

PERSONAL DATA

Age: 40

Sex: Female

Education: probably lower middle school graduate, no higher

Total Years Relevant Experience: 24

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1979

Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Peking native/husband Malaysia OS

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Trim Painter, Peking Municipal Construction Company,
1956-79

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

1) Municipal/(fluctuated)

APPOINTMENTS: 2

TOTAL HOURS: 5

PAGES TEXT: 8

Occupational History (4/5/80, 2.5 hrs.)

The informant worked as a painter for the Peking Construction Co. This company was under the Peking Municipal Construction Bureau. Below the Bureau were 6 companies, and each company was divided into several work areas (gongqu). Her company was divided into 5 work areas, and each was responsible at any given time for a building. Each work area was divided into several sections (gongduan), and each section was divided into many small groups (xiaozu), which are the basic units of production. Her work as a painter was mainly painting door and window frames. She worked in the same small group from 1956 until October 1979, when she emigrated legally to Hong Kong.

Wages

She was an apprentice starting in 1956. They received money in units measured by the cost of millet (xiaomi), which came out to 24¥ per month. They lived in a collective dormitory, 4 people to a room. This was for two years. After these two years she was raised to grade 2 worker, at 40.04 ¥. The apprentice system worked with master painters who had earlier been individual handicraftsmen before liberation. Afterwards they were organized into painting groups in various sections and they trained apprentice painters. Each master had 2-3 apprentices.

Her next raise was in 1963, when she was raised to grade 3, 49¥. Then in 1972 she was raised to grade 4, 56.5¥. Afterwards, she got no more raises because her pay was already high.

There were general wage readjustments in 1954, for 40% of the workers, in 1956, for 40% of the workers, in 1959, for party cadres, in 1963, for 40% of the workers, in 1972, for low wage people. In 1972, if you had worked since 1960 and were still grade 2, you were raised to grade 3, and if you had worked since 1957 and were still grade 3, you were raised to grade 4. Above grade 4 you were not raised, and in all a factory could raise no more than 40% of their workers. In 1977 they raised 40% of the workers, and appraised people according to years of service, low wages, and work performance. In 1978 they had a small readjustment of 2% of the workers, to make up for those who missed out in 1977 but deserved it. In 1979 they started to give raised to 40% again, and had just gotten started when she left, they were beginning the small group assessments of people.

Bonuses

Before the cultural revolution, they had bonuses for quality and over-fulfilling quotas. The most one could get in one month from both sources was 30¥. During the Great Leap you could double your salaries because there was so much overtime, and in Peking they were building so many public buildings and monuments. The bonus for quality was appraised in the groups, by the group leader and by quality control inspectors from the section. The bonus for quota overfulfillment was figured by the group. There were quotas for square meters of paint, figured at the group level, then all in the group got a bonus if the group met its quota, and they divided the bonus up proportional to wage levels. They appraised for bonuses on the quality of individual work, but did not divide into 3 grades. The average bonus per month was 50-60% of monthly wages. They later cancelled the bonus system in the CR and replaced it with wage supplements of 4, 6, or 8¥, depending on one's wage grades--it was proportional to the wage level.

They had no piece wages in the painting group, but there were piece rates for other kinds of construction workers--structural steel, excavation, bricklayers. They were paid by the cubic meter of dirt, the square meter of brick wall, and could get a lot of money this way by working faster. During the CR they cancelled both the piece rates and the bonuses. They went to straight time wages with supplementary wages. Incomes went down for workers, even though monthly wages stayed the same.

This greatly influenced worker activism. More work, but no more pay. Apprentices even got less--16¥, 18¥, and 21¥ for the first 3 years. They also got money for clothing and transport. After three years they went to grade 1, 35.5¥. This was in the 4th year, and they were already thinking about getting married--but there was no way to support a family, so they lost their work activism, and couldn't even think of love. There was also a problem with older workers who could now get no more than 8¥ per month in supplementary income while before they could double their wages.

