
PERSONAL DATA

Age: 41

Sex: Male

Education: Middle school graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 23

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1980

Year Left China: 1980

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Guangdong native/wife in Hong Kong

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Staff, Central Laboratory, Chemical Fertilizer Factory,
Guangdong, 1958-66

2) Petrochemical Plant, Canton, 1966-73

a) Staff, Production Control Department, 1966-68

b) Lab Assistant, Laboratory, 1968-73

3) Chief Technician, Medicine-making plant, small town
in Guangdong, 1973-80

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

1) Province/(2000)

2) Province/(1000)

3) county or town/(100)

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

unknown

APPOINTMENTS: 2

TOTAL HOURS: 4.5

PAGES TEXT: 5

Occupational History (8/2/80, 2.5 hrs.)

The informant graduated from middle school in the mid-1950s, and worked for a while in an export-import company in Canton. In 1958 he was assigned to a newly-built chemical fertilizer factory of about 2000 employees as a technician. The plant was under provincial bureau administration. He worked in the central laboratory of the plant on experiments with new products. They were responsible for quality analysis and control for finished products, as well as experimentation with new products. He also did some procurement and designing work in the first couple of years when they were still finishing plant construction and hadn't yet started production. He worked here until 1966.

In 1966 he was transferred to a petrochemical plant in Canton which produced methane and chemicals for fibres, about 1000 employees, also under the provincial bureau. He worked in the production control office (shengchan diaodu ke), which was separate from the production and technical departments, but had close relations with both. It was directly under the plant director. He worked here about 2 years and then was transferred back to the laboratory of the factory as lab technician. He did this until 1973, when he was transferred to a medicine factory.

In 1973 he was sent back to his home town (another city in Guangdong) where he was assigned to a small (100 person) medicine-making factory under the municipal government. He was the head technician in the plant. He worked here until he came to Hong Kong legally in early 1980. His wife is a Hong Kong native who moved to China in the 1950s. She came out in 1979, and he followed shortly thereafter.

Wages

When he first started working, he got 40+¥. He was given a raise one grade in 1963, and also in 1971, and no more after that. When he left his wages were at 58.5¥. He also got supplements. There was a wage reform in 1956, a small readjustment in 1959 and 1963, a big one in 1971, and big ones in 1977 and 1979-80. In 1959 and 1963, the most important criteria was that the leadership nominated you. In 1959 only cadres got raised, in 1963 both cadres and workers. They did not have any group assessments, this was only after the cultural revolution. The leadership decided.

In 1971, the raises were given out according to years of experience and according to whether or not you had low wages. Again, no assessments. Strictly according to years of service.

In 1977, they had raises for 40% of both workers and cadres. A part of them were done according to years of service--about 20%. Then another 40% were assessed in small group meetings according to work performance. The process took about 2-3 months to complete in any given group, since they met for one hour after work about twice a week. Then the names are sifted through again at shop meetings with group leaders in attendance, then again at all-plant level with shop leaders attending.

In 1979, again 40%, and again they assessed in small groups the same way as in 1977. This was supposed to be entirely according to work contribution and skill. Some contradictions appeared in the midst of this. Everyone wanted to raise their standard of living since most people's were still fairly low. Also, the opportunities to do so were rare, and some hadn't had raises for 10-15 years. Also, it was very difficult to compare performances on different kinds of jobs. So people argued and disagreed. Finally the problem was solved by having the leadership make the final decision and releasing the names.

Bonuses

They had bonuses before 1966 and after 1977. The system was different in different kinds of factories. And there were differences within factories. There was the general (zonghe) bonus, then there were several individual bonuses--overfulfilling quotas, quality. In some factories, piece rates were used, but this was more common in collective factories.

Most workers were assessed for bonuses every month. Most cadres were assessed every quarter. Then there was a year-end bonus that depended on how often you were chosen for the top bonus in monthly or quarterly assessments during the year. They assessed in small group meetings, and the method was about the same as they used for raises in the last two readjustments. In some factories the shop or group would be able to give out more bonuses depending on output or profit, but this was not always the case. In his plant they gave each an amount of money equal to 8% of the wage bill to distribute as bonuses. This came out of welfare money given by the state.

The monthly bonuses were divided into 3 grades, 8¥, 7¥, and 6¥. About 70% of the workers got bonuses. The quarterly bonus ranged from 50, 40, 30¥. In each case, most workers who got bonuses got the middle grade, while grades 1 and 3 were smaller.

