bout of depressing news of big industrial closures? For that, in essence, is Sir Robert's message." (151)

It seemed that such pragmatic political considerations were likely to be the only retarding force in the path of the proposed redundancies. For as the article continued,

"At the Govan yard on the Clyde, where there are new orders, the mood of shipbuilding workers throughout the country was summed up by a shop steward who dismissed as futile any move to begin a strike against further cuts. The battle, he warned, was against the Government." (152)

By 3 May 1983 it was clear that British Shipbuilders were intent on pressing ahead with the redundancies and that still more were to come. As the Guardian reported,

"Delegates representing 64,000 shipyard workers will decide tomorrow how to fight at least 9,000 redundancies, in the knowledge that British Shipbuilders has already drawn up contingency plans for a more drastic rundown of the ailing industry ...

... "Job losses could be significantly greater than the 9,000" Sir Robert Atkinson, the departing B.S. Chairman, told startled managers in a report less than a month ago.

His industrial relations director, Mr. Maurice Phelps, added: "Unfortunately, large-scale redundancies cannot now be avoided". (153)

There were signs emerging that the Unions had had enough and that some kind of industrial action would be forthcoming. Moreover, local managers appeared to be growing increasingly critical of the "heavy handed" tactics of the B.S. central administration.

"Union officials appear convinced that Sir Robert is determined to press ahead with the 9,000 redundancies - and if he does, that could provoke a militant response. For over the past few years most of the redundancies have come from "volunteers". It is questionable whether another rundown could be achieved without compulsion. On this occasion the shipyard workers can count on the support of 1,500 managers who have simply had enough." (154)

The conference backed a call for industrial action to stop the redundancies and to pressurise the Government into providing an emergency package to save the merchant industry. The tactic of yard occupations and sit-ins was the one favoured by the unions. The proposal was condemned by British Shipbuilders and the majority of the press. However even the media were not altogether without sympathy for the unions' case.

"Last week's response by the Unions was a predictable backlash by an increasingly angry labour force to the threat of yet more cuts and the rapid fall of shipyard workers down the pay league in recent years ... But to make good the threat and turn the sit-ins into a reality would be an act of desperation." (155)

In the face of the sit-in threat, British Shipbuilders responded to the pragmatic political pressures upon the Government in the run-up to the general election. A point recognised by the Guardian:

" ... the State company - which will soon press the new Industry Secretary Mr. Cecil Parkinson, for emergency aid to prevent a collapse of the merchant building sector - postponed the redundancy programme until after the election. ... Under the original plan B.S. had hoped that its subsidiary yards would have begun declaring redundancies by now." (156)

The delay in carrying through the redundancy plan and the re-election of the Tory Government had served to weaken the unanimity of the unions' opposition, as the Guardian continued:

" ... in spite of union resistance to compulsory redundancies, there are indications at several yards - particularly on Wearside - that the required number of job losses can be achieved by voluntary severance." (157)

Of the 9,000 redundancies 1,150 were to be from the Wear yards. The move towards "voluntary" acceptance of this number of redundancies sank any prospect of a unified struggle against job losses. British Shipbuilders were to achieve this target and more in the future in an apparently unproblematic fashion. Furthermore the willingness of individual workers to accept voluntary redundancy was seen to damage the prospects for the "Save Our Shipyards" campaign being run by Tyne and Wear Metropolitan Council and made a nonsense of their claim that:

"United We Stand.

The avalanche of support for the "S.O.S." campaign has surpassed all expectations." (158)

It seemed that the "avalanche of support" was forthcoming from everyone apart from the workforce in the industry. Moreover this was not the first time that the local organisers of a campaign to resist redundancies had been in effect undermined by the work-

force. On 5 February 1981 at the beginning of the job losses the Secretary of the Wear C.S.E.U., Henry Wilkinson, boldly announced that:

"There should be no doubt in anybody's mind that the River Wear as well as the rest of the country will combat any enforced redundancies." (159)

The question of enforced redundancies never arose, for as the Sunderland Echo of 28 February pointed out:

"More than 700 men have indicated a readiness to accept redundancy even in an area of 17% unemployment." (160)

The Regional Organiser of the General and Municipal Workers' Union resigned in disgust, saying:

"They are betraying their forefathers, throwing away - for short-sighted and selfish reasons - job opportunities for the young and putting shackles on their trade union negotiators ... I say the shipyard workers on the Tyne and Wear need a bit of fight in their bellies like the miners. Do they not realise we are a maritime nation and as such shipbuilding in this country could never be finished." (161)

Was this a fair comment? Were the motives for taking voluntary redundancy simply reducible to "Short-sighted and selfish reasons"? At a deeper level did the willingness to "sell ones' job" indicate a change in the quintessential nature of the traditional working class? There were those who thought so:

"It has always been the Left's critique of capitalism that it must hide its true purposes from the people who, if they recognised its true nature, would rise up against it. It was Mrs. Thatcher's privilege to shout its true nature from the housetops to the plaudits of the people who, far from rising up, inclined themselves to its will. As industry after industry shrank in the early 1980s - steel, shipbuilding, engineering, cars, chemicals, construction - the workers accepted the common sense of capitalism, took their redundancy payments and were glad." (182)

b

The reality of the redundancy issue on the Wear is perhaps more complicated than either a lack of moral fibre or a "lack of fight in their bellies" of the workforce. The redundancy issue has to be seen directly in the context of the changing nature of working practices and the wider political environment. If such an analysis is forthcoming it is at least as easy to argue the case that the "ease" with which the "voluntary" redundancies were achieved on the Wear was in part due to the high level of the struggle within the yards rather than the opposite.

A point forthcoming from Wear workers when discussing the redundancy situation on the Wear in the first half of the 1980s was that:

1 "The old time stewards were the first, they got out 'cause they knew what we were in for." (163)

Some of what they were "in for" has already been outlined. The managerial offensive began by tightening up on the movement of labour and the "productive input" of the working day. The aforementioned "durable aspects" of worker control began to break down under extreme pressure from above. The foremen and middle management were exposed to extraordinary pressure from senior management. In the minds of the workers the person ultimately responsible was Eric Welsh, the Managing Director of the Sunderland yards. One worker from Pallion summed up these feelings in a reply to a questionnaire issued by the company.

1 "Mr Welsh would have done well in S.S.." (164)

This did not mean Sunderland Shipbuilders! The intense pressure

exerted by the senior management and the fear that this generated in the lower supervisory grades in the face of the possibility of forced redundancy or even the closure of all the yards on the river ensured that for the first time managerial control initiatives were not diluted in their transference to the shop floor. Importantly these control initiatives were increasingly being linked to changes in working practices being fostered under the auspices of the phases of the W&SRHP plan already agreed by the unions.

The union agreement to the general idea of such changes in working practices coupled with the "enthusiasm" with which they were pursued by higher management in their creation of an atmosphere of fear precluded any collective response. However individual responses were forthcoming. More active expressions of "botching up" began to emerge, which bordered on sabotage. As one universally acknowledged "responsible worker" explained,

"They get you that way, as sick as a parrot. There's sabotage now, I've started rubbing the chalk marks off pipes in the pallet that are ready to go out." (165)

The pipes pre-fabricated in the group shop are numbered with yard and detail position location numbers - to obliterate these would involve a considerable delay in their delivery to the right place. But this was mild by comparison to some of the acts going on. The removal of pieces of machinery, the deliberate fusing of lighting systems in inaccessible places, electric welding machines left arcing to earth until they burned out were just

some of the ways that frustrations were vented. There was little comfort in such acts however, as managerial offensive continued. Foremen were obliged to keep written records of the progress of jobs to be submitted weekly, under relentless pressure. Sometimes they booked jobs in that were not completed and they appealed to or cajoled men to finish quickly. The "catch phrase" of one foreman at Deptford, when making such appeals, caught on and men greeted each other with A.L.'s words,

"You've got to do it Bob, they'll chew my balls off if you don't." (166)

The workers knew that the pressure was coming from senior management and more specifically its personification in the form of Eric Welsh, but the effects were felt on the shop floor in the deteriorating quality of relationships between workers and their immediate supervisors. Access to higher management was restricted and even the personnel department appeared to be remaining aloof. As a worker from the Pallion yard asked,

"Why does it take three weeks to see personnel?" (167)

When senior management were spotted in the yards their reception was hostile. Thus one worker recalled, the reaction of his friend at seeing a group of managers:

"We were working up on one of the masts when he spotted them. He was hanging on with one hand shouting "Bastards, bastards". They took no notice!" (168)

The "big brother" approach was seen as particularly sinister by some.

"They've got videos down there, they can sit in an office and see who isn't where they should be. Their computer monitors the use of power, if there's a shortfall in any area of the yard they want to know why." (169)

Amid all of this, intense individual struggles went on in circumstances where the union was seen as impotent.

"Health and Safety, all the time I stopped them with that. On one occasion I was working in the double bottoms when a plate slid over the tank top and dropped down a manhole. "I'm not working here", I said to the head foreman, so he got a manager. He asked what could be done to help, could I suggest anything? I told them a lip should be erected around the manholes to stop things sliding down. On another occasion they were lining sections up using lasers. Now I noticed when they first started using lasers they used to rope areas off and put up signs - "Danger Lasers", all that had gone. So I got onto them about it, work stopped while they roped off the main area and put signs up. I don't know what it was we had to beware of, but I got the signs back. The problem was it didn't hit the management, it only annoyed the blokes working on the job - they now had to rope off areas and put up signs as well as their other work." (170)

Again, the problem was how to hit back at management rather than to increase the general level of "hassle" on the shop floor. It seemed an intractable problem which added to the frustrations all the more. Where direct attacks could be made upon management they were eagerly grasped. One such event gained great notoriety. It occurred on the night shift at Deptford, but by the end of the following day shift was being celebrated in the rest of the yards on the river. The Deptford night shift had been "getting out of hand" for some time. On one particular ship no matter how hard the supervisors and management tried the men kept managing to paint "S.S. Rubber Duck" on the hull in large letters. More management were drafted onto the night shift. One

night the lads spotted Eric Welsh on the quayside. The spotlights were turned on him and an assortment of bolts, flanges and other objects were thrown at him. He got away but not before a few direct hits were registered. In calmer moments some of the perpetrators confessed that it was a stupid and dangerous thing to do, but that they could not help themselves.

The problem of such individual resistance is, as we have seen, that its target cannot always be hit and thus in some circumstances only serves to make an intolerable situation worse. Moreover with the tightening of control and increasing issue of written warnings individuals were risking "the sack". For many of those most active in resisting, this likelihood persuaded them that taking redundancy would pre-empt their increasingly inevitable dismissal and loss of entitlement to any redundancy payment.

The importance of redundancy entitlement built up over a number of years in the absence of occupational pensions etc. is often underestimated. As Elger found at Doxfords Engine Works in the late 1960s, the redundancy entitlement was for some workers a major reason why they didn't look for work in more attractive or higher paid jobs.

"If I leave now I'd lose £400 redundancy so it would take a lot to shift us." (171)

Ironically it was the threat of losing redundancy entitlement which inclined many of the workers at the yards in the 1980s to leave. Not only was it a way of escaping the "torture" that the work situation had become,

"Every Monday morning you go in you might as well bend over - you're waiting to be bugged!" (172)

but also it forestalled the loss of entitlement by dismissal. Moreover the plans of the Tory Government to privatise the Warship yards were well advanced by this time. The fear was that if a buyer could also be found for individual merchant yards these would be sold with no guarantee that long standing redundancy entitlement would be honoured. Again it was the threat of its potential loss which encouraged some workers to take the payment and leave.

Such decisions were not taken easily. For weeks and sometimes months workers and their families agonised over making the right decision. And all the time the pressure at work increased until some could take it no more.

"It's become a matter of dignity - I got to get out." (173)

Individual decisions were taken in the light of financial circumstances at home. This inevitably meant that the workforce were divided by their individual home circumstances and many of those who did not leave wished that they could have done. However such was the pressure that some "had" to leave even in the face of unfavourable circumstances at home. Despite the claims of Maurice Phelps, British Shipbuilders' Industrial Director, that:

"nobody wants to force people out of the industry" (174)

the net effect of the managerial offensive on the river was to do

just that. As a twenty seven year old shipwright, married for two years with a new mortgage and a pregnant wife, who had just applied to "take his lot", put it:

"I don't care what anyone says, there has not been one voluntary redundancy on this river. Blokes have been hounded, abused and pushed into it." (175)

Another responded to the accusation that he was selling his son's future job.

"I wouldn't wish that set-up on my worst enemy let alone my son. He's better off without it. I've got my dignity and my redundancy." (176)

The redundancy issue on the Wear was clearly tied to changes in working practices.

Part VIII

The End of Craft Control?

Initially felt as a tightening of managerial control, the offensive developed into formal changes "disguised" as wage and productivity agreements under the auspices of W&ARHP and with union agreement. Phase 4 of the W&SRHP scheme was outlined to the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee on 12 October 1983, and the local details of the productivity deal and changes in working practices and technology were formulated over the winter months. There was by this time a feeling that resistance should be offered to any management proposals. But the prospects for a collective stand were not good. Any industrial action was seen by the unions and shop stewards as equivalent to walking out of the yards never to return. As well as the shorter term work based tactical considerations, more long term processes had weakened the potential resources upon which workers could call to fight against changes in the labour process. Several of these issues are apparent under the general tendency towards the growing gulf between the work and non-work community situation of Wearside shipbuilding workers.

Despite claims in the Save Our Shipyards campaign or of banner headlines in the Sunderland Echo of the town rallying to save jobs, division was more characteristic than solidarity. The differences in the home circumstances and financial commitments of individual workers could, as we have seen, exert a determining

effect upon their willingness to take their redundancy, and the same was true of attitudes towards industrial action. More generally the increasingly heterogeneous non-work environment of workers had over the years begun to destroy what little "patterning of paradox" had existed in the past. That this was to some extent a legitimate development was tacitly acknowledged in the "community". An illustration of one strand of this process was forthcoming in a discussion between three shipyard workers, about another worker, in a Sunderland pub.

- (a) What I can't understand is P... - which way does he kick?
- (b) He's a Tory.
- (c) Bastard.
- (b) He had an inheritance. His Dad had money.
- (c) Bastard.
- (a) He's a canny lad though.
- (b + c) Oh aye he's canny.
- (a) You've got to keep an eye on him though.
- (b) Oh aye, you've got to watch him.
- (c) Bastard.

What was odd about this conversation was that the Tory sympathies of the worker under discussion were seen to stem naturally from his being left money (enough to buy a large terraced house in an upmarket part of Fulwell). In other words that his political affiliation was determined solely by his non-

work situation and that he was nevertheless a "canny lad" (177).

Another feature of the divorce between the work and community situation was used by the management to put pressure upon workers to accept the "productivity" offer. The consequences of mailing the details direct to each individual home were outlined by one worker.

"When my wife opens the letter and sees the figures that's all she thinks about. She sees it in terms of how much more that amount will buy in the shops. She doesn't see what I would have to do to get it." (178)

Finally in a more general sense the division between work and community and changing patterns of family life have isolated generations from each other. The generation of shipyard workers beginning their working life in the inter-war period have now retired. The relative decline in the industry over which they presided was masked by the absolute growth in the post-war period. For them the crisis of British Shipbuilding is in no way tied to them. Ironically the unchallenged degree of authority that they experienced over the production process is projected onto their sons and grandsons, and it is here that the responsibility is seen to lie:

"... as time went on you got people who weren't interested and nowadays - there's no buzzer blows in the shipyards, them days eight o'clock in the morning the buzzer blew ... I was walking home one day (I'd been on night shift) and I met a lot of big lads coming along and I said "when the buzzer blows you're supposed to be starting work not getting out of bed", and that is it at the present day - this morning the shipyards - none of them will be started before nine o'clock because they'll be discussing the Manchester United Cup Final from last night - because they're not on piece, they're on bonus because the whole system has gone rotten

... I could do better than some of the 18 year olds now and I'm 72 years old ... I'm talking about work, not putting hours in and that's the trouble with them at the present day ... nowadays they couldn't care less - couldn't care less about it." (179)

The heterogeneity emerging from the breakdown of the occupational community, outlined in earlier chapters, serves to shatter the potential for solidaristic support. In such an atmosphere and with the shop stewards advocating acceptance the phase 4 deal was voted for by a majority of the workforce. Although as to how many had given their "informed consent" there was dispute.

"Nobody knew what the hell they were voting for. The motion proposed by the stewards had about four amendments which had to be voted on first. Blokes were asking me, "What are we voting for now?" (180)

What they were endorsing is attached in Appendix (3) The main points in the national agreement included the following sections:

"Interchangeability/Flexibility

The nature of the work in the industry is such that it is essential for employees at all levels to work effectively, and to recognise that change will be a normal part of the working life. Therefore, all employees must be prepared to acquire new skills, and to remove customary practices where they are no longer appropriate. To meet the demands of competition it is accepted that new working practices will be adopted which match those of our international competitors and enable companies to respond to changing work priorities, product and workload fluctuations. The key elements of these new practices which need to be implemented urgently and to the fullest effect are:

Interchangeability

1. All levels of staff will be interchangeable as required according to their individual skills and experience.
2. Hourly paid employees will be interchangeable within their main group, i.e. within steelworking, outfitting and ancillary groups.
3. Skilled employees will also be required to be interchangeable across groups and trades, providing they are capable of undertaking the work required, and will also undertake ancillary work as appropriate.
4. Ancillary employees will also be required to undertake tasks within their ability, including work which skilled employees have in some cases traditionally retained, but which can be completely undertaken by other employees after retraining.
5. All employees will be fully mobile within their company and between areas and departments including maintenance and production.

Flexibility

6. Skilled employees, in order to progress the completion of their own work will undertake their own servicing.
7. As part of the above arrangements, it is agreed that in order that employees will use the full range of their skills and abilities to maximum advantage, companies will have the option of establishing area supervision and integrated groups of workers as required." (181)

The local agreement restated in a bolder fashion the points in the national agreement. Thus area supervision and integrated work groups were labelled "Composite Groups" - they were used to signify the end of the single trade work group (182), thereby rendering demarcation concerns which arose, in particular between plumbers and fitters at the North Sands yard, an issue which could be handled by an "independent" foreman. Demarcation increasingly became a matter of individual group dynamics rather than an issue uniting a whole trade. The principle of craft exclusiveness had been surrendered, although the consciousness of

individual workers as belonging to a particular trade remained. This again increased the frustrations on the shop floor, and some workers talked of a "sell out" by their representatives.

The local agreement also went further on the introduction of new techniques, and the point of introduction, before discussion was conceded.

"We should try new techniques first and get them working while talks are going on about these other matters (Trade Unions, pay, demarcation). That means no delay in using the techniques that have helped foreign shipbuilders grab a bigger share of our markets." (183)

The agreement at a national level headed off a threatened national strike. The new Chairman of British Shipbuilders was well satisfied:

"After 13 hours of talks a national shipyard strike - accompanied by yard occupations - had been averted. "A hell of a good day's work", said a smiling Mr. Graham Day (Salary £80,000 plus performance bonus) ...

... The unions had been pressing for an increase on basic rates as a precondition of further productivity talks. Mr. Day has persuaded Mr. Murray, and 29 shipyard delegates who endorsed the outline deal, to accept a productivity agreement as a precondition for getting more money." (184)

Once again the tying of wages to working conditions had helped British Shipbuilders to further the aim defined by Graham Day in the Financial Times:

" ... the craft basis on which B.S. has operated - rigid demarcation lines, fierce protection of skills and the like - has to be altered. We've got to get from a craft to a system basis." (185)

The workers received £7 a week for accepting the deal, on union advice. The changes were felt very quickly on the Wear, as

a painter explained in February 1984:

"It's ridiculous. I've been working in the joiners shop today, sweeping up - me, a skilled painter!" (186)

As for the composite work groups it was explained in the local agreement that training would be given,

"The groups will be responsible for unit or area completion, usually with one Supervisor, and the people in it will have the skills required. Each person will be expected to carry out whatever work is necessary to complete the job, including work that has been thought of as "belonging" to only one group. Retraining will be organised ... " (187)

According to Mr. R.D. Clark, the personnel director on the Wear, such training amounted to "multi-skilling", and the management welcomed the rising skill level in shipbuilding (188). He went on to say that whilst the changes in working practices had been "driven through in the face of an adverse economic climate", workers were now happier and more involved in their work because they could follow through the processes on the yard floor (189).

The reality on the shop floor was rather different. The retraining was seen as a mockery, but workers took the £75 given to those who volunteered. As a shipwright explained:

"I served a five year apprenticeship to become a shipwright but now after three days hanging about with the welders I'm a welder, three days I'm a rigger, two days I'm a burner and two days and I'm a plater!" (190)

Mr. Clark made the claim that the workforce were happy with the changes occurring only one month after Sunderland Shipbuilders had commissioned a piece of survey research looking at worker attitudes in the firm. In the light of the results of that research (which he had at the time of the interview) his

analysis seems odd to say the least. Dissatisfaction with the situation in the yards clearly ran through most of the replies to a large majority of individual questions (see Appendix 4). Thus, for example:

"Question 5

"Sunderland Shipbuilders is a pretty good place to work - I would recommend a friend or member of my family to work here."

	% Agree 1 and 2	3	% Disagree 4 and 5
Pallion	16	9	74
Deptford	17	11	71
N. Sands	11	7	81
Main Office	36	20	44
Aggregate	18	10	70

As the survey research firm commented,

"Clear indication that the considerable majority of employees feel that this is not a good place to work. In other questionnaires we have carried out, it is possible to observe that whilst there are many complaints and grumbles about one's workplace it is still possible to feel that overall it is a fairly good place to work, and consequently that one would recommend it to family and friends. It is in answer to this question that we see that the concerns that the workforce have go particularly deep." (191)

In answer to the statement that

"Senior management can be trusted to make sensible decisions for the Company's future",

79% of Deptford's manual workers disagreed, and the figures for Pallion and North Sands yards were higher still at 80% and 81% respectively. As far as industrial relations were concerned, the results were even more clear cut. Thus:

Question 12

How would you describe relations between management and trade unions at Sunderland Shipbuilders at present?

	% Excellent 1 and 2	3	% Poor 4 and 5
Pallion	1	3	95
Deptford	3	5	89
N. Sands	2	3	89
Main Office	9	10	82
Aggregate	2.5	4	90

(192)

The results are clear cut and suggest that the workforce were far from happy with changes in the yards. Moreover given the context of the survey, coming as it did in 1986 after several rounds of large scale redundancies when some of the more critical workers had already left in desperation, and, with shop stewards advocating that men should not co-operate with the survey, it is likely that some of the more critical workers left in the yards did not complete the questionnaire.

The depth to which the morale of the workforce had been driven is even more apparent in the replies and comments to the "free answers" and "open questions" sections of the survey. In all three yards the largest single response to the question of what was liked about working for Sunderland Shipbuilders was "Nothing". This was written by 66 men from Deptford, 60 from North Sands and 209 from Pallion. The next most popular "like" in all yards was that "It is a job/better than dole".

The individual quotations again make the situation crystal

clear. Some of these expressed a deep sense of injury to the self:

"What do I have to do to get management to realise I am a human being, not a mindless unfeeling robot! HELP!"

"Attitude of management to workforce is one of hatred and hysterics."

"Being treated unfairly (you've got to work here to understand that)."

"Men - totally demoralised - need to be encouraged and nurtured - sick of being stamped into the ground."

"This is the worst job I've had in 45 years in shipbuilding." (193)

Other comments were more concise:

"Management stinks - are corrupt."

