The Critique From Without: Japan and British Employment systems compared.

Huw Beynon
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In 1980, the Ford Motor company reordered its calendar, replacing "AD" with "AJ" - After Japan. In this new scheme of things 1980 became AJ2: it was the second year which followed the decisive penetration of the USA market by Japanese car imports, it was the year when Ford Europe sent its own chief Executive to Japan to find out the truth. He returned in a state of shock. His visit (and especially that part of it which took in the Mazda plant which produced the Escort - Ford's new global car) had taught him that the Japanese assembly plants were remarkably more productive than their European counterparts. The details of these comparisons were spelled out in the company's top priority document, The Challenge From Eastern European and Japanese Imports.

> The message is clear. They are not dumping surplus production at unprofitable prices. They are vastly more efficient than we are. Their high productivity enables them to manufacture and sell vehicles at competitive prices and quality levels throughout the world. Their profitability endeavours them to keep an expanding production output.

And at the heat of this advantage lay the "ability and dedication" of the Japanese workforce. It was this which gave the Japanese companies their advantage through their "complete flexibility in terms of being able to work many more hours than their planning base". In Japan, the Report concludes:

> Everyone must do what they'r esupposed to do, when they are supposed to do it. Japanese discipline and worker dedication is such that this situation is maintained. All workers work together as a team and will cover for their colleagues as required.

A number of points of interest stem from this report. To begin with, of course, it relates to a number of other such accounts produced in 1980 around the theme of "learning from the Japanese". The Financial Times produced a series of articles under such a title which were in such demand that the paper reproduced them as a booklet. In 1980, "kan ban" and "quality circles" became a part of the intellectual handbaggage of British and European businessmen. However it was not an easy or a complete conversion. With the Japanese assault came a questioning about the feasibility of importing parts of an "employment system" as isolated "techniques of management". Such criticisms were supported by evidence of the contrasting policies of Japanese businesses inside and outside Japan. Nevertheless 1980 remains a year when the business fraternity looked upon the Japanese process less as an Asiatic "dumper" of cheap and inferior goods and more as a legitimate and frighteningly efficient competitor. It was also the year when members of this fraternity concerned itself with philosophical and political questions; questions which touch upon the issue of different "employment systems", upon the "how?" and the "why?" of differences in industrial practice in different settings.

Perhaps the most remarkable fact about this upserge of business interest in Japanese practices is that it didn't take place earlier. The "Japanese threat" was there to be seen throughout the 1970's. In the 1970's too a research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation had been set up to specifically examine the comparative features of the Japanese and British systems.

The project was directed by Ronald Dore, and set up with the aim to compare the 'various ways in which two methods of organising industry differ from each other and to explain the differences'. Based upon the electrical engineering industry the project compared the Liverpool and Bradford factories of the (then) English Electric Company with the Furasatu and Taga plants of Hitachi. Dove takes these plants to be, in an important way, typical of the British and Japanese 'employment systems' and in making his comparisons he supports 'attitude surveys' with extensive quotes from both the formal documentation of factory life and the occasional informal conversation that he had with managers and shop stewards. After a space of ten years British Factory - Japanese Factory[1] remains a rare attempt at detailed and systematic comparison of industry in the two countries. As such it repays careful study. The more so since, as we shall see, many of its interpretations and findings gell with those now in common currency.

The interest of the approach adapted by Dore, lies in his openness to the idea of different and differing ways of organising production, and his understanding of these as employment systems. From this standpoint the Japanese system is not understood as a "feudal survival" but as an important and new pattern of industrial development. Defined as "important" it is seen to be distinct from western capitalism and to have quite deep implications for it, and for the pattern of development followed by other third world countries. In contrast to the "convergent" theories of the 1950's and 1960's Dore offers a more open interpretation of (capitalist) industrial development. For him, employment and class relations are more than simply technical relations-they are seen to be social in the fullest sense and as such need to be investigated via the "rationales, underlying organisational principles" and "abstract principles of justice" which underpin them. In this way

Britain and Japan are seen to exemplify quite distinct "employment systems" - "the market orientated" and the "organisation orientated". To this extent Dore's initiative was a welcomed one; so too in the detailed concern it engenders in empirical and comparative sociological inquiry. However this approach is not without its problems.

To begin with, the approach is overtly functionalist. The jacket blurb describes the book as "an exercise in functionalist sociology without the functionalists' usual claim to explain origins". This leads to two general kinds of problems for Dore: resolved in quite different ways. In the face of the question of "origin", and reluctant to develop his fruitful lines of historical enquiry he frequently resolves to immutable 'cultural' factors as a source of differentiation. He argues, for example, that it "should by no means be ruled out" that the greater submissiveness revealed by Japanese workers can be related to differences in "national character" (p.248). In the British case he talks of piece work inhibiting "cooperative instincts" (p.345) and of demarcation disputes reflecting "not just economic disputes about scarce opportunities to earn money; they involve also, something of the same ego-assertion as the blackbird shows when it drives another blackbird off its territory."