The individual bonuses, which were mostly for workers (but they also had quality bonuses for technicians) usually amounted to 2-3¥ figured on a monthly basis. The bonus for overfulfilling quotas are set at the group level. You can't set individual bonuses in a chemical plant. If the group overfulfills its quotas, it gets a chao'e jiang (or bonus for overfulfilling quota). Plant-level leaders got no bonuses. Shop directors and department heads got bonuses the same as everyone else.

In the cultural revolution they abolished this kind of bonus system. In the cultural revolution and until 1977, they had supplementary wages. They did not assess after that. All cadres got 4.5 ¥, all workers 5¥. Workers who started after 1967 did not get supplementary wages. These supplementary wages are maintained right up to the present if the workers getting them were not given raises in 1979. If in the 1979-80 readjustments they get a raise, then the supplementary wages are cancelled. This was not the case in 1977-78.

During this period when they had no bonuses they had assessments for advanced workers once a year, and they would continue to assess up to the city and national level. In his unit about 5% were selected, and given token prizes like towels and notebooks. No money.

When they began to restore the bonus system in 1978, the general bonus was smaller in amount than before the cultural revolution, but more workers were eligible (remember, he's in a different work unit now). They also had the same individual (danxiang) bonuses--for full attendance (which they did not have in the chemical fertilizer plant before), and overfulfilling quotas. Also item bonuses for scientific inventions and technical innovations.

They use the same method of small group assessment as before the CR. His factory used a 100 point system, while there were other factories that also use the 3-grade system. In their plant, if you were absent too many times, or caused an accident, no bonus. Otherwise they assessed you according to a point system, and the value of the points varied only according to the total number of points given out in the group. The amount available for bonuses was fixed according to the total wage bill. Then after everyone was assessed, the total number of points given out was divided into this fixed amount of money to get the worth of each point. Then you added them up to derive the bonus.

They did not rely much on group assessment discussions after the CR. Most of the points were deducted according to work records--especially attendance and work output. If someone did something wrong they would have a group discussion and decide to deduct a certain number of points that month. If someone fell below the 70 point mark, no bonus, and if someone didn't do anything wrong, they kept all 100 points. The highest was usually around 6¥, the lowest 4¥. But the situation, he stresses, is different in each factory. Some will give you a few mao if you have earned only a few points. Other factories have piece rate systems and it is possible to get 100¥ a month.

Worker Motivation

This new system has had some effect of worker activism. But it also has its problems. There are problems with a bonus system, just as there were problems with a no-bonus system. With no bonuses it doesn't matter whether workers work hard or not, they still get paid the same. There is no competition to spur on workers. But the problem with having bonuses is finding a way to assess people properly, because it is very possible for many contradictions to arise between workers. So each factory tries to find an appropriate way to assess workers. Since implementing the bonus system, worker activism has been improved. This is especially the case in piece rate systems where you can earn a great deal of money. Also, the attendance rates (chuqin lu) have risen a great deal. Workers now will not ask for sick leave for minor discomforts or illnesses.

Temporary and Contract Workers (8/3/80, 2 hrs.)

They had temporary workers who came from several sources, both from agricultural villages and from the people without jobs in the city. There are two conditions for employment. The first is that they have a fixed job to do, like construction. When the work is finished, so is employment. The second is when the number of workers in the plan is not enough to meet new targets, they get permission from the labor bureau to hire temporary workers, and these are more long-term. If their work and behavior is good, then they can be turned into formal workers after a while.

They also have contract workers who sign contracts for one, two, or three months. They come from both the cities and the countryside. The ones in the city are registered at labor bureaus like city temporary workers, and get fixed contracts because the nature or length of the job may be different. From the communes they come in groups, and the contract is signed between the factory and commune for an entire group of workers. This is often during the slack agricultural season.

The city temporary and contract workers are registered at labor bureaus and they have files there specifying their skills and experience. When the factory notifies them they ask for certain types of workers. The countryside workers are arranged directly between the factories and communes. The labor bureau approves and arranges introductions, while the enterprise handles concrete negotiations and arrangements.

As far as temporary and contract workers from the countryside go, there are two wage conditions. Most give a portion of wages back to the commune in exchange for work points and grain. Some do not do this, and do not get grain. Some workers from the communes are able to get permission to move into the city (to have their hukou transferred) if the labor bureau permits it. This is usually in small or medium sized cities when labor supply is tight. The biggest example of this was the Great Leap Forward.

Workers from the city also have two ways of finding these temporary jobs. They can register either at the labor bureau or at their local

residents' committee office. The latter are usually dependents in households.

The workers from the cities have wage grades assigned to them on the basis of their experience and tests for skill. Their grade is on their labor bureau file. They are paid varying amounts according to whether they do manual labor or can operate a lathe, drill press, or can do a fitter's work. Those from the countryside usually do only manual labor. Usually the wages are equal to a grade one worker.