After the CR worker activism was low, and they would get the same amount of money no matter how hard they worked. There were two ways it influenced worker behavior. First, people just didn't work as hard because they couldn't get any more money if they did, and got no less if they didn't. Then, other people, even if they still wanted to work hard, wouldn't because it wouldn't be fair if others were loafing. Before the CR, each construction worker produced on the average of 100 square meters of housing space per year. During and after the CR, this figure was about 12 m².

In 1977, they restored bonuses, and separated them into 3 grades--10¥, 20¥, and 30¥. They appraised in groups, but in fact it was not really an appraisal, since they used a 'rotation system' (lunhuan zhidu) where people took turns getting the high bonus. They did this in order to reduce dissatisfactions. People would be embarrassed if they got small bonuses, but they would be dissatisfied if the same people would get them every month. This was not a fixed system; they just used it to get by within the group. They still have the old supplementary wage, and also the bonus, so bonuses are smaller now than before.

Just as she left, they were discussing in groups that they should get rid of the supplementary wage and restore the quota overfulfillment bonus (chao e jiang). They still have not restored piece rates, because they are hard to calculate. Work efficiency is still low, and not as high as before the CR. This is because the experienced workers are now old, while the younger workers still haven't received training or developed good work habits and discipline, due to the cultural revolution and the early 1970s. So it will take a while to regain this old form. Also, setting quotas is hard for old workers to meet, while the younger workers still can't meet them. So it will be hard to make this work again like it used to. When she left in October 1979 they were still using the group appraisal, 3-grade bonus system.

Temporary and Contract Labor

They had these kinds of workers both before and after the cultural revolution, and they came mostly from the countryside. The contract labor came from contracts between the company and production teams (shengchan dui) in communes. The company gave money to the team directly equal to 60% of the total wages. Forty percent of the wages were given to the workers, while they still got work points from the team. They did all kinds of work. The contracts were fixed according to the estimated length of the construction project. There was no fixed percentage of contract workers in the company, it is hard to estimate how many there were. In her section they didn't have many because the work required skill, so if they needed

more workers they were transferred from elsewhere in the company.

They also had temporary workers from the neighborhoods, some were students on summer vacation, but others were "unemployed youths" (daiye qingnian). The company goes to the street office where the potential workers are registered. Temporary workers got 1¥ per day, and could be fired at any time. But some can work for 1-2 years. If their work and attitude is good, it is possible for them to become permanent workers.

This system was not discontinued after the cultural revolution or even in its midst, despite the fact that the temporary and contract workers rebelled during the CR with the chief goal of becoming permanent workers. Basically there was no change in the percentage of these people in the labor force. But in the past 2 years there have been more than at any time since the GLF, when they also hired a lot. The reason is that recently the intellectual youths sent to the countryside have been coming back in large numbers recently, and there are also others who did not want to go, so in order to solve the employment problem they have expanded this kind of employment.

Discipline, Firings

If a worker's work is bad, there is no punishment, just a small group meeting to criticize (piping) and 'help' (bangzhu) the person. If he persists, there is no final punishment, they just continue to criticize and help him.

During the anti-rightist campaign in 1957 there were a lot of people who received punishments--no workers, all technicians. They were labelled rightist of 3 types: The first type was sent to do manual labor in labor reform camps, and were expelled from the work unit. The second type had their wages cancelled, then they were given a living allowance of 18¥. There were also allowances if the person had children. The person still works in the unit, and can return home at night. The third type was a demotion, and a reduction in pay by 1 or 2 grades. Some of these people kept their labels until 1979. What they had done was to raise opinions during 1957, largely about the level of wages, and criticisms of the party leadership.

It was very rare for people to be fired or demoted. Corruption was one reason for punishment, and 'workstyle' (zuofeng) problems is another (I presume she means illicit sexual relations, but am too polite to press her on this further).

Great Leap Forward

This started in 1958. The main result was that workers worked harder and longer. There were few meetings for politics, but they had a lot for production. They had the "8 personnel" (ba da yuan) in their small groups. There was the group leader, the vice-leader, and people in charge of livelihood, study, culture and physical education, propaganda, sanitation, labor, quality inspection, and materials. The number of 'yuan' was equal to the number of workers in the group. Everybody had a task, and this was for the purpose of raising each person's sense of responsibility. If a group was too small, then one person would have to handle two tasks at once.