It is on the "comparative" question that Dore gets himself into the biggest tangle however. His approach to "employment systems" is a normative one. He explains how:

> Personal experience is translated into sentiment and attachment only by refraction through the norms of the work community - the shared norms of fellow workers. (p.214)

Such an understanding creates real problems of comparative assessment and evaluation: how, through such a framework, can one set of norms be any better or worse than any other? He partly resolves this through the idea of "world norms" which govern the range of feasible and desirable options. Also by offering a cross-cultural interpretation of Japan through British eyes and vice versa. In this though his own preferences are made clear:

> A good deal of what I saw in both societies appealed to my sense of humour; both provided occasions for a slight sense of nausea - more often perhaps Japan, where rather more hypocricy has been used to oil the wheels of the system. But as far as I can remember it was only in England that I occasionally experienced that much more dangerous emotion, indignation. (pp. 9-10)

Dore is attracted to the 'rationality' of Japan. He clearly appreciates the efficiency, the fact that managers are qualified graduates who 'know what they are talking about' and who have no qualms about sharing the same lavatories and canteens as the workers. It is the absence of this; the inefficiency, the lack of 'community' and the blackbird syndrome which annoy him about the British. The descriptive passages in the book are weighted by this preference. Take this initial comparison of Hitachi and English Electric:

> Other features reinforce the impression of greater neatness and disciplined formality at Hitachi; a looser, even sloppy, informality at English Electric. At Liverpool a dented and

hence unusable washing machine casing had been going around the supply conveyor belt for weeks, collecting a layer of dust and the odd cigarette packet. It was no one's job to take it off so no one bothered. At Furasato, the foundry had surrounded itself with some rather splended flower beds which workers tended in their lunch hour, thus they tried to compensate for the foundry's dirty low status image, and so soften the arid masculinity of the one shop in the factory where no women worked. (The explanation of the safety officer.) At Furasato one was allowed in the engineering shops to break off for a cigarette, but not on the assembly lines, at Liverpool and at Bradford one could smoke while one worked. So, too, in dress and speech. Hitachi workers wore safety helmets issued by the Company in every shop where there were cranes; assembly line girls had uniform head scarves. English Electric workers wore a variety of clothes; they were urged to buy protective boots...but these were not compulsory. A foreman at Hitachi was addressed by his title - 'Foreman'! He addressed his subordinates by their name plus the polite suffix appropriate to his addressees age. In English Electric, foremen and their workers mostly used Christian names, occasionally for the foreman a 'Mister', but there was generally greater informality. A young foreman...described how 'how the first time I, Jimmy say to one of the women "what the fuckin' hell do you think you're doing'?" I looked hard in the other direction. But I found they just answered back, "Oh, fuck off", and now I find myself talking the language.

Carried in accounts like this one is a strong impression of the rationality, of the Japanese factory, of Japan and the Japanese. 'The school year ends in March and hirings take place in April.' As April is the start of the financial year it is 'the natural date...for promotions and salary increases'. And of course, 'wage contracts run from April to March'. It is all so ordered and sensible, that one might forget that at this time of the fieldwork, railway workers on go-slow were brutalised by commuters (seemingly with the tacit support of the police) and the army clashed with an alliance of students and peasants protesting over the location of a new airport. So too the other "costs" of industrial expansion. Compare for example Dore's account of Japan with that of Jon Halliday:

> "The cities are wreathed in perpetual smog; policemen have to inhale pure oxygen after half an hour in the streets. There are stinking, open sewers everywhere. The traffic is murderous; yellow flags are provided in boxes on some zebra crossings - pedestrians hold these aloft in an effort to cross the road. Housing is utterly inadequate. The oppressed conditions of women, brothelised sexuality, and the unmitigated polarising of ritual and commercialism, create an often intolerable human environment. Interwoven with an ideology steeped in passivity and obedience is a fossilised culture. The idyllic image Japan enjoys abroad is pure folk lore. In reality it is a harsh and cruel society in which growth is built on exploitation and contradiction is muzzled by mystification."(2)

The difference here is partly one of emphasis, partly of political attitude and preference. What they achieve (side by side) is to create a puzzle and one which can be explored by looking more carefully at the assumptions which support Dore's approach. At root, he assumes that societies and employment systems can be understood in terms of a consistency between their major institutions, a consistency which is paralleled in the ideas of the people who make up the society, the link being achieved by socialisation. Thus in comparing Britain and Japan the comparison is between 'two integrated and internally consistent systems - the market orientated and the organisation orientated' (p.278). These being based upon their own consistent and adequate world views; which the individual internalises and accepts. As Dore puts it: 'It is overstating the case to say that one feels what one is supposed to feel, but it is safe to say that one is more easily disposed to feel what one is supposed to feel'. In Dore's account it is self-evident that people know what they are supposed to feel, and that most of the time they feel it. And this approach underpins the account he offers of factory life in Britain and Japan.

