
PERSONAL DATA

Age: 35

Sex: Male

Education: Industrial College graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 12

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1980

Year Left China: 1980

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Canton native/brothers in Hong Kong

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Technician, Technical Department, Agricultural
Machinery Repair Plant, Hainan Island, 1969-80

Administrative Level of Work Unit/(No. of employees):

1) County/(200)

Experience in Full-time Manual Labor (for non-worker occupations):

two years in countryside, 1966-68, before job assignment,
Taishan dyke project under PLA; one year shop labor, 1969

APPOINTMENTS: 2

TOTAL HOURS: 4

PAGES TEXT: 6

Occupational History (3/22/80, 2.5 hrs.)

He worked in an agricultural machinery repair plant, which had 200 staff and workers. Its products were spare parts for tractors, also transmissions. They also repaired tractor transmissions and did other repairs. This factory was run by the agricultural machinery bureau for the county. This was on Hainan Island (Guangdong), and he started work here after 5 years of university and two years of manual labor in and around Canton. He was sent to Hainan in 1969, and worked at this factory until he left, legally, for Hong Kong in 1980, February.

He worked in a technical section (gu), which is equivalent to a department (ke) in a larger plant, but they call them gu in a small plant. Their job was to examine incoming agricultural machines--generators, trucks, tractors--and find out what is wrong. They draw up diagrams for the spare parts needed. Then they would send the diagrams to the parts shop for the production of these parts. Afterwards they sent to the assembly shop for repairs.

Some of the parts were in the plant warehouse, but many were not, so they had to process them themselves. They had many different kinds of machines--tractors from Rumania, Hungary, Russia, and several makes from China. The plants were supposed to be self-reliant and complete (wan neng) when it came to the production and supply of parts.

After graduating from South China Industrial College in 1967, he was sent down to do 2 years of manual labor in a labor brigade under the PLA, and did work building dykes in Taishan County, to keep out the sea. After this, in 1969, he was sent to Hainan, where he was assigned to this factory. He did one year of manual labor in the shops, and then was assigned to the technical section. Thereafter he was never sent to do manual labor.

Wages

When he first came to the factory, he did manual labor and was a practicing technician (jianxi) for one year. After one year, according to regulations, he was turned (zhuanzheng) into a grade 13 technician. The first year his wages were 57¥, and after he became a regular technician he was raised to 68.75¥. This did not change until he left in 1980, but he says he would almost certainly have gotten a raise during 1980 if he had stayed, and would have gotten 80¥ or so.

There were two wage readjustments during his experience. One was in 1978, and another began near the end of 1979. In 1978, they had two readjustments. One was very small, for just a few people, and then there was a larger one for about 40% of the people. Then in 1979, they proceeded to raise another 40% of the people. In both, the criteria were in part seniority, work contribution, technical level. People were raised 1 grade, which was worth about 10¥.

They had many arguments in small groups when they assessed for raises. The small groups assessed, drew up name lists. The shop would pare off names to make sure they didn't give too many raises. Then the final list was given to the party branch committee to discuss. They drew up a final list and posted it on the wall. They can cross names off the list and add new ones not on the list of nominations from the shop floor. Then workers can raise opinions about the nominees, and if there are many objections expressed then they will send the names back to the small group for discussion.

Almost every small group had serious arguments about these raise assessments. When people all were of about the same level and there was only

a fixed number of raises to be given out, there were often arguments. People would get embarrassed (mianhong erchi), and then argue about the assessments if they were unsuccessful. Sometimes friends split up over this, and would not talk thereafter. There were also some problems with bias in selections, and often it was based on personal friendships.

This was an experimental plant when it came to wage readjustments. In 1978 they saw that there were many problems developing, that dissatisfactions and splits were resulting from the assessments, so they announced that there would be another assessment later in a year or two. Now they are studying ways of changing the selection process to avoid these kinds of problems.

