What's Happening at Work

Some thoughts on the Sociology of Occupations and States

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The current dispute on the docks in Liverpool serves to draw attention to the scale of changes that have taken place in workplace industrial relations over the past fifteen years. Here, 80 dockers working for the Torside company, had a dispute over overtime payments. they went on strike; picketed the dock and received support from the other 420 workers. They were all immediately dismissed and a few hours later, new contracts of employment (involving radical changes in working conditions) were delivered to their homes. in their complains, dockers and their leaders made repeated references to the abolition of the Dock Labour scheme in 1989 and the return to casualisation. In spite of strong organisation, the MDHB have claimed that they have now rerecruited sufficient workers prepared to be engaged on the new terms. they are prepared to pay redundancy payments to the others.

During the nineteen eighties the structure of British industry and the pattern of its industrial relations went through a process of near-revolutionary change. The scale of this transformation can be grasped - initially at least - in a contrast with the <u>eighteen</u> eighties.

In 1883, the coal miners organised a national strike which was seen by William Morris to be indicative of a "new kind of power" in the land; it was widely seen as prefigurative of industrial relations in the twentieth century. Six years later, in 1889, the dock workers confirmed this development with a strike which the historian Bullock described as the "most famous strike of the nineteenth century". In his view, the organisation of dock workers into a coherent political force represented a major, and unexpected, development in society, bringing the unorganised, the

downtrodden, the social outcasts away from the margins of society and towards its very centre. In a curious way, the politics of the twentieth century can be understood as an consequence of these developments. These strikes posed problems for the social ordering of capitalism and provided the basis for a social democratic politics. A politics which, it seems, has taken a century to run its course. For, one hundred years later - in their strikes of 1984 and 1989 - these two groups of workers again challenged the logic of capitalism. This time they were defeated, and in a manner which symbolised the end of an era.

This ending has, of course been written about in many different ways: as the Second industrial Divide and the move from Fordist to post- Fordist modes of regulation. Here the impact of globalisation and of the advent of new technologies for communication can be seen as deeply influential. Allied with this has also been the political strategies of particular governments. In the British case, it is helpful to recall the observations made by Alan Budd, Professor of Economics at the London Business School and erstwhile advisor to Mrs. Thatcher. In reflecting on Government policies in the 1980s he informed his interviewer on the Pandora's Box programme that:

> raising unemployment was a very desirable way of reducing the strength of the working classes...what was engineered in Marxist terms - was a crisis in capitalism which recreated the reserve army of labour, and has allowed the capitalists to make profits ever since.

In this context, its worth wondering about the experiences of the "reserve army" and the impacts of these changes of those who labour in the new work places.

To an extent any assessment of how British companies have reacted to these changes must be seen as preliminary. However the contrast between most research findings and many of the most optimistic expectations is quite striking. New technologies have been introduced and, not surprisingly, there has been little conflict involved in this. Daniel has noted the extensive introduction of micro-electronic technologies into private manufacture (31% of all such establishments employing manual workers had been involved in the new application of information technology in the early eighties) and the general lack of opposition to these changes from shop stewards (see Daniel 1987 and Daniel and Hogarth, 1990). However there is little evidence to suggest that this produced workplaces characterised by multi-

skilled workers, involved in rewarding and satisfying work; or that they have been associated with a sea-change in attitudes to work. Generally it seems that the jobs of employees have changed in a number of ways: they involve more tasks than hitherto, often they involve more responsibilities and these could be seen as positive features; however people seem to be working harder with fewer breaks, and experiencing greater levels of stress (for an assessment see Elger 1990). These are important changes but they are far removed from the potential outlined in the models of flexible specialisation and contain within them potential lines of conflict.

1: Unemployment and the Decline of Manufacturing:

In Britain, manufacturing and mining industries now employ 4 million less people than they did in 1980. Several industries (coal, steel, shipyards, docks, mechanical engineering) have been severely reduced in size, often through the precipitous closures of plant and factories. In the 1990s industrial production fell for three consecutive years and this gave the debate on deindustrialization an added poignancy. On the one hand it raises questions of economic survival in an increasingly competitive world; on the other it asks us to consider the employment trajectories of these, large numbers of ex-industrial workers.