In Japan, Dore argues that the "system of industrial relations" has "passed through its social democratic revolution in a way that the British system has not". This revolution is built around the giant corporations which have come to dominate Japanese manufacturing and which exist as "organised communities which admit selected recruits to life membership". At Hitachi, for example, an ideal type 'career' begins when the worker leaves school, or the manager university, and continues there until retirement, at 55, on compa ny pension. In between these times the employee will spend some time in a company house, join the company union, be guaranteed annual increments in wages, have another part of the wage determined by the merit rating of

his superior, and be a part of a rigid, meritocratic, seniority system. A third of Japan's labour force, work within such a company (although only a few have careers which conform to this 'ideal' pattern). Their wages are higher and their privileges and fringe benefits far exceed those of the employees in the smaller companies. They are the elite; a corporate aristocracy, comprising all of Japan's university graduates and most of the skilled manual workers. They are predominantly youthful and between them receive over half of personal earned income in Japan.

Outside of this elite are the workers employed by the large number of small companies who feed off contracts from the large ones. (The practice of sub-contracting is, by Dore's evidence, utilised far more by the giant corporations in Japan than their U.K. counterparts.) These small companies rarely recognise a trade union, pay significantly lower rates of pay and offer limited job security. Workers in this sector move from company to company, and occasionally end up within the temporary labour pool that the large companies keep as ballast. These older, temporary workers (and the part-time women and seasonal workers) have few of the rights accorded to the company men. As far as the corporate family goes they are very much distant relations.

The reliance that Dore places upon 'authority relationships' is brought out no clearer than in his treatment of the inner workings of these large Japanese corporations. There, he argues, the managers assume that they manage with the consent of the workforce. In his view this assumption is not a mistaken one. In comparing Hitachi and English Electric he writes that 'the basic difference (is) that Japanese managers can and do operate on the assumption that workers fully accept the values and the goals of the firm' (p.240).

In Dore's view it is consent and consensus and not coersion or compromise which dominate factory life in Japan. His account of industrial relations at Hitachi can be seen as a demonstration of this assertion.

Dore was clearly impressed by the Hitachi union. To him it seemed 'a generally more efficient, formal, well thought out and more literate organisation than its British counterpart'. He asks us to 'compare, for instance, the slap-happy method of electing British shop stewards with the secret ballot election of their Hitachi counterparts, or the trim functional organisation of the Hitachi unions with the archaic complexities of the British union structure' (pp. 137-8). To Dore the comparison is clear and open to one interpretation: Japanese trade unionism is a more rational term of organisation, because of its location within the company which as a collective corporate, can be said to have interests in much the same way as one talks of the "national interest" (p.364). Yet there have been times in post-war Japan when the workers have given quite a different interpretation of these things.

During the American occupation after the last war, a wave of trade unionism spread through the Japanese working class. A mixture of a demoralised ruling class and a strong emphasis upon 'democratisation' amongst the earlier American forces assisted the emergence of a strong, militant trade unionism closely allied to the Communist Party and to growing Marxist elements within the schools and universities. During that period a union of teachers was formed which, as part of its professional code, proclaimed:

> ...teachers are labourers whose workshops are the schools. Teachers in the knowledge that labour is the foundation of everything in society, shall be proud of the fact that they themselves are labourers. At the present stage of history the realisation of a new society . . . is possible only through the power of the

working masses whose nucleus is the labouring class. Teachers shall be aware of their position as labourers, shall forcefully, believing in the historical progress of man and shall consider all stagnation and reaction as their enemies.

The potential of such a revolutionary alliance was quickly realised by McArthur who on the outset of the Korean War encouraged the re-establishment of the 'authority' of the old Japanese ruling class. This had profound implications within the factories. At Hitachi the strike called by the militant leadership was broken and the leaders sacked. Since then all the other large corporations have operated with similar tactics; faced by a militant strike they have launched and recognised their own 'second union' and recruited loyal workers to it - the strike is broken and the leadership sacked. At the car plants of the giant Nissan company for example, such a second union followedthe slogan 'our God is stability and prosperity for the enterprise'. All its officers were foremen. A study of elections at Nissan throughout the 1970's reveal a continuation of this pattern. On no occasion was a candidate opposed. On no occasion did the successful candidate get less than 99 per cent of the eligible votes.(3) At Hitachi the situation was less clear cut, although some 60 per cent of the chairmen of the departmental union committee at the Furasato works are foremen or superintendents.

