PERSONAL DATA

Age: 43 Sex: Female

Education: Technical school graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 25

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1979 Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Shantou native/husband Thai OS

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Staff technician, Technical Department, Harbin Electric Machinery Factory, 1956-59

2) Staff technician, Technical Department of Prototype Plant, Canton Machine Tools Research Institute, 1959-79

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

1) probably Ministry/(10,000+)

2) Ministry until 1972, later Municipal/(1000)

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

none mentioned

APPOINTMENTS: 1 TOTAL HOURS: 2.5 PAGES TEXT: 3

No. 26

Occupational History (4/6/80, 2.5 hrs.)

The informant is originally from Guangdong, in a village near Shantou, on the seacoast. When she graduated from lower middle school she wanted to serve industrialization, as did 80% of her classmates. They all took the national exam to enter technical middle school. They all wanted to get out of the village. This was in 1952. She passed, and went on to study machine building at a technical school in Changchun, Jilin. She studied here for 3 years, graduating in 1956. Then she was assigned to an electrical machinery factory in Harbin. She was a technician there in the technical (gongyi) department from 1956-59.

In 1959 she was transfered with her husband to the Canton Machine Tools Research Institute. There she worked also in the technology department, in the plant under the research institute which made prototype machine tools. Her job was to take the design drawings and draw up plans for producing the parts from raw materials. The result was a series of technical cards (gongyi kapian). The steps for each process from raw materials to finished parts would be specified on each card, along with specifications, processing methods, tools to use, raw materials to be used. So she would take the designs and break them down into a planned production sequence. She worked here until 1979, when she emigrated legally to Hong Kong.

Wages

When she graduated in April 1956, she was given a work point designation of 134 fen, with each point work X amount of yuan. She got 32¥. At the end of 1956 they shifted to a system of technical grades, and she was then an assistant technician, grade 15, and got 44¥. In the 1956 wage reform they set out a 'practice' (jianxi) period of one year, after which you would be 'made regular' (zhuanzheng). So in April 1957 was zhuanzheng to 50¥. After she went to Canton she was given a regional readjustment to 55¥,but was still grade 14. In 1963 she was raised a grade to 13 and became a full-fledged technician, at 61¥. Then in 1977 she was raised to 68¥, grade 12.

In 1963 she got the raise because she hadn't had a raise since the 1956 reform. In 1977 she was also raised because she hadn't gotten a raise in 14 years. There were other readjustments: in 1959, mostly for workers and very few administrative and technical cadres. There was no mass discussion, they just gave raises, but a small number overall. This is the only other readjustment she remembers. There was no readjustment during the cultural revolution and ensuing period.

Bonuses

In Harbin during the 1950s they had bonuses for workers but not for staff. These were based on overfulfilling targets, attendance, etc. This was every month. They also had bonuses in the research institute for the workers but not for the technicians. It was cancelled during the CR. In 1977, at the very end of the year, they began quarterly and year-end bonuses for both workers and technical staff. They were divided into 3 grades.

Temporary and Contract Workers

There were none in her plant during 1956-59. The plant was large, and growing fast. They had a lot of apprentices--over 200 were being trained at that time, but did not use temporary labor of any sort.

Firings, Discipline

If a worker was doing a poor job, they would talk to him give him criticism (piping), or send him to a study group (xuexi ban). The study group was for people who did work poorly. They went to these groups for political education full time, and were docked 30% of their wages. During the 'blooming and contending' (daming dafang) period of 1956 (she probably means 1957), the workers criticized this practice as being a warehouse of spare workers, which in practice it actually was, since workers seemed to go in and out based on whether they needed workers. The system was cancelled after the 'blooming and contending' criticisms.

There were no firings that she heard of during the 1956-59 period, but workers would be penalized for bad work by missing out on bonuses and raises. Some few were arrested and taken away for political or lifestyle problems, and did labor reform. But generally you can't just fire a worker..