Bonuses

They began in 1977. They had monthly, quarterly, and yearly bonuses, and also bonuses for overfulfilling targets (chao e jiang). The bonuses for each month were divided into 3 grades, usually about 4¥, 6¥, and 8¥, but they fluctuated based on the profit/loss situation of the enterprise. For the year end bonus (nianzhong jiang), grade 1 was about 30¥, grade 2 about 25¥, and grade 3 was 20¥. About 40% of the people in the plant do not get any bonuses at any given time. These are the people who come to work late, spoil spare parts, etc. They also had a quantity bonus which was somewhere between the amount of money for the year-end and monthly bonus.

The method for assessing for the monthly bonus was through small group meetings. They would raise opinions, draw up lists of names. Just like for raises. They used a lot of time in these meetings. The time formerly allocated for political study is now being used for these bonus assessments. Now there is never more than 1 political study meeting a week, if that many. Most of the meetings now are production-related meetings.

They also have a piece rate 'bonus' for overfulfilling targets. If an individual overfulfills his quota, then they will give back to the worker a fixed percentage of the profit on each overfulfilled piece, as an 'overfulfillment of quota bonus' (chao e jiang). If they lost money, then there is no bonus. If profit increases or decreases, the bonus will increase or decrease accordingly.

Before 1977 they had 'supplementary wages' (fujia gongzi), and now they no longer have them. Every person got about 5¥ per month, regardless. There were no differences in the amounts given individuals, and the amount remained the same month after month, year after year. Bonuses have now taken the place of these payments.

Before 1977 there was a lot of dissatisfaction due to the wage problem. This influenced people's work, and they didn't want to work real hard. "Mo yang gong" (磨洋工), this is a universal type of condition in Chinese factories. The meaning of this term originated during the contract labor system (bao gong) of pre-liberation times. Whenever the gang boss (gongtou) was not there, workers would loaf on the job.

Workers also asked for a lot of sick leave so they could stay at home and clean, buy things, make furniture. This was a very serious problem. But in the past year this has changed greatly. Things have gotten almost completely better, but of course there are still problems. For example, some younger workers, when there is nothing to do will loaf. Generally the young workers don't work hard, and aren't really interested in bonuses, have no real skills, and their education is not very good, they don't need to support a family, so they are pretty lazy. There is also a big problem caused by the children of higher cadres who come to work there. They don't listen to orders, and are lazy because they know they are cadres' children. This is still a fairly serious problem.

Generally speaking, the formerly serious problems with work style have changed for the better. People's incomes are directly connected to profitability, and individual performance, so they want to work hard. Also the problem of false sick leave has been greatly reduced, and they practically don't have that problem at all anymore.

Temporary and Contract Workers

They always had this system. There was a navy airbase nearby. They would hire people in the households (jia shu ren)--children or wives--of the military personnel. They signed contracts to work for a fixed period of time. At certain times, when the local labor bureau approved an addition to the labor force, they would come from among these temporary workers. They were paid about 30+¥ per month.

They usually did casting work in the metallurgy shop. They usually had about 20 of these kinds of temporary workers, or about 10% of the total labor force. Before the temporary workers did not work any harder than the other workers. Now they are eligible for bonuses and piece rates just like the others, and their work has improved too.

There is a remaining problem with the bonus system which is tied to output, especially the new piece rate bonus. It is Ok for workers to increase their output, but they still have supply problems, and still run out of parts and materials. So when they run out, there is nothing they can do, and activism at work is of no use. This is a remaining contradiction in the new bonus system.

Democratic Elections

In 1979 they began democratic elections for leaders at two levels. They elected shop directors (chejian zhuren), shift supervisors (banzhang) if the shop was divided into shifts, and the production group leaders. Nominations: the leading cadres in the plant brought out their list of nominees at an enlarged meeting of all enterprise employees. The plant leaders would nominate more than one person for each shop director's position. Some of the old shop directors were not qualified for their jobs. It was not unusual for an incumbent shop director not to be nominated by the leadership.

