

Occupational History (6/4/80, 1 hr.)

The informant is 25 years old, from Nanhai, a town near Canton. He graduated from upper middle school and was assigned to a factory which made parts for internal combustion engines. The engines were used in the assembly of tractors. The plant he worked in was a small branch factory in Nanhai, part of a series of branch factories which served a larger general plant which made tractors in another city. The plant was under county administration, was state owned, and had about 300 employees.

He was assigned to work at this plant in mid-1974. He was a technical worker (jigong). He worked at this engine parts plant for 4 years. Then he was assigned to teach at an agricultural machinery industrial school in the town. This was run by the provincial education bureau. They selected certain skilled workers to be teachers there and it was a sought after position. They taught skills to untrained workers. Many people tried to use all kinds of connections to get these appointments. He was just lucky. He used to copy documents for the leading cadre of his plant, and therefore the leader had a good impression of him and respected his education level. So when time came for the plant to send a worker to the industrial school, he was selected by this leader.

He taught at this school from 1976-79, and came to Hong Kong legally in mid-1979.

Wages (6/8/80, 2 hrs.)

When he first started as an apprentice, he made 18¥ for the first year, 20¥ the second, and 22¥ the third. There was also a clothing supplement. This was for a level 2 standard of living area. After that, grade 1 was 34.7¥. This was not the only way one could enter the labor force as a worker. It was also possible to be a 'trial worker' (shiyong gong), which was 28¥. Then after one year you would be a grade one worker. Whether you were an apprentice or a trial worker depended completely on luck. Some of his schoolmates were trial workers. Some were apprentices like himself. There were many documents on labor and he just assumes that at one point there was a document permitting this.

Apprentices can not usually be fired, except for very serious mistakes, while trial workers can be fired a little easier during the first year. Apprentices and trial workers both had masters they studied under. There were no tests for either, of any sort. Promotion was automatic and based completely on years of service.

After one year of being a grade 1 worker, you were automatically raised to grade 2, 40¥. After that, you had to pray to heaven and hope for a central document to come down ordering a wage readjustment. He was transferred to teach at the industrial school right after he was made grade 1, but wages didn't change as a result of the work transfer. He also was promoted ultimately to grade 2. In 1978 there was a readjustment which depended largely on years of service. He was too young to be affected by it.

Temporary and Contract Workers

They had temporary workers who came from the communes. They did not have fixed contracts normally, but some did who signed long term contracts for hauling and transport of goods. They normally did cleaning, moving things that required no skill. There were also seasonal workers (jijie gong) in the sugar factories who came for fixed short term periods each year. If these temporary and seasonal workers were good, they could be made a permanent worker. This happened frequently. This was the most common way

for people in the villages to get a job in town. They could move into the town if it was convenient. The temporary workers were normally paid in piece rates. If they worked real hard, they could make over 100¥ in a month. They were paid by the load if they were hauling. If the worker's wage was fixed at a monthly rate, then they would get slightly more than the average worker. But they got no fringe benefits, like hospitalization, medicine fees, paid sick leave, hardship subsidies.

The length of service for these temporary workers ranges from a few months to over 10 years. It depends on a lot of things. In theory, temporary workers can be fired on the spot for bad work, but you rarely see it happen.

Discipline, Punishment

There is a series of possible punishments. First is criticism. Second is a warning and self-examination. Third is to suspend for a short period. These last two are recorded on one's file (dang'an) and stay in it forever. If it is a very serious error, like murder, rape, they can be expelled, sent to labor camp, but this is under the legal system's sphere of powers, not the factories.

What kind of things can a worker be fired for in a factory? Most important is illicit sexual relations (nannu guanxi). His whole time at work only one man was fired, and this was for illicit sex.

If a worker's work is bad, if attendance is poor, they will usually criticize in meetings, bring up his name. If he persists in this behavior then they might halt his work temporarily, and have him write a self-examination.

Work Efficiency

There were no bonuses in his plant during his three years there. Worker activism as a result was very low. They just didn't work very actively. No matter how hard they worked they got the same amount of money. But soon after he left to teach in 1977 they put a bonus system into effect and worker activism increased immediately. Of course there always were some labor activists before, but generally people didn't work hard. They had selections of advanced workers each year, annually, throughout the time he worked there. They would discuss and nominate people in the small groups.

The Engine Parts Factory

The enterprise had over 300 workers. There was a large repair shop that repaired internal combustion engines, with over 50 workers. Then there were the production shops. There was one shop for the repair and restoration of spare parts. China is really short on spare parts, so there was over 30 workers in this shop. There was a scientific research group of technicians and assistant technicians. There was a parts and products shop, which included the rest of the plant, which manufactured parts for tractor engines. They had a mess hall in which only temporary workers were employed.

The leading group's name had changed many times during the years, but never really changed in nature. The branch party secretary was always in charge. They had a revolutionary committee. The party branch secretary was the head, and the 2 vice branch secretaries were the vice-heads. The rest of the RC were all members of the branch party committee, some were workers. They also had sections (gu) for technical and administrative matters.

The informant worked in the repair shop. His small group had only 3 people, but some groups had 10, it depended on the work. His group re-

paired trucks and tractors. His personal responsibility in the small group was the electrical system of the tractor. Another was responsible for the engine, and another for the drive train and axle. They had a group leader, the one with the highest technical level. He directed the repair of the trucks and tractors.

Shop directors usually understood production, because they mostly were promoted from among the experienced workers. But plant directors (or party secretaries) didn't understand production at all, they were sent in from above.

They had a quality inspector in the shop, an old worker who could tell what was wrong with an engine just by listening to it. He worked with a young guy right out of technical middle school.

Meetings

During some periods, they had meetings every night--five nights a week. For example, when Deng Xiaoping fell from power, they studied this every night for several weeks. They also had a campaign to study the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These were just about the People's Daily editorials, they did not leave these topics. The campaign had nothing to do with wages.

They also had business meetings occasionally. About once a month, for the entire plant. Twice a month, they had pre-shift meetings of the shops for half a hour. But this was not fixed, it depended on the number of problems that popped up in production. Once every three months, they had an 'exchange of technical experience' meeting (jishu jiaoliu hui), where some workers would give demonstrations, and discuss technical problems.

Technical Education

They also had a couple of kinds of schools for spare time worker education. The July 21 Worker's College was full time, completely separated from production. First, one has to apply, then the plant has to approve. Very few workers could participate--about 1% would get permission. Usually people studied 2-3 years depending on their technical level which they started with. When they graduated they were considered technicians. They were specialized by system--light industry, heavy, textiles. Each bureau would have one. Their small town of 10,000 didn't have a July 21 College. When people graduate, they don't necessarily get assigned to their old unit. They can be sent to a new one.

The school he taught at after leaving the factory was run by the local Agricultural Machinery Bureau. Skilled workers from nearby factories would teach peasants from the surrounding countryside about the maintenance and repair of agricultural machinery. The peasants would come in, study for 3 months, then return to their villages.

Part-time technical study classes were run either by several plants in combination or by one large plant independently. This was just in order to raise worker skill levels. These were mostly young workers who participated, few old ones. It was voluntary to participate. People commonly took part. They met for 2 fixed nights a week. Their plant did not have this kind of spare time education before 1977. This was established after the Gang of 4 was knocked down. So there was no conflict with nightly political study classes because after that time there was little political study.