Most of the industries that declined rapidly, employed large numbers of male manual workers throughout this century. Often sons followed fathers into jobs and occupational cultures developed which ordered working relationships and gave a certain social coherence to particular localities. These industries provided detailed training programmes for their skilled and technical workers and their managements also acquired industry-specific skills and qualifications. There is some evidence to suggest that all groups in these industries experienced demoralisation, cynicism and negative attitudes to work and industry as a consequence of their experience of closure and run-down.

Take the example of the coal industry.

Since 1985 the British coal industry has gone through a period of unprecedented transformations. For example:

- at the end of financial year 1985-6 there were 133 deep mines employing 158,000 mineworkers and managers; at the end of financial year 1993-4 there were 15 deep mines and 16,000 mineworkers and managers.

- in 1994, in the coal regions of Kent, South Wales, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Durham, Northumberland, Cumbria all the deep mines had closed by mid-1994; only one remained open in Scotland; all the mines in the Barnsley and Doncaster regions of Yorkshire had closed as well as those in South Nottingham

- in the period since privatisation several collieries have been reopened, but with much smaller labour forces and changes employment practices as part of new coal companies and cooperatives.

- in areas where female activity rates were typically much lower than males and much below the national average for females, women have emerged as an increasingly important segment of the wage labour force.

- districts which had experienced reasonable stable labour markets and employment regimes, had by the mid 1980s begun to challenge inner city areas as centres of poverty and deprivation (see Green A.E., 1994). The most recent research into these areas argued that official unemployment rates considerably underestimate the real rates of unemployment, arguing that: "the present real level of male unemployment in the coalfields is probably around 25% and 30% in the pit villages" with rates in Durham and South Wales far exceeding these levels of economic inactivity (Beatty and Fothergill, 1994).

These statistics clearly point to a change of some magnitude, the significance of which has been realised by both the Government and British Coal. Considerable efforts have been made to change the character of employment in the regions. The steel and coal industries both set up "Enterprise" organisations and counselling schemes to attract new industry and facilitate the reemployment of redundant employees. While these have generally been deemed successful (British Coal Enterprise was recently hired by the Ministry of Defence to assist it in its closure programme) there is little independent evidence to support this.

This has involved:

- the payment of reasonably generous redundancy compensation to miners and managers;

- the introduction of an Enterprise scheme by British Coal aimed at generating endogenous economic activity and job creation;

- the introduction and support of a range of initiatives aimed at retraining mine workers and their children and facilitating innovation and change in their labour market behaviour;

- the creation of new, and support of existing development agencies aimed at securing inward investment and new kinds of employment.

Strong claims have been made about the success of these policies. In its 1993 Annual Report, British Coal (Enterprise) has stated that it has assisted in the creation of over 100,000 jobs on the coalfields in the last decade. This is an important claim and, if demonstrated, it represents one of the most significant managed changes of labour markets in the current period. it is supported, in part, by the researches of Beatty and Fothergill (1994) which indicate that coal districts in the 1980s gained manufacturing jobs at a higher rate than the national average. Nevertheless, they indicate that the net gain in manufacturing employment on the coalfields of England and Wales was only 8,100, compared with a loss in coal mining employment of 159,400. These, and other researchers have indicated the above average levels of ill health registration on the coalfields and discrepancies in 1981 and 1991 population data which indicate patterns of out-migration. The avoidance of Census enumerators is, of course, another factor possibly contributing to this trend.

What is clear is that, significant proportions of redundant mine employees have remained without employment, many of them for long periods (Thomas, 1990). More recent surveys conducted by the Coalfield Communities Campaign (Guy, 1994) of workers made redundant with the closures of the Taff Merthyr, Silverhill, Vane Tempest, Parkside and Grimethorpe collieries have indicated unemployment levels of over 40% six months after closure. They also indicated that for those in employment, wages have been significantly reduced. Researches into the social conditions of unemployed coal miners confirm those of the SCELI survey in focusing on the disruptive effects upon domestic organisation and indicators of self-esteem etc. (Wass, 1988 , Gallie,et.al., 1994).

The researches of David Wray (1993) in Consett and Marilyn Thomas (1990) in Mid-Glamorgan reveal little evidence of trade union power influencing the kinds of jobs being made available, or the levels of wages set. Wray quotes one steelworker who, after the closure of the Consett plant:

> went for a job that was going for £40 a week. I don't know if they really expected people to actually work for that, but I took it because it paid more than the dole

In answering critics of its policies a senior member of the local development agency argued that he:

> would have to agree that the majority of the firms we have attracted have been non-union and have paid low wages, but we have to live in the real world. If we insisted on trade union membership or high wages before we would help anybody, they would simply go elsewhere

Yet in spite of this fewer new jobs are being created than anticipated, and fewer redundant workers are being retrained and moved into new employment.