Dore sees the Hitachi union as a middle of the road organisation which rejects militancy but does not go overboard in its identification with the bosses. In fact it operates with what Dore considers to be the sensible assumption that production is a co-operative effort and should be treated as such, while recognising the need for some bargaining over the distribution of the spoils. (It is in this respect that he sees Japanese unions differing from

British unions which apparently cling resolutely to the idea of two sides in all things.) As such the union recruits workers, foremen and (with the exception of certain key positions) members of middle management. It is a true company union, and although Dore lays great stress on the differences that exist between Japanese corporatism and British paternalism, readers will find that the details he offers of the in-plant activity of the union at Hitachi have an entirely familiar ring. Union activism does not stand in the way of promotion (it may be an asset), managers exercise a strong influence upon the election of union officers (in the words of one official - 'one always approaches the company first and one's got to make some kind of settlement, because sometimes the company might say: "No it would be very awkward if this chap were elected as an official") and the shop floor representatives, once elected, exercise little or no control over production decisions. While Dore stresses that the union and its representatives have clear and definite rights, these have always turned out to be rights of status. The representatives have offices and telephones, they are not talked down to or kept waiting at the manager's door, they are afforded 'full equality of respect'. But all this is underpinned by an acceptance of a common ground which insists that 'the prosperity of the firm is pre-conditioned for all their other objectives' and that 'a real mud-slinging stand-up fight would be extremely unpleasant and would in the end benefit no one' (p.173). At Hitachi the union representatives' status depends upon his recognition of the power of management. Their facilities and rights are the other side of the coin to management's right to organise production. It is in the examination of this bargain - of the experience of production in Japan that Dore's account is weakestand and more vulnerable.

The foreman figures prominently in the arena of production and at Hitachi 'the function and scope of his authority spreads diffusely over a

larger segment of his subordinates' lives' than that of his counterpart in English Electric. The worker at Hitachi is dependent upon the favour of his supervisor for without this he becomes vulnerable to an adverse merit assessment, and loss of money and prospects of promotion. Dore sees the foreman - worker relationship to be a central one yet stresses that it is not oppressive but personal, in which the foreman figures as an elder statesman, respected by the workers in his work group. He supports this with several diagrams and with the fact that in the Hitachi factories one foreman supervised between 16 and 19 workers, while in the domestic appliance division of English Electric in Liverpool a foreman supervised as many as 44 workers.

> The higher the authority level a person occupies in an organisation, the stronger is likely to be his commitment to that organisation's goals. Foremen are more likely than their subordinates to share the goals of management, and their stronger commitment is more likely to spread to and influence sixteen workers than (forth four). (p.250)

By ever stressing socialisation, Dore ignores the other, more material factors. While he admits the vulnerability of the Hitachi worker to the operation of the merit rating and seniority system he never stresses the importance of this, even though there are quite significant traces of its effects. Hitachi workers, concerned to keep a clean absence record 'almost universally . . . ask that days taken off for sickness should be counted as part of (their) annual holiday' (p.187). Only a third of those interviewed - as against three quarters of the British workers - felt that they were working in a good company, and here criticism was frequently directed at the coersion of the work process. This discontent is reflected again in

the fact that only a quarter of the Hitachi workers felt that they worked at a pace they could influence themselves; seventy eight per cent of the British workers thought that they could. A remarkable difference yet one which Dore (bolstered by his assumptions of normative integration) does not investigate in any detail. Had he done so he may have revealed some of the costs of the "Japanese system".) Th ese were revealed in another book, also published in 1973. Entitled Factory of Dispair: Diary of a Seasonal Worker it presented a first hand account of life as a Toyota Employee.

> once the line starts moving at 6.00 a.m. transmissions to be assembled continue flowing exactly every minute and twenty seconds without stopping for five hours 11.00 a.m. I should say not exactly but cruelly. When the line stops at 11.00 a.m. everybody throws off his gloves and immediately leaves his position. Marching off, the grease stuck to their hands, they rush to the toilet to empty bursting bladders. Then they run to the dining hall 100 meters away. The line starts moving again at 11.45. Since we have to arrange supplying parts 16 minutes earlier, there is no time to really rest. The line stops at 2.15 p.m. stay 30 minutes for overtime. Went back to the dorm after walking for 40 minutes hardly moving my legs which were like lead. Utterly exhausted. Is this the life of a worker for the auto maker who boasts itself as No. 1 in Japan and No. 3 in the world?

It turned out that it was.

> From the moment I step through the gate of the plant, and from the moment I show my ID card to the guard, I exist only as a number. It is as if leaving myself, my soul and mind, checked in at the gate like leaving a coat.(4)

Satoshi, as Toyota worker number 8818636, makes clear that the 'rights' of the Japanese workers are based upon severe costs, the most profound of which is that he stays with the firm and accepts his position within it, for the rest of his working life. And these costs extend beyond the workplace.