The group leader was a party member, led political study meetings, and was responsible for people's ideological thought. This person must be a party member. The vice-head led production. He arranged the speed, planning, rate of completion of tasks. He led production meetings, but was not necessarily a party member. He cooperated closely with the group leader. The 'yuan' were workers appointed to do management-related tasks, and they used off-hours to do this, mainly before and after the shift.

The informant was the 'livelihood yuan' (shenghuo). She distributed ration tickets, found out who had financial problems, who needed hardship supplements, and also had to visit people who were ill. The 'study yuan'

(xuexi) helps the group leader lead political study during the meetings. He is usually an activist, and often is a party or youth league member. The propaganda 'yuan' (xuanchuan) was responsible for finding out about good experiences, and finding out who were the good workers in the group, write this information up to propagate these model experiences on the group blackboard. The 'education yuan' (wenti) gets movie tickets from the union and distributes them to the workers, helps organize other activities, basketball games, exercise. The 'sanitation yuan' (weisheng) makes sure that the work area is clean and tidy, and puts away leftover tools. The 'labor yuan' (laodong) helps the vice group leader arrange the day's work, making work assignments, and they discuss every week the plan for production and the problems. This person is usually experienced in work. The quality yuan is also an experienced worker. He inspects the painting job of each worker, and if there is a problem he will bring it up with the worker, or raise the problem at a meeting if it persists.

There are also inspection specialists who are technicians, from the section. Sometimes these are experienced workers who have been given promotions. They work in the office and come down to inspect. They are non-production staff, and work in offices. They come at non-fixed periods as uninvited guests, and have the power to reject work and make you do it over again. The materials yuan collects materials on advanced methods and gets articles on technical matters. For foreign material he went to the qingbao zu, which was a division of the library. Then they brought the materials back to the group to bring it up at the study meetings.

This system of management was used beginning in 1958, and right up until 1966, and after this it was not used. Up until 1978 they did not have it, and now they are trying to restore it. In the intervening 12 years the group leader handled everything. This is not to say that the system did not exist, just that the yuan didn't really do any work, and the system was neglected. This is because worker enthusiasm was low during this period.

(4/8/80, 2.5 hrs.)

The worker 'yuan' are led by the group leader and assistant group leader. At the section level there were also the same '8 personnel', and they led the '8 personnel' in the small groups. This was called "2 level leadership" (shuangceng lingdao).

The 8 'yuan' in the small groups are chosen by discussion in the small groups. They try to fit each person's abilities to the task. They discuss who will be selected, then they have a ballot (secret) for electing each person. This was during the Great Leap. They also used this system in 1978 when they revived the system. In the past, they had a reelection each year, but in practice most people were reelected to the same job, because they didn't want to change them around too much.

Whenever there was a campaign for something like quality or health and sanitation, the 'yuan' involved would be called to a meeting at the company or city level, and after returning the 'yuan' would submit a report to the group leader about how to carry out that particular campaign. For example, in her own job as 'livelihood yuan', she was required to visit homes of workers and find out if there was any illness or special burden that required supplements. She did not have the power to decide on the normal supplement (for example if the family's percapita income was under 18¥), but she did have the power to decide to pay for medicine, etc.

At that time, people were generally willing to do that kind of 'social work' (shehui gongzuo), which means work done by everyone on matters of concern to all. The purpose was to bring each person's abilities into play, and arouse their concern for the small group. There was not too much

responsibility, and also it frees the time of the group leader for production.

This worked very well in the Great Leap Forward because people were of one mind (renxin henqi), and they wanted to hasten the country's modernization. After the CR, the system didn't work at all. People had separated into factions and there was a lot of disunity.

During the Great Leap the group leaders were not elected, unlike the 'yuan'. They were selected by above. The group leader was certainly a party member, but the vice leader was not necessarily one. Earlier, the group leader didn't need to be a party member either. But after the CR he had to be. They needed to have a fairly high technical level.