In the early 1980s Pryke quoted the views of redundant engineering workers on Tyneside. These men took a very negative view of the future, and of the utility of their engineering skills. While they recognised that they would have to adapt if they were to get a job, they weren't doing this with good grace. This process of redundancy, unemployment and reemployment, and its effect upon attitudes and "orientations to work" has been a critical aspect of contemporary society yet it is something which we know all too little about. So too is a consideration of any related downward mobility amongst such manual workers (referred to as the "K-Marting" of the working class in the USA). At a time when 32 million people are currently unable to find jobs in industrial countries, it would be helpful if out assumptions about how labour markets operate were informed by longitudinal studies of the attitudes and behaviour of targeted unemployed groups.

2: New Forms of Organisation at Work:

The overall effect of these changes upon the supply of labour and the future of employment patterns in the UK is unclear. In the immediate future, they will serve to direct increasing attention upon the nature of industrial and commercial management and its role in organising economic activity (see eg. Scase and

Goffee,1989, Streek, 1987, Webb, 1992) The new theories of "post-Fordism" and "flexibility" emphasised the importance of labour and the need for management to involve people in decision-making as organisations cope with an increasingly complex and unpredictable world. The failings of British management in this regard we brought out forcefully by Nichols (1987); conclusions which were reinforced in two recent case studies. In a factory in North Wales, "the workers argue that management do not know how to do the jobs but insist on telling the workers that they do". A common reaction here was expressed in this way:

> when decisions come, most men in my department keep quiet ... in the workers' experience, nobody ever listens .. so we don't say much now (Jones, 1993)

Similar reactions were found in an automotive component plant in South Wales. Here a major organisational change was introduced in which management estimated that 88% of all the jobs had taken on increasing numbers of tasks and where they required the increasing trust of the workforce. A common response here was:

> For eighteen years (this) has been a standard company. If they could kick you in the teeth they would and did. Now they expect trust merely because they ask for it (Trotman, 1993).

On the basis of evidence like this, Michael Heseltine's irritation at the annual dinner of the Institute of Directors is understandable. He asked for "a clear recognition" that there was a gap between Britain's industrial performance and the rest of the world, adding: "we have a rather too fulsome opinion of our own performance". In this he drew upon a European survey of companies employing under 500 people conducted by the Cranfield Business School to emphasise the point that:

> the rest of Europe did not think our managers were particularly hard-working or that our companies were focused on the marketplace (Financial Times, 24 November 1993)

This point was developed by Christopher Lorenz who argued that British management (along with the Spanish and Italian) was increasingly falling behind the advanced skills and systems developed by their French and German counterparts. In his view far too many British managers, in large and small companies, are "ill-trained, myopic and therefore poor learners" (Financial Times, 26 November 1993).

insert::

Inward investment

service sector employment

Somehow it doesn't seem likely that the UK is going to figure in the premier league. In the view of Alain Lipietz Britain is emerging as a society in the outer perimeter of the emerging European production system. High value added production being increasingly concentrated in Germany France and Northern Italy. The implications of this view for the UK is becoming clear.

3: Labour Contracts and the Changing Composition of the Work-Force:

The old industrial economy of Britain was highly regulated; it employed large numbers of highly unionised workers employed on full-time contracts. In the 1950s workers and managers in these industries had "a job for life", and, as we have seen, most of these were men, and they were paid what was recognised as "a family wage". In Britain today, women make up 44% of the labour force, and only 60% of the jobs on offer are full time, permanent jobs; almost no-one now has "a job for life". "Non-standard work contract" (part-time, temporary, home-based etc) or some kind of "self-employed" activity, have become the rule; especially for women. The "family wage",like coal and steel production, is a thing of the past.

The kinds of changes indicated here can be seen to involve an increasingly flexible labour market which offers great opportunities for employers. Some authors have emphasised the advantages for workers also, stressing the ways in which deregulated labour markets facilitate people moving into and out of particular jobs, careers and markets. For example, Hakim, and others, have pointed to the benefits which self-employment and non standard work contracts offer for women to reenter the labour market. These authors argue for greater flexibility and for employment arrangements to be increasingly loosened so as to permit a range of possible living and working options. Patricia Hewitt (1993) has been most adroit in pointing out the unnecessary inflexibilities in working arrangements and the potential advantages that could flow from altering our use and understanding of time.