In Japan, workers live in company houses on company housing estates. Here the equality that operates in the canteen and the lavatory breaks down: 'In the housing estates there are what are known as a superintendents' row, a section chiefs' row and so on, grading according to size.' (Here, as elsewhere in the book, we are not told about the directors)(5). On these estates the foremen act as sick visitors and are occasionally involved in drinking parties with their work teams. While all this goes on, the women keep house and look after the children, for they are entirely subordinate to the man's corporate responsibilities. In fact, at the time of Dore's field work there were moves toward a degree of sexual emancipation in Japan. These moves met the response of a new school curriculum announced in March 1971 which aimed at ensuring that:

> General housekeeping became compulsory for every girl. The theory and practice of 'everyday manners' will be taught to make girls more genteel and to break the 'trend of argumentativeness'. The making of kimono . . . will be made a compulsory subject so that wives can at least make

> their husband's yukata. Gymnastics for boys are also to be increased by 22% and kendo and judo are both to be made compulsory (for boys).(6)

This isn't referred to by Dore whose discussion of the position of women is restricted to statements like the following:

> Women are, consequentially, rather more prepared than English women to accept the fact that they share very little of their husbands' lives and can lay claim to little of his time. And if it is now the company and the office rather than the village or the retainer band that claim his primary loyalty the difference in principle is not too great.

And:

> The fact that a man had planned to take his children for an outing would be seen as a rather 'selfish' reason for trying to avoid overtime work on a Sunday if an order had to be finished.

If he be so selfish he faces the moral chastisement, and a blot on his record. One gathers that such selfishness is rare. So are dismissals:

> 'Dismissals are extremely rare . . . a tribute to the care taken in selection procedures, and also to the 'totalitarian' nature of the workshop atmosphere where incipient delinquency/ rebellion is a matter of such general concern that the

> incipient delinquent is either shamed or brainwashed back to the straight and narrow path or else leaves voluntarily because he cannot stand the moral pressure.

The use of 'totalitarianism' here is important. The sick visiting foreman is an important example of such a regime. Many large companies in Britain have, at one time or another, operated such a scheme and many of their workers view it, at best, with mixed feelings. For while it may be nice to think that the foreman is concerned, there is always the sneaking feeling even in the most 'progressive' of companies that the concern may not be genuine and that the sick visitor may also be a spy - not intentionally perhaps, but a spy nevertheless. Many workers in Britain have been 'disciplined' or sacked as the result of such spying. In the Civil Service - the employment situation which Dore sees as the closest approximation to the Japanese model - the corporate rights are double edged. In 1972, for example, workers in many offices were threatened by office managers with dismissal followed by re-employment and the subsequent loss of service entitlements should they support the union strike call. At Ford in 1969 the management's attempt to introduce fringe benefits doled out on a merit (good behaviour) principle, was at the root of a bitter dispute. The fact that these clauses were viewed as "penalties" by the workers and "bonuses" by the employers points to the potential contradiction in corporatism. It also points to the need for explanations to go beyond the normative level and to investigate questions of power and politics.

'Hitachi workers', writes Dore, 'do not conceive of the workshop situation as a straightforward "us" and "them" situation' (p. 170). The clear implication here is that British workers do see things in such terms,

and Dore argues on several occasions that this is in fact the case. However, in 1973 he felt that the situation was changing, for while notions of class antagonism may still have dominated the institutions of collective bargaining in Britain in his view they could not be said to characterise the consciousness of the class to anything like the same extent.

> the difference between Japan and England . . . is not so much a difference between workers' attitudes as between the institutionalised attitudes of union leaders (p. 191).

In his view class consciousness has become ossified within the ritualised patterns of encounter and avoidance that make up the system of industrial relations in Britain. Dore's entire account of union-employer relationships in Britain is dominated by this notion of ritual; he points to the fact that the steward who takes a foreman's job is held to have 'joined the other side' by his mates, that stewards and managers rarely meet socially and that any meetings that do occur are looked upon with suspicion, and to the forms of address which permeate union branch meetings. All this he sees to be basically irrational and part of the 'instituional luggage' which British companies and unions have been carrying around with them since the end of the last century. The price paid for being first has in the coninance of outminded ideas of a class society. Thus:

> There is a congruence between the British pattern of industrial relations and the British political party structure . . . Both seem to reflect a fairly widespread consciousness of class amongst manual workers. There is a similar congruence

> in Japan, both sets of institutions reflecting the absence of such consciousness. Attitude studies bear out the weakness of class consciousness in Japan, but much less consistently display its presence in Britain. It is highly likely though that there would have been more consistent evidence of class consciousness in Britain if the survey had been carried out in the early years of this century when the institutions were being created. The better fit between attitudes and institutions in Japan is due to the shorter history of the labour movement in that country. (p. 292)

It was Dore's view that this "lack of fit" would be corrected in the U.K. in the 1970's, and that this would be assisted by important changes on two fronts. British corporations, he argued were beginning to recruit a new kind of manager:

> younger managers with new attitudes - personnel specialists who have taken courses in industrial relations and know all about constitutional management, for instance, or members of the new quasi-classless technocracy with no ingrained sense of the need to defend a crumbling traditional hierarchy. (p.145)