Before the Great Leap, they had quality inspection 'yuan', and had those for materials, propaganda, but not as many yuan as later. But these people were not elected or selected within small groups, or given names and titles. They were just assigned these jobs informally by the group leader. The elections of the 8 personnel did not change the group leader's authority in any way. It went neither up or down.

Xiafang of Cadres during the Great Leap

They also had cadres during the great leap who were sent down to do production jobs for the first time. In July-August 1957 they had an anti-rightist campaign, and in the beginning of 1958 they sent the first group down for labor. This was the "blooming and contending, big character poster" (daming dafang dazibao) campaign in mid-1957, May-June. Then those among the intellectuals and technicians outside the Party who had criticized its work a leadership were criticized in the following anti-rightist campaign. This was in late 1957.

The number of people criticized and labelled rightists were few on her work area. The largest numbers were in intellectual units like bureau and schools. The party set a quota of 10% of intellectuals for such labelling. Not until 1979 were they rehabilitated.

After this movement they sent the intellectuals in the company to do manual labor. They had intellectuals in her painting group. They were sent for one year on a rotating basis. They generally worked hard because if they didn't they could be appraised poorly and might have to stay. At the beginning, the relations were a little awkward between intellectuals and workers, but generally they warmed up after that and were OK. At the 3 lean years began at the end of 1959, they stopped this practice. They revived it at the beginning of the four cleans movement in 1963, when they sent some intellectuals down to the countryside until about 1966. They had people from her work group go to the countryside to run the socialist education movement. Up until 1966, nobody in her own work group was a sent-down cadre; they began having them in 1969, and had this until 1978, when it was abolished. This was after Deng became vice-premier again.

The Construction Company Structure

The bureau was divided into 5 companies, according to type of work. The five companies had fixed administrative offices in their own buildings. The work areas (gongqu) moved around, depending on where the work happened to be. Each one was separated into sections (gongqu), then groups. Each section had a complete set of production capabilities--excavation, painting, carpentry, etc. So the section is a complete areal construction unit. The groups are broken up by type of work--hers was painting.

There are inspectors from all levels--company, work area, section--who came down to inspect work. They inspect for both quality and rate of completion. During the CR the number of these inspections decreased greatly, and in fact were abolished in all but name. The cadres were not

willing to go down because no one would listen to them, they just didn't have the authority to enforce their orders. During the CR and after this was considered orders of reactionary experts--a counter-revolutionary line. After the CR the problem was not so much that they were considered reactionary but that they really didn't make full use of cadres. They just gave them a little work to do, and work efficiency was low.

Cultural Revolution

There were 2 factions in the company, both in the leadership and among workers. One was zaofan, the other was baohuang (rebels, royalists). They both wanted to drag out leaders, but different ones, so they fought over this. There was no basic age or demographic characteristics which separated the two factions; the only thing is that the core of each side were young people. The contract and temporary workers in the company joined the rebel faction, and raised the demand that they be changed to permanent workers. They raised the demand, but they were not changed to permanent workers.

Almost all of the leading cadres from the group leader up to the departments and leading officials stood aside. They all were replaced by members of the factions, and were all young people with no experience. The former leaders were sent to production groups to engage in productive labor. Others were put under supervision, and were suspected of historical problems from before the revolution. These were leading officials, and they were not allowed to return home. When they ate or went to the toilet, they had someone go with them.

During this period basically no construction went on. In 1968 they established a revolutionary committee. A military control committee was sent to the plant to forge an alliance, and there were about 10+ PLA soldiers in the group. They held meetings. These people replaced the highest leadership in the company, and in effect replaced the party committee.

The RC was an example of unified party leadership (dang yiyuanhua lingdao). There were 13 members. The head was the head of the military control committee, who was also the party secretary. Several former middle-level cadres from work areas and section, with no major political problems, became members. There were also mass representatives from each faction. These non-army people were chosen after fermentation (yunniang) meetings, where they finally arrived at a list of people which both factions could agree on. This was election by the masses.