"Management back-stabbing." (194)

Management behaviour towards the workforce was seen variously as ignorant and flippant, high-handed, dogmatic, bullying, arrogant, petty, persecuting. Even attempts at being witty carried the same message:

"Treated like idiots, led by idiots, paid like idiots."

"Thank Mr. Welsh for his effort on our behalf." (195)

Specific issues featured in replies too, the ending of canteen facilities producing hot meals for manual workers yet their continuance free to staff members was a large concern. Similarly the non-payment of a £500 bonus which had been "promised" by Eric Welsh was mentioned several times with comments such as

"Where's our £500 - thieves."

A whole section of replies referred to the work itself, where comments included:

"Not being able to develop new skills."

"Quality control system not working."

"Seeming lack of standards in inspections which causes lack of confidence when working with owners reps and having to reply "I don't know" to 90% of any questions relating to specific standards of tolerance."

"Misuse of skills."

"Lack of training."

"Responsibility of job taken away from tradesman."

"Taken away job satisfaction."

"No faith in new workpacks."

"Too much new work."

"Departments working against each other."

"Rundown of craft trades."

"Too many supervisors know nothing of the particular trade they're responsible for."

The list goes on, throwing serious doubt on the claim that the workforce was "happier" with the new working practices which seemed indeed to have been "driven through". The management had by 1986 been able to "drive through" almost every change that they had desired. Composite group working had become the norm and a computerised stock control system "Artemis" had been installed. Movement was being made towards a continental split shift system worked on a four set, three shift basis.

Throughout the whole period of these changes the redundancies had continued. One man leaving British Shipbuilders in 1986 was Graham Day. After spending less time as Chairman of B.S. than manual workers spend as apprentices Day, who complained "I am earning here well below my capacity in Canada", was off to British Leyland. In an article entitled "Buoyant amid the Wrecks" the Guardian noted that:

"One man's timbers remain unshivered by the gurgling noises emanating from North-eastern shipyards ... Day's achievements at B.S. are said to have so impressed Mrs. Thatcher that he was being considered as Big Mac's (Ian McGregor) successor. Particularly endearing to the boss was his no-nonsense approach. He was reported to have said of a shop steward: "I would love to get him behind the shed and take my jacket off to him".

Instead, he stripped down the workforce to 9,000 - a tenth of the numbers at nationalisation in 1977 - thus surmounting widespread opposition to his productivity proposals. He also engineered the sale of profitable warship yards. He admitted that the plan was uncommercial, and astonished M.P.s by disclosing that he had only been informed of the Government's decision hours before it was announced in the Commons." (197)

Leaving Wearside in 1986 was Eric Welsh, who, after organising the details of the shutdown of Smiths Dock on Teesside as the head of North East Shipbuilders Limited, reopened part of the works as a private ship repair company. He also had "achieved much", on the shop floor the core workforce had been whittled down to approximately 2,000 workers plus an increasing proportion of subcontract workers.

The craft administration had apparently given way to the constant flow principle based on the composite work group and

CAD/CAM systems dominated the stages of both pre-outfitting and the more established prefabrication of structural steel units. As an article written by a manager of N.E.S.L. in the Durham University Industrial Society Magazine put it,

"At Pallion, as in all British shipbuilders yards, the building process is on the workstation principle. That is to say that the whole ship structure is broken down in design terms, into a great number of sub-assemblies.

There are workstations throughout the yard, each specialising in the production of one kind of sub-assembly. Starting with the smallest, each sub-assembly moves on to the following stage where it is further enlarged, until a main unit is created. That is then taken to the building berth.

This whole operation is an exercise in precision. Each unit, built to drawings produced by computer, must fit snugly and exactly with the others at the point of assembly in the berth. When it is considered that units may weigh a hundred tons or more and stand as high as a church, the task is obviously an exacting one." (198)

"An exercise in precision" - is this how it actually worked at the point of production? As has been outlined the changes were "driven through" with little regard for the views of the workforce, and the new system of working was imposed without detailed consultation. The result was a hybrid of the new system of organisation of work and some of the older detail working practices, executed in an atmosphere in which no one wanted to be identified with mistakes, the consequences of which, if they occurred in the early phases of the transformation of plans into reality, could be far more wide ranging than in the earlier systems. The consequences of this in relation to the requisite degree of precision were profound. A plumber explained how the new system

worked in practice:

- "1. The plans arrive and are to be converted into detail sketches. The sketchers draw the individual pipes to be fabricated. But as they would be no good if they end up too small, they add 100mm extra.
2. The sketch is numbered and entered on the computer and the sketch goes to the group shop for "fabbing".
3. When the pipe is fabbed it is then fitted with a tag detailing its location and palatised among many more.
4. The palate is delivered to its location which is not necessarily the right one or even the right yard.
5. When the palate is delivered the paper tags are often torn or get soggy in the rain or just fall off. So a labourer has to rummage through the palate for the right pipe.
6. When the pipe is found it's too long (remember the sketcher left 100mm extra). Therefore if another one looks a better fit you take that. Or you get a hacksaw and cut it or take it back to the shop to be cut. As you would have done in the old days." (199)

In this example then, the supposed divorce between conception and execution and the fragmentation of work locations and tasks is frustrated by the decisions of the sketchers and the consequent decision of the craftsman to use the pipe that "looks the better fit". The formal system is not translated unproblematically into "systemised response" at the point of production; the discretion of the individual worker is to some extent left intact. A point borne out in the company's survey where 78% of the workers at Pallion and 77% and 72% at Deptford and North Sands respectively replied that they always felt personally responsible for the job they did (200).

The persistence of the craft ethos among the manual workforce and their immediate superiors represented itself in an even more dramatic way at times. Thus when under pressure from

superiors to speed up the work in order to finish a ship nearing the end of its completion time there was a tendency for the new system to break down and the old patterns of working to re-emerge. In such a situation foremen order workers to bypass the computerised stock control and allocation system and physically go and obtain their materials and tools, on their authority, as they would have done under the old system.

Moreover the specific craft identities deemed irrelevant to the composite work groups also reassert themselves as the basis of the physical procurement of tools and materials. Thus for example plumbers complained that stock-keepers in the stores belonging to the A.E.U. would not hand over materials to them, but if a "friendly" fitter could be found they just walked in the back of the store as was the practice in the past. A similar tendency has been noted in a study of the Aerospace Industry where the physical movement of plans and designs re-emerges and dominates the new CAD/CAM system when deadlines are tight:

" ... examples were cited where reverting to manual methods has to happen in order to get the work out on time ...
... I was directly involved in getting the last project off CAD/CAM, to meet the deadline.
... such situations tend to strengthen the resolve of those who prefer the old ways and make it easier for them to abandon the struggle to adapt." (201)

The point to be made about both these examples of the re-emergence of older working patterns is not that the workers are fighting at the point of production to retain their "archaic" craft specific skills, but rather, they are fighting to get the

job out in time. In the yards it is not the intensity of the conflict between capital and labour that leads workers to revert to more traditional working patterns. Rather it is the case that in spite of everything else that management has done, the workers still see themselves as having a responsibility towards their work and "getting the job done". This comes across in the Sunderland Shipbuilders survey:

"Question 26

"I feel personally responsible for the job I do."

	Always 1 and 2	3	Never 4 and 5
Pallion	78	8	14
Deptford	77	9	13
N. Sands	72	11	14
Main Office	92	4	4
Aggregate	77	8	12

As the summary put it,

"Overall, something slightly more than three-quarters of the population feel personally responsible for the job that they do. The majority moves up to 92% in the main offices. As with one or two earlier questions, this hints at a basic feeling of pride in one's work which should be a source of strength for the organisation. However if this feeling does not have an outlet, if people feel that their work is not worthwhile ... then it can be a source of some frustration."
(202)

The feeling of personal responsibility for one's work, a hallmark of the craft worker, was not easily extinguished, even in the face of technical changes in the labour process. This is the key to understanding the high levels of both conflict and co-operation which were, during this period, displayed by the same

individuals. The co-operation sprang from a personal responsibility to see the job through. The conflict arose not primarily because of objective technical changes, but rather due to the management offensive in relation to its direct control strategy and more generally in relation to its whole human relations approach. This "offensive" represented the empirical manifestation of the external pressures working upon the industry. Those of the modernisation of capital and working practices as an element in achieving large growths in productivity in the context of overall reduction of capacity and cost.

A belated appreciation of the realities of the managerial offensive was given in the House of Commons in July 1987 by the town's two Labour M.P.s. Chris Mullin, for Sunderland South, described the management as "bone headed" and went on to say:

"In Sunderland the yards had a management that is more interested in pursuing the class war than in shipbuilding. They have exploited the crisis in shipbuilding to inflict further humiliation on a workforce that has already made great sacrifices." (203)

Bob Clay, for Sunderland North, spoke of the management's

"... arrogance, secrecy and hostility to the workforce ... The number of managers that have been turned over in Sunderland in British Shipbuilders even exceeds the number of Government Ministers we have had dealing with these debates, or the number of chairmen of British Shipbuilders we have had at a national level.

How can you expect workers in a shipyard to feel any confidence in the future when they see managers come and go in sometimes extremely mysterious circumstances. There needs to be a whole inquiry even now into the way British Shipbuilders has been managed." (204)

There was no inquiry however, and the M.P.s were berated in

the media for damaging the image of Sunderland Shipbuilders. The response from the new managing director of Sunderland Shipbuilders sought to exploit the "irresponsibility" of the M.P.s. He said:

"I am not prepared ... to conduct any part of the company's business through public debate either in the media or elsewhere." (205)

The "hidden abode" of the workplace was to remain obscured from public view then, on the pretext that to discuss such issues would damage the company's image.

By this time however the ferociousness of the managerial offensive had abated somewhat. The desired agreements over working practices had been achieved and the requisite number of "voluntary" redundancies had been forthcoming. Union resistance to managerial initiatives had been weak and short lived. However the workers still found themselves in a state of desubordination, the changes in the labour process had not totally destroyed either the craft ethos or a willingness to exercise non-formal controls over the mobility of labour. One such example where the management did not appear to realise that control needs to be created and recreated and is rarely finally won was in relation to the four set, three shift basis of working.

The system was introduced without union agreement and on a "purely voluntary" basis late in 1986. Most workers were opposed to its introduction, however as the direct controls over physical attendance were relaxed they found that the system could be used.

Because if the four set pattern within an individual shift there was nearly always one section of the workforce who had a legitimate right to be in the amenity block or moving to or from it. Thus the overlapping nature of coffee and dinner breaks was used to good effect by workers who could escape a "booking" by choosing, in explanation, the "right set" to belong to. So well was this tactic used by the workforce that the pattern of shift working was withdrawn by the management early in 1988 as "unworkable". The nature of the respite from constant managerial pressure was well understood by workers:

"Aye, they're leaving us alone at the moment, they've got what they want ... it'll start again soon though, there's talk of more redundancies again." (206)

Conclusion

The changes in the organisation and control of the division of labour in the Wearside shipbuilding industry which took place between the time of publication of the first British Shipbuilders Corporate Plan in 1978 and 1988 were massive. Formal agreements between management and unions, which in the past had only been partially realised at the point of production, were implemented in full. Within the ten year period however there was not a uniform offensive waged on behalf of the management. Rather the key period in which the changes were "driven through" at the point of production began in 1983 and continued until 1987. This period began at the same time as the appointment of Graham Day as the Chairman of British Shipbuilders, and coincided with the "rule" of Eric Welsh as the Managing Director of Sunderland Shipbuilders. This is not to suggest that these men alone caused the rundown of the industry and the offensive for the sake of it.

Rather they were willing to attempt to drive through changes in the organisation and control of labour which aimed to increase productivity in the context of a projected decline in state support. In this respect the enthusiasm with which they pursued their work was directly translated into a level of ferocity on the shop floor. A move which was seen by Robert Atkinson as largely pointless and one that he was unwilling to undertake. As he put it on the "World in Action" programme in June 1984:

"... In early April 1983 I made it clear that the problem was the world recession and the absurd dumping of ships by Korea and Japan, and the solution lay totally outside of the control of British Shipbuilding. It was Government, it was EEC and it was O.E.C.D.."

(Commentary) The Department (of Industry) took a different view and looked around for a chairman who would share that view. They came up with Canadian lawyer Graham Day ... During the two months that they spent at British Shipbuilders before Sir Robert left the two men rarely spoke to each other.

"I wouldn't be a party to decimating that great British Industry. I really believe that certain Ministers would like to see it run down and have nothing to do with Government." (207)

This view was to prove correct. Day presided over the privatisation of the warship yards, a move he himself acknowledged as being against the overall interests of the corporation. The "asset stripping" went on with the piecemeal closure or privatisation of yards throughout the country. By March 1988 the Guardian reported that the Trade and Industry Secretary, Lord Young, was

"... considering removing the safety net of subsidies for British Shipbuilders by setting a deadline for ending state support in a radical review of options for privatisation." (208)

On Wearside the Sunderland Echo pronounced that the closure of all the yards of N.E.S.L. which would surely follow the ending of subsidies would "rip the heart out of the town". It went on,

"The time to organise another co-ordinated, all out campaign has come. We cannot afford the luxury of awaiting Government announcements - by then it will be too late.

Meanwhile Wearside shipyard men and their families are undergoing agonies about their future. The rumours have reached boiling point and British Shipbuilders as a corporation could disintegrate." (209)

Such disintegration was indeed a reality, as the Guardian noted:

"The Government yesterday signalled the break-up of the state owned British Shipbuilders group, with news of possible buyers for the Govan yard on Clydeside, which employs 1,750 people and Appledore, in Devon which employs 1,500.

The announcement places a question mark over the future of the N.E.S.L. yards at Sunderland, employing 2,500 people, which has run into contractual problems with its £100 million contract to build 24 ferries for a Danish financier." (210)

The breakup of what was left of British Shipbuilders will in all probability lead to the end of shipbuilding on the Wear. The selling off of the Govan yard means that there is no longer any pretence of the corporation being able to offer an integrated product range. The Wear yards are left with the capacity to build highly specialised tonnage; a market which whilst providing insulation from the fiercest of far Eastern competition is nevertheless a niche in the high risk end of a high risk industry. This point is underlined by the collapse of the firm which had ordered an oil-rig support vessel in 1987; the ship was eventually sold at a price well below its cost. The latest blow to the industry on the river was the cancellation of five of the 24 ferries ordered by a Danish consortium. For the workers in the yards the anguish over these cancellations was mixed with anger over the explicit reason given by the firm for the cancellation: the poor quality of work, with the chairman of the V.R. shipping company saying of the two ferries already delivered

"... they were so bad they had become "laughing stocks" in Denmark." (211)

It is at present doubtful whether the yards on the Wear can recover from this series of blows.

This then has been the context under which the changes in working practices have been achieved. Organised resistance has been largely absent for several reasons. Firstly the nature of the crisis in shipbuilding led the unions to accept the changes largely on pragmatic grounds. Secondly the ideology of co-operation established within the nationalised industry under the Labour Government could not easily be reversed, given the context, under the Conservative Government. Thirdly the de facto acceptance by the unions of voluntary redundancy ensured that the potential workforce solidarity would be uneven and the point at which to make a stand would be unclear.

Thus it would seem to be this generation of workers in the yards who will bear the final conclusion of the decline of the British Industry which began at the turn of the nineteenth century. In this context the apparent acquiescence displayed by these workers is to be seen as "submission agreement" rather than "sympathetic agreement". Individually their resistance to the changes has been both non conflictual by intent in terms of their continuing tendency to assume responsibility for their work. But also the more overt challenges of management have been tenaciously resisted as an exercise in the dialectic of control and de-subordination. If the work has become deskilled the workers have not, and this survival of the craft ethos constantly

threatens managerial control.

Ideologically the workers have apparently nowhere to go. Nationalisation has been in their experience the vehicle of their oppression. A feeling that you cannot fight the state, borne out by the result of the miners strike, again diffused the possibility of collective action. Yet the attacks by the representatives of labour on those selling their "birthright" by taking their redundancy is misplaced. It has been the failure of the labour and trades union movement to take initiatives on behalf of the workforce during the years of strength which has resulted in such an apparently easy victory for those currently running down the industry. Given this run-down the changes in the organisation of the division of labour confronted workers merely as an attempt at a humiliation of the "captives" before their final "execution". On the evidence available this seems in some respects not to be too far from the truth. In a situation where any resistance to the "will" of management was deemed illogical or deviant the aspirations of the workers were, in contrast, modest. As Derek Duffy of the Deptford yard put it:

"We are not political men. All we want is the right to work ... All I want is to come to work, build ships, and take a pay packet home on a Friday night." (212)

Notes to Chapter Five

- 1 Cousins, J.M. and Brown, R.K. "Shipbuilding" in: Dewdney, J.C. (Ed) Durham County and City with Teesside, Durham, British Association for the Advancement of Science 1970, p326.
- 2 More, C. "Skill and the Survival of Apprenticeship" in: Wood, S. (Ed) The Degradation of Work?, London, Hutchinson 1982, pl18.
- 3 As Roger Penn has pointed out the occupational socialisation of skilled workers involves not only technical mastery of processes - but the very access to the tricks of the trade will depend upon other aspects such as socialisation. Thus:

"The acquisition of appropriate tools and dress predisposes older craft workers to take the apprentice "seriously" and to be more willing to provide access to the "tricks of the trade". Conversely, failure to conform can seriously handicap an apprentice. Not only will he become an object of fun and perhaps ostracism, but vital knowledge will be withheld or at best grudgingly provided."

Penn, R.D. "Socialisation into Skilled Identities: An analysis of a neglected phenomenon." Paper at Aston/Umist conference "Organisation and Control of the Labour Process", April 1986, pp3-4.

- 4 More, C. Op.cit. pl20. Other benefits accrued to the employer from the apprentice system. As the apprentice was regarded as a minor it was historically the case that the agreement, sometimes an indenture, was made between the employer and the apprentice's parents or guardian. This agreement was not seen to be legitimate territory for detail collective regulation and therefore apprentices were not eligible for full membership of the relevant trades union. The legacy of this position continued in the yards where apprentices were not seen as subject to a collective dispute of their trade, and in some circumstances could be used by the employers to mitigate the effects of any dispute. This for example during the 118 day strike by maintenance fitters at J.L. Thompsons in 1962 mentioned in Chapter 4 complete shutdown of the yard was avoided because of the maintenance work undertaken by the foremen and apprentices.

S.S.R. Vol.99, 7 June 1962, p767.

- 5 Brown, R.K. and Brannen, P. "Social Relations and Social Perspectives amongst Shipbuilding Workers - A Preliminary Statement" (Part Two) in "Sociology" Vol.4 No.2 1970, p197.
- 6 Falk-Pederson, S.D.S. "Production Information and Control Systems in Shipyards", unpublished M.Sc. Dissertation, Durham University Business School, 1969.
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Brown, R.K. "The Sociology of Organisations" in "Mens en Maatschapzuj" Vol.49 No.4, 1974, esp. pp382-383.
- 9 Brown, R.K. 1974 Op.cit., pp382-383.
- 10 McGoldrick, J. "Industrial Relations and the Division of Labour in the Shipbuilding Industry since the War", October 1982, reprinted in "British Journal of Industrial Relations", Vol.21 No.2, July 1983, p25.
- 11 Elger, A.J. "Affluence, Rationalisation and the Skilled Worker: a critique of the Affluent Worker paradigm and a local case study." Unpublished Ph.D., University of Durham 1987.
- 12 Elger, A.J. Op.cit. p95.
- 13 Elger, A.J. Op.cit. p105.
- 14 Elger, A.J. Op.cit. p107.
- 15 Cousins, J. and Brown, R.K. "Patterns of Paradox: Shipbuilding Workers' Images of Society." Durham University Department of Sociology and Social Administration Working Papers in "Sociology" No.4 1972, p33.
- 16 They list six of the most important changes:
 - i) The amalgamation of trade unions.
 - ii) The introduction of standardised schemes of apprentice training.
 - iii) The creation of shipbuilding consortia.
 - iv) As a consequence of (iii) a tendency to specialise between yards - and therefore less diversity of work tasks and work situations.
 - v) The negotiation of common terms and conditions of employment for all yards in the group and of "productivity agreements" in which higher rates of pay were secured in return for mobility of labour and flexibility and inter-changeability.
 - vi) As a consequence of the need to negotiate agreements at

the level of the whole consortium, the creation and/or strengthening of negotiating committees of shop stewards and full-time union officials within each yard and for the whole consortium.

- 17 Cousins, J. and Brown, R.K. Op.cit., pp36-37.
- 18 That first morning we had to report at 9.00am rather than the usual starting time of 7.30am.
- 19 There was no malice intended in this comment, and it was said in a jocular fashion. However it did bring home to me one difference between work and school, and that was that the ordinary "inmates" could swear openly in front of authority figures, i.e. the training officer. One thing was similar to school however, and this concerned the hurling of abuse directly at authority figures in a semi covert fashion with the perpetrator pretending to hide the utterance and the authority figure pretending not to have heard it. Thus throughout the whole of our guided tour of the yard the same comment was forthcoming from several quarters and directed at the training officer:
"Where's your handbag?"
The shouts were clear as was their source, but the officer concerned ignored them as best he could. The implication of homosexuality I later found out was based on the fact that the individual concerned prided himself on his appearance, never swore, wore leather gloves and was "soft". As I was to find out later the view that he was "very dodgy" was also shared by some of his managerial colleagues, who often used him as the "fall guy" when problems arose. Nevertheless so impressed were some of the first day apprentices with this phenomenon that by the end of the day the call of "where's your handbag?" could be heard emanating from the midst of our group, with the difference that the perpetrators ensured that they were well hidden!
- 20 The old plumbers shop has since been replaced by a new "group shop" serving the whole of the river, which is located up the bank from the Deptford yard.
- 21 Brown, R.K. et al, Final Report to SSRC: "Orientation To Work and Industrial Behaviour of Shipbuilding Workers on Tyneside", p24.

In a paper drawing on the same research project, Jim Cousins outlined the variations in work locations of a yard of Tyneside:

"There were trade shops which, to varying extents, approximated to conventional factory situations (17.0% of the 1969 sample). There were the large metal prefabrication sheds which, though covered, were vulnerable to external conditions of heat and cold; and were more or less under the foreman's eye (12%). There were the exposed and often dangerous building berths which were difficult for foremen to control (36%). Finally there were the very variegated working conditions of the fitting out stage which were unheated and noisy though not always exposed; and in the final stages of construction an absolute jungle of pipes, wires, bulkheads, companion-ways and different scattered groups of workers that were very hard for the foreman to control (27%).

Cousins, J.M. "Factors Affecting the Quality of Life in the British Shipbuilding Industry", paper at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Conference 1973, p4.

- 22 See: Brown, R.K., Brannen, P., Cousins, J. and Samphier, M. "Leisure at Work: the "occupational culture" of shipbuilding workers." in: Smith, M., Parker, S. and Smith, C.(Eds) Leisure and Society in Britain, London, Allen Lane 1973.
- 23 J. Roberts (Snr)
- 24 Alan Bell's Shipyard Tales include the following account:

"In the docker's cabin with the lights out, just in case the dock police got nosy, Dan started his evening shift. The stove was half full with glowing coke, it was the usual cast iron pot bellied type with a little round hatch on top, open fire bars in front and an ash pen underneath to catch the ash and burnt cinder. Out of the top was a four inch stove pipe which led up through the roof. Being winter it was dark outside and Dan had locked both front and rear doors. Soon he was stuffing the cable into the hatch. As it dropped onto the coals the rubber ignited and the lead melted. The molten lead ran down finding its way through the fire bars and pattering down in a red molten stream into the ashcan.