Added to this were important changes in the attitudes of British workers, "particularly those in southern England" who were developing an instrumental relationship with their trade unions. For these workers, trade unionism was no longer regarded as an agency of class struggle, or

even as 'objects of loyalty', but simply as a means of achieving some pecuniary advantage. This situation Dore contrasts with an "older view" (sometimes located in 'the first three quarters of the nineteenth century', at others in 'the early years of this century') which was based upon the notion of 'irreconcilable class opposition! It is this view which has, in Dore's view, structured the pattern of collective bargaining and industrial relationship in Britain. By 1970 it had become ossified with the trade union movement - amongst its activists and trade union officials. But it was a survival from an earlier era; a survival that would appear increasingly anarcharistic, and identified as a "minority view shared by the Trotskyist left groups (and) some members of the communist party" (p.362)

This discussion is not without interest, and certainly Dore could, today, point to the Thatcher government and the rise of the SDP-Liberal Alliance as support for his arguments. But it is worth stressing, at the outset, that they were (and are) highly speculative comments, supported in no clear way be detailed evidence.

To begin with, the British survey, like the Japanese, faces the problem of "typicality". Dore assumes that Hitachi and English Electric are in important ways typical representatives of the two employment systems. Dore makes a detailed justification for his choice of Hitachi (a large firm occupying a monopolistic position within the increasingly important big business sector) which, in his own terms, is convincing. In contrast he 'takes it for granted that the reader is capable of assessing roughly in what respects English Electric was, and in what respects it was not, typical of British firms' (p.301). This however invites the question: "What respects are crucial? Given the limited aim of comparing factory organisation of

firms from two different countries within the same industry, operating in the same international market, the choice of English Electric seems reasonable. Even then though questions do arise about the position of particular plants within particular companies - Friedman's account of 'core' and ' peripheral' plants within companies should make no pause before a ready acceptance of 'typical' units.(7) The case for typicality is further weakened if we remind ourself of Dore's aim: it is to be a Weber, not a Blauner. His concern is to establish 'systems' with differing underlying rationalities. Given this (and the added claim of quite fundamental changes in the British system) there is even greater need for the English Electric company to be firmly located within the British economy. It is clearly not good enough to present the company on a "take it or leave it" principle. If there has been a change in the ideology of British managers, union officials and workers then it is important to determine the basis of such a shift and to know how these forces are expressed within the particular company.
Dore's argument is further stretched by the fact that, in Britain the workers who were interviewed did not work for English Electric at all but for Babcock and Wilson in Glasgow and Marcone in Cheltenham (the differences between their responses is the subject of much intriguing speculation throughout the book). While Dore's difficulties with English Electric's management may have been unfortunate (faced with Weinstock's take-over they refused to co-operate with the study after Dore's initial contacts), this does place a great strain upon his claim to have, in some way, typified factory relationships and the changing nature of ideology and class consciousness in Britain. This claim is strained further by the fact that, for some reason, foremen and managers were not included in the survey. Given these inadequacies Dore relies (implicitly and explicitly upon the survey conducted by Goldthorpe and his colleagues at Luton(8). Yet in

embracing the findings of the Luton study he is unable to present evidence as to the ways in which the different groups within factories interpret or act upon the 'orientations' that are held to dominate their relationships. He has no systematic way of linking the interviews with workers in Glasgow and Cheltenham (conducted by an opinion research firm) with his observations at English Electric in Liverpool, or to the historical patterning of trade union relationships and understandings.

These points asside, it can be argued that in identifying the potentiality of a rift between trade union organisations and their members Dore's account is important as it offers an explanation of tensions within labour movements which go beyond simpler theories of bureaucratisation. However it is concievable that in his framing of the argument Dore's logic is as vulnerable as his empirical evidence.

First there are historical questions, and here the absence of any clear or firm periodisation in Dore's account is disturbing. As with so many other accounts of dramatic changes in working class attitudes and consciousness, "the past" is illdefined and romantically conceived. For example, he lays some store by a conversation he had with a shop steward in Liverpool in 1967. This man, while preparing for the occupation of the English Electric factory argued that:

> in a democracy it means that you carry out the wishes of the majority - that's the difficult one. But I can't accept that policies have to be determined by the selfish motives of people. Somebody has to make stand.

However, if we compare this with views expressed to Carter Goodrich as he prepared his account of the state of shop floor organisation within the engineering industry after the First World War we find a strong similarity:

> The average workman it is often said, is interested in 'mere wages'. He cares nothing about control; he doesn't want to run things. What he wants is to draw his pay regularly and get away as quickly as possible. Nor is this merely an employers view of working class psychology. I heard it from an impatient leader of shop stewards who said that working men were 'not interested beyond wages and hours' and that therefore he had no intention of waiting for the majority.(9)

To point to this similarity, is not to assert that things have not changed, but to cast doubt on the account of that change offered by Dore.