Insert: Hours of work

The arguments here are often attractive and resonate with the discussion of industrial transformation and change within the work-place. Here too however, the evidence is both patchy and contradictory. Attitudinal surveys have indicated that women are happy to combine paid employment with the demands of child-birth and a family,(to get out of the house, to meet people etc). They also show that the need for money (for the independence it provides and the necessary income it generates for the household) is an important factor and that for many women (like men) the experience of paid employment is the source of tension as well as satisfaction. Furthermore, the emphasis upon choice often obscures the fact that in many circumstances, market and power relations favour employers,and that these changes taken together may well trap some women in low paid employment rather than liberate them. Certainly this view would be supported by some advertisements in places like Consett:

> we are seeking people who are prepared to work on a casual basis, with extremely flexible hours. We can accommodate from 3 to 10 hour stints throughout the 24 when work is available. Applicants must have very nimble fingers to cope with the work involved, and be prepared to work at 24 hours notice. (quoted in Wray, 1993)

Furthermore, "non-standard work contracts" may be imposed, rather than freely negotiated. This has been the case in the retail sector where many employees have found their full-time contracts revoked in favour of part-time ones. A recent MORI poll of senior personnel managers found that:

> More than half the managers believed that the desire to cut over-heads by avoiding the legal terms and conditions due to full-time workers might influence decisions to introduce flexible working patterns (Financial Times 31 November 1993)

A recent study of the hotel industry in west Yorkshire revealed that the standard classification of employment as "fulltime" or "part-time" in fact made little difference in daily practice. Many of the "full-time" workers were in fact emplyed on a split shift and informalised lay-off arrangement. So developed were these practices that the term "casual" is a far better descriptor of their work contract. This pattern was observed nationally, as the Department of employment researchers estimated that half of the people employed on "full-time" contracts were, in fact, involved in working arrangements that were less stable than this term implied. This indicates the pace to which casualised or

"non-standard contacts" have become a generalised aspect of working life and applying to men as well as women. The recent DofE pilot studies of their Job Match programme indicate the extent to which men will take part-time employment, but also how the expectations of employers interfere with any real attempts by workers to develop a genuine "portfolio" of jobs (Sampson, 1996).

Oddly though, given the scale of deregulation of labour markets in key sectors evidence of demarcation breakdowns between "women's work" and "men's work" is rather thin. there are accounts of unemployed face workers taking jobs as sewing machinists in Durham. Accounts of the deunionised, deregulated hotel trade however resonate with established patterns of separation: chambermaids and chefs; female receptionists and male porters.

Clearly, great care should be taken in interpreting the costs and benefits of "flexibility".

Given the failure of the British economy in its deregulated form to generate as many new jobs as its US counterpart, we should hesitate before advocating even greater moves in this direction. This is all the more important given the possibly strong interconnections between employment stability and the kinds of commitment to work which a more flexible production system would require. Here, the words of warning spoken by the director general of the Institute of personnel management at the Institute's annual conference are of some interest. In his view, "flexibility" had led to abuse by many employers with workers being hired and fired on terms determined by employment legislation rather than the needs of the individual or the dictates of the production process. Such policies were leading to: "the creation of a permanently casualised industrial peasantry, with little protection and no stake in the future". In his view, this situation "can't be in the interests of organisations or society" (Financial Times, November 31 1993).

This opinion is reinforced by research into home-working which indicates that the experience of unskilled, less privileged workers is more exploitative than rewarding (Mitter and Rowbotham, 1993; Phezackilie, 1993).