Dan gleefully pushed more and more cable in and soon the stove was glowing and the sweat was running down his face. The molten lead was by now half filling the ashcan and he was well on the way to having a great big ingot. The cabin got hotter and Dan stripped off his coat then his overalls. It was a bitterly cold night outside but the cabin was roasting. Dan was by now so engrossed as he

feverishly fed the stove he failed to notice that by some odd form of combustion the stove pipe had begun to draw flames up to the outside air ... Then, not only was the stove hot but the pipe began to glow dull red near the base, then bright red all the way up. Where it passed through the roof space, the wood began to smoulder and the roof felt grew soft while the pitch in it began to bubble.

The docker's cabin was well on the way to catching fire and at last Dan stopped feeding the flames when he realised that the glow from the fire might be seen by passers-by through the windows. He went to look out and realised that the area around the cabin was as light as day. We had finished our work for the evening and were coming off the ship. We had to walk along the dock past the docker's cabin.

The sight that met our eyes was amazing. The stove pipe was belching flames and sparks like a volcano, there was a breeze sweeping down the dock and it was pressing clouds of black evil smelling rubber smoke and burning particles down and driving them along the dock before dispersing them in and around the shipyard. The alarm had already been given and the shipyard's own firefighters were converging on the cabin while in answer to an emergency phone call, the fire brigade was on its way. We could hear the engine racing along the dock, siren screaming, and in no time we were running towards the cabin along with dozens more shipyard men who had turned out to watch the excitement. We were just in time to see a figure hurtle out of the rear door. It was a cold night ... but Dan was stripped down to his vest, he had to leave his loot behind, he disappeared into the dark, vanishing among the piles of machinery and equipment stacked under tarpaulins further along the dock near to the engine works, from where he eventually made his way to our cabins. He stood there for a while cursing the loss of his loot before his natural good nature took over. Luckily our chargeman was a man with a sense of humour. He knew what Dan had been up to and although he could not approve he warned him to watch his step and avoid the docker's cabin."

Bell, A. Shipyard Tales, (unpublished), pp16-17.

For similar accounts of the ease with which one could absent oneself from official work at a shipyard on the Clyde see:

Gallacher, T. Apprentice, Sevenoaks Coronet 1983, esp. pp68-71.

- 25 The potential to circumvent what active management control attempts existed was traditionally greater on night shift

where grades of management other than foremen were largely absent until 1983.

- 26 Tony Elger has outlined the situation in Doxfords in the late 1960s where he noted:
" ... the coincidence between successive rounds of new management appointments and new management initiatives in negotiations. Both management 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".
Elger, A.J. Op.cit., pp95-96.
- 27 Brown, R.K. et al: Final Report to S.S.R.C. p24.
- 28 Brown, R.K. et al: Final Report to S.S.R.C. p25.
- 29 Cousins, J.M. 1973 Op.cit. p14.
- 30 Ehrenreich, J. and Ehrenreich, B. "Work and Consciousness", in "Monthly Review", Summer 1976, Vol.28 No.3, p17.
- 31 Burawoy, M. 1979 Op.cit. p81.
- 32 Roy, D. "Work Satisfaction and Social Reward in Quota Achievement: An Analysis of Piecework Initiative" in "American Sociological Review", Vol.18 1953, p162.
- 33 Thompson, P. 1986 Op.cit. p17.
- 34 Abrams, P. 1982 Op.cit. p262.
- 35 We must beware of bestowing too great a degree of cohesion and coherence on the phenomenon we are discussing by using the work "strategy". Such strategies can be pre-planned in some situations, especially where something has gone wrong, but in others they may include ad hoc responses to unexpected contingencies. However it is important to realise that even in these situation responses, or indeed initiatives, will draw upon elements of "practical consciousness" and "common stocks" of knowledge.
- 36 Being "strict" or "hard" does not necessarily preclude the development of the identity of being fair however. Although it may have consequences with regard to sociable relations with the workers.

- 37 Those who work flat out all the time could be seen as similar to rate busters in the machine shop. But given that there is no direct individual payment system the explanation of their behaviour is more problematic. Whilst in some cases it can be put down to fear of the foreman this is by no means always the case. It would seem likely however that the answer lies in some other aspects of the individual's socialisation, and self-image.
- 38 C.T., plumber.
- 39 J. Roberts (Snr).
- 40 C.T.
- 41 J.S.
- 42 Management did not and could not, during the time under consideration (i.e. prior to 1979-80), legislate the grounds of sociability upon which foremen interacted with workers. However as will be argued later they subsequently applied pressure which "ironed out" many of the divergences in a negative way from the point of view of the workforce. This pressure eliminated much of the scope for negotiation of the ground rules of sociability and the removal of "perks" for "special jobs" removed much of the objective basis for such negotiation.
- 43 Dubois, P. Sabotage in Industry, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1979, p62.
- 44 The difference between the apparent duration of work and the abstract social labour time devoted to production has been explained by Jesus Ibarrola as representing the "porosity" of the labour process.

"The working day remained for a long time relatively porous, made up, of course, by some particularly intense periods but also of periods of inactivity. It is in the nature of machinery to systematically eliminate porosity."

Quoted by Palloix in C.S.E. The Labour Process and Class Strategies, London, Stage 1 1976, p49.

- 45 J. Roberts.
- 46 J.B.R.
- 47 J.B.R.

48 J.B.R.

49 J.B.R.

50 Oppositional in this sense is to be understood as implying opposition to authority in terms of subverting the control of the authority figure. But perhaps of greater "phenomenological force" is the extent to which the opposition is to an individual foreman, a person with a particular identity. Great worth is put upon the ability of a worker to be seen as a "patter merchant" to get anyone, not just foremen, to believe dubious stories. The more ridiculous the explanation that a worker can get a foreman to believe the greater the esteem in which that worker is held by others. Moreover once someone, not necessarily a foreman, is identified as gullible, a "plonker", "not a full box of matches" etc., they are fair game for lesser skilled patter merchants.

51 As Goffman puts it:

" ... "looping": an agency that creates a defensive response on the part of the inmate takes this very response as the target of its next attack."

Goffman, E. Asylums, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1968, p41.

52 This time spent in the yard with the training officer was during a period of negotiation of access in order to undertake a study of the "ship" "shop" division amongst plumbers. This attempt ended in failure due to management suspicion and more importantly to a strike by Electricians, who turned the power off before leaving, creating a crisis in the yard.

53 I.C.

54 J.S.

55 J. Roberts (Snr).

56 Corrigan, P. Schooling the Smash Street Kids, London, Macmillan 1979, p58.

57 J. Roberts (Snr).

58 J.S.

59 Mann, M. "The Working Class", in "New Society", 4 November 1976, P240; also reprinted in The New Classes, London, New Science Publications.

- 60 Hopkins, C.H.G. The Moving Staircase: Sunderland 1939-72, Sunderland, Wearside Printing Co. Ltd. 1972, p131.
- 61 Weber, M. The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation, London, Macmillan 1964, p327.
- 62 Brown, R.K. et al: Final Report to S.S.R.C. "Orientations to Work and Industrial Behaviour of Shipbuilding Workers on Tyneside", p25.
- 63 Ibid
- 64 Friedman, A.L. Industry and Labour, London, Macmillan 1977, ppl01-102.
- 65 Quoted in: Sabel, C.F. Work and Politics, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1982, p86.
- 66 The submergence of this segmentation of the workforce has been accomplished in recent years by the increasing disappearance on the ancillary worker from the yards.
- 67 A fish "lot" is fish and chips. A pattie is a potato fritter.
- 68 Coates, K. Work-ins, Sit-ins and Industrial Democracy, Nottingham, Spokesman 1981, p36.
- 69 For a development of the concept of fatalism see:
Lockwood, D. "Fatalism: Durkheim's hidden theory of order" in: Giddens, A. and Mackenzie, G. (Eds) Social Class and the Division of Labour, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1982, ppl01-118.
- 70 Sabel, C.F. Op.cit. p84.
- 71 Terkel, S. Working, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1975, pl.
- 72 See: McGoldrick, J. "Industrial Relations and the Division of Labour in the Shipbuilding Industry Since the War" in B.J.I.R., Vol.21 No.2, July 1983.
Also:
Lorenz, E. and Wilkinson, F. "The Shipbuilding Industry 1880-1965" in: Ellbaum, B. and Lazonick, W. (Eds) The Decline of the British Economy, Oxford, O.U.P. 1968.
- 73 One such occasion was remembered by several plumbers who recalled how an official "from Tyneside" had been chased out of the Deptford yard after "ordering a return to work".

- 74 Hopkins, C.H.G. The Moving Staircase, Sunderland, Wearside Printing Co. Ltd. 1972, p41.
- 75 Hopkins, C.H.G. 1972 Op.cit. p43.
- 76 J.B.R.
- 77 As Robert Taylor has emphasised, both the Donovan Royal Commission of 1968 and the Labour Government's ill-fated "In Place of Strife" made a distinction between unions and workers, stressing the "responsibility" of the former group. Thus in speaking of restrictive practices, "In Place of Strife" noted that:
- " ... On the whole such practices are operated, not by Unions themselves but by groups of employees, who see them as a way of protecting their jobs or of maintaining their earnings."
- Quoted in: Taylor, R. Workers and the New Depression, London, Macmillan 1982, pp83-84.
- 78 The concept of "de-subordination" is in this context an important one, and speaks of the lack of incorporation of the British Working Class into either capitalism or the contemporary labour movement. As Ralph Miliband put it,
- "De-subordination means that people who find themselves in subordinate positions, and notably the people who work in factories, mines, offices, shops, schools, hospitals and so on do what they can to mitigate, resist and transform the conditions of their subordinators. The process occurs where subordination is most evident and felt, namely at "the point of production" and at the workplace in general, ... "
- Miliband, R. "A State of de-subordination", in "British Journal of Sociology" Vol.29 No.4, December 1978, p402.
- 79 McGoldrick, 1983 Op.cit.
- 80 See; Marx, K. Capital: Volume Three, London, Lawrence and Wishart 1959, esp. Ch. XXVII, "The Role of Credit in Capitalist Production."
- One problem with much "Marxist" analysis of the tendency towards the growth of large capital has been the association of this movement with what became an automatic assumption that the size of productive unit would also grow - whilst this was perhaps an understandable extrapolation from empirical evidence it should not have been elevated to the level of a general principle as the flight from large scale

and search for the flexible firm has shown us in the aftermath of the collapse of the long boom.

- 81 Aaronovitch, Sam "The Firm", Chapter Sixteen in: Aaronovitch et al: The Political Economy of British Capitalism, London, McGraw Hill 1981, pp243-244.
- 82 The strategic resources afforded to a multidivisional company in relation to their handling of individual workforces is well illustrated in Beynon and Wainright's account of the "Vickers" corporation. See: Beynon, H. and Wainright, H. The Workers' Report on Vickers London, Pluto Press 1979.
For an example from the shipbuilding industry of where the nationalised corporation "successfully" used their strategic power against the action of workers on the Tyne, see the account of the "Polish Order" in: Foster, J. and Wolfson, C. The Politics of the U.C.S. Work-In, London, Lawrence and Wishart 1986, pp424-425.
- 83 The Sunderland Echo, 8 May 1972.
- 84 The Sunderland Echo, 17 May 1971. In the budget of March 1972 the Conservative Chancellor had announced new (or rather re-introduced old) measures to assist traditional industries in regionally depressed areas. See: Hogwood, B. Government and Shipbuilding, Farnborough, Saxon House 1979, pp164-166.
- 85 Quoted in an article about Appledore Shipyard, "Inside Story", in "Esso magazine", London Esso Petroleum Company, Summer 1970, pp10-13.
- 86 This fear was based on the fact that Court Line was already involved in a joint venture with Austin and Pickersgill in the form of "A. and P., Appledore", a consultancy advising on shipbuilding technique and yard layout.
- 87 The Sunderland Echo, 7 June 1972.
- 88 The Sunderland Echo, 28 May 1972. The Appledore yard could build ships up to 10,000 gross tons, although the majority of their output tended to average around 3,000 tons.
- 89 C.T., Deptford Yard.
- 90 S.P., North Sands Plater.
- 91 J.B.R., Deptford.

- 92 C.T.
- 93 J.S.
- 94 Hogwood, B. Op.cit. p179.
- 95 The Sunderland Echo, 21 June 1974.
- 96 Although it is true that the shipbuilding side of the concern made an operating loss of £6.5 million in the year to September 1974.
Hogwood, B. Op.cit. p179.
- 97 The Sunderland Echo, 26 June 1974.
- 98 Quoted in The Sunderland Echo, 27 June 1974.
- 99 The Sunderland Echo, 28 June 1974.
- 100 The Sunderland Echo, 27 June 1974.
- 101 The Sunderland Echo, 28 June 1974.
- 102 The Sunderland Echo, 27 June 1974.
- 103 Mathias, P. The First Industrial Nation, London, Methuen and Co. 1969, p404.
- 104 Parkinson, J.R. The Economics of Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1960, p3.
- 105 See: Pollard, S. and Robertson, P.L. The British Shipbuilding Industry, 1890-1914, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press 1979.
- 106 Eatwell, J. Whatever Happened to Britain, London, B.B.C. 1982, p91.
- 107 Lorenz, E. and Wilkinson, F. "The Shipbuilding Industry 1880-1965" in Elbaum, B. and Lazonick, W. (Eds) The Decline of the British Economy, Oxford, O.U.P. 1986, p128.
- 108 Lorenz, E. "The Labour Process in British and French Shipbuilding from 1880 to 1930", in "Journal of European Economic History", 13 (3) 1984.
and
McGoldrick, J. "Crisis and the Division of Labour: Clydeside Shipbuilding in the Inter-war Period" in Dickson, A. (Ed), Edinburgh, John Donald and Co. 1982.

- 109 Nichols, T. The British Worker Question, London, R.K.P. 1986, p70.
- 110 Shephard, R.B. Article in Shipbuilding and Shipping Record, 24 January 1946, p96.
- 111 Nichols, T. 1986 Op.cit. p71.
- 112 Sabel, C. Work and Politics, Cambridge, C.U.P. 1982, p195.
- 113 The notable exception here is of course Austin and Pickersgill with their standard SD14 built as a replacement for the liberty ships. Austin and Pickersgill's success with this single design was to be limited however, as a contemporary observer noted:
"The current success of one or two standard British ship designs is likely to be short-lived, if they are not up-dated by innovations to suit a changing market. In 1977, there were available from British, Danish, German, Spanish and Japanese shipyards between twenty and thirty types of standard ship. The Japanese were also developing other standard ships of more sophisticated design."
(Quoted in: Spence, J. 1987 Op.cit. p90.)
Indeed from 1979 orders for the SD14 began to decline and the profit making yard of Austin and Pickersgill began to return operating losses.
- 114 Sabel, C. Op.cit. ppl96-197.
- 115 Save Our Shipyards information pack, Newcastle, Tyne and Wear County Council, March 1983, p9.
- 116 S.P.
- 117 Great hostility was forthcoming from those without relatives in the yards that one of the written questions on the application form was an inquiry into whether the applicant had relatives within the yards, and if so, who they were.
- 118 This is not to say that all development for the future halted. Indeed the covered in yard at Pallion was brought to completion in December 1976.
- 119 Hogwood, B. Op.cit. p178.
- 120 British Shipbuilders Corporation Plan 1978-1983, Ch.27/4 (B.S.C.P.)
- 121 B.S.C.P. Ch.21, "Merchant Shipbuilding 21/8 to 21/12".

- 122 B.S.C.P. Ch.21, 21/12 to 21/13.
- 123 British Shipbuilders Annual Report 1984/85, p57.
- 124 The Sunderland Echo (Shipbuilding Special), 19 April 1988.
- 125 British Shipbuilders Annual Report 1983/84, p51.
- 126 Bell, A. "Shipyard Tales", unpublished.
- 127 J.M.
- 128 The position on compulsory redundancy adopted by the union eventually broke down in the face of accelerating decline.
- 129 B.S.C.P. Ch.17, Introduction 27/1.
- 130 These film shows ended not through managerial pressure, but when the "porno King" "caught religion" after the illness and subsequent recovery of his wife.
- 131 J.B.R.
- 132 J.B.R.
- 133 J.S.
- 134 Hughes, E. "Work and Self", article in: Esland, G. et al (Eds) People and Work, Edinburgh, Holmes McDougall 1975, p212.
- 135 Simon, R. Gramsci's Political Thought, London, Lawrence and Wishart 1982, pp56-57.
- 136 Simon, R. Op.cit. p55.
- 137 Nichols, T. The British Worker Question, London. R.K.P. 1986, p173.
- 138 Quoted in: Beynon, H. "False Hopes and Real Dilemmas", Chapter in: Ticken, H. (Ed) Critique 16, Glasgow 1983, p7.
- 139 See: Taylor, R. Workers and the New Depression, London, Macmillan 1982, Ch.7 "The Myths of Trade Union Power".
- 140 Quoted in: Nichols, T. 1986 Op.cit. p176.
- 141 Nichols, T. 1986 Op.cit. p181.
- 142 McGoldrick, J. "Job Control, Industrial Relations and the

State; Changes in British Shipbuilding since nationalisation." Paper presented at Kings College Research Centre Colloquium "Job Control and the State", 27-29 September 1982.

- 143 McGoldrick, J. 1982 Op.cit. p21.
- 144 Quoted in: McGoldrick, J. 1982 Op.cit. p28.
- 145 J. Roberts, quoted in: Roberts, I.P. "The Labour Process in the Shipbuilding Industry", unpublished B.A. Dissertation, University of Durham Department of Sociology and Social Policy 1982, pIII.
- 146 The covered in yard at Pallion was in fact disliked by many of the workers from the start. For despite the good P.R. image of the "high-tech" yard it seems likely that it was not designed with the interests of the workers in mind. A universal complaint about this yard was that there was not enough extraction of fumes, and "Doxie's throat" was elevated to the position of an industrial illness amongst the workforce. Also shipwrights in particular frequently drew attention to the fact that work on the bottom of the dock below the outside water level was in conditions frequently colder than work on an outside berth.
- 147 This man had previous convictions for G.B.H. and was known by everyone as a "head case". He was eventually sacked for beating up a fitter he found in the plumbers shop apparently doing "plumber's work".
- 148 Of course it did not include any mention of the managerial input into labour productivity as outlined by Theo Nichols, 1986 Op.cit..
- 149 J.S
- 150 Stirling, J. and Bridgford, J. "British and French Shipbuilding: the industrial relations of decline", in Industrial Relations Journal Vol.16 No.4, Winter 1984, p11.
- 151 The Times, 20 April 1983.
- 152 Ibid
- 153 The Guardian, 3 May 1983.
- 154 Ibid
- 155 The Observer, 8 May 1983.

- 156 The Guardian, 16 June 1983.
- 157 Ibid
- 158 S.O.S. Campaign Bulletin, Newcastle, Tyne and Wear County Council 1983, p3.
- 159 Quoted in: Spence, J. Op.cit. p97.
- 160 Ibid
- 161 Ibid The situation for the G.M.W.U. was becoming more serious than for the craft unions, as the redundancies were not spread evenly and the disappearance of the ancillary worker was to become a characteristic development in the yards.
- 162 Blackwell, T. and Seabrook, J. A World Still to Win, London, Faber and Faber 1985, p151.
- 163 S.P.
- 164 Attitude Survey undertaken in April 1986. "Pallion - Comments from "Free Answers"."
- 165 J. Roberts.
- 166 A foreman plumber referred to everyone as Bob.
- 167 Attitude Survey, April 1986 Op.cit..
- 168 C.T.
- 169 I.C.
- 170 J.B.R.
- 171 Elger, A.J. 1987 Op.cit. p125.
- 172 I.C.
- 173 J.B.R.
- 174 Quoted in" The Sunderland Echo, 5 May 1983.
- 175 I.C.
- 176 J.B.R.

- 177 It is interesting that many of the workers interviewed during the course of this research were very cagey about talking about politics. Some agreed with the sentiments expressed by one woman in Roy Greenslade's book:

"We have a rule in this house. You can talk about anything except politics and religion. They're banned. They always lead to arguments."

(Greenslade, R. Goodbye to the Working Class, London, Marion Boyars Ltd. 1976, p161.)

- 178 C.T.

- 179 Albert Baxter.

- 180 J.S.

- 181 "National Framework Agreement For Survival", British Shipbuilders 12 October 1983, pp3-4.

- 182 Ironically the shift to these "composite work groups" implied greater direct control by management. This is the exact opposite of the original intention of those who developed this notion of the composite group, where it was seen as a method of developing more responsible autonomy in the work group. Most notably, see:
Trist, E.L. and Bamforth, K.W. "Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall method of coal-getting" in Human Relations, Vol.4 No.1, 1951.

- 183 Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd. "Productivity Agreement" 1984, p3.

- 184 The Guardian, 4 November 1983.

- 185 Financial Times, 9 November 1983, quoted in:
Stirling, J. and Bridgford, J. Op.cit. p11.

- 186 G.W.

- 187 Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd. 1984 Op.cit. p2.

- 188 Indeed if one only looked at the proportion of skilled to non-skilled workers there would seem to be an indisputable case for rising skill levels, given the "disappearance of the ancillary workers". But Burawoy's distinction between deskilled work and deskilled workers can be usefully inverted to make the point that the individual "skilled" worker increasingly undertook a greater range of unskilled work.

- 189 The interview with Mr. Clark took place in May 1986. Having failed to get any useful access via the management at Sunderland Shipbuilders during a period of negotiation that went from 1982 to 1985, I had almost resigned myself using only unofficial channels. However during 1986 I was working for Durham University Business School, whereupon I used these credentials and wrote to British Shipbuilders national headquarters explaining merely that I was doing a paper on the shipbuilding industry. Within a week I was invited to Sunderland Shipbuilders to speak to their (luckily) new personnel director, Mr. Clark.
- 190 I.C.
- 191 Sunderland Shipbuilders/Employment Relations Survey (S.S.E.R.S.) results, 29 April 1986, p2.
- 192 S.S.E.R.S. Op.cit. p9.
- 193 S.S.E.R.S. Op.cit. "Comments".
- 194 Ibid
- 195 Ibid
- 196 The Guardian, 15 May 1986.
- 197 Ibid
- 198 "Shipbuilding", article in Durham University Industrial Society magazine 1987, ppl2-13.
- 199 J.S.
- 200 S.S.E.R.S. Op.cit. p21, Question 26.
- 201 Lee, G.L. "Technology Driven Organisational Change: A Case From the Aerospace Industry", paper at Aston/Umist Organisation and Control of the Labour Process, March 1988, pl6.
- 202 S.S.E.R.S. Op.cit. p22.
- 203 The Sunderland Echo, 10 July 1987.
- 204 Ibid
- 205 Ibid

206 J.S.

207 World in Action, 11 June 1984.

208 The Guardian, 4 March 1988.

209 The Sunderland Echo, 19 April 1988.

210 The Guardian, 19 April 1988.

211 The Journal, 23 April 1988.

212 The Sunderland Echo, October 1984.

Conclusion

"Cartesianism has such a grip on philosophical thinking that opponents appear either extravagant or mad."

The theoretical aim to which this project was addressed as outlined in Chapter 1 has indeed proved to be almost impossible to achieve in practice. Unthinking the dualism of structure and agency necessitates the mediation between all levels of social life from the individual utterance to the world system. Moreover to be undertaken successfully such a project needs to incorporate the uneven nature of temporal flow, from individual life times to the rise and fall of world hegemonic powers. In as far as this thesis has actually grappled with these issues it has merely hinted at possible directions and typologies for further analysis. In this sense, for me personally, it will serve as a pilot study. It has re-emphasised how much I still need to learn and the responsibility that one, as a sociologist, owes to the subjects of study. If I have achieved nothing else in this thesis I hope I have provided a "sympathetic" but "realistic" account of the non-activist worker in the Wear shipbuilding industry. Workers who have at times been berated both by capital, for being unreasonable, and by trades union officers, for not having enough "fight in their bellies". I hope I have shown that both these views are mistaken.