Further doubts gather if we look at the contemporary period. For while much that has happened since 1973 can be seen to bear out Dore's account of a working class moving toward a new kind of consciousness of the world and their place in it, other things call it into question. Most pointed, of course, is the case of Ford. In the document quoted at the beginning of this paper the sources of the Ford Motor Company's are identified <u>not</u> as the attitudes of union officials, but rather the attitudes, approaches, beliefs and practices of the workers in the plants. Clearly these aren't entirely separate from trade union organisations, but it is worth noting that Ford, in the 1970's, operated with a style of industrial relation

practice which Dore points to as prefigurative of the corporatist form. Union negotiations continued to be based on the company, shop stewards were given increased facilities and were drawn into a variety of welfare and administrative functions. In 1980, however, the Financial Times' correspondent was clear that a crisis in the company had been caused as a result of a situation where the shop stewards "no longer had control of the membership". In commenting on this situation, Steve Broadhead the Body plant convenor noted that: "they see Ford making £386 million profit last year, but companies are leaving Merseyside and little is going into public services. The men feel they are being explited."(10)

In this context it is worth returning to Dore's main argument: that sometime in the past - say the first twenty years of this century - British trade unionism was a pure reflection of the 'older view' of class antagonisms that predominated within the working class. This view he associated with the laissez-faire, open-market development of British capitalism. Here the relationships drawn between the pattern of capitalist development and the character of trade union movements is an important one. But again what is open to question is the nature of the relationship and the extent to which British (and Japanese) trade unionism can be understood as simple reflections of patterns of capital accumulation and expansion. For example, it is certainly true that British trade unionists did (and do) play the market, but they were also concerned, perhaps above all else, to exercise some regulative control over the price of wage labour. And in these aims they have probably been more concerned to stabilise the wage bargain rather than maximise short run wage rates.(11) As a consequence the relationship between the trade union official and the employer in Britain has never been dominated by any simple notion of "us against them". Certainly it would be difficult to think

of any trade union leader during this century (or the last for that matter) who would unequivocally endorse Dore's 'market-free-for-all ideology':

> Defend your members right or wrong. All dismissals are wrongful dismissals and must be fought. If a man draws his money and doesn't work, so what? It reduces the bosses profits and it's one up for us. (p.145)

It simply is not true to suggest, as Dore does, that the union official (unlike the steward) has only one loyalty - the union and not the employer. A strong emphasis in the ideology of British trade unionism has always been the acceptance of the bosses rights. One of the first agreements made by Bevin for the Bristol dockers for example, ceded the right to the dock employers to 'manipulate the men as they thought fit'. When Dore quotes statements from Jack Jones and Vic Feather on the need to 'co-operate with the management side', he may interpret this as an ideological change, a shift onto the corporatist tack, but if he reads the statements and writings of the Cetrines and the Jimmy Thomases, not to mention the Applegarths, he would find some embarrassing similarities. For as Cowling and others have demonstrated, trade union leaders in the early part of this century, while quite prepared to use class slogans, were by and large not motivated or equipped to secure any fundamental changes in the structure of capitalism: 'They neither wanted or sought anything more than co-operation between worker and management'.(12) There was no clearer example of this, and of where the trade union leaders knew their place to be than in 1919. After a period of quite ferocious struggle between the leadership and the rank and file within the major unions (a struggle incidentally which is in no way brought out in Dore's account of the 'fit' between the consciousness

of the class and its trade union leadership) the Triple Alliance, Lloyd George is reported to have said:

> I feel bound to tell you that in our opinion we are at your mercy. The Army is disaffected and cannot be relied upon. Trouble has occurred already in a number of camps. We have just emerged from a great war and the people are eager for the rewards of their sacrifices, and we are in no position to satisfy them. In these circumstances if you carry out your threat and strike then you will defeat us. But if you do so have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the Government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the State which is stronger than the State itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the State, or withdraw and accept the authority of the State. Gentlemen have you considered and if you have are you ready?

'From that moment on', remembered Robert Smillie, 'we were beaten and we knew we were'. (13) Lloyd George knew his men as did Bonnar Law a few months earlier when he had pressed the view in the Cabinet that: 'Trade Union organisation was the one thing between us and anarchy.' (14) This is the crucial point: in Britain the corporatist tendency within the trade union movement - a view which sees society as an amalgam of functional economic groups within which workers are seen as isolated producers rather than as members of a class - led to its integration into Liberal and Social Democratic state apparatuses, rather than company structures. Arguable it is the dissonance between the position of union officials in the state and the company which explains much of the ritualised behaviour

and ego assertion that Dore points to. Certainly the contrast with Japan where a more homogeneous and coherent big business class was able to establish the incorporation at the level of the company is, in these terms, a dramatic one. For it was this pattern of incorporation which paved the way for fascism in the 1930's (a period which Dore unaccountably skirts around in his - often lucid - account of the history of the Japanese employment system) and which politically locates the idea Dore has of a "social democratic evolution". In Britain, social democracy was established in society via a welfare state. In Japan, the "revolution" took place at the level of the corporation, and was limited to the companies employees - the family. Several things follow from this. To begin with and most generally, it makes clear the need for any theory of "employment systems" to go beyond the factory or corporation and locate these within the political and economic structures of the state.