Taken together these findings raise important questions about the employment rights of workers, and the need for better regulatory practices rather than their diminution. This view is supported by the experience of Citizens' Advice Bureaux across the country where counsellors are increasingly involved in providing advice on employment law and their abuse by employers. It also raises

questions about the motivation of workers and their enduring relation with employers. This was made clear in a recent decision by Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television to offer full staff status to contract staff. In the past three years employment levels in the company have fallen from 2,400 to 650 staff, with a further 250 employees on short term contract. In his assessment of the situation, Mr Ward Thomas, Chairman of the company recognised the self deception involved in defining many of these workers as "short term", as their contracts were being systematically renewed, adding that "it is right that they should feel secure about their employment". This was welcomed by the trade union, whose representative, Tony Lennon argued "casual staff have less loyalty to their employers and there is little incentive to provide training" (Financial Times, 21 November 1995)

4: The Public Sector:

Work places, and the supply of labour, are regulated (in part) by normative patterns established by employees in relation to their work. This is perhaps seen most clearly with regard to the public service professions. In many middle -class occupations work behaviour is regulated by a professional association and by informal codes of conduct which draw upon ideas of public service. Undoubtedly these codes have served to develop self interest, but this should not detract from their significance as non-instrumental forms of motivation and regulation.

The last ten years have seen quite fundamental changes taking place within the public service sector through privatisation and the imposition of new external budgetary constraints. These changes have strongly influenced the operation of schools, universities, hospitals, local authorities, the civil service, the BBC and the emergency services (fire, ambulances, the police). In each of these areas there have been similar responses of protest, and complaints about increased work-loads. This was demonstrated graphically by one delegate at the NUT Annual Conference who arrived with the documentation relating to the National Curriculum on a porter's trolley! In fact, strikes in the UK are becoming increasingly concentrated in the public sector, and public sector unions increasingly dominate the politics of the TUC.

This change is mainly related to the decline in the significance of manufacturing unions, but it also represents a significant development in its own right. At one point it seemed as if these professional groups would reinvigorate the work ethic. Teachers talked of being "at the chalk face"; in these occupations and

I love the work/ hate the job

beyond "workaholism" became a legitimate illness as people turned up earlier and earlier for work, and often boasted of it. However, there are signs that this phase is over, and that many of these people are developing strategies of work-avoidance.

A recent national survey by the AUT indicated that "academic staff are working an average week of 55 hours with one group, women professors, working an incredible 65 hours per week" (AUT, 1994). In response, , one senior academic told me that he'd:

> been working in the University for over thirty years, and I've always turned up for my lectures and class. this term, for the first time, I rang in to cancel my classes saying that I was unwell. I had so much work to do that I just had to have two days alone at home - "on the sick" - to catch up.

This story was told with a certain amount of angst and in this respect contrasts with the experience of one Social Services Department I visited where:

> The pressure of work has got such lately that people are regularly taking days off work "on the sick" as the only way of coping with it. As soon as a new virus appears, everyone develops the symptoms: one after the other. I've started to make a joke of it. I call into the offices and ask "has anyone got something that I can catch: I need a few days at home"

It seems that many professional people are resenting the increased demands placed upon them in a world where their "service" isn't valued. As one teacher put it to me:

Teacher dissatisfaction

> I went into this job because I was interested in it; interested in teaching kids. But that isn't valued anymore. Not by the government or even by the parents. Its 'money' that counts nowadays. There are a lot of things - extra-curricular things - which I just won't do anymore.

These views and experiences resonate with the views of students engaged on the various Nursing 2000 schemes. Many of the graduates of these schemes are having difficulty obtaining employment in the state sector and resent the enforced choice of unemployment or private nursing.

All this is suggestive of important changes taking place within the state sector. They are related to changes in state policy and the imposition of external, budgetry contraints upon activies

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which was previously delivered on the basis of "need". In this sense they resonate with ideological senses of purpose, and also with changes in the experience and evaluation of work.

5: Insecurity "in the mind":

In Britain the most dramatic changes over the past decade and a half have been associated with the rate of unemployment and with increased insecurity (and "fear") expressed by employees. Unemployment increased in the early 1980s and has remained high since then. While these changes have had a disproportionate affect upon certain age groups (the young and the over-50s) and people from ethnic minorities, they have affected all social groups since 1990. In fact, the last recession hit directly at the new post-industrial, service economy and its heartland in the South east.