After the enlarged plant meeting, the factory split up into shops, and had meetings in all the shops to discuss and nominate further. The branch party committees and the plant office had the power to disqualify nominees, but in his plant they were hesitant to use this power, because it would make workers unhappy. They did not use this power in his plant but he hears that in other plants (through reading newspapers) that this was a problem elsewhere--cadres cancelled the election results. But this never happened in his plant.

Elections: they elected an 'election committee' composed of common workers, who were elected at these shop meetings. Then they had secret ballots. They collected the ballots, and the members of the election committee would count them up right in front of the workers, on a blackboard. Then the results were sent to the plant director's office for approval. There were no cases of them changing election results. They had a number of incumbent shop directors who were nominees but who lost the elections--there were four shops in all.

All the newly-elected shop directors were middle aged workers or above. They were people who had good relations with the masses, and who had their respect. They elected five people in all at the shop level, in each shop. One shop director, 1 vice-director, and one group leader for each small group.

The whole process took an intensive week of effort. There were several preparatory meetings, one every day after work. Both in small groups, to discuss the elections and their significance, and in the larger shop meetings to discuss and nominate individuals. The branch party committee, aside from raising some nominees and approving the final list, had no special role. Originally all the shop directors were party members. After the elections, the percentage of leaders who were party members was reduced. He says that there were plans in his plant within the three year period of readjustment (1979-81) to develop these elections further to the level of the plant director. Many plant directors were upset about this, and feel that their abilities were not great enough, and feel like their days are numbered, and were counting the time until they were replaced.

These election results were to be valid for one year, after which they would elect again. If the incumbent had done a good job, he could be re-elected. When they were preparing for elections, they studied an article about an enterprise in Yugoslavia--a big trust which combined agriculture and industry--which was published in 1977 in People's Daily. He says that they studied the Yugoslav experience with elections. He says that now China is leaning towards the Yugoslav experience, and they are very much interested in it.

(4/6/80, 1.5 hrs.)

His impression while they studied the Yugoslav experience was that they eventually planned to take this road all the way. This meant establishing elected workers' councils by secret ballot, and having them take the functions of the party committee in supervising the Plant Directors. The party would then handle only internal party personnel matters and the workers' council would supervise the plant director's management of production. So instead of having a system of "unified leadership of the plant director under the party committee", it will be under the direction of the workers' council. They have not implemented this yet, and still haven't even elected the plant director, although there are preparations currently under way to do this. But he says he believes that the workers' councils will come before too long. This will require the party committees to relax their hold. In fact, the newspapers still insist the Party must exercise unified leadership, but in fact the relaxation has already begun. Many non-party members, and old workers, are being elected to positions like shop director.

Class Labels

In 1979, in relation with the relaxation of party leadership, they got rid of the pre-1949 class labels and took all bad material related to that out of the files (dang'an). Their class designation (chengfen) would be changed to their present occupation. This was the case for landlords, rich peasants, capitalists, traitors, spies, rightists, etc. All these labels are gone. So there is no more discrimination of this sort in promotions, school admissions for children. The old system of 30 years has been basically done away with.

The Agricultural Machinery Repair Plant, 1970-80

He started working there in March 1970. At that time they had already established a revolutionary committee. The old plant director and party secretary had been sent to agricultural villages. A new party branch secretary and plant director had already been transferred in.

For a short period during the cultural revolution, a rebel leader had been selected as the head of the Party Committee, but later on he was replaced by the new Party Branch Secretary. He had originally been a regular

worker, but after the new party secretary came he was sent to be a shop director. During the elections after the Gang of 4 fell he was defeated in the election and is now an ordinary worker. "Careerist" (yexin jia)--this is the term he uses to refer to this fellow who was a former rebel leader, who had ambitions to be a leader and climb up over the backs of others. These people were fairly common during that era.

There were 5-6 members of the revolutionary committee, which was finally abolished in 1978. The head of the RC was the party secretary, the vice-head was the plant director of pre-CR days, and there were 2 leaders from the mass organizations, and a couple of shop directors.