In another, more personal, sense this study has successfully overcome one dualism. At one point during the research I used to

describe this work as one of exorcism, of externalising my own past in order to get on with the future. Having completed this (stage of the) project I now evaluate far more positively the "role strain" I have at times experienced whilst undertaking this study.

For this research was formulated out of the confrontation of two sources of experience. On the one hand my experience of higher education and academic sociology led me towards a literature concerning the working class and industrial organisations. On the other hand my continued location in a working class community, as far as my home and family life were concerned, gave a critical impetus to my academic studies. The objects of both these centres of experience were the same, namely the working class and the world of work. However a crucial difference lay in the "distance" from which these "objects" were viewed.

The distance and detachment of much academic sociological study of "the class" contrasted with my participation in the lives of those referred to in such studies. Importantly my participation in the culture of my own community was not as an organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense. Rather than being concerned primarily with issues of political and industrial activism this environment was my home, the shipyard workers were my father, my brother, old school friends, mates with whom to relax and have a few (too many) drinks. Such relationships ensured that any attempts to make generic statements about "the

workers" had to be framed carefully if the authenticity of their lives was to be respected.

It was this concern that led me to appraise critically the existing sociological work upon the shipbuilding industry. This criticism deepened during the period of the research itself and the original problematic as to why, if the workers could retain control over the labour process in the inter-war period, they had apparently totally relinquished that control with little resistance in the 1980s, was overly simplistic. In developing my analysis of shipbuilding on the Wear in the inter-war period it became obvious that the secondary literature was flawed in several respects.

The accounts of McGoldrick and Lorenz based their analysis primarily on the Clyde, with some mention of the Tyne, and focused especially upon the introduction of the S.E.F. welding plan. Such analyses cannot give a basis for generalisation about the nature of British Shipbuilding. Their accounts of the conflicts surrounding the introduction of the S.E.F. welding plan are not convincing in relation to the industry on the river Wear. There are several reasons for this. Firstly due to differences in product type the timing at which the issue of welding would become a practical issue differed, indicating a need to understand the uneven development of the industry at a national level. Combined with the latter point was that fact that structural welding was far from a universally accepted technique even

amongst owners themselves. Thus these two issues ensured that on the Wear at least the employers' offensive was largely in theory and not in practice. Indeed on the Wear, not only was riveting seen to be a far superior process, and would remain so even into the post-war period, but the employers remained enthusiastic advocates of the craft division of labour. Not only was the welding issue of marginal importance on the Wear, but the evidence for workers resisting expropriation of control at the point of production is not forthcoming. On this river such employer attempts to expropriate control at the point of production are not generally in evidence.

This raises important analytical issues for the study of the division of labour. Namely, that one cannot deduce the strength of capital or labour solely from the objective contours of the labour process. Such contours need to be related to the product market and, importantly, to the situated social action of capital and labour which cannot be deduced simply from their supposed roles implied in the personification of structural categories (i.e. capital and labour). This further indicates the need to relate the control issue within the workplace to the wider community and the control potential of what Alan Warde has called "local political hegemony" (2).

In the context of Wear shipbuilding in the inter-war period such an analysis developed in Chapter 2 demonstrates the need to understand the moral dimension of the division of labour existent

within the objective and experiential unity of the work and non-work community. In this way workers on the Wear in the inter-war period inhabited a single "small world" rather than a series of "small life-worlds" in the phenomenological sense. Thus Chapter 2 suggests that in the inter-war period there was little evidence of an employer offensive aimed at attacking the craft control of the division of labour on the river Wear. Given the fact that conditions for successful capital accumulation were as bad, if not worse, on the Wear than elsewhere, this again suggests that we must be careful in linking employer offensives at the level of the labour process directly and immediately to conditions of capital accumulation. Indeed during this period and more especially during the Second World War it was workers on the river who berated employers for their conservatism in relation to changes in the division of labour.

This pattern continued into the post-war period. However, on a general level, the position of Britain as a "victorious" power, and the political colour of the government which initiated the building of the post-war consensus, ensured that British industry did not restructure its industrial division of labour (especially labour practices) to the extent of other countries. Moreover the event of the "long boom" produced a relatively stable, and growing, market demand. Conditions in which Fordist and constant flow techniques of production could be used to maximum advantage. Whilst initially the British shipbuilding

industry held on to an absolute level of output its relative decline accelerated. Furthermore the massive increase in the penetration of the capitalist world system brought out the potential for "footloose industry" and the phenomenon of rapid technology transfer indentified by Sabel. This implied that on a global scale the "efficiency" of the division of labour in production was of decreasing importance as the arbiter of costs and market success. Increasingly as the developing countries entered the market the costs to capital in terms of the reproduction of national society as a whole (including the social wage) became important.

These developments held the implication of crisis for the British shipbuilding industry, with its "traditional" division of labour. However we should avoid the temptation to see the detailed working of these processes as the manifestation of some inevitable historical law. Such a view would merely replicate the tendency to portray the epoch of stable demand built upon the post-war long boom as the normal operating conditions of Capitalism. However with the benefit of the hindsight of the 1970s and 1980s it becomes apparent that the period of the long boom may have been an exceptional period in the development of the capitalist world system. In this sense the triumph of quantity production techniques of shipbuilding in the post-war period and the rapid decline of the British industry may have rested upon exceptional conditions. Indeed, as Lorenz and

Wilkinson have argued,

"European firms are now showing a distinct preference for less capital-intensive and more flexible methods than those characteristic of the 1960s, and under these conditions it is unclear whether large-scale specialised facilities will prove an advantage or a handicap." (3)

The period of the "long boom" brought not only buoyant product markets but also helped to sustain relatively tight labour markets, particularly for skilled labour. The net effect of this development for the shipbuilding workers on the Wear, as for workers elsewhere, was a rise in prosperity. The consequences of this process need to be clearly stated. The account provided in this research suggests that a "drift" began to occur between the spheres of work and non-work. Most importantly this represented itself in a breakdown of the physical and geographical boundaries of shipbuilding community. The upshot of this was that the moral (or immoral) order of local political hegemony built upon the unitary experience of the work and non-work spheres lessened.

In the context of greater affluence the non-work world became an arena in which, over time, individual life styles served to introduce a degree of heterogeneity into a community previously re-produced within the constraints of closely defined physical and social limits. The most manifest expression of this fragmentation was the increase, especially amongst skilled workers, of private home ownership.

Such a process, once started, became cumulative over time

and when associated with other characteristics of the "respectable" working class, such as a tendency towards smaller families, the degree of fragmentation grew with each generation. It must be understood however that such fragmentation does not amount to a transformation of the non-pecuniary elements of class, even though the changes transformed individual life styles. In relation to education and other aspects of culture the skilled workers' reference groups remained working class (4). Whilst this remained so, the magnitude of the changes within the working class were seen in an exaggerated form from the "inside".

What all this meant was that whilst changes were underway which in theory would reduce sectionalisation at work and make manifest a "latent proletarianisation", in the non-work situation pressures were operating in an opposite direction. Not only did advocates of the latent proletarianisation thesis (5) over-estimate the degree to which changes at work would reduce sectionalism, but they also failed to grasp the increasing degree of fragmentation in the non-work sphere, based not only on the withering of the physical occupational community, but also on the uneven incorporation of individuals into the cash nexus. The implication of these processes in the work situation was an acceptance of a weakened determination to defend craft statuses as the "master status", the institutional recognition of this development on behalf of the trades unions was expressed in an increasing willingness to "sell the book" and agree to changes in

working practices.

The willingness to enter into such agreements also included ideological changes amounting to the "new realism" of responsibility in the post-Geddes era and a situation in which on the whole more flexibility was paid for than was forthcoming at the point of production. Again the reason for this cannot solely be accounted for in terms of worker resistance or the strength of labour relative to capital. Rather employers did not make concerted attempts to introduce effective control systems which could overcome the more enduring forms of organisation and practice on the shop floor ranging from the special privileges accorded to particular individuals to the craft administration of labour as a dominant form of organisational structure.

All this was to change however with the deepening crisis and the nationalisation of the whole of the British industry. The survival package as laid out in the first British Shipbuilders corporate plan of 1978 was tough enough. Redundancies and changes in working practices were accepted by the unions and in return they were reassured by the commitment to industrial democracy which was stated as a primary duty of the corporation:

" ... to promote industrial democracy in a strong and organic form in its (the corporation's) undertakings." (6)

This attempt to continue and develop the industrial relations consensus which had been the hallmark of post-war years of the long boom was to falter due to the severity of the slump in demand which now faced the shipbuilding industry, and more

graphically the election of the Conservative government in 1979 ensured that consensus policies with regard to industry were largely a thing of the past.

The break with the past consensus by the Tory government embraced both political and industrial elements. The form of nationalised organisation, the public corporation had been devised by the Labour party in the 1930s, its "independence" with board members being chosen on "grounds of ability" was meant to preclude its use for the pursuit of sectional interests. Such an objective could only work within a wider framework of political and industrial consensus. For as Tomlinson argued,

"... the public corporations form was constructed so as to work for the general public interest ... as against sectional interests. The weakness of this kind of justification for non-representation of particular interests is that it assumes that the fact of "non-representation" will itself guarantee pursuit of the (unproblematic) general interest." (7)

Not only did the Conservative governments from 1979 onwards re-define the general interest as involving a move away from the mixed economy towards private enterprise, but also within this overarching ideology they applied the criteria of "success" of nationalised industries as involving the production of profit, whilst at the same time obliging them to sell off assets which were attractive to private enterprise. Clearly these two aims could not be met, privatisation of assets yet the production of profit in remaining centres involved a paradox which was to exacerbate problems of redundancies and exert greater pressure at

the point of production to recover in productive "efficiency" what had been lost in the fragmentation of overall financial viability. This was the context in which the managerial assault upon working practices took place in the 1980s. The public ownership of the industry initially loosened management from immediate market constraints whilst continuing to expose workers to them to an increasing extent (8).

Objectively the potential for collective resistance to the assault upon working practices was low given not only the introduction of sophisticated control systems but also the massive reductions in the numbers of the workforce. The severity of the changes on the Wear however can only be grasped when it is understood that it was not only the case that reductions in the workforce were used as a lever to changes in working practices, but also that changes in working practices were used as a lever to ensure that sufficient "voluntary" redundancies were forthcoming. In such a context the "power" of the trades unions appeared to have evaporated. The stewards that remained no longer went to the foreman's office with a smile on their faces eagerly anticipating another victory. More often they were to reply to a worker's grievance "there's nothing I can do about it!". Workers' commitment towards trades unionism on the shop floor was continually kept in check by the inability of the stewards to get results. A fundamental aspect of the cumulative power of the trades unions had been thrown into reverse.

"For the nature of power is ... like to fame, increasing as it proceeds; or like the motion of heavy bodies, which the further they go, make still the more haste." (9)

Not only was the objective basis of trades union "power" dealt a severe blow in the 1980s, with loose labour markets and mass unemployment, but also their inability successfully to articulate the concerns of their members at work reduced their appeal, for:

"Reputation of power, is Power; because it draweth with it the adherence of those that need protection." (10)

The irony of the situation should not be lost upon us. The effective power of capital to pursue changes in the labour process was all the more enhanced by the fact that it was state capital in its nationalised form which "drove through" the changes. Moreover the unions in the yards who, in some cases, such as the boilermakers, had advocated nationalisation of the industry consistently in the post-war period, were now apparently helpless to resist a vicious onslaught at the point of production.

It would be wrong however to finish this account implying that there had been a total collapse of control on behalf of the shipbuilding workers on the Wear. The feeling of despondency amongst the remaining workforce is hard to overstate. Ideologically they have nowhere to go. The unions are seen as ineffective, and nationalisation (seen by many as equivalent to socialism) does not work to their interests as perceived from "the present". Nevertheless quiescence should not be mistaken for

total submission. Resistance to the imposition of managerial power continues, its form is that of de-subordination, its application is "subversive" with respect to managerial objectives even when it emerges as a concern to get the job done. At such times the importance of craft sectionalisation re-emerges even though the changes in production technique identified by R.K. Brown et al are well established. This again points to the fact that the intersubjective disposition of the workforce cannot be deduced from the overt contours of the physical division of labour.

The second half of our initial problematic is clearly in need of restating then. The collapse of craft control in the 1980s is not total, its submersion is one of degree and is temporally contingent. Control needs to be asserted and re-asserted over time, the first wave of the managerial offensive in the yards on the Wear which took place between 1982 and 1986 appeared to carry all before it, however as the failure of the four set, three shift working pattern demonstrated, resistance had not disappeared. Similarly the breakdown of the new system when under pressure illustrates that managerial control is not omnipotent. Whilst it could be objected that the re-emergence of older patterns of working is a temporary feature of a transitional period, it seems likely that such re-assertion of older working practices will survive as long as the industry itself does on the Wear. The important point to be noted then is

not necessarily the collapse of craft control in the Wear yards in the 1980s, but rather, given the ferocity of the managerial onslaught and paucity of the objective resources for resistance, the notable feature is that resistance continues. A resistance that owes as much to a workforce desire to get the job done as it does to more directly oppositional forms of protest such as the withdrawal of labour.

The Nature of the Wearside Working Class:Towards a More Complex Problematic

One of the central themes running through the whole of this project has been an attempt to understand the nature of the workers in Wearside shipyards. This concern framed the initial problematic in relation to the secondary literature on the inter-war period and re-emerges several times in attempting to explicate the changes occurring between then and now. The complexities of the issues involved cannot be neatly summarised in a conclusion, but hopefully do emerge from a full reading of my account. Rather than attempting a summary I will conclude by addressing some of the views of the working class presented implicitly or explicitly by others, in the light of my study of Wearside. Again, my aim is not to prove other accounts wrong, but rather to raise issues which demand an understanding in order to appreciate the full complexities of class.

The work of Lorenz and McGoldrick on Clydeside shipbuilding has already been dealt with to some extent. Their inversion of Braverman's passive view of labour on the basis of the objective contours of the labour process must be qualified by two factors. Firstly the locality of their study must be taken into account. Clydeside, and to a lesser extent Tyneside, have particular political cultures which in the inter-war period could not be assumed as characteristic of Wearside. The heterogeneity of local political hegemony must be addressed if the inter-subjective as

well as the more objective issues of class are to be dealt with.

An issue of greater criticism with respect to their work is the sources through which their accounts are established. A reliance upon Employers and Union minutes and events around which industrial action occurred screen out the more routine processes of the reality of class at work, and the complexities of the inter-subjective views of the non-activist worker are given no voice. This approach ignores any reference to moral frameworks of meaning through which elements of hierarchy may be accepted upon pragmatic grounds, or even deemed legitimate to some extent.

Moreover in neglecting the non-work context, these studies neglect the extent to which class was reproduced in a unitary fashion across the work-non-work divide. The resources for possible struggle at work were reproduced in what was, on Wear-side at least, a strictly ordered society. The "small world" of the occupational community may have upheld the dignity of the "working man", but as the women who experienced work in the yards in wartime testified, for them such work was seen as a form of liberty relative to the more restrictive routine of the non-work community. The radical potential and traditions of the inter-war working class should be seen in its context relative to the rigidities, produced from both within and outside, of the community. Whilst it is perhaps true that the "class" had a greater sense of identity during this period than subsequently, it should not be thought that this identity was, in total,

autonomously created. In some ways the coherence of the identity was a product of the rigidities surrounding the community. Such an identity could, given other factors, facilitate a radical response, but equally such an identity could merely indicate the rigidly structured subaltern position of the class. We must not then mistake coherence and identity for radical self assertion, and sensitivity to life styles and language (11) must also guide our appreciation of the inter-war working class. Such an approach, linked to one that does not assume that the inter-subjective disposition of even a section (i.e. male workers) of the class can be deduced from the existent contours of the labour process must be adopted if we are to avoid producing an unreal "benchmark" against which to assess the working class in the post-war period.

Indeed it is this change from the working class of the inter-war period inhabiting the "small world" of the occupational community to the post-war working class inhabiting the "small life worlds" of "modern society" that has led some theorists to talk of the integration of the working class or even of its disappearance altogether. Early versions of the integration hypothesis, such as that of Marcuse in "One Dimensional Man" emphasised how the working class, particularly in the USA, had been "bought off" by "successful" capitalism. Such accounts emphasised the ability of capitalism to overcome limitations of the market by creating the warfare/welfare state. Underpinning

these accounts was the view that the economic conditions of the long boom were now the norm.

However with the collapse of the long boom, and the re-emergence of the cyclical tendency of boom and slump, it seemed that the institutionalisation of the working class was no longer conditional upon the material success of capitalism. Gorz, for one, bid a non too fond "Farewell to the Working Class". Others, such as Seabrook and Blackwell, continued the earlier themes of the incorporation. Thus in their account of "The Working Class in the 1980s" they suggest that:

"Margaret Thatcher sensed the "sea change" that was occurring at the heart of the working class, and she believed that it was sufficiently advanced for her to be able to detach large sections of the working class from an allegiance, which had become enfeebled, to organised labour and its movement. She could accomplish this the more convincingly because capitalism itself had been transformed from satanic mill to shopping mall, from an irrational and inhuman system which inflicted suffering and deprivation into a sagacious and beneficent means of distributing the good things of life." (12)

Their account seems plausible because it resonates to some of the populist portrayals of the "feeling" of the class available in any letters page of local newspapers or snatches of conversations overheard on bus journeys, and indeed these form some of the sources used by Seabrook. Yet such a view, characterised by its clarity and coherence, remains a view from outside of the class. In some senses it merely inverts the failings of Lorenz and McGoldrick. Where they concentrated on the work situation to the neglect of the non-work situation,

Seabrook does the opposite. Where they focus upon the activist worker and situations where capital and labour "confront" each other, Seabrook does the opposite. There are similarities as well however, - both approaches appear to deduce, in a rather simple fashion, the inter-subjective disposition of the class from the objective contours of aggregate formations. For Lorenz and McGoldrick the existent form of the labour process implies a strong labour force actively struggling to retain control. For Seabrook the success of Thatcherism at the ballot box is indicative of change occurring at the "heart of the working class". Ironically Seabrook's account would harmonise well with those of Lorenz and McGoldrick, each the polar opposite of the other. The active working class of the inter-war period becomes transformed into the fragmented, pacified class of the 1980s.

Both views hold some truth, but neither can be seen as a definitive account, they are partial accounts masquerading as a general truth. On this point the work of Seabrook is more at fault than that of the other two authors. His inversion of their tendency to portray workers as being engaged in active struggle is pursued with dedication. As Beynon has noted, his skills as a writer are used to overcome his partial presentation. Those skills are indeed great, as his account of Sunderland demonstrates:

"Sunderland. The river opens the town, a deep wound in its granite base, and the cliffs glitter like silver beneath the grass that partly covers them." (13)

An evocative portrayal, and yet one which immediately puts someone from Sunderland on their guard as to the thoroughness of the research. Sunderland has a limestone base, not granite! A small point, maybe, but as his account of the town and the people in it unfolds the accuracy of his geological description can be seen as similar to his social description. The unemployed in the town are seen as turning to crime, or sexual fantasy, their every day life being one of degradation. The concluding paragraph is given over to the words of Dave,

"I'm very right-wing. There's too many people in the nick who ought to be at the end of a rope. You go and do a bank, spill blood like it was milk, only eight or ten years. It's ridiculous. I've got no time for worrying about mankind, I'm too busy worrying about myself. I think everybody is selfish, everybody is out for himself. All our brothers! What brothers? I don't believe it. What happens in Asia, Africa, that's their fucking bad luck. And when they come here, give them hand-outs, offer them houses. It's asking for trouble if you can't house your own people. I don't believe in unions - the only union I believe in is a guy and a chick coming together for a good fuck; I don't worry about the bomb either; the only big bang I'm concerned about is the one I might get tonight." (14)

The selectivity of Seabrook's account is again an inversion of those radical academics who wish to portray the working class as inherently revolutionary but always subject to betrayal by their leaders. Because he has consigned the "older" traditions of working class self-support to the dustbin of history he does not look for any signs of its continued existence. He polarises the class into those who have work and are "doing alright thank you very much", and those who are deemed to have fallen into a

state of absolute degradation, both groups paying a one dimensional homage to the cult of commercial culture. He is happy with programmatic statements from individuals, such as the one quoted, and having confirmed his "theory" he leaves to re-confirm it somewhere else. He does not ask the question as to whether the totalising statements produced in an interview situation with a stranger actually relate to the processual life style of these individuals. Neither does he see the other working class people in the town: fathers who still take their sons fishing; women on the estates who club together to get trips to the beach organised during summer holidays; teenagers amassing skill and knowledge in dismantling (and re-assembling) motor bikes; reciprocal arrangements for child care between families; the coming together of communities in the face of some tragedy. In short his account is too simple, it catches only one, undeniable, element in contemporary working class life but it does not hear the "double tongued signs" that are still there for those that will listen.

Seabrook claims to portray the reality of working class life in the post war period and to listen to the voices that Labour politicians have been deaf to. Yet his portrayal of the "common man" (and, to a lesser extent, woman) ends up as condescension.

"We are left with a view of the working class which gives no place to popular culture as an imminent, dynamic form and this elitist adjudication of cultural practice weighs heavily upon the account." (15)

The view of the shipyard workers on Wearside produced in this study is not to be seen as a general definition of the

working class. However any such definitive statements about the class must take into account such particular portrayals. The aim then is the promotion of an adequate understanding of the complexities involved in such attempts at general accounts rather than the provision of such an account here. Nevertheless it is possible to make some comments which engage with more general debates even on the basis of such a particular study.

Firstly, whatever the material gains that have been made by workers on Wearside in the post-war period it would seem that those gains are very vulnerable. Such vulnerability is still a feature of working class life, in the absence of occupational pensions and the vicissitudes of manual work, to an extent not experienced by those in more middle class occupations. Perhaps more importantly however is the continuance of cultural inequality. The reproduction of inequality through generations, via the mechanisms of the education system and the attitudes enshrined therein, ensure that cultural capital remains unequally distributed. In this environment we have not, despite some individual indicators, said "Farewell to the Working Class". Present quiescence should not be mistaken for integration or harmony. Pragmatic conditions indicate against active outbursts, but, if a widespread boom was to occur, as some suggest, in the 1990s ⁽¹⁶⁾ horizons would again rise and the reference group may become "those above" rather than "those below".

The basis of such potential activism stems not from any

direct symbiosis between the working class and the labour movement. Indeed its form may not be associated with the official labour movement. But one thing this study of the shipyards on the Wear has brought home to me is that the position of these workers under capitalism remains one of "de-subordination". Surely, the pattern is complicated by the asymmetry which has developed between the work and non-work spheres, yet whilst most workers on the Wear do not, and cannot afford to, dwell on the issue they know that somewhere along the line they are getting "ripped off". When this realisation cannot be ignored and even "fantasy equality" (17) cannot be sustained some leave the yards, others, under the force of the cash nexus or the work ethic, remain. One thing is certain however, and that is that whatever happens to the shipyards on the Wear the present generation of workers will not forget how management kicked them when they were down; as to how they respond to that experience in the future, that is less clear.