An investigation by World in Action (10 November 1992) into the local economy of Slough (the boom town of the 1980s) documented "the fear that affects every office and shop-floor in Britain". In a sample of 1,000 they found that 9% had recently been made redundant; 43% were worried about being made redundant and 60% expected there to be an early redundancy within the family. The leader of the local Council remarked:

> everyone is depressed on the borough council...this country seems to be geared up for one thing - unemployment. You can't plan your future

A year later, a MORI/IRS survey commissioned by the Financial Times found that:

> the number of workers who fear they might lose their jobs in the next twelve months rose to more than 50 per cent in December- in spite of last week's sharp fall in unemployment (Financial Times, 20 December 1993)

This survey revealed some interesting variations in the pattern of change. In referring to a "surge" in the increased fear of redundancy, particular groups were highlighted:

> Part-time women workers are taking most of the jobs being created but this group has seen the biggest rise in job fears.... The anxiety ratio also rose among white-collar staff and lower managerial staff... possibly reflecting the likelihood of more public-sector job cuts

In a reanalysis of LFS data, Philip Bassett and Particia Tehan estimated that in the three years 1990 -1993, as many as 28% of the labour force experienced unemployment (ie 7 million people!) (Times, 11 January 1994).The British Social Attitudes survey report for 1994, registered a dramatic increase in the proportion of employees who saw job protection as their most important concern. Fourteen percent of the sample had been made redundant in the past five years, 52% had worked in workplaces where there had been redundancies and 80% knew someone who had experienced redundancy. These data are supported by a survey conducted at the University of Warwick by Whitstone and Waddington. Focusing on issues relating to trade unionism, they recorded only 6% of respondents claiming that their job was secure. Shop stewards and workplace representatives stressed managerial attitudes and the abuse of authority as giving greatest concern to their members. These feelings were felt most strongly in the public services.

While the earlier period of uncertainty had affected manual workers in the manufacturing and extraction industries, by the 1990s insecurity was widespread. For example, on 3 March 1994, The Times noted that:

> more than 1,000 young business travel agents will be looking for jobs in corporate management this year after graduating from new training schemes.

It added that:

> a recent study has said that up to 700 students on new tourism degree courses could fail to find jobs within the travel industry because of the recession.

Eighteen months later, the Financial Times was noting that:

> there has been a sharp increase in the number of travel agencies which have collapsed. In the three months to the ends of September, the number of failures rose by 46 per cent compared with the same number last year.

In its view:

> the industry is bracing itself for another tough year in the face of erratic consumer behaviour in a market which most describe as "not buoyant" (The Financial Times, 28 October 1995)

Perhaps the most interesting survey has been the one conducted recently by Mintel into "Marketing to 45-64s" (Mintel, 1995).

The Skinned Society

This group has hitherto been the source of considerable purchasing power with the mortgage paid off and the children through education and married. The survey reports an astonishing change in the circumstances of this age group which it depicts as "the sandwich generation"; caught between the changed demands and circumstances of their parents' and their childrens' generation. Caught too in the changed circumstances of their own employment. The study highlights: "a new mood of disenchantment with the world of work" with a significant decline in the proportion indicating that they would continue working if they didn't need the money. It its view:

> it is certainly true that the widespread changes in working practices across the decade, including greater reliance upon new technology and a more "results oriented" those in many occupations are more likely to have been unsettling for established members of the workforce

This report, helpfully draw attention to the ways in which fears and anxieties about security compound the stress which is related to the intensification of work itself. In the year to March 1993, Britain's largest 1,000 companies shed 1.5 million workers (The Director, March 1993), cutting costs and restructuring their operations.In the view of Alistair Anderson, managing director of Personal Performance Consultants UK:

> downsizing in companies has meant that often people have been left ill-equipped and ill-prepared for the job expected of them. This itself creates great stress.

He added that in his belief:"the demands on the workforce are greater than they have ever been" (Financial Times, 8 December 1993).

Here as everywhere there are ironies. So acute is the stress experienced by the "survivors" of corporate shake-outs that many of them wish that they had been "let go". In a recent survey of 40 UK organisations in the public and private sectors, all of whom had undertaken at least one redundancy exercise, Drake Bean Morin (1995), the management consultancy found that:

> survivors frequently feel confused and insecure about the future, and envy their former colleagues' lump sum payments and the opportunities opened up by career counselling....It is common for productivity to nose dive

More recently, a survey of 1,300 managers carried out by the Institute of Management pinpointed "recession survival strategy"

as the source of significant levels of stress.

> Four out of five of the managers in the survey said that their work loads had increased in the past two years and the same numbers were worried about their future financial position. More than half the managers said that they were concerned about future career opportunities .
>
> As companies emerged from recession, however, the new management job structures were not offering improved job security, reduced stress levels or the easing of work loads (IM, 1995)

In this respect these responses fit well alongside the findings of Cary Cooper's researches into the work habits of industrial managers. These confirm that many managers are rejecting the demands of the office in favour of time spent in more rewarding relationships beyond the work-place.