Harbin Electrical Machinery Plant, 1956-59

There were over 10,000 workers and staff. The products were water-powered electrical generators (shuili dianfa ji), and also normal sized electrical motors. During this period they used the Soviet system--'one-man management' (yizhang zhi). They had an 'experts office' (zhuanjia bangongshi), full of Russian technical specialists. The plant in fact was built with Soviet assistance, and in fact was enlarged from smaller plants which had been in existence earlier.

The plant was divided into about 14 shops. There was a plant director, many assistant directors, and a large group of 'director's assistants' (changzhang zhuli). There was a designing department, a technical (gongyi) department, a quality inspection department (jiancha ke), the experts office, a personnel department, an organizational department, an educational department (for technical education and literacy campaigns). There were quite a number of other departments, but she doesn't remember clearly because she was a technician and it was such a large plant.

Her technical department had about 160 staff members. There was one department head and 3 vice-heads, one branch party secretary and one union cadre. They were divided into different groups (zu). She worked in the tool designing group (gongju shiji zu), about 26 or so people, about 18 of which did industrial designing, and another 5-6 or so did copying and tracing of the original drawings. This was also a unit for political study. Study was led by the group leader or the union cadre. Political study was irregular then, and not much emphasized. They had enlarged meetings of the department more often. They also had an equipment group, a materials quota group, and a few others based on type of product.

All the groups had group leaders and two vice-leaders, and one union leader (gonghui zuzhang). The group head was an engineer. He handled the work plans, and according to the work assignments of the group would arrange work assignments and quotas for each person. He would hold meetings about the tasks of the group and would assign tasks to people based on his assessment of their abilities. He also checked over the work of each individual and was responsible for mistakes in designs if they left the group.

Anti-Rightist Campaign, 1957

In 1957, they first had the 100 flowers, the 'blooming and contending'. Later came the anti-rightist campaign. During this campaign a lot of technicians were criticized, and they largely had made the mistake of complaining about the treatment of intellectuals, the leadership of the party over them, and the Party cadre's lack of technical ability. At that time these experts could usually read foreign languages like Russian, and could get money for

translations by working at night.

Great Leap Forward

They sent groups of staff workers down to do manual labor in shops, about 20-25% of the members of her department went at any one time. They were sent for fixed periods of one year to the shops. She was sent to the tool shop which used the drawings her group made. She operated machine tools. After 3 months, however, she was transfered. She went to do labor with this second group at the middle of 1959, but after these 3 months she went to her new unit in Canton and never finished her one year stint.

Even though a good proportion of the staff was being sent to the shops, they could still finish their designing responsibilities because they worked overtime frequently and also on their days off. So they did pick up the slack. They did not get overtime pay for this, but the workers did. They also had the 'da lian gang' (steel-making) movement. They pulled a number of people out from other jobs to work on this.

Small group management: Before the Great Leap the small groups had only a group leader and vice-leader, and a union leader (gonghui zhang). These 3 people handled most of the jobs that the '8 personnel' (ba da yuan) were supposed to do later. Her group had this new system--shenghuo yuan, zhiliang yuan, kaoqin yuan, etc. This was a new thing. Some groups handled this well, some didn't. Some had appointed these 'yuan', but they in reality didn't do any real work most of the time, just had this name. Other groups strictly adhered to their responsibilities. (The implication here is that she views this not as participation in management but as a 'responsibility system').

They really emphasized this system in Harbin during the Great Leap. But the group she was in was full of older workers from before 1949, and they basically ignored the political study and 'ba da yuan' system. In fact it was still like the 'yizhang zhi' (the 'one leader system', or 'one-man management') within the group, with the group leader handling all the tasks which were supposed to be done by the worker 'yuan'.

Results of the Great Leap: Since their factory was not a large batch production plant, and produced large machines to order, there was a problem with quality because they were turning out these large machines at a faster rate. They did not carry out quality inspection with very much strictness. With the 'downward transfer of powers' (quanli xiafang), quality control powers were sent down to the shops and the shops then sacrificed quality to meet the demands for greatly increased production. But generally speaking, her plant was modern and very orderly, and had fixed processes of production and was not thrown into too much disorder during the Great Leap, but some smaller factories really were disrupted.