"For these workers experience the class struggle every day of their lives. If, in the way they cope with it, they produce a politically confused situation that's just too bad. Radical intellectuals may put their hands to their heads in despair but that doesn't help either." (18)

Ideally this conclusion should finish here. However by way of a post script I should perhaps return to the issue of the relationship of the "theory" outlined in Chapter 1 to the rest of this study. If, on reading the first chapter, one expected that it would provide a strict theoretical framework into which the

more empirical data could be slotted, disappointment with the work as a whole will most likely have followed. In my own defence I wish to re-emphasise that it was never my desire to construct an all-embracing formal theoretical structure.

Rather, the aim of the first chapter was to engage with existing theoretical approaches in a positive (opportunistic?) way to develop their strengths in as far as they could handle the interpenetration of structure and agency, and yet to purge them of any tendency towards a positivistic theoretical imperialism. What I saw this as providing was a perspective rather than a logical, but static, framework. I hope I have written this study in a way which admits a reflexive interaction between theory and empirical data. I have tried to respect the meanings implied by the actors and yet to contextualise the action within the contexts of multifarious flows of temporality, location and culture. Contexts enabling as well as constraining, produced and experienced.

Finally I hope the "perspective" has allowed for the introduction of some of the aspects of social reality often neglected by sociologists - those of feelings. The actors are human, not just "cultural dopes", or even aggressive economic "men", although at times they may approximate these caricatures, they have feelings, hopes, fears, desires and "standards". They can be seen at times as their own worst enemies, or at others as their own severest critics. As an individual I have learned a

lot from "analysing the behaviour of my subjects". Not only about their social relations and situations, but at a more personal level about the dangers of gauging human behaviour against an inflexible rule of coherence or "rationality". In short I have learned a lot about dignity, a phenomenon which cannot always be dismissed with reference to false consciousness. These lessons, which have been of profound importance to me both as a person and social scientist, have, I believe, been learnt all the more easily because of the relatively loose perspective which I developed and modified over the course of this project.

When I see a welder striking up an arc on the Wear I see a person who may be working due to direct control or because of an internalised "responsible autonomy". I see a craftsman, hierarchically removed from labourers and demarked from other trades, although he may share leisure pursuits with men from either group. I see his use of a technology adopted relatively late on the river. I see a man worried about the future, and I see the massive shifts in the geographical location of industry on a global scale. I see his home region in relation to the rest of the country and ultimately the cleavage between the advanced world and developing nations. I see a man who had, as a child, a particular experience of the education system and parental advice about the world that played a part in his "choice" of career. I see then an individual, but through his life I see a society, human society. Its totality is there in a series of presences

and absences of the present and the past, of human being and striving of the absolute and the relative. This is what the perspective I developed in Chapter 1 tries to do, it attempts to "ground" the sociological imagination for the purposes of this study. This was the aim; as to whether I have succeeded in this to any degree is not for me to say.

Notes to the Conclusion

- 1 Backhurst, D. and Dancy, J. "The Dualist Straightjacket" in the Times Higher Education Supplement, 22 April 1988.
- 2 Warde, A. "Industrial Discipline: Burawoy, Factory Regimes and the Case of Lancaster", Paper at Aston/Umist Labour Process Conference, March 1988.
- 3 Lorenz, E. and Wilkinson, F. "The Shipbuilding Industry: 1880-1965" in Elbawm, B. and Lazonick, W. (Eds) The Decline of the British Economy, Oxford, O.U.P. 1986, p129.
- 4 On the importance of reference groups see:
Urry, J. Reference Groups and the Theory of Revolution, London. R.K.P. 1973.
- 5 See For example: Cousins, J. and Brown, R. Patterns of Paradox: Shipbuilding Workers' Images of Society, Durham, University of Durham Department of Sociology and Social Administration Working Papers in Sociology No.4 1972.
- 6 British Shipbuilders Report and Accounts 1978/79, p6.
- 7 Tomlinson, J. The Unequal Struggle? British Socialism and the Capitalist Enterprise, London, Methuen 1982, p72.
- 8 A point well understood by workers on the Wear who, often citing the miners' strike as an example, expressed the view that you cannot fight the state, in the form of public corporations, in terms of strike activity, and win. In this sense the balance of the "structural" forces of Capital and Labour had been profoundly affected by the intervention of the "Agency" of the Thatcher Government.
- 9 Hobbes, T. Leviathan, Harmondsworth, Penguin 1968, p150.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 One issue which made a particular impact upon me while looking at the inter-war period is just how much the "official" language of newspapers has changed. The use of class labels (i.e. lower class, working class etc.) appeared frequently in reports in the Sunderland Echoes of the inter-war years. The disappearance of such labels in the post-war period does not, of course, necessarily relate to changes in the more "objective" indicators of class, but does hold important implications for the external production of the rigidities of class identity.

- 12 Blackwell, T. and Seabrook, J. A World Still to Win, London, Faber and Faber 1985, p150.
- 13 Seabrook, J. Unemployment, London, Quartet Books 1982, p107.
- 14 Seabrook, J., 1982, op.cit. p151.
- 15 Beynon, H. "Jeremy Seabrook and the Working Class" in Socialist Register, London, Merlin 1982, p291.
- 16 Andre Gunder Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein, following a Kondratieff analysis, suggest the likelihood of another expansionary phase of the world system beginning in about 1990. See:
Amin, S. et al Dynamics of Global Crisis, London, Macmillan 1982.
- 17 Ditton and Brown have suggested that the ability to "fiddle" and the hidden economy contribute towards feelings of "fantasy equality" within the manual working class. In the yards one effect of the managerial offensive was to make the taking of materials out of the yards far harder. Such "pilfering" did continue; however, the assistance of someone with a small boat was required to ship "goods" down the river rather than walking out of the gate with them. On fantasy equality, see:
Ditton, J. and Brown, R. "Why don't they revolt? "Invisible Income" as a neglected dimension of Runciman's relative deprivation thesis." in the B.J.S., Vol.32 No.4, December 1981.
- 18 Beynon, H. Working for Ford, East Ardsley, E.P. Publishing Ltd 1975, p319.

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APPENDIX 1

Table I Leading building ports in 1790-1 and 1804-5 and 1814⁵

	<u>1790-1</u> <u>peace years</u>	<u>1804-5</u> <u>war years</u>	<u>1814</u>
	<u>tonnage</u>	<u>tonnage</u>	<u>tonnage</u>
London	16,372	12,680	
Newcastle*	12,444	15,054 (1st)	8,481
Whitby	11,753	9,950	3,813
Hull	8,193	10,839	7,926
Liverpool	6,710	4,154	3,896
SUNDERLAND	3,951	14,198 (2nd)	14,330 (1st)
Whitehaven	3,630	6,750	4,711
Bristol	3,071	1,623	
Total: English ports	104,010	127,901	
Scotland	18,817	23,306	
G. Britain			82,855

* these figures are for the Tyne and at least half of this output would have been in the County of Durham.

APPENDIX 2

tunds has a similar effect in increasing ...

TABLE XXXI

Tonnage commenced, launched, and under construction at the end of each quarter, 1920-39 ('000 gross tons)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Commenced</i>	<i>Launched</i>	<i>Under construction</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Commenced</i>	<i>Launched</i>	<i>Under construction</i>
1920 I	708	454	3,394	1930 I	427	345	1,615
II	589	523	3,570	II	230	468	1,392
III	594	483	3,731	III	161	379	1,117
IV	506	580	3,709	IV	132	297	909
1921 I	393	433	3,799	1931 I	33	146	694
II	69	322	3,530	II	23	170	556
III	51	308	3,283	III	39	80	417
IV	55	467	2,640	IV	105	71	401
1922 I	51	334	2,236	1932 I	26	35	373
II	39	149	1,920	II	28	69	281
III	82	307	1,617	III	11	48	238
IV	231	261	1,469	IV	7	39	225
1923 I	335	228	1,492	1933 I	77	13	252
II	241	239	1,338	II	50	11	288
III	112	66	1,271	III	40	42	304
IV	245	115	1,395	IV	75	65	332
1924 I	228	362	1,474	1934 I	203	35	481
II	375	365	1,517	II	147	36	587
III	253	360	1,468	III	77	183	604
IV	195	353	1,297	IV	93	207	597
1925 I	202	339	1,165	1935 I	144	106	556
II	190	298	1,094	II	108	116	560
III	261	225	1,009	III	119	113	531
IV	161	216	885	IV	311	132	743
1926 I	193	191	843	1936 I	233	194	842
II	168	172	841	II	282	168	849
III	68	208	775	III	293	212	929
IV	152	68	760	IV	273	280	964
1927 I	580	128	1,217	1937 I	253	176	1,014
II	437	269	1,390	II	368	253	1,200
III	370	356	1,536	III	219	266	1,185
IV	377	499	1,580	IV	217	223	1,125
1928 I	342	407	1,441	1938 I	173	179	1,089
II	279	403	1,203	II	157	286	1,037
III	245	388	1,090	III	87	309	885
IV	432	246	1,243	IV	88	241	780
1929 I	362	270	1,357	1939 I	71	158	597
II	428	393	1,454	II	402	138	791
III	360	369	1,448				
IV	499	473	1,560				

TABLE I

LAUNCHINGS OF SHIPS OVER 100 g.r.t. EXCLUDING WARSHIPS

Source: Lloyd's Register of Shipping

YEAR	Nos.	UK Tons	WORLD Nos.	Tons	UK % of Launch- World	Export ings	NORTH EAST Nos.	Tons	% of World
1892	681	1,109,950	1051	1,358,045	81.7		251	570,296	41.9
1893	536	836,383	846	1,026,741	81.4		192	431,405	41.9
1894	614	1,046,508	932	1,323,538	79.0		252	544,768	41.1
1895	579	950,967	880	1,218,160	78.0		222	497,564	40.8
1896	696	1,159,751	1113	1,567,882	74.0		280	611,727	39.0
1897	591	952,486	990	1,331,924	71.4		236	498,594	37.4
1898	761	1,367,570	1200	1,893,343	72.3		299	763,825	40.0
1899	726	1,416,791	1269	2,121,738	66.7		276	766,282	36.0
1900	692	1,442,471	1364	2,304,163	62.5	23.0	264	794,300	34.4
1901	639	1,524,739	1538	2,617,539	58.2	23.0	279	872,723	33.4
1902	694	1,427,558	1650	2,502,755	57.0	19.0	258	701,005	28.0
1903	697	1,190,618	1650	2,145,631	55.5	20.0	252	581,343	27.0
1904	712	1,205,162	1643	1,987,935	62.0	19.0	257	671,580	33.7
1905	795	1,623,168	1576	2,514,922	64.5	21.5	276	872,314	34.6
1906	886	1,828,343	1836	2,919,763	62.6	20.3	334	1,005,148	37.4
1907	841	1,607,890	1788	2,778,088	58.0	34.1	297	817,510	29.4
1908	523	929,669	1405	1,833,286	50.7	40.3	154	355,859	19.3
1909	526	991,066	1063	1,602,057	62.0	24.4	197	434,810	27.1
1910	500	1,143,169	1277	1,957,853	58.4	19.5	196	578,315	29.5
1911	772	1,803,844	1599	2,650,140	68.0	22.4	331	977,278	36.8
1912	712	1,738,514	1719	2,901,769	60.0	23.9	267	888,683	30.6
1913	688	1,932,153	1750	3,332,882	58.0	21.7	267	974,109	29.2
1914	656	1,683,553	1319	2,852,753	59.0	24.4	262	854,697	30.0
1915	327	650,919	743	1,201,638	54.2	14.75	110	352,825	29.2
1916	306	608,235	964	1,688,080	36.0	—	108	353,445	20.9
1917	286	1,162,896	1112	2,937,786	39.6	—	136	611,233	20.8
1918	301	1,348,120	1866	5,447,444	24.7	—	162	736,858	13.5
1919	612	1,620,442	2483	7,144,549	22.6	6.0	184	716,295	10.0
1920	618	2,055,624	1759	5,861,666	35.0	41.0	210	948,902	16.5
1921	426	1,538,052	1379	4,356,843	35.3	38.5	137	662,753	15.2
1922	235	1,031,081	852	2,467,084	41.8	26.0	90	432,137	17.4
1923	222	645,651	701	1,643,181	39.2	2.9	89	255,542	15.5
1924	494	1,439,885	924	2,247,751	64.1	15.3	202	631,258	28.0
1925	342	1,084,633	855	2,193,404	49.5	16.4	108	382,855	17.4

YEAR	Nos.	UK Tons	WORLD Nos.	Tons	UK %		NORTH EAST Nos.	Tons	% of World
					UK %	Export % of Launch- ings			
1926	197	639,568	600	1,674,977	38.2	14.0	57	198,979	11.8
1927	371	1,225,873	802	2,285,679	53.6	21.8	129	567,197	24.8
1928	420	1,445,920	869	2,699,239	53.6	20.2	162	641,120	23.9
1929	489	1,522,623	1012	2,793,210	54.5	17.1	199	679,321	24.8
1930	481	1,478,563	1084	2,889,472	51.2	44.0	148	608,476	21.0
1931	148	502,487	596	1,617,115	31.1	40.7	35	168,796	10.4
1932	100	187,794	307	726,591	25.8	31.2	30	72,252	9.9
1933	108	133,115	330	489,016	27.2	9.1	23	37,419	7.5
1934	173	459,877	536	967,419	47.5	10.2	40	66,717	6.8
1935	185	499,011	649	1,302,080	38.3	12.8	43	134,929	10.3
1936	328	856,257	999	2,117,924	40.4	10.9	96	340,922	16.1
1937	309	920,822	1101	2,690,580	34.2	13.5	96	341,199	12.6
1938	267	1,030,375	1119	3,033,593	34.0	19.8	87	398,100	13.1
1939	201	629,705	941	2,539,424	24.8				
1940	229	842,910	495	1,754,198	48.1				
1941	245	1,185,894	510	2,491,173	47.6				
1942	273	1,270,714	1300	7,815,369	16.4				
1943	243	1,136,804	2078	13,884,776	8.0				
1944	279	919,357	1738	11,169,503	8.1				
1945	307	893,515	1326	7,192,679	12.7	2.03	111	433,758	6.1
1946	314	1,120,526	690	2,114,702	53.3	10.2	107	509,995	23.9
1947	343	1,192,759	787	2,102,621	56.9	31.6	103	474,842	22.6
1948	342	1,176,346	872	2,309,743	50.9	34.9	105	500,681	21.6
1949	320	1,267,467	926	3,131,805	40.5	41.2	96	531,121	16.7
1950	275	1,324,570	1013	3,492,876	38.0	33.3	82	538,956	15.4
1951	261	1,341,024	1022	3,642,564	36.8	44.9	77	616,894	16.9
1952	254	1,302,548	1074	4,395,578	29.6	31.8	72	540,333	12.5
1953	220	1,317,463	1143	5,096,050	25.9	27.7	73	612,110	12.0
1954	253	1,408,874	1233	5,252,631	26.8	34.2	72	576,111	10.9
1955	276	1,473,937	1437	5,314,850	27.7	36.6	75	623,970	11.7
1956	275	1,383,387	1815	6,670,218	20.7	31.4	72	639,304	9.5
1957	260	1,413,701	1950	8,501,404	16.6	18.5	72	624,187	7.3
1958	282	1,401,980	1936	9,269,983	15.1	24.1	78	688,626	7.4
1959	274	1,372,595	1808	8,745,704	15.7	8.4	70	618,581	7.1
1960	253	1,331,491	2020	8,356,444	15.9	11.0	66	614,980	7.2
1961	247	1,191,758	1990	7,940,005	15.01	23.6	61	568,442	7.1
1962	187	1,072,513	1901	8,374,754	12.8	15.4	46	461,420	5.5
1963	160	927,649	2001	8,538,513	10.9	30.6	36	440,171	5.1
1964	179	1,042,576	2147	10,263,803	10.1	14.3	45	530,108	5.1
1965	158	1,073,074	2280	12,215,817	8.8	12.7	35	455,120	3.7

MERCHANT SHIPPING LAUNCHES IN THE NORTH EAST

Source: Lloyd's Register

<i>Hartlepool and Whitby</i>			<i>Middlesbrough and Stockton</i>			<i>Newcastle</i>			<i>Sunderland</i>			TOTALS	
<i>No.</i>	<i>g.r.t.</i>		<i>No.</i>	<i>g.r.t.</i>		<i>No.</i>	<i>g.r.t.</i>		<i>No.</i>	<i>g.r.t.</i>		<i>No.</i>	<i>g.r.t.</i>
1892	36	98,623	46	103,725		94	181,508		75	186,440		251	570,296
1893	28	79,120	46	89,707		70	144,261		48	118,317		192	431,405
1894	30	81,839	45	104,071		106	190,601		71	168,257		252	544,768
1895	37	95,819	47	115,003		86	161,476		52	125,266		222	497,564
1896	29	82,093	63	112,932		103	200,746		85	215,956		280	611,727
1897	25	65,686	38	88,827		113	169,585		60	174,496		236	498,594
1898	44	125,791	51	140,729		120	238,551		84	258,754		299	763,825
1899	41	128,034	51	146,599		112	249,038		72	242,611		276	766,282
1900	40	140,623	44	144,164		110	265,142		70	244,371		264	794,300
1901	41	150,607	46	161,058		116	292,989		76	268,069		279	872,723
1902	21	81,824	40	108,230		130	280,860		67	230,091		258	701,005
1903	28	80,808	39	91,675		125	219,360		60	189,500		252	581,343
1904	31	96,154	38	110,236		116	236,055		72	229,135		257	671,580
1905	36	124,006	40	132,748		126	310,391		94	305,169		276	872,314
1906	44	144,603	44	147,857		149	385,987		97	326,701		334	1005,148
1907	28	94,469	48	138,621		131	292,814		90	291,606		297	817,510
1908	13	37,843	18	57,210		83	174,259		40	86,547		154	355,859
1909	18	57,712	27	62,492		95	182,235		57	132,371		197	434,810
1910	23	86,295	44	108,754		69	203,831		60	179,435		196	578,315
1911	34	135,557	95	141,934		117	412,959		85	286,828		331	977,278
1912	30	121,725	71	143,570		86	317,654		80	305,734		267	888,681
1913	33	153,071	62	154,743		94	366,331		78	299,964		267	974,109
1914	29	124,419	70	137,165		91	315,585		72	277,528		262	854,697
1915	13	59,308	30	58,574		36	124,001		31	110,942		110	352,825
1916	11	54,295	27	31,342		35	133,336		35	134,472		108	353,445
1917	13	65,622	23	109,306		52	231,907		48	204,398		136	611,233
1918 ¹	25	100,413	24	109,298		55	266,594		58	260,553		162	736,858
1919	20	82,233	36	119,943		64	239,836		64	274,283		184	716,295
1920	16	73,221	44	195,452		83	365,775		67	314,454		210	948,902
1921	6	34,101	28	129,559		73	354,813		30	144,280		137	662,753
1922	4	18,822	17	45,814		42	240,788		27	126,713		90	432,137
1923	5	23,864	23	42,709		44	137,408		17	51,561		89	255,542
1924	14	55,804	56	105,707		76	275,672		56	194,075		202	631,258
1925	9	37,874	25	58,786		51	194,614		23	91,581		108	382,855
1926	3	14,814	21	22,369		25	126,609		8	35,187		57	198,979
1927	13	65,588	18	64,783		61	274,056		37	162,770		129	567,197
1928	9	39,743	33	93,223		70	300,508		50	207,646		162	641,120

Table II—continued

<i>Hartlepool and Whitby</i>			<i>Middlesbrough and Stockton</i>			<i>Newcastle</i>			<i>Sunderland</i>			TOTALS		
No.	<i>g.r.t.</i>		No.	<i>g.r.t.</i>		No.	<i>g.r.t.</i>		No.	<i>g.r.t.</i>		No.	<i>g.r.t.</i>	
1929	15	70,385	61	91,824	65	271,601	58	245,511	199	679,321				
1930	14	39,481	40	71,935	54	323,750	40	173,306	148	608,476				
1931	—	—	9	38,990	19	120,992	7	8,814	35	168,796				
1932	7	31,911	14	13,487	7	24,226	2	2,628	30	72,252				
1933	—	—	14	14,685	4	11,033	5	11,701	23	37,419				
1934	2	1,100	21	16,238	9	30,169	8	19,210	40	66,717				
1935	2	10,228	14	12,582	19	80,736	8	31,382	43	134,928				
1936	9	41,015	40	51,667	21	109,441	36	138,799	96	340,922				
1937	10	43,615	30	39,740	18	102,121	38	155,723	96	341,199				
1938	11	47,633	16	39,569	25	141,897	35	169,001	87	398,100				
WAR YEARS														
1945	10	45,270	15	50,342	37	122,635	49	215,511	111	433,758				
1946	13	46,653	14	87,279	35	184,052	45	192,011	107	509,995				
1947	11	43,309	16	56,072	35	185,914	41	189,547	103	474,842				
1948	12	40,443	25	75,348	30	206,845	38	178,045	105	500,681				
1949	7	27,967	22	104,075	30	217,971	37	181,108	96	531,121				
1950	7	35,693	19	105,344	22	206,501	34	191,418	82	538,956				
1951	9	50,506	16	125,556	24	243,499	28	197,333	77	616,894				
1952	8	45,347	13	122,756	25	201,338	26	170,892	72	540,333				
1953	6	29,180	13	153,544	27	234,714	27	194,672	73	612,110				
1954	7	45,891	11	125,076	28	214,967	26	190,177	72	576,111				
1955	6	32,665	10	130,776	30	238,146	29	222,383	75	623,970				
1956	6	39,916	10	129,120	27	259,391	29	210,877	72	639,304				
1957	5	38,238	10	111,877	29	263,274	28	210,798	72	624,187				
1958	5	39,143	11	131,303	32	249,837	30	268,343	78	688,626				
1959	3	20,305	7	92,875	32	257,874	28	247,527	70	618,581				
1960	2	23,503	7	120,959	34	262,085	23	208,433	66	614,080				
1961	2	19,559	5	95,628	27	193,942	27	259,313	61	568,442				
1962	—	—	3	50,275	22	196,790	21	214,355	46	461,420				
1963	—	—	5	81,830	15	154,355	16	203,986	36	440,171				
1964	—	—	7	72,047	20	226,533	18	231,528	45	530,108				
1965	—	—	2	43,513	18	158,930	16	252,677	36	455,120				

Notes:

¹ In 1918 Whitby figures were included with those of Middlesbrough and Stockton rather than with Hartlepool

² Some small sailing vessels built by North East in this period, but negligible

TABLE III

MERCANTILE WORK IN HAND IN GROSS TONS

Source: *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*

	<i>Hartlepool</i>	<i>Middlesbrough</i>	<i>Newcastle</i>	<i>Sunderland</i>
<i>1910</i>				
June 30th	65,283	70,967	194,537	108,500
September 30th	54,048	65,648	204,016	109,273
December 31st	42,135	74,587	206,692	126,897
<i>1911</i>				
March 31st	69,430	76,408	241,159	156,803
June 30th	69,506	86,649	246,504	195,104
September 30th	51,686	81,908	255,247	185,808
December 31st	64,353	68,357	240,913	194,648
<i>1912</i>				
March 31st	78,230	84,077	261,471	201,050
June 30th	101,582	88,842	310,529	214,062
September 30th	97,725	91,196	320,843	210,105
December 31st	98,844	108,403	312,763	232,180
<i>1913</i>				
March 31st	106,805	108,210	335,310	245,674
June 30th	88,518	106,980	312,620	238,080
September 30th	81,502	100,973	297,250	236,450
December 31st	80,630	91,404	302,375	231,220
<i>1914</i>				
March 31st	83,750	83,315	319,227	204,066
June 30th	85,406	82,504	285,157	172,103
September 30th	79,880	69,258	302,831	191,064
December 31st	71,610	72,035	267,226	187,051
<i>1915</i>				
March 31st	61,830	86,915	300,997	161,342
June 30th	71,350	83,165	270,854	162,836
September 30th	73,530	85,855	263,591	176,685
December 31st	60,640	60,475	260,546	163,639
<i>1916</i>				
March 31st	72,800	43,405	294,116	169,129
June 30th	69,625	51,670	310,577	197,359
September 30th	72,275	76,480	401,926	220,004
<i>1917</i>				