Open-door Rectification

The masses were mobilized to express their opinions about the members of the RC. But this was of absolutely no use. The PLA group split into factions too and didn't listen. Mostly, people did not dare to raise any but the most superficial (pimao) opinions. There was always the danger in criticizing the PLA that you could be given the label of anti-PLA. They used the small group meetings for this.

In 1974, the PLA left, and the RC chairman and party secretary position was left open for one year. So the #2 in charge took over both the party committee and RC. Finally a new party secretary was sent in from the bureau, and he assumed the leadership of the RC. This was at the company level. They had a lot of party secretaries transferred to other units after the CR because they had been struggled so severely during the CR, and everybody knew it. There were no other organs created during this time. They had revolutionary committees in work areas and sections also.

Early 1970s

They had a lot of cadres 'liberated' right after the CR, around 1969-72. They returned to offices, but not always to leading positions, or to their previous work. It was not until after 1976 that these people started to return to their former leading positions.

During the Pi Lin, Pi Kong campaign there was a lot of political study--6 days a week. There were meetings all the time. They used half of work time for study. They studied all day on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and only worked half the days. This was from 1966 up to 1972, with another increase during Pi Lin. In the 1970s the criticism of cadres was rare, but they still had a lot of study. They also had cadres rotating down to do productive labor. This was called intellectuals receiving education from the workers.

After the Gang of Four

They rehabilitated some rightists, but no one was criticized and removed for following the Gang of Four, and no one was removed from leadership positions as far as she knew.

In 1979, they had elections for work area heads (quzhang), and section leaders (gongduan zhang), and both group leaders and assistant leaders. The criteria was technical ability, not party membership. The two were not always connected. These were secret ballot elections, while within the small group they would give each member a ballot with names of all the group members. They had 3 rounds of balloting. On the first round, you circle the names of all those you approve of. On the second round, you just vote for those who got over $\frac{1}{2}$ approval. On the third round, the one who gets the most votes is the winner. Second place is the assistant group leader.

In her group, the group leader from before the CR was elected. This was the case in most groups. The younger group leader who had been an activist during the CR had become a leader during the CR and had entered the party since then. The older group leader was also a party member, but the newly elected group leaders were not all party members.

They began elections at the group level and worked up. The work area and section leader nominees were put on a name list which came down from the company level. It included the names of incumbents, and old cadres who had previously stepped aside. The groups would discuss the nominees for a few days, raise opinions, sometimes a name or 2 will be added. The nominee list is discussed first by the party committee, then by the election committee. Then each small group ballots separately. The ballots are sent up to a committee called the "appraisal and election committee" (pingxuan weiyuanhui). This committee is composed of representatives from the company, area, section, and small groups. These representatives were earlier elected within each office and unit by discussion and general acclamation. The election committee then counts the ballots, and announces the results. The upper levels do not have the power to cancel the results.

There were a lot of changes after these elections. Most of the CR era leaders--the ones promoted during that period--were losers, and the technically proficient were elected, most of whom were the leaders from before the CR. The group leaders are to be reelected each year, but the section and work area leaders are not. Things need to settle down now and become stable. Another reason is that you can't tell a leader's effectiveness after only one year. Generally speaking, workers feel this system is reasonable. The previous leaders were all sent from above.

Technical Study

They had a systematic arrangement for worker technical education at night before 1966. They arranged study in the evenings in the enterprise. Also, night school was available in the construction design institute of the city, if workers were willing to participate. During the CR, for a long period thereafter, no technical study or other technical education opportunities existed. Just political study.

After 1977, they restored the technical education classes every Wednesday night for workers, especially younger ones. This is set by regulations. Also other opportunities existed in other schools and units, but so far not as many as before the CR.

In 1975, they established a July 21 College attached to the company, where young workers could study full time for 2 years at full wages, and thereafter go back to their units as technicians. They still have the workers' college, and young workers with at least 2 years of experience can attend. There has been no change in the size of this program.