He volunteers that the revolutionary committee form was no good. Why? Because they were never elected, they were just people who had been most active in struggling and knocking down others. Also these people had no abilities to manage production. Finally, their power was quite concentrated in their hands, and they didn't have to listen to worker suggestions. So workers did not like it.

The main problem was that politics was first, and production second. All these new workers in positions of leadership, without experience, and some of them 'careerists', grasped mostly politics, meetings, criticism, and campaigns. They didn't manage production too well. They were 'campaign experts' (yundong zhuanjia).

Who handled production? In name, the revolutionary committee, but they really didn't understand the production process. So they would continually raise the slogan "grasp revolution, promote production", but they didn't really know how to promote production effectively. Production during this period naturally was not good. The plant lost money during at least part of every year, and drew on state funds. They ate out of the same rice bowl (chidaguo fan).

A good-sized group of activists were promoted to leading positions in departments and shops. The old cadres were mostly at the May 7 cadre schools. They left around 1970, and had not returned until 1975. Their talents were wasted. When they finally came back to the plant, they did not demote the activists, the new cadres. So if the old leading cadre came back, he would just increase the overall number of leaders. "There were more people than work" (ren fuyu shi)--the number of leaders multiplied beyond the work there was for them to do.

This gave rise to another problem. There was a contradiction between the new and old leaders. They didn't agree on a lot of matters, so a lot of problems could not be solved because the different generations of leaders could not agree or cooperate. The basic problem was that leaders could not be demoted. Among these different groups of leaders, there remained a lot of mutual personal hostility (siren de chouhen). This is a problem which remains right up to the present.

Administrative Structures

The departmental (gu) structure underwent no basic change as a result of the cultural revolution. They still had departments, but they were led by the revolutionary committee. They always raised the slogan of "simplifying administration", but this was just talk. As time went on, the departments got fatter and fatter.

In the production groups, there were no worker 'yuan' to carry out small group management, and they did not establish this system until 1977-79. But there were technicians, quality control yuan, and materials yuan for each shop of 40-60 workers. The small groups had a fixed system of before and after-shift meetings, production meetings, and several other activities. But these meetings were only restored after 1977. During the earlier period

they had fallen into disuse, and nobody bothered with them. Before the Gang fell, the group leader just gave orders, and sometimes the workers listened, sometimes they didn't.

After the Gang of Four

After the Gang fell, they did not drag out and criticize anybody. They did not want to repeat the Gang of 4's own method. This did happen at the upper levels of the party and government, though, but in their plant they just had meetings to criticize the gang of 4.

They have not completely abolished political study, although they no longer have a fixed system of political study every Thursday, as they used to. Now when an important document is released, they will hold a meeting to read it. But other than that, meetings are strictly for business. Before the Gang of 4 fell, they had political study at least four evenings a week. During the high tides of campaigns, they had five nights a week plus one hour on Sundays. For the criticism of Deng Xiaoping in 1976, for example, they met seven days a week, and these meetings went on until 11pm. Many people just slept and chatted.

During the period before 1976, it was not uncommon to stop production during some periods to study criticisms of Lin Biao and Confucius, study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.

(Generally speaking, the informant is quite impressed with the Yugoslav model as it has been presented to him within China, and he refers to it repeatedly and compares China's method with this democratic model.)

Impressions of Work in Hong Kong

The informant has found his first job in Hong Kong since the first interview--a factory job in a watch factory in Kwai Chung. We started this interview with his impressions gathered during his first 2 weeks of work, and with comparisons to China. The biggest difference in work is that work is divided very finely for a small plant, as compared with the small plants in China (the plant in Hong Kong is Japanese, Seiko). Work is very monotonous here (dandiao). Workers only do one thing all day long, and are not masters of the house. They can't make any suggestions, there are no discussion meetings. Also the work pace is much more tense (jinzhang). He admits that he had a great deal of trouble getting accustomed to it at first.