	<i>Hartlepool only</i>	<i>Middlesbrough Stockton and Whitby</i>	<i>Newcastle</i>	<i>Sunderland</i>
<i>1918</i>				
June 30th	93,450	137,370	333,275	242,050
September 30th	82,000	130,100	330,755	218,245
December 31st	77,200	146,820	378,015	241,175
<i>1919</i>				
March 31st	75,600	148,420	433,932	259,467
June 30th	76,450	163,280	498,294	269,018
September 30th	77,320	227,565	536,960	286,390
December 31st	90,100	225,920	593,189	299,465
<i>1920</i>				
March 31st	89,140	217,790	629,408	346,215
June 30th				
September 30th	107,640	256,503	660,726	322,098
December 31st	97,960	281,031	658,112	327,120
<i>1921</i>				
March 31st	106,300	231,181	710,752	339,375
June 30th	89,965	213,258	680,334	328,488
September 30th	89,880	190,018	603,194	291,276
December 31st	67,405	134,075	516,776	203,654
<i>1922</i>				
March 31st	56,680	99,987	438,154	181,457
June 30th	46,530	75,124	384,304	144,301
September 30th	52,680	57,493	353,761	116,676
December 31st	32,340	83,395	265,097	102,583
<i>1923</i>				
March 31st	41,367	95,247	276,781	119,753
June 30th	31,127	72,513	222,652	127,495
September 30th	22,677	49,878	230,257	117,777
December 31st	41,597	52,615	247,850	139,064
<i>1924</i>				
March 31st	45,467	52,615	247,850	139,064
June 30th	45,090	70,508	258,568	135,638
September 30th	34,410	71,740	249,582	132,604
December 31st	40,680	54,735	224,019	103,734
<i>1925</i>				
March 31st	31,430	41,255	198,185	80,770
June 30th	28,745	39,649	222,221	71,262
September 30th	18,245	30,680	207,843	57,840
December 31st	18,115	31,670	165,585	46,910

	<i>Hartlepool</i>	<i>Middlesbrough Stockton and Whitby</i>	<i>Newcastle</i>	<i>Sunderland</i>
<i>1926</i>				
March 31st	29,760	22,617	160,237	53,478
June 30th	29,320	42,580	155,685	61,978
September 30th	19,620	43,810	127,344	46,425
December 31st	29,320	39,810	160,977	37,767
<i>1927</i>				
March 31st	45,730	94,961	251,842	114,488
June 30th	30,670	78,721	264,578	132,950
September 30th	45,100	77,232	254,871	166,197
December 31st	38,414	97,902	272,136	194,678
<i>1928</i>				
March 31st	41,108	83,020	246,004	162,346
June 30th	21,832	73,999	210,753	111,863
September 30th	16,990	45,364	160,366	65,146
December 31st	30,825	48,047	154,912	102,091
<i>1929</i>				
March 31st	39,058	78,903	178,990	157,601
June 30th	36,513	77,687	225,101	161,181
September 30th	34,930	57,977	224,446	175,864
December 31st	28,760	79,204	263,628	192,028
<i>1930</i>				
March 31st	38,440	70,944	324,423	149,236
June 30th	22,000	44,741	331,067	109,255
September 30th	6,200	59,500	251,926	63,097
December 31st	—	43,930	193,384	31,518
<i>1931</i>				
March 31st		39,720	141,317	21,260
June 30th		35,680	113,073	16,176
September 30th	5,400	9,055	80,318	10,920
December 31st	26,350	10,986	44,304	7,020
<i>1932</i>				
March 31st	26,350	12,917	35,760	7,020
June 30th	25,600	2,205	16,600	9,660
September 30th	10,400	—	11,140	9,648
December 31st	10,400	—	2,950	7,020

*Middlesbrough
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<i>1933</i>				
March 31st	4,800	10,000	10,730	8,540
June 30th	4,800	16,430	14,705	16,040
September 30th	4,800	16,040	20,505	11,000
December 31st	4,800	10,750	15,140	12,180
<i>1934</i>				
March 31st	4,800	5,027	28,800	11,200
June 30th	5,880	10,613	51,650	13,200
September 30th	5,880	10,711	61,430	18,260
December 31st	4,800	11,188	59,915	14,880
<i>1935</i>				
March 31st	10,140	7,600	52,960	14,862
June 30th	10,140	6,460	53,575	20,518
September 30th	10,140	35,720	44,825	30,480
December 31st	23,840	37,084	65,215	55,706
<i>1936</i>				
March 31st	26,295	39,925	93,230	88,170
June 30th	30,150	23,927	108,663	109,450
September 30th	30,260	11,943	111,190	90,630
December 31st	35,070	16,130	119,463	130,605
<i>1937</i>				
March 31st	43,580	29,330	126,690	113,830
June 30th	46,890	39,405	138,919	140,960
September 30th	49,630	48,196	141,241	160,126
December 31st	46,985	39,846	129,611	169,697
<i>1938</i>				
March 31st	35,530	34,995	146,852	155,542
June 30th	30,370	35,760	158,603	125,737
September 30th	27,310	26,800	130,001	95,461
December 31st	13,700	29,012	129,385	61,601
<i>1939</i>				
March 31st	13,450	5,610	80,180	44,879
June 30th	26,922	25,630	91,036	118,955
<i>1945</i>				
September 30th	40,250	147,902	244,177	245,270
December 31st	40,970	112,336	292,089	223,198

*Middlesbrough
Stockton
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<i>1946</i>				
March 31st	39,060	93,352	314,968	197,310
June 30th	44,410	75,236	346,098	192,615
September 30th	49,310	105,876	358,522	203,170
December 31st	58,580	109,730	381,105	193,700
<i>1947</i>				
March 31st	53,100	102,838	410,485	206,803
June 30th	52,360	92,679	408,085	226,440
September 30th	53,010	93,751	412,235	228,186
December 31st	54,220	116,296	432,115	239,950
<i>1948</i>				
March 31st	54,370	120,921	408,025	225,920
June 30th	57,580	118,079	417,305	232,450
September 30th	55,272	120,314	425,260	231,975
December 31st	57,474	123,899	435,660	224,775
<i>1949</i>				
March 31st	49,739	123,700	392,930	215,765
June 30th	62,742	157,718	392,300	210,530
September 30th	48,072	173,530	403,770	207,194
December 31st	41,780	171,633	388,967	206,625
<i>1950</i>				
March 31st	49,080	135,553	399,253	200,626
June 30th	52,483	127,477	373,040	207,862
September 30th	53,840	132,209	379,293	241,821
December 31st	55,104	150,267	400,208	219,437

APPENDIX 3

Sunderland Shipbuilders Limited

P.O. Box 1
Pallion, Sunderland SR4 6TX
Telephone Sunderland (0783) 670143 & 75473
Telegrams Doxford Sunderland
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TO EMPLOYEES OF SUNDERLAND SHIPBUILDERS

The papers sent with this letter are those given to the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee (S.N.C.) by British Shipbuilders at the meeting on Wednesday, 12th October, 1983.

At Sunderland Shipbuilders the figures show a surplus of 89 employees: these could be selected from over 100 volunteers but we would need to agree on more interchangeability to match people who want redundancy with jobs actually surplus. With agreement, we could deal with this without compulsory redundancy.

Since the loss of the Falklands barges, lay-offs cannot however be ruled out in the short term.

Looking at productivity, you have a copy of the National Survival Plan and linked with acceptance of this is an offer of £3.50 per week for 26 weeks. In our Company we have a new Bonus Scheme ready for acceptance with £121 already earned. The £3.50 could be paid in addition to this providing the Survival Plan is also agreed.

We need agreement on the Survival Plan for our own future; many of the proposals contained in it are well known to Managers and Stewards after many hours of meetings on these subjects.

If everyone had been at work we should have given time to discuss with you the points in these papers; as it is, I hope you will see what contained in them is ultimately a message of hope for Sunderland shipbuilders providing we are prepared to change.



R.D. CLARK
PERSONNEL MANAGER

MARKET FORECAST

WORLD

- WORLD SHIPBUILDING OVERCAPACITY IS CURRENTLY APPROX. 40 PERCENT
- DEMAND FOR NEW SHIPS WILL FALL UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF 1984 TO A LOW OF APPROX. 13M GRT
- FROM MID 1984 DEMAND IS EXPECTED TO RISE TO APPROX. 25M GRT by 1990

MARKET FORECAST

BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS

-	1983-84	ACTUAL TO DATE PLUS EXPECTED	90,000 CGRT
-	1984-85	FORECAST	180,000 CGRT
-	1985-86	FORECAST	200,000 CGRT
-	1986-87	FORECAST	200,000 CGRT

B.S. COMPETITIVENESS

TO COMPETE WITH EUROPEAN SHIPYARDS ON A COSTS BASIS BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS MERCHANT SUBSIDIARIES MUST:

- REDUCE MATERIALS AND COMPONENTS COSTS
- REDUCE OVERHEADS AT SUBSIDIARIES AND AT THE CENTRE
- REDUCE PRODUCTION MANHOURS
 - MANAGEMENT AND STAFF MUST PLAN AND ORGANISE BETTER
 - WORKFORCE MUST APPLY COMPETITIVE WORKING PRACTICES

EUROPEAN COMPETITION

EXAMPLE

PANAMAX BULK CARRIER

1980	-	650,000 MANHOURS
1983	-	400,000 MANHOURS

23 PERCENT REDUCTION

BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS REQUIRES MORE THAN 650,000 MANHOURS FOR SIMILAR SHIP

B.S. ORDERS POTENTIAL

- NOT MORE THAN SIX POSSIBLE ORDERS ARE FORESEEN FOR MERCHANT VESSELS IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.
 - MINISTRY OF DEFENCE ORDERS FOR 2 X TYPE 22 FRIGATES AND ONE SUBMARINE ARE EXPECTED.
 - A SMALL NUMBER OF MOD (N) SUPPORT CRAFT ORDERS ARE POSSIBLE.
 - A LIMITED AMOUNT OF MISCELLANEOUS WORK IS EXPECTED.
 - ANTICIPATED BUSINESS WILL BE INADEQUATE TO SUSTAIN ALL FACILITIES.
-

BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS LOSSES

- B.S. LOSSES FOR 1983-84 MAY APPROXIMATE £100M
 - TO REDUCE LOSSES B.S. MUST:
 - IMPROVE COMPETITIVENESS
 - DISPOSE OF SURPLUS ASSETS
 - CONCENTRATE ON MAINSTREAM ACTIVITIES
 - GOVERNMENT LOSS FUNDING MAKES UNLIKELY EEC APPROVAL OF ANY IMPROVED DIRECT PRICE SUPPORT
-

PAY

- FOR 1983-84 BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS CANNOT AGREE TO ANY GENERAL WAGE INCREASE
 - BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS HOPES TO NEGOTIATE QUICKLY A SELF-FINANCING PRODUCTIVITY PAYMENT SCHEME
-

B.S. MAINSTREAM ACTIVITIES

BS WILL CONCENTRATE ON MERCHANT SHIPBUILDING

BS WILL CONTINUE IN OFFSHORE SUBJECT TO COMMERCIAL LEVEL OF ORDERS AND PERFORMANCE

BS WILL DISPOSE OF SURPLUS ASSETS TO REDUCE COSTS AND REALISE CAPITAL

BS WILL REVIEW ALL NON MAINSTREAM ACTIVITIES AND WILL DISPOSE OF NON PROFITABLE PARTS

BS WILL ACT UPON ANY WARSHIPBUILDING DISPOSAL DECISIONS BY GOVERNMENT

BRITISH SHIPBUILDERS

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR SURVIVAL

PREAMBLE

At the present time, B.S. is facing a major workload crisis and to secure further work must achieve major reductions in the cost-price gap. The industry must obtain substantial improvements in productivity and unit costs to improve its competitive position and long term survival. To achieve this, B.S. is seeking a radical reappraisal of its operations and particularly:-

- (i) Design, planning, scheduling and production engineering, production methods, quality control and computer applications.
- (ii) Improved supervision, work organisation, flexibility, interchangeability and communications.

Much of this work will require the introduction of advanced manufacturing techniques and computer systems. To succeed, will require a fundamental change in the basic approach to our business and the active support, acceptance and co-operation of all employees is crucial.

It is mutually agreed therefore that this section provides the basis for subsidiary companies to jointly review their operations and to conclude local agreements which support this National framework:-

1. ADVANCED MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUES AND COMPUTER SYSTEMS

- 1.1. It is recognised that to improve performance and productivity, companies need a radical reappraisal of their existing operations. As part of this, both parties agree to the introduction of advanced manufacturing techniques and computer systems involving better and earlier planning and production engineering, scheduling and material control, improved work organisation and production methods.

It is agreed that these new techniques, equipment and systems will be introduced and will be used on an ongoing and continuous basis, and will involve:-

- (i) Communication and training programmes aimed at familiarising employees with these new techniques and providing the necessary skills.

- (ii) New methods of working, new systems both manual and computer for scheduling and monitoring the progress of work, for time charging and for cost control.
 - (iii) Redefined duties to operate these advanced techniques.
 - (iv) Use of control techniques (e.g. quality and accuracy control) including self certification.
- 1.2. Both parties agree to the following approach for both advanced manufacturing techniques and computer systems.
- 1.3 Consultation on all applications during which, discussions will take place on the following:-
- (i) The scope of application involving the type, location, and areas of work affected.
 - (ii) The timing of introduction including any trial periods.
 - (iii) Health and Safety aspects.
 - (iv) Training.
- 1.4. An introductory period of 12 months during which a full evaluation of the effects of the application can be carried out. To assist with the evaluation, companies can introduce techniques such as activity sampling, job analysis, systems charting and the like. Any disputes will be resolved using the National Procedure Agreement.

Note: The 12 month period will commence when the plant/equipment/process is available and operational.

- 1.5. Where applications in the form of new techniques or computer systems are introduced, then it is accepted that they will continue to be used or operated throughout any introductory period referred to in 1.4. above, even though the procedure agreement may be exhausted.
- 1.6. It is jointly agreed that benefits to employees resulting from the operation of new techniques/computer systems shall accrue through the operation of approved productivity bonus schemes. No payment other than through the operation of approved productivity bonus schemes shall be made to employees, other than where the evaluation referred to in 1.4. above has identified a significant change in individual skills and responsibility. In such a case, the individual employee will be re-graded using existing domestic wage and salary structures.
- 1.7. In the case of major capital expenditure full agreement will be required on all aspects of use and operation, including manning and employee provisions, prior to the Corporation approving the investment of its limited resources.

3. INTERCHANGEABILITY/FLEXIBILITY

The nature of work in the industry is such that it is essential for employees at all levels to work effectively, and to recognise that change will be a normal part of their working life. Therefore, all employees must be prepared to acquire new skills, and to remove customary practices where they are no longer appropriate.

To meet the demands of competition it is accepted that new working practices will be adopted which match those of our international competitors and enable companies to respond to changing work priorities, product and workload fluctuations. The key elements of these new practices which need to be implemented urgently and to the fullest effect are:-

INTERCHANGEABILITY

- 3.1. All levels of staff will be interchangeable as required according to their individual skills and experience.
- 3.2. Hourly paid employees will be interchangeable within their main group, providing they are capable of undertaking the work required, i.e. within steelworking, outfitting and ancillary groups.-

- 3.3. Skilled employees will also be required to be interchangeable across groups and trades, providing they are capable of undertaking the work required, and will also undertake ancillary work as appropriate.
- 3.4. Ancillary employees will also be required to undertake tasks within their ability, including work which skilled employees have in some cases traditionally retained, but which can be competently undertaken by other employees after retraining.
- 3.5. All employees will be fully mobile within their company and between areas and departments, including maintenance and production.

FLEXIBILITY

- 3.6. Skilled employees, in order to progress the completion of their own work will undertake their own servicing and particularly:-

- (i) Outfit trades will undertake servicing activities of drilling, tack stud and other non structural welding, hi-cycle grinding, slinging, good housekeeping and simple maintenance and similar activities;
- (ii) Steelworking trades to undertake servicing activities of caulking, burning, drilling, tack and other non structural welding, slinging, good housekeeping and simple maintenance and similar activities.
- (iii) Machine operators to operate, clean, remove finished parts and remove swarf etc.

- 3.7. As part of the above arrangements, it is agreed that in order that employees will use the full range of their skills and abilities to maximum advantage, companies will have the option of establishing area supervision and integrated groups of workers as required.

For Example

- (i) Area supervision with full acceptance by both staff and hourly paid.

- (ii) Multi-trade manning of workstations, with full flexibility/interchangeability to progress work and reduce waiting time within the group.
- (iii) Pipeworker squads including plumbers, copper-smiths and fitters, so that all pipework can be manufactured and installed by one pipeworking group.
- (iv) Ancillary worker groups.
- (v) Redleaders and painters to form joint painting squads.

3.8. It is stressed that the above provisions will be used against the basic belief that employees work best in their own skills, and therefore it is in the interest of the industry to use its employees on work which fully utilises their skills and experience.

NOTES:

- (i) Any detailed Agreement reached under the above paragraphs must take full account of any retraining which may be necessary; the individual competence of the employee(s) involved and all aspects of safe working practices and health protection.
- (ii) The terms and conditions of existing working practice agreements in companies shall be superseded by any arrangement concluded within the terms of this framework agreement.

4. MANPOWER RESOURCES

In order to reduce the cost-price gap and improve performance, it is recognised that a full reappraisal of any traditional manpower scales or ratios will be required. Both parties agree that:-

- 4.1. Management is responsible for establishing effective organisation structures together with a balanced work force and for determining manpower scales or ratios, on the basis of productive methods of operation and workload.
- 4.2. Management is responsible for determining the manning requirements for operating equipment, processes, and

other Production functions as well as plant and machinery, on the basis of the most productive methods of working, the competence of employees and all aspects of safety and health protection.

- 4.3. It is management's responsibility to balance manning with workload and to determine priority actions. In doing so, it is recognised that a range of measures will need to be employed, which will include the following:-

- (i) Temporary transfers to and from other B.S. subsidiaries.
- (ii) Recruitment, including the use of short term/fixed term contracts.
- (iii) Sub contracting, in respect of materials, work and special skills, both within and outside the Corporation.
- (iv) Overtime working.
- (v) Shift working, including where necessary, nightshift, double dayshift, linkshift and continuous manning.
- (vi) Lay off and short time working.

- 4.4. It is agreed that all the above measures will be used, but where separate national understandings exist or are agreed nationally on any single measure, then the terms of the national agreement will be overriding.

- 4.5. It is further agreed that consultation will be essential to the effective operation of all of the above measures, but recognising the critical nature of the need to maintain or recover the programme, it is agreed that local consultation will be completed and the measures implemented if necessary, within 5 working days from the commencement of joint discussions.

5. PRODUCTIVE USE OF THE WORKING DAY

- 5.1. Currently within the industry, a large proportion of the working day is lost through poor planning, scheduling, lack of materials, tools and equipment and by lost time associated with tea breaks, and starting and finishing practices.

It is recognised that it is management's responsibility to organise and control the measures by which productive working can be significantly improved, and the areas which will require urgent attention at local level include:-

- (i) Planning and scheduling arrangements.
- (ii) The availability of materials, tools, equipment and technical information.
- (iii) Shift arrangements and particularly periods of overlap.
- (iv) Management and supervisory involvement at workstations.
- (v) Timekeeping and absenteeism control at all levels.
- (vi) Controlled starting and stopping times.
- (vii) Phasing of tea and meal breaks at times to meet employee and production needs.

6. MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES

The most effective use of resources detailed in Phases 1-4 are re-affirmed except where amended or superseded by this document.

7. CONCLUSION

It is agreed that the above measures are essential for the survival of the industry. It is jointly accepted that it is critical for each company and each workplace to produce agreements based on this framework, related to their own particular needs. For such actions to work the commitment at all levels will be essential, and although the document stresses the managerial role, it is a core ingredient that the trade unions, their representatives and employees are fully involved. Survival will be a joint effort.

DIARY	REDUNDANCIES July/Aug/Sept '83	REDUNDANCY ANNOUNCEMENT Oct/Nov/Dec.	ADDITIONAL JOES AT RISK Jan/Feb/March '84	TOTAL
n & rsgill	752	-	-	752
's Dock	450	280	400	1130
erland	78	150	-	228
Hunter	263	-	-	263
	660	-	-	660
	34	-	-	34
nds	53	Last Del. Nov. - (405)	-	53
	36	Last Del. Dec. - (370)	-	36
son	29	-	-	29
Robb	322	Last Del. Oct. - (390)	-	322
L MERCHANT	2677	430	400	3507
r Hawthorn	46	-	Review after 3 months)	46
. Kincaid	110	50	)	160
ETS) Limited	19	-	)	19
erland Forge	110	-	)	110
send Slipway	0	82	)	82
L ENGINEERING	285	100	0	417
ell Laird	0	650	750	1400
t Lithgow	818	734	600	2152
L OFFSHORE	818	1384	1350	3552
UK) limited	69	68	362	499
lay Curle	98	56	-	154
ke Marine	0	-	150	150
ers S & E	0	-	150	150
L WARSHIP	167	124	662	953
FES) Limited	20	-	-	20
odynamics	0	28	-	28
L OTHERS	20	28	0	48
SECTORS	3967	2098*	2412	8477*

cludes jobs at risk indicated thus ().
cludes Shiprepair.

SUNDERLAND SHIPBUILDERS LIMITED

PRODUCTIVITY AGREEMENT 1984

A GUIDE TO THE PROPOSALS

1. The Reason for the Agreement is to help win back work that has been going to the more competitive European and Far Eastern Shipyards. For example, these yards are quoting 450,000 hours for a similar class ship to 865 ship, the Hupeh, compared to 825,000 hours which we took and which for us was a good improvement.

The Agreement is just part of what we are doing—but a very important part—to increase each person's contribution and to help keep down costs.

We also hope that the Agreement will give everyone a real opportunity to improve earnings through our bonus incentive scheme.

THE MAIN POINTS

2. **WORKING TOGETHER** means bringing together

people who between them have the skills to carry out and finish the job. That way there will be less wasted time, a better job and more job satisfaction.

The term in the Agreement for this is 'Composite Groups'. The groups will be responsible for unit or area completion, usually with one Supervisor, and the people in it will have the skills required. Each person will be expected to carry out whatever work is necessary to complete the job, including work that has been thought of as 'belonging' to only one group. Re-training will be organised and jobs on which Composite Groups will work have been identified.

The same idea is applied to staff such as technical, commercial and production staff working in teams together and sharing information and problem solving to produce a better result more quickly and with less misunderstanding.

Interchangeability and Trade Groups

Our Steelworkers have already shown what is possible with interchangeability; the Outfit Trades still have some training to be completed and Ancillaries are 100% interchangeable. The Agreement gives full interchangeability within each main trade group.

Sharing the available work helps to keep everyone

in Sunderland Shipbuilders Limited employed. When there is a shortage of work, what is available will be shared between trades and trade groups, after re-training. The Agreement gives complete interchangeability across trade groups during periods of shortages or surpluses of manpower.