In the 1970s, the problems of British employment relations were strongly identified with the days lost through strike action. In the 1990s it seems that work- related stress (accounting for the loss of as many as 90 million working days a year) has replaced it. This helps to highlight the ways in which the most significant changes taking place in employment relations involve an interplay between the labour process and the content of the job on the one hand and institutional and external factors on the other. Of these, the depressed nature of labour markets; the reorganisation of labour contracts and the related changes in the composition of the labour force; and the changing nature of public sector employment are of considerable significance. In this context the decision by the Department of Health to shred printed copies of the commissioned publication: Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers is of some interest. As Cary Cooper,one of the authors, put it:

> obviously it struck a nerve somewhere....(but) it is clear that long hours do not mean good health (Times, 6 October 1995)

I n assessing the current situation in labour markets across the UK the Pennington column of the Times put the matter rather succinctly. Responding to the Bank of England's puzzlement over the failure of earnings to push up in the period of recovery, it argued thus:

> ask anybody working in the real world why earnings have not risen during this recovery as in past ones and they will

come up with a much more sensible answer, which is blind terror.

The industrial reforms of the 1980s have rendered the labour market permanently less secure for large swathes of the work force. Many more people work part-time and on temporary contracts and the use of casual labour is widespread.

> The jobs market is stacked dramatically in favour of the employer rather than the worker. look no further than the fear of unemployment for the reason for low earnings growth. (Times 9 November 1995)

Conclusions:

Things are changing in our society: sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes dramatically and before our very eyes. Much of this change is associated with work and employment. The processes. whereby new labour forces were reproduced have been radically transformed.Many of these were unchanged for two or three generations, and the implications of these changes for policy makers and for those concerned with the future of the labour supply are portentous.

It seems clear that the operation of the new system is strongly linked to the social consequences of high unemployment, lower real wages and the tacit ending of "the family wage". The "deregulation" of the British system of employment relations has brought it more in line with the US. However it has failed to deliver new jobs at anything like the US rate. At the same time there grounds for feeling that it has done damage to the normative attachment of employees to their occupations and to their particular employer. Here the reference to the "tranfer market" in British Universities is revealing, and it touches upon an important element in the emplyment relationship which Fukihama has recently identifies as critical -trust.

In reflecting upon the ways in which work and work places have changed over the past ten years it is difficult not to be struck by the importance of changes in work contracts and in the role of the state. The changes in the state sector, and the patterns of deregulation draw attention to the importance of state reguative forms and forms of integration into state corporations for work place experiences and ocupatonal cultures. This is

perhaps most obvious with the coal miners: here it is possible to understand the development of an occupational culture and politics which was contructed around a strategy toward, and support from the state. Oddly, the sociological literature on occupations like mining (dockworkers, shipyards etc) pay scant regard to the role of the state, identifying instead socioogical features of local communities as being critical. More generally, state support for trade union organisations and forms of collective bargaining, together with the operation of Wages Copunculs for the low paid etc had a critical ordering effect upon the experiences of work places in the UK.

New kinds of cultures: against work and against the state?

In 1974, as Minister of Employment, Michael Foot expressed a general worry from within his Ministry that unregulated youth unemployment could have serious effects upon work discipline and the future pattern of labour supply. There is evidence of this fear being realised amongst a significant minority of young people. Paul Willis' researches (1991) indicate the extent to which unemployed young people identify with consumption rather than production and develop ways of surviving without having to "do shitwork" or work on "Schemes" (this word, or so it seems, is universally pronounced with a sneer). The best selling investigation into young people's attitudes in the USA (Generation X) emphasises the ways in which young people are experiencing the fragmenting experience of contemporary society in ways which emphasise the significance of positive (and exciting) experience as opposed to the mundane encounters with work. There is some support for this view. In a recent radio interview on Piccadilly Radio in Manchester a young man explained openly why he felt it was more legitimate for him to earn a living as a drug dealer rather than follow the example of his father who had worked for twenty years in a factory before being "thrown on the scrap heap". Perhaps there is the beginnings of an explanation here for the Chief Constable of Avon who thought the rioting in Bristol to be "very sad" and said: "I simply don't understand why people are tearing their community apart in this way" (Financial Times 18 July 1992)

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