In the post-war period the Japanese state has served as a simple adjunct to big business. There, it has been estimated that 90 per cent of the activity of government is directly related to industry, which is in turn largely financed through state controlled banks. This pattern of is one part of an explanation of corporate stability missing from Dore's account. It goes some way to explain the ascendancy of Japanese manufacture: In the 1960's when the Japanese economy grew at 10 per cent, over 30 per cent of GNP went to investment, in the U.K. the figures were 3 per cent and 17 per cent. In contrast state spending on "welfare" in Japan has been minimal. At the time of Dore's survey The Economist's survey indicated that Japan, in spite of its high per capita GNP had a much lower housing stock than the U.K's (14 rooms per 100 persons as against 25). Public amenities received a score of 9 on the Economist's index while the U.K. figure was 26. (15) In such a situation a place within one of the elite corporations takes on an immense significance which is truly measured not in

the company's welfare services and flower beds but in the position of the temporary worker. Writing after the oil price increase in 1973, Richard Milner noted:

> . . . nearly half the temporaries have already been laid off . . . To those on the lowest rungs of the ladder, the present almost unreported shake-out will mean very hard times indeed. Many of the temporary workers are farmers obliged to take on factory jobs to make a decent living, and the latest survey indicated that non-farming income amounted for two-thirds of their household budget. And employees of small firms are not much better off, 'I work at a factory which makes cheap candy. The factory has less than ten employees. I get only 30,000 yen (£46) a month' one wrote. 'At home I work until late in the night helping my wife with her side job. I barely manage to eke out a living'. It is from the sweat and enterprise of men like 47 year old candy-maker Shun Minato that Japan has constructed its economic miracle. (16)

Equally, in Britain, it is difficult to see how an account of a "normative employment system" can be built up which doesn't extend to the state, both as a provider of welfare and as a regulator of the industrial relations system itself. In looking at the situation of the British working class in the 1960's, one gets nowhere unless one appreciates the extent to which the trade union bureaucracies - forever stressing their 'independence' - had become entwined in the apparatus of the state. It was the failure to recognise the nature of this incorporation that brought about the downfall of the Heath Government. Equally the hallmark of the Thatcher administration lies in its attempts to radically alter this relationship.

Footnotes

1. R. Dore, British Factory - Japanese Factory, Allen & Unwin, 1973.

2. J. Halliday, 'Japan - Asian Capitalism', New Left Review, 44, pp.28-29.

3. Yamamoto Kiyoshi, "Labour Management Relations at Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., (Datsun)", Annals of the Institute of Social Science, Tokyo, No. 21, 198

4. Quoted in Yamaka Junko, "Beyond Dispair: One Automaker's Season in Hell" Japan - Asia Quarterly Review, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1981.

5. He does mention the directors on page 165. Here he says that 'as well a owning some shares, (they) receive a bonus which is paid out of profit'. He does not see this as a potential source of conflict within the enterprise which he instead relates to management's 'superior sense of responsibility and ... livelier appreciation of the need for occasional self-denial in the interests of the firm'.

6. Quoted in J. Halliday and G. McCormack, Japanese Imperialism Today, Penguin Books, 1973.

7. See. H. Friedman, Industry and Labour, Macmillan 1976.

8. J. Goldthorpe et al., The Affluent Worker, Vols. 1, 2, and 3. Cambridge Univeristy Press.

9. C.L. Goodrich, The Frontiers of Control: A Study in British Workshop Politics, Bells and Sons, 1920, p.21.

10. Financial Times, 15 November, 1981.

11. See for example, J.M. Cousins & R.L. Davis, "'Working Class Incorporation A Historical Approach", Paper delivered at BSA Annual Conference on Stratification, April, 1973.

12. M. Cowling, The Impact of Labour, Cambridge University Press, 1971, p.423. For a very interesting account of this see Tony Lane, The Union Makes Us Strong, Arrow Books, 1974.

13. Quoted in A. Bevan, In Place of Fear, London, 1952, pp.21-22.

14. Quoted in P.S. Bagwell, 'The Triple Industrial Alliance, 1913-1922', in A. Briggs & J. Saville, (eds), Essays in Labour History, 1886-1923, MacMillan, London, 1971, p.106.

15. See 'The Economist Survey of Japan', op.cit. For an interpretation of of these differences see David Yaffe, 'The Crisis of Profitability', NLR 80.