Ancillary employees could help with parts of a job that do not need a skilled man's experience leaving skilled employees with more time for their trade skills. The Agreement means that Ancillaries will undertake some work where there is no definable skill content.

4. Introduction of New Techniques

Many of us recognise the need to update equipment (e.g. computers) and techniques but find problems in that this conflicts with our other interests such as Trade Unions, pay, demarcation.

We should try new techniques first and get them working while talks are going on about these other matters. That means no delay in using the techniques that have helped foreign shipbuilders grab a bigger share of our markets.

5. Local Review of Manning Levels

No one likes to think his job is over-manned; but probably everyone will agree that all long

established practices need review occasionally. This review will be carried out using proper methods. If there is no agreement then the Procedure for the Avoidance of Disputes can be used but the changes can take place for a three month trial period while we talk the matter through.

Voluntary Two-Shift Working

In just some areas, two-shift working can be useful, e.g. preparation, painting, berth erection. It can help to avoid bottlenecks which hold up other people. It is worth on average £20.00 per week (for a Tradesman) and in addition full consideration will be given to overtime opportunity.

It will be worked on a voluntary basis only so if a shiftworker's circumstances change and shifts do not suit him, then he can go back to daywork.

Change the Coffee Break

Taking a break to have a hot drink during a work period is quite a boost especially on a winter's day if you have been working in the open air. The problem is that it knocks a hole in the morning's work—jobs stop, paint sets, everyone moves around on and off ships—and we reckon it costs about half an hour on average per person over and above the actual break time.

We want to move the break to 7.30 a.m. – 7.50 a.m. so that people can have a hot drink, etc., between arriving at work and starting work. This would give four hours before the next break and if this seems a long time to some, then take a snack or hot drink onto your job and have it there. We will not object providing everyone is sensible about it.

8. Half-Hour Dinner Break

An hour's dinner break can seem a long time and compared to half an hour's break it is also extra time to heat and light the Yards. So there is a double bonus—there is an energy saving and you can get home half an hour earlier instead of sitting in the amenity waiting for the buzzer.

9. The Local Productivity Agreement 1984

This booklet is a guide only and full details are available from Personnel Officers or members of Management. The guide does cover the main points—nothing has been deliberately left out and the wording has been kept simple avoiding the legal type jargon in which Agreements tend to be written.

10. Reaching Agreement by 10th February, 1984

Providing we can reach agreement by 10th February, 1984, then a payment of £7.00 per

normal week will be added to earnings **AND** backdated to 1st November, 1983. On 10th February that will be worth more than £100 back pay (for full attendance).

If we do not reach agreement by 10th February, then the back pay is lost for good.

We will be meeting representatives throughout and **your** views are vital. **GET THE FACTS.** Think of our future, then decide.

APPENDIX 4

NORTH SANDS - COMMENTS FROM "FREE ANSWERS"

NORTH SANDS DISLIKES

Everything	4
<u>Management</u>	
Do not like management	7
Bad management	6
Bad organisation	1
No planning	3
Attention of management to workforce (ignorant and flippant, high handed, dogmatic, bullying, arrogant, petty, persecuting)	67
Treated like children, dirt, serfs, slaves, animals	8
Too much hassle/harassment, facist dictatorship	3
Too many threats, bookings	2
More inteterested in times than getting jobs done	4
No respect from management	2
No trust from management	1
Poor workforce management relations,	8
No trust, no discussion	1

Work

Lack of job security	6
No team work	1
14 day working clause	1
Working practices do not seem to be working	2
Too many contractors do not like using stud gun	
Bad inter-department communications	
No training to allow movement to other departments	
Do not like working in both	2

NORTHSANDS LIKES

Nothing	60
It is a job / better than dole	46
Friendship of workforce	9
Steady job	2
Proximity to home	13
Interesting and valid work	8
Educational policies	1
Satisfaction of job completion	2
Working outside	2
Pay day	6
Holidays	2
Nightshift	1
Overtime	1

Ship building has been my life for 29 years. I like the place.

Life long association.

It was better 30 years ago.

Challenge of overcoming adversity.

Air of gloom and despondency hangs over yard
Company from top to bottom has no wish to foster a team spirit

Management back-stabbing

Total disenchantment of workforce with company
confrontational attitude constantly adopted by management

I was proud to work for S.S.B. years ago but not now
Company has introduced Japanese practices but not for themselves - still have free meals etc.

1 director said 'get this rabble home' meaning workers who had just got back from shiptrials at sea

This is the worst job I've had in 45 years in shipbuilding
Disciplinary rules misconstrued and abused by management
Are management prepared to give up perks to preserve future of company as men have had to do, by giving up canteen facilities

How can management take man out of yard with shipyard property to his home to do work in company hours
Workforce have some excellent ideas on improving company performance but most are frustrated by management, supervisors not committed or don't care

PAY

Poor	212
A & P comparison	77
No bonus or incentive	52
Bonus promised and not paid	11
Where is our £500	5
Contractors	43
Little job security	34
Poor overtime rates	2
Overtime too long on 1 shifts	
That I am only temporary	
Poor redundancy pay	
No one understands bonus system	
Inequality between staff and workforce especially re sick pay	
Personal rewards not adequate for expected contribution	
Wages lower than other yards but we have more training and interchangeability	
Why do contractors get more for same work	
Why after all cutbacks are we still worst paid yard	



PALLION - COMMENTS FROM "FREE ANSWERS"

DISLIKES

Everything

28

Management

Bad Management	64
Bad attitude of managers and supervisors	254
Treated like children	35
treated like an animal	1
treated like slaves	2
treated like machines	1
treated like a number	5
Management by victimisation and threats	10
Management by fear	2
Too much harrassment	19
Too much booking and namsteking	52
Management too concerned with petty things	4
Bad atmosphere	7
dictatorial attitude	4
Management have no respect for workforce	20
Workforce dont trust management	16
Workforce have no confidence in management	6
'us and them' attitude of management	7
dogmatic attitude of management	3
victorian attitude of management	3
narrowminded attitude of management	1
no co-operation between management and workforce	11
no negotiation/consultation of workforce	4
no communication between management and workforce	20
poor management/workforce relations	73
management don't listen	5
too many managers and supervisors	27
supervisors no training in craft they are supervising	4
Management don't know what they are doing	5
Management should adopt more honest approach	3
Workforce oversupervised	
lack of leadership	
lack of organisation	10
No or bad planning	8
Low morale of workforce	9
Broken promises from management	3
Management attitude of 'jobs for the boys'	
Too many management posts	5
disregard shown to unions	6
Certain Managers always upsetting workforce	
Management "blackmailer"	
"bully boy tactics of Management"	
"obey Managers or else"	

Regimented at ^{the} ~~the~~ of management

Junior supervisors and management seem incompetent in liaisons with workforce - see things only their way

Management unable to get good working relationship

There is feeling of mutual contempt between management and shopfloor

Being treated unfairly (you've got to work here to understand that)

Being told we're alone but we're getting less money and poorer working conditions

Class distinction - i.e. directors calling workforce 'rabble'

Treated like idiots, led by idiots, paid like idiots

Petty management

Management stinks, are corrupt

Management are concerned with time wasted and petty things rather than time wasted waiting for materials which could have been bought locally

Management upstarts in wrong job

Poor feedbacks and misleading information from management

Total lack of meaningful discussion between management and men

Men - totally demoralised - need to be encouraged and

nurtured - sick of being stamped into ground

Management more concerned with policing methods instead of encouraging me to turn out a good job

Management lack of concern about individual

Being social outcast and always being depressed

Attitude of management to workforce is one of hatred and hysterics

Jobs for the boys

Management don't know how to talk to workforce

Management don't go about getting people to work together in the right way

Passing the blame to workforce, 'buck stops here'

Management don't listen and have killed off any job satisfaction and enjoyment I once had

After 21 years working here not a lot to like now with this management

Perks for management i.e. free work done on property, done during working hours

Management hellbent on upsetting workforce - no harmony at all

Too much private work done for management

Relations and members of certain bodies get promotion

When will we be able to enjoy coming to work?

Management won't listen to sound judgement of workers with vast amounts of experience

Too much politics not enough negotiation

Total commitment of management to make everyone's life total misery

No sense of get up and go

Strategy seems more important than trust

Failure to understand that underlings can contribute without threats

Failure of senior management to recognise that individuals matter

PALLION LIKES

Nothing	209
its a job, better than dole	175
payday	55
interesting work	37
proximity to home	27
working undercover	14
job security	4
good working conditions	5
friendly atmosphere amongst workforce	32
training and education	5
job satisfaction	5
selection: 'end of day buzzer'	
'Friday 4.20', 'the road out', 'Saturday'	30

DEPTFORD - COMMENTS FROM "FREE ANSWERS"

DEPTFORD LIKES

Nothing		66
It is a job	46	57
Better than dole	11	
Local		3
Freindly atmosphere (on shopfloor)		10
Good attitude of management and workforce		1
Good working conditions		1
Job security		6
Overtime		1
Flexibility of holidays		1
Helpful supervisors		1
Management of further education		1
Certain amount of decision making allowed		1

Only time I like working here is when there are signs of spirit and atmosphere of yard as it was 4 or 5 years ago.



DEPTFORD DISLIKES

Nothing written down	8
Nothing disliked	10
Everything	10

Management

Bad management	13
Attention of management and supervisors	41
Bad industrial relations	9
Too many managers and supervisors	3
Treated like school children	3
Warnings and threats given too much	4
'All take no give'	2
No communication between management and workforce	4
Manager cheated employees out of £500	10
Low morale	2
Promotion by 'who not what' you know	4
Blame for problems passed down to workforce	1
Management perks (especially free hot meals)	8
Lack of or bad organisation	2

Only time we work well together is when there is a rush eg. for launch and trials when management ignore everything

Pay

Low pay	53
No bonus incentive	12
Compensation with A and P	5
Not paid £500 by management as promised	5
Having to work overtime	1
Poor redundancy pay	2
Working in a short contract	1

Conditions

Poor	25
Poor first aid facilities	1
Low safety standards	1
Working with insulation welding	1
Poor amenities	9
Specifically: lack of canteen facilities	10
toilets in poor condition	3
less overalls than before	3
cold conditions	4



DEPTFORD - COMMENTS FROM OPEN QUESTION

Bad management	13
Bad attitude of management and supervisors	26
Too many threats and warnings	4
"All take and no give"	2
Too many supervisors and managers	9
Management do not like suggestions	2
Bad/poor organisation	2
Bad industrial relations	5
Management perks (especially canteen)	4
Low morale	2
Shifting of blame down to workforce	3
"have no faith in company"	
"attitude of men is one of despair"	
No communication	3

Pay

Too low	29
Should compare with A and P	12
No bonus or incentive	15
Where is our £500	12

Conditions poor	8
Amenities	2
Specifically - No canteen	6
Disgusting state of showers and toilets	4
Lack of overalls	2
Poor safety	6
Cold	2
Staff get better sick conditions than workforce	2
Not enough leave when close relative dies	2
Should be longer paternity leave	1

Job

No job satisfaction	2
Little or no security	5
Equipment unsuitable or inadequate	6
Not enough training	2
Contractors	2
Prep and fab poor	1
Dislike temporary employment	1
Feel there is no future for me as ancillary worker	1
Not enough information	2

WORK

Would like more information on company, its
future and any new orders 53

Poor quality and lack of availability
of tools and machines 11

Boring repetitive work

Not being able to develop new skills

Poor prospects lead to apathy

Q.C. system not working

Seeming lack of standards in inspections,
which causes lack of confidence when working
with owners reps and having to reply
'I don't know' to 90% of any questions
relating to specific standards on tolerance

Misuse of skills

Lack of training

Responsibility of job taken away from tradesman.
taken away job satisfaction

Employees should be given more trust to work
on their own

Disagree with interchangeability

Constantly having to move equipment - general
outlining of jobs poor

Inability of company to use employees skills
and abilities to greater extent

No faith in new workpacks

Too much re-work

Departments working against each other 3

Everyone too concerned with production, and
ignoring training which is future of
shipbuilding

Run down of craft trades

Material shortage prevents job progression

Not enough help for apprentices

Too many supervisors know nothing of the
particular trade they're responsible for

Material allocation should be sorted out

Would like to see Artemis system looked
into

Plant department undermanned. Planners should
be trained in use of CAD/CAM

Commissioning departments should be given
technical status

Working here was a pleasure - now a drag

No job satisfaction 2

CONDITIONS

Poor working conditions	55
Poor health and safety	13
Fumes	14
Poor amenities	17
Poor ventilation	2
Pollution in atmosphere	9
Red leading	
Poor toilet facilities	10
Poor canteen facilities	3
Too cold	13
Noise	2
No facilities for drying overalls	2
working inside	
safety greatly ignored	
ventilation not up to standard	
e.g. houses accommodation all completed	
before windows put in	
dislike going home scruffy - can't get	
muck from hands and nails	
bring back coffee machines	

Any information about company you would like to receive

Information on future job prospects
and orders

Generally more information about firm

11.

4

COMMENTS

Why does management tell lies? Less lies
Why can't Mr Welch explain points to unions and men without coming with
the 'take it or leave it' attitude
Why does it take three weeks to see personnel
Why does management persecute sick and disabled
Where's our £500 pound 'thieves'
Bombastic attitude of company
What do I have to do to get management to realise I am a human being,
not mindless unfeeling robot! HELP!
More manpower needed to compete with other yards in completing delivery
dates
What are management and staff ratios compared to shop floor work force
Forced old jobs and procedures by Big Brother
Company promised through Mr Welch that we would be envy of shipbuilding
industry (i.e. more wages and bonuses). We are now bottom of all
shipyards in wage league and still waiting for bonus
Thank Mr Welsh for his effort on our behalf
Lies told by management re wages and bonus which we never get
Slave labour
Management don't give a damn about workforce
Management - dictators
No faith in company
X Mr Welch would have done well in SS
More protective equipment
Contractors costing more than when workforce did jobs and then it was
much safer
Want to be treated like human being not number
Who is getting back handers for allowing contractors in
Improved talks between management and men
More trusting relationship must exist between both sides

Ex. Welch - rose from shop floor to person M.D. was "send-out"
- 1986 - now running an outfit in Texas.



Sunderland Shipbuilders - by location

QUESTION 3

"Sunderland Shipbuilders is recognised as a leader in its field."
(circle the number which corresponds most closely to your view)

	Agree		Disagree
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	46	19	32
Deptford	37	19	40
N Sands	41	27	29
Main office	72	15	12
Aggregate	46	19	30

The above indicate a relative split in opinion on this question, with a majority of three to two amongst those holding any opinion that Sunderland Shipbuilders is indeed a recognised leader in its field. Whilst this is not a particularly high figure, it does approach half of the working population, and given the low morale indicated elsewhere it does seem to indicate that there is still a strong reservoir of pride.

There are interesting differences between the various geographical sites on this question. Pallion Yard and North Sands express similar views on this matter, whereas Deptford Yard has a slight majority in favour of this who feel that Sunderland Shipbuilders is not a recognised leader in its field. Some 8% more than Pallion and 11% more than North Sands feel that it is not a recognised leader. The most interesting difference is that expressed by those in the main offices. It can be seen from these statistics that 72% of those questioned in the main offices felt that Sunderland Shipbuilders is a recognised leader in its field, whereas only 12% felt that this was not the case.

QUESTION 4

"Sunderland Shipbuilders does not have a good image on Wearside."

	Agree		Disagree
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	50	13	35
Deptford	53	14	29
N Sands	55	16	26
Main office	39	15	46
Aggregate	49	14	34

Approximately half of the population agree that Sunderland Shipbuilders does not have a good image on Wearside, and approximately one-third disagree. Compared to the answers to Question 3, this would indicate that whilst a proportion of the workforce feel that the company is a recognised leader in the industry, that its image locally is not good.

It appears that the Shipbuilders are not as well known as they should be.



Again there is a difference of opinion between the localities. The overall figure of 49% agreeing that Sunderland Shipbuilders does not have a good image on Wearside masks the slightly higher percentage of people within each yard who feel that that is the case and the low percentage of 39% within the main offices who feel that the company has a poor image locally. Indeed, within the main offices a majority of 46% indicate that they feel the company has a good image locally.

It is interesting to note that although on other questions the main offices have given more positive answers than have those employees in the yards, on this question there is a stronger feeling that Sunderland Shipbuilders is not a good place to work; 44% as against 36%.

QUESTION 5

"Sunderland Shipbuilders is a pretty good place to work - I would recommend a friend or member of my family to work here."

	Agree		Disagree
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	16	9	74
Deptford	17	11	71
N Sands	11	7	81
Main office	36	20	44
Aggregate	18	10	70

Clear indication that the considerable majority of employees feel that this is not a good place to work. In other questionnaires we have carried out, it is possible to observe that whilst there are many complaints and grumbles about one's workplace it is still possible to feel that overall it is a fairly good place to work, and consequently that one would recommend it to family and friends. It is in answer to this question that we see that the concerns that the workforce have go particularly deep.

QUESTION 6

How successful do you think we are in this company?

	Very successful		Not successful at all
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	25	30	44
Deptford	23	24	49
N Sands	24	28	47
Main office	51	20	27
Aggregate	27	27	43



Just over a quarter of the population thinking that the company is successful, a similar proportion unsure about the situation, and something under a half feeling that it is not successful. One way of judging these responses is for management to determine how it thinks the workforce ought to have answered here. For example if management think the workforce should be aware that the company is not successful at the moment, then it would be of concern that 27% still feel it is. However if management feel the company is being successful at the moment, there would be even more concern that 43% do not seem to share that view. Whichever of these is the most realistic appraisal, the spread of opinion itself is of some concern in that there is no clear picture of the current performance of the organisation. Given that this is the case, any initiative or plan taken by management is bound to receive a mixed response from these differing opinion bases. This mixed response is likely to militate against the success of any initiative. It is important then to establish as far as possible a common view of the current position.

As with other questions, the aggregate answer accords fairly well with the individual scores of the yards. The position in the main offices is almost the reverse in that half feel that the company is successful and 27% feel that it is not successful. We are clearly beginning to build up considerable differences of opinion between those employed in the offices and those employed in the yards. Of those expressing an opinion there is a majority of 3 to 1 for the view that the company does not have a good record in improving productivity. On this question the majority of those expressing an opinion in the main offices agree with the majority of their colleagues in the yards. However, the feeling is less strong; 44% to 35%.

QUESTION 7

How good do you think the Company's record is in improving productivity?

	Very good		Not good at all
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	18	16	65
Deptford	19	16	62
N Sands	18	15	66
Main office	35	21	44
Aggregate	20	16	61

General agreement within the yards that the company's record is not good, the view less widely held in the main offices.



QUESTION 8

How do you rate Sunderland Shipbuilders' business prospects over the next year compared with last year?

	Much better		Much worse
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	20	21	58
Deptford	16	13	68
N Sands	12	19	65
Main office	30	20	50
Aggregate	20	19	59

Overall a 3 to 1 majority of those expressing an opinion feeling that business prospects will become worse over the next year. All locations agree with this. The view being held slightly less strongly in the main offices, with 30% of the main office staff feeling that the situation will be better in the next year.

QUESTION 9

"Senior management can be trusted to make sensible decisions for the Company's future."

	Agree		Disagree
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	10	9	80
Deptford	12	6	79
N Sands	9	7	81
Main office	30	15	51
Aggregate	13	8	75

Once again, the overall figures of 75% who feel that management cannot be trusted to make sensible decisions for the company's future and 13% feel that they can, hides differing emphasis between the yards who agree with other almost totally in that within the yards the figure is approximately 80% feeling that management cannot be trusted to make sensible decisions and roughly 10% feeling that they can, whereas in the main offices 51% feel that management cannot be trusted to make sensible decisions and 30% feel that they can.



What do you think accounts for hold-ups in the work flow?

	A major cause			Not a cause	
	1	2	3	4	5
Equipment breakdowns/faults					
Pallion	39		16		32
Deptford	45		15		28
N Sands	51		17		24
Main office	17		17		53
Aggregate	38		16		32
(Quite high voids between 7.5 and 15%)					
Special work/rework					
Pallion	58		14		15
Deptford	46		14		24
N Sands	59		19		11
Main office	57		14		18
Aggregate	55		14		17
Materials supply problems					
Pallion	57		10		23
Deptford	50		13		22
N Sands	62		12		18
Main office	34		15		38
Aggregates	53		12		24
Bottlenecks					
Pallion	48		18		22
Deptford	43		20		21
N Sands	50		17		20
Main office	34		20		31
Aggregate	45		18		22
Low employee performance					
Pallion	16		14		56
Deptford	20		8		54
N Sands	15		14		61
Main office	32		16		40
Aggregate	19		13		54



Poor time keeping

Pallion	11	13	64
Deptford	11	12	60
N Sands	10	14	67
Main office	9	20	58

Aggregate	10	13	62

Not enough people

Pallion	37	13	40
Deptford	45	9	32
N Sands	44	13	33
Main office	49	11	30

Aggregate	40	12	35

Inadequacies of supervision

Pallion	56	10	26
Deptford	42	11	34
North Sands	54	11	26
Main office	45	15	30

Aggregate	50	11	27

Inability to adapt to market
demand/changes quickly

Pallion	26	16	45
Deptford	27	16	40
N Sands	26	19	46
Main office	18	12	57

Aggregate	24	16	45

Poor training

Pallion	32	11	44
Deptford	37	11	38
N Sands	38	11	42
Main office	39	13	37

Aggregate	35	11	41

Poor production planning

Pallion	72	10	13
Deptford	68	10	16
N Sands	74	7	12
Main office	54	17	16

Aggregate	68	10	13



Lack of information

Pallion	77	7	10
Deptford	74	7	12
N Sands	76	7	10
Main office	70	11	11
Aggregate	75	7	10

If we highlight those areas where the majority have expressed a clear opinion we can see that those factors felt to be a major cause for hold-ups in the flow of work are in order of importance:

Lack of information
Special work or re-work
Material supply problems; and
Inadequacies of supervision.

And those areas where a majority expressed the view that it was not a cause are:

Poor time-keeping; and
Low employee performance.

QUESTION 11

Which of the following actions, if taken by the Company, do you think would help to make more money?

	Helpful		Not helpful	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Cutting out waste and unnecessary expenditure				
Pallion	81	5	8	
Deptford	79	6	7	
N Sands	74	10	9	
Main office	90	5	3	
Aggregate	80	6	7	

Getting everyone (including yourself) to work harder

Pallion	39	17	33
Deptford	39	17	33
N Sands	30	20	41
Main office	61	15	19
Aggregate	40	17	32



Increasing amount of work
which is sub-contracted

Pallion	7	5	80
Deptford	10	3	78
N Sands	4	2	85
Main office	7	15	73
Aggregate	7	5	78

Improving the quality of
our work

Pallion	53	13	24
Deptford	53	9	26
N Sands	48	19	31
Main office	76	10	8
Aggregate	53	13	23

Getting work done on time

Pallion	78	5	9
Deptford	73	7	11
N Sands	72	9	12
Main office	93	2	1
Aggregate	76	6	8

Giving people more skills and
training

Pallion	60	10	21
Deptford	60	11	19
N Sands	56	12	24
Main office	78	10	9
Aggregate	61	10	19

Getting people to work better
together

Pallion	73	8	11
Deptford	71	9	13
N Sands	66	9	19
Main office	90	6	1
Aggregate	73	8	11



Increasing flexibility of the workforce

Pallion	42	13	37
Deptford	41	9	40
N Sands	32	14	45
Main office	56	17	21
Aggregate	42	12	36

In order of importance those areas of action that people support in the majority are:

- Cutting out waste and unnecessary expenditure
- Getting work done on time
- Getting people to work better together
- Giving people more skills and training; and
- Improving the quality of our work.

QUESTION 12

How would you describe relations generally between management and trade unions at Sunderland Shipbuilders at present?

	Excellent	Poor	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	1	3	95
Deptford	3	5	89
N Sands	2	3	89
Main office	9	10	82
Aggregate	2.5	4	90

A really massive expression of opinion that relations between management and unions are very poor at the moment. Some 90% of the population taking that view and even though it is slightly less strongly held in the offices, still even there 82% share that opinion. The view is most strongly held in Pallion where 95% of those asked expressed the view that relations were very poor.

QUESTION 13

Senior management are committed to improving industrial relations in the future

	Agree	Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	28	6	63
Deptford	28	8	62
N Sands	23	3	72
Main office	38	11	50
Aggregate	28	7	60



Despite the pessimistic view of current relations something approaching 30% of those asked (and 38% of those in the offices) expressed the view that management is committed to improving industrial relations. However, this leaves an overall 60% of employees feeling that management is not so committed. Indeed 72% of those in North Sands feel this is the case. From this position, of course, it is possible to detect the level of suspicion and cynicism that there will be in response to any management initiative.

QUESTION 14

Generally I feel that my immediate boss is doing a good job in:

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Setting work objectives clearly				
Pallion	38	13	45	
Deptford	41	14	37	
N Sands	29	18	46	
Main office	60	12	24	
Aggregate	40	14	40	
Helping me to achieve my work objectives				
Pallion	30	15	48	
Deptford	37	15	39	
N Sands	28	17	46	
Main office	52	14	28	
Aggregate	33	15	43	
Delegating appropriately				
Pallion	30	16	43	
Deptford	36	17	36	
N Sands	25	19	43	
Main office	50	17	26	
Aggregate	33	17	39	
Communicating				
Pallion	30	11	52	
Deptford	35	14	40	
N Sands	30	14	46	
Main office	47	15	33	
Aggregate	33	12	45	

Dealing with poor standards
of work

Pallion	32	17	42
Deptford	34	15	40
N Sands	30	17	43
Main office	45	24	34
Aggregate	32	17	39

Using and developing my
full abilities

Pallion	33	9	49
Deptford	33	16	42
N Sands	28	15	45
Main office	47	14	32
Aggregate	34	12	44

Furthering my career

Pallion	14	10	68
Deptford	16	10	64
N Sands	14	8	67
Main office	32	17	43
Aggregate	16	10	63

Motivating me

Pallion	22	10	60
Deptford	26	10	52
N Sands	20	10	61
Main office	42	17	35
Aggregate	24	11	55

Building teamwork

Pallion	22	14	56
Deptford	26	16	47
N Sands	19	14	58
Main office	36	15	41
Aggregate	23	14	52

Controlling quality

Pallion	26	17	46
Deptford	32	14	43
N Sands	24	19	47
Main office	42	19	31
Aggregate	28	17	43

Getting the work done on time

Pallion	40	13	40
Deptford	46	13	33
N Sands	32	17	42
Main office	65	13	17
Aggregate	42	13	45

Letting me know how I am doing

Pallion	24	7	63
Deptford	27	10	56
N Sands	21	12	59
Main office	38	14	40
Aggregate	25	9	57

Looking at the aggregate data for the total population, there is no item in which the majority of employees felt that their immediate boss is doing a good job. The nearest item that achieves this is 'setting work objectives clearly', where 40% of the population feel that that is the case and 40% disagree, and secondly 'getting work done on time' where 42% of the total population feel that bosses are doing a good job here. On the other hand 45% of the total population disagree with that. But these two items were the only areas in which the views expressed in terms of bosses' performance approached the positive. The following were mentioned by the majority, and in rank order they are:

that immediate bosses are not doing a good job in furthering careers
not letting people know how they are doing
not motivating; and
not building teamwork.

In line with the continuing pattern, opinions expressed in the offices are somewhat different and here the balance of opinion would seem to indicate that people feel that there are areas in which bosses are doing a good job, and they are, in rank order:

getting work done on time
setting clear objectives
helping people to achieve objectives and delegating appropriately.

On all other items, except 3, the majority of those expressing opinions felt that their bosses were doing a good job, although the size of that majority was not great, about 10%. The three items where there was agreement within the offices that bosses were not doing a good job were, in rank order:

furthering careers
building teamwork; and
letting people know how they are doing.



It is interesting to note that, although there are different opinions expressed in the offices, the areas of agreement with the rest of the colleagues in other yards focus on the man-management aspects of superiors' performance being unsatisfactory.

QUESTION 15

"We are kept in the dark about things we ought to know."

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	84	3	12	
Deptford	81	4	14	
N Sands	84	4	9	
Main office	63	9	17	
Aggregate	82	4	12	

A clear majority, 82% overall, expressing the view that people are kept in the dark about information. Again, this is held less strongly in the main offices but still a considerable majority, 63% to 17%, agreeing that people are ill-informed.

QUESTION 16

How interested are you in receiving information about Sunderland Shipbuilders' financial position?

	Very interested		Not interested	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	76	9	16	
Deptford	73	9	16	
N Sands	76	7	14	
Main office	83	5	12	
Aggregate	74	8	15	

Overall, 3/4 of the population are interested in receiving financial information. This view is general across the yards, but is more strongly held in the main offices, where 83% are interested in receiving financial information.

QUESTION 17

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements relating to information on the Company's performance given to employees?

	Agree		Disagree
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Sunderland Shipbuilders -			
Is not sufficiently honest and open in the information given			
Pallion	79	5	14
Deptford	77	6	12
N Sands	79	4	12
Main office	74	11	15
Aggregate	77	5	13
Fails to put across information in a way which is meaningful			
Pallion	75	7	13
Deptford	76	5	12
N Sands	75	7	11
Main office	74	9	15
Aggregate	74	7	13
Tries hard but is not successful in getting the information across			
Pallion	41	11	42
Deptford	39	13	40
N Sands	36	11	45
Main office	50	18	29
Aggregate	41	12	40
Only looks at issues from the point of view of management			
Pallion	80	3	13
Deptford	75	6	14
N Sands	78	5	12
Main office	66	15	17
Aggregate	76	6	14
Tries to mislead employees			
Pallion	72	7	19
Deptford	68	8	18
N Sands	76	7	10
Main office	44	16	39
Aggregate	66	9	20



A considerable majority overall agreeing that management is not sufficiently honest and open, fails to put information across, only looks at the management's point of view, and two-thirds of people feeling that the company tries to mislead its employees. The only area of questioning which the employees disagree with the assertion made, is the one that management tries hard but is not successful in getting information across. Clearly 40% of the population feels that it doesn't try hard at all.

In the main offices the broad spread of opinion is similar, the only significant difference being that 39% of employees in the main offices do not believe that management are trying to mislead the employees, whereas 44% do. Whilst this is still a majority of those expressing an opinion, the view is held less strongly here than in the other yards.

QUESTION 18

Listed below are some common problems with company information. How true do you think each is in your Company?

	Very true		Never true
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Too little information is circulated			
Pallion	79	8	9
Deptford	79	8	8
N Sands	80	7	11
Main office	69	14	16
Aggregate	76	8	10

Managers and supervisors do not pass information on

Pallion	73	11	12
Deptford	69	11	12
N Sands	69	10	15
Main office	57	19	23
Aggregate	68	12	14

Information is not exchanged between sites/departments

Pallion	76	10	10
Deptford	68	13	11
N Sands	69	13	11
Main office	66	13	16
Aggregate	71	11	11



Information is too complicated
to understand

Pallion	36	21	36
Deptford	35	21	35
N Sands	34	24	35
Main office	23	20	53
Aggregate	34	21	37

Information is too general
and lacks detail

Pallion	66	10	17
Deptford	59	15	17
N Sands	70	13	12
Main office	52	17	28
Aggregate	62	12	17

Information is out of date
when I receive it

Pallion	63	15	17
Deptford	61	17	14
N Sands	60	16	18
Main office	48	21	29
Aggregate	59	16	18

The trade union passes informa-
tion on better than management

Pallion	60	16	20
Deptford	51	13	25
N Sands	67	12	17
Main office	39	28	31
Aggregate	57	16	21

Overall, there is clear support for almost all the assertions made except that information is too complicated to understand. Whilst a third of the population do feel this is the case, the majority of those expressing a view do not feel that information is too complicated.

When we look at the location responses on this question of complication, we see that there is an even split of opinion in Pallion and Deptford and in the offices 53% feel that it is not true that information is too complicated. Another interesting point is that the majority in all areas feel that trade unions are better at passing on information than management. Having said that, there are differences between the locations in response to this; in terms of rank order, North Sands shows 67%, Pallion 60%, Deptford 51% and Main Office 39%.

This is clearly a period of high anxiety within the industry as a whole and also within Sunderland Shipbuilders. At times of anxiety people do want to know what is happening to them. They seek information with will make them feel better or at least give them some picture of how they can get out of their present troubles. However, for this inform-



ation to be accepted, it is necessary for there to be an atmosphere of some trust between those receiving the information and those giving it. One problem with the present situation in Sunderland Shipbuilders is that relationship does not appear to exist.

QUESTION 19

How important are each of the following sources of information to you?

	Important		Unimportant
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Noticeboard			
Pallion	71	8	16
Deptford	63	13	20
N Sands	69	9	17
Main office	61	10	27
Aggregate	67	9	17
Your boss			
Pallion	48	12	33
Deptford	48	12	31
N Sands	43	13	37
Main office	78	7	15
Aggregate	50	11	30
The grapevine			
Pallion	43	15	35
Deptford	48	9	32
N Sands	42	16	34
Main office	45	18	34
Aggregate	43	13	34
Your trade union			
Pallion	69	11	15
Deptford	58	10	19
N Sands	78	7	11
Main office	45	18	34
Aggregate	65	11	17
Briefing groups			
Pallion	40	12	42
Deptford	40	12	39
N Sands	36	15	42
Main office	51	14	32
Aggregate	40	12	39

"Shipbuilding News"

Pallion	29	15	49
Deptford	28	12	50
N Sands.	32	12	52
Main office	27	14	59
Aggregate	28	14	50

Overall, the rank order for sources of information are:

1. Noticeboard
2. Trade union
3. Your boss
4. The grapevine
5. Briefing groups
6. Shipbuilding News.

Indeed, whereas for the first five items the majority feel they are an important source of information, for Shipbuilding News the majority of 50% as against 25% feel that this is not an important source of information. This view is held across all locations, but is held more strongly in the main offices (i.e. in the main offices there is even less support for Shipbuilding News than in the yards themselves).

Looking at some of the differing answers within the locations, we can see that, for example in North Sands, 78% feel that their Union was the most important source of information, followed by the notice board at 69%, whereas the majority on this site felt that Shipbuilding News and the briefing groups were not an important source of information. In Pallion yard 71% felt that the notice board was the most important source of information, following by 69% expressing the view that the trade union was important. There is a fairly even split of opinion on the usefulness of briefing groups and again a majority questioning the usefulness of Shipbuilding News. In Deptford Yard, 63% feel that the notice boards are an important source, and 58% the trade unions. There is an even split of view on the usefulness of briefing groups and again a majority questioning the importance of Shipbuilding News. Once again in the main offices, the pattern is somewhat different. Here the rank order is as follows:

- 78% expressing the view that their boss was an important source of information
- 61% for the noticeboard
- 51% for briefing groups; and
- 45% for the trade union and grapevine as a source of information.

A majority here expressing support for briefing groups, but again an even stronger view that Shipbuilding News is not an important source of information.

QUESTION 20

"Briefing groups are a good way of getting my questions about Sunderland Shipbuilders answered."

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	29	8	59	
Deptford	32	13	52	
N Sands	30	8	57	
Main office	48	12	33	
Aggregate	32	9	52	

Overall about one-third of the population feel that briefing groups are a good source of getting questions answered, whereas over a half disagree with that view. Within the locations, the position is much the same in all three yards; less than one-third feel that questions are answered through the briefing group system, and some between 52% and 59% feeling that it is not a useful route for getting questions answered. In the main offices approximately a half of the population feel that it is a useful way and a third disagree.

QUESTION 21

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Do you read "Shipbuilding News"?			
Pallion	28	59	11
Deptford	19	60	19
N Sands	26	65	7
Main office	38	55	5
Aggregate	26	59	11

Is it relevant/interesting?

Pallion	16	62	17
Deptford	15	55	24
N Sands	13	64	18
Main office	10	80	8
Aggregate	14	62	17

Do you believe what is in "Shipbuilding News"?

Pallion	16	67	14
Deptford	10	63	22
N Sands	13	71	11
Main office	17	74	5
Aggregate	14	66	13

QUESTION 22

"In practice, employees are kept well informed by management about the current situation as it affects their particular site/department/yard."

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	11	8	80	
Deptford	7	9	82	
N Sands	8	8	80	
Main office	22	13	65	
Aggregate	11	8	77	

With three-quarters of the population feeling that employees are not kept well-informed about the current situation; while this is felt less strongly in the main offices there is still a majority of 65% as against 22% expressing the view that this is the case.

QUESTION 23

"Management is aware of things that worry people at my level."

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	15	5	79	
Deptford	19	6	72	
N Sands	16	7	74	
Main office	27	8	64	
Aggregate	18	5	74	

Three-quarters of the population feel that management is not aware. Whilst this view is held less strongly in the office, it is still a view expressed by two-thirds of the population there.

QUESTION 24

"My boss is receptive and listens to my ideas and suggestions."

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	27	15	57	
Deptford	32	18	48	
N Sands	26	14	58	
Main office	62	13	24	
Aggregate	32	15	50	

Whilst the overall position is that half of people feel that their boss is not receptive, and a third do, this does mask some differing opinions on different locations. In both North Sands and Pallion almost 60% feel that their boss is not receptive, and 26-27% feel that



he is. In Deptford Yard only 48% feel that their boss is not receptive, and 32% feel that he is. In the main offices, the opposite view is expressed, in that 62% feel that their boss is receptive and only 24% disagree. A slight majority of the total population have a positive feeling at the end of the working day, whereas 29% do not. However, in the yards, in North Sands 41% feel they have accomplished something worthwhile, in Pallion 49% feel the same way, and in Deptford 55% feel the same way, something over 30% not feeling that way. In the main offices however 76% of people feel that they have accomplished something worthwhile at the end of the working day, and only 6% not, again evidence of a very different atmosphere in the offices as against the yards themselves. Whilst the more positive atmosphere of the offices might be of some comfort to management, there are inherent problems with such differing views of the organisation and attitudes about the organisation, in that it may hinder mutual understanding between these different groups.

QUESTION 25

□As an individual, I feel that I have accomplished something worthwhile at the end of a day's work.□

	Always		Never
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	49	16	33
Deptford	55	14	30
N Sands	41	21	34
Main office	76	17	6
Aggregate	51	16	29

Evidence that a significant number still feel a sense of achievement. Although in the yards one-third do not, in the offices three-quarters feel a sense of accomplishment and only 6% do not.

QUESTION 26

□I feel personally responsible for the job I do.□

	Always		Never
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	78	8	14
Deptford	77	9	13
N Sands	72	11	14
Main office	92	4	4
Aggregate	77	8	12



Overall, something slightly more than three-quarters of the population feel personally responsible for the job that they do. The majority moves up to 92% of those in the main offices. As with one or two earlier questions, this hints at a basic feeling of pride in one's work which should be a source of strength for the organisation. However if this feeling does not have an outlet, if people feel that their work is not worthwhile, as 29% overall did feel (as indicated in Question 25), then it can be a source of some frustration.

QUESTION 27

To what extent are you able to decide how to do your job?

	A great deal		Far too little
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	63	11	26
Deptford	66	11	20
N Sands	60	16	21
Main office	85	8	6
Aggregate	65	11	21

Some two-thirds of the population feel that they can decide how to do their job, very slightly lower in North Sands and Pallion, and the majority moving up to 85% in the main offices. In the yards, between 20% and 26% feel that they are not able to decide how to do their job, whereas only 6% share this view in the main offices.

QUESTION 28

How much say do you have on what goes on in your work group?

	A great deal		Far too little
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Pallion	27	13	59
Deptford	26	21	49
N Sands	23	15	60
Main office	50	17	32
Aggregate	29	15	53

Just over half of the population in total feel that they do not have a say in what goes on in their work group; in the yards between 23% and 26% feel that they do have a say, but the position reverses in the main offices where 50% feel they have a say and 32% feel they do not.

QUESTION 29

How much control do you have over output in your work group?

	Complete control		No control	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	26	15	58	
Deptford	33	12	52	
N Sands	25	17	54	
Main office	48	16	35	
Aggregate	29	14	53	

Something over half the population feeling that they do not have control over output, and just less than 30% feel that they do, is pretty much reflecting the view of the yards, but again in the main offices the situation is reversed, where 48% feel that they have control and 35% feel that they do not.

QUESTION 30

How much opportunity is there to participate in determining work methods and procedure?

	A great deal		Far too little	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	17	11	70	
Deptford	20	18	62	
N Sands	14	12	69	
Main office	15	11	50	
Aggregate	20	12	64	

Overall, two-thirds of the population feeling that they have little opportunity to participate in these areas; in North Sands and Pallion that view is held more strongly than overall, and in the main offices, while people in Question 29 indicated that they can influence output, they agree with their colleagues in the yard by 50% to 15% that they do not have opportunity to participate in determining methods and procedures.

QUESTION 31

"I would like more involvement in decisions affecting my job."

	Agree		Disagree	
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5	
Pallion	79	10	10	
Deptford	75	4	12	
N Sands	77	10	9	
Main office	84	7	6	
Aggregate	77	9	9	



Over three-quarters of the population wanting more involvement in decisions affecting their jobs. This view is even more strongly felt in the main offices, where a majority of 84% express this opinion. It is not at all contradictory to find a position in which people feel that they can influence aspects of their work and yet feel that they want even more, because that influence is generally seen as a motivating factor.

QUESTION 32

Please answer each statement.

	True now	Not true but would like	Not interested
In my job I can -	1	2	3
Learn new things and develop skills			
Pallion	33	53	10
Deptford	30	52	14
N Sands	28	56	12
Main office	58	30	3
Aggregate	34	50	10
Do varied and interesting work			
Pallion	35	50	10
Deptford	33	48	14
N Sands	32	49	15
Main office	66	32	1
Aggregate	37	47	10
Decide my own pace of work			
Pallion	41	48	6
Deptford	41	48	5
N Sands	34	54	8
Main office	59	37	2
Aggregate	41	47	5
Have my views and opinions taken into account			
Pallion	22	66	8
Deptford	27	61	9
N Sands	23	62	11
Main office	50	48	2
Aggregate	26	61	7



Follow through tasks to
completion

Pallion	30	57	8
Deptford	32	51	12
N Sands	28	56	13
Main office	67	30°	1
Aggregate	34	51	9

QUESTION 33

Which of the following factors are most important to your job
satisfaction?

	Important		Not important
	1 and 2	3	4 and 5
Opportunity for promotion			
Pallion	43	10	41
Deptford	36	11	42
N Sands	31	12	51
Main office	69	10	21
Aggregate	42	10	40

Fringe benefits, .e.g subsidised meals, social facilities

Pallion	67	6	21
Deptford	63	9	19
N Sands	76	7	10
Main office	46	12	41
Aggregate	64	8	21

Good holiday/sick pay conditions

Pallion	94	2	2
Deptford	90	3	1.5
N Sands	95	0	1
Main office	86	5	8
Aggregate	91	2	2

Shorter hours of work

Pallion	81	7	10
Deptford	76	7	10
N Sands	83	7	7
Main office	59	14	25
Aggregate	76	8	11



Opportunities for overtime

Pallion	64	10	22
Deptford	56	11	25
N Sands	58	15	21
Main office	54	11	34
Aggregate	59	11	24

Good union representation

Pallion	81	6	10
Deptford	75	6	12
N Sands	86	7	3
Main office	49	11	28
Aggregate	75	7	11

Healthy and safe working
environment

Pallion	95	1	1
Deptford	92	1	1
N Sands	96	0	0.5
Main office	90	4	4
Aggregate	93	1	1

Regular increases in wages

Pallion	95	2	1
Deptford	90	1	1.5
N Sands	95	0.5	1
Main office	95	2	3
Aggregate	93	1	1

Extra payment for effort

Pallion	92	2	2
Deptford	90	1	2
N Sands	92	1	2
Main office	92	2	4
Aggregate	90	2	2

status/prestige

Pallion	59	12	23
Deptford	52	15	22
N Sands	55	13	25
Main office	66	13	19



Aggregate	57	12	22

Opportunity for leadership
or responsibility

Pallion	46	11	40
Deptford	39	13	39
N Sands	36	15	45
Main office	73	10	14
Aggregate	45	11	36

Opportunity to learn and
develop skills

Pallion	75	7	13
Deptford	69	10	13
N Sands	70	15	9
Main office	89	7	2
Aggregate	73	9	11

Participation in decision making

Pallion	72	10	13
Deptford	62	11	17
N Sands	64	13	16
Main office	88	6	4
Aggregate	70	10	13

Guaranteed job security

Pallion	91	2	5
Deptford	88	1	4
N Sands	89	2	5
Main office	95	2	2
Aggregate	89	2	4

Recognition and praise for
a job well done

Pallion	78	7	11
Deptford	72	6	14
N Sands	72	7	15
Main office	88	7	4
Aggregate	76	7	11



Good working relationships

Pallion	93	2	2
Deptford	85	4	4
N Sands	86	3	6
Main office	98	0	1
Aggregate	90	2	3

Reputation of the Company

Pallion	67	13	15
Deptford	63	10	19
N Sands	60	11	22
Main office	84	6	8
Aggregate	66	11	16

Fair allocation of work load

Pallion	85	6	4
Deptford	80	6	7
N Sands	77	11	6
Main office	92	3	4
Aggregate	82	6	5

Management attitudes

Pallion	82	4	12
Deptford	86	6	11
N Sands	79	5	12
Main office	98	1	3
Aggregate	81	4	10

Common terms and conditions
for everyone

Pallion	88	4	5
Deptford	89	2	3
N Sands	86	5	4
Main office	77	9	14
Aggregate	85	4	5

In rank order, the factors which are important to job satisfaction are regular increase in wages, and health and safety second, good holiday and sick pay joint third, extra payment for effort and good working relationships. From the general data, the only areas where there is a significant body of people not interested are in 'opportunity for promotion' and 'opportunity for initiative and responsibility. However although there are significant minorities, 40% and 36% respectively, who do not seek these factors, the majority of people would like these opportunities. Looking at those areas considered not important by the main office staff, it is clear that there is far more interest in promotion and leadership opportunities and less interest in fringe



benefits, e.g. subsidised meals, opportunities for overtime, union representation and shorter hours of work. Interestingly, in the main offices the most favoured response is for good working relationships. Again although there do seem to be better relationships in the offices than elsewhere, the staff still feel that this is a massively important area for them, and clearly value good working relationships.

In general, it is clear that there is strong evidence of a task-centred culture within Sunderland Shipbuilders; obviously in an area of this kind that may on the face of it seem quite proper. However it is a constant theme in organisation development that tasks are achieved through and with people. Management sometimes mistakenly take the view that they can concentrate only on the tasks or on the people, and that in hard times they must therefore concentrate solely on the task, with people-issues coming a poor second. However there is plenty of evidence that successful companies are those who understand the inter-related nature of task-management and people-management, and who realise that driving for the task at the expense of people-relationships does not even deliver good task performance; that far from being mutually exclusive these things are intertwined. A clear and comprehensive management philosophy and strategy for the management of relations within the yards is an important aspect of recovery for this organisation.

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