They always had these kinds of workers, but the amount varied. After the CR they had more, because production was not coordinated very well, and demand for labor fluctuated, so the number of these kinds of workers increased. Before the CR production was more carefully balanced and planned, so they needed fewer. Now that they are reorganizing the economy, they should be employing fewer of these kinds of workers once again.

Central Laboratory in the Chemical Fertilizer Plant, 1958-66

The main task of the laboratory was to inspect the quality of production. But the shops also had their own labs, and they were responsible also for quality inspections there. The shop labs were fairly simple. The laboratory had engineers, technicians, and some technical workers. When they found something wrong with quality they would report to the production control department and the shop director involved. They took samples of chemicals for analysis before they put them in the stores, and their personnel also did occasional inspections in the shops. Most of their quality inspections took place in the lab, not in the shops.

The shop laboratories were under the shop director, not the central laboratory. They received advice from the central labor but not leadership. They were very polite to the central lab, however. The shop labs did production control. They had three shifts, had to do chemical analysis of half-finished products and finished products both at fixed intervals, and make technical adjustments in the production process. The central lab, however, simply did analysis on final products before they would be offered for sale to outside units. The central lab was under the plant headquarters.

The head of the lab was an administrative party cadre who had a university education, but did not study anything technical. He was assisted by two engineers. The lab head was there for administrative purposes, was an 'outsider' (waihang). The engineers were only advisors, he did not have to listen to their advice.

Their leading group was made up of the plant director, several vice-directors who divided up responsibility. They were under the leadership of the party committee, but the plant director was responsible completely for production matters. The plant director was like most others, an administrative party cadre who had been in the PLA before liberation, around 60 years old. Most of the vice-directors were the same. There were very few who received specialized university training in their fields.

Most of the vice-directors, and also the plant director, were members of the party committee's standing committee. The party secretary was supposed to handle only general matters, ideological issues, campaigns, and big issues in the plant. But since the Great Leap Forward you can say that in reality he was the first in command in the plant.

Their plant had just started production in the Great Leap Forward, so it is hard to say what changes there were. They sent a lot of technicians from the departments down to the shops, and they worked as technicians in the shops for a while. This was called 'strengthening the shops', 'simplifying administration'. They soon returned to the departments after a while, while some were transferred to other factories. Production increased, and the number of workers grew quickly, but this was also due to the fact that this was a new plant, and this was planned anyway, so it is hard to say what was due to the Great Leap and what was not.

Production Control Office in the Petrochemical Plant

He was transferred in 1966 to another new plant where he worked in the production control office, which was separate from the production department in his plant. The production control office was responsible for assuring balance of production. They had to keep in touch with the situation in each shop several times during the day, know when there were breakdowns, quality problems, materials shortages or imbalances developing. Then they would have to dispatch people to remedy the situation, or transfer equipment, personnel, materials.

They had around 10 people in the office, spread out over three shifts. Most were technicians. The leading cadre was a technician among them. They read daily reports, stayed on the telephone, made personal inspection visits to the shops. The most common problem they ran into was a breakdown in machinery. In these cases they would dispatch a number of workers from the repair shop to fix the problem. They had the power to do this. The shop director could not do this because the shops are parallel with one another. A second thing is not the equipment but the production process. They have to make sure that the pressure and temperature in the machinery is correct in all the shops, and that the quality at each step is correct. To assure this they have the shop technicians check the gauges and report on them and have the labs report on quality. If there is a problem, they order the shop director to have his technicians correct the situation. If the problem cannot be solved quickly, they report to the chief engineer or the plant director. They do not want these kinds of quality or production problems to persist in a shop because it will influence the next shop's production by depriving it of materials and will upset the balance of production. Other than this, the most common problem was the supply of materials, of electric power and gas. On occasion these would be insufficient or cut off, and there was not much they could do about it. It was not common, but it happened.

During the CR, things were in disorder. Around 1969 they established a revolutionary committee. This was after the province established theirs. The first head of the RC was a cadre transferred in from another plant. There were also several cadres from the PLA involved. But we don't need to talk about this because this involves the Cultural Revolution and besides they have abolished revolutionary committees, and don't use them now. No, they never simplified administration and never abolished departments. These were slogans in the paper, but in fact the number of people was too much for the work to do, and work efficiency went down. They have since restored those systems which were advantageous for production.

Medicines Factory, 1973-80

This was a small factory, they didn't have any departments. They just had a leading group which handled a whole range of different tasks. He was the technician in charge, and handled all major repairs, designing work, quality inspection, development of new products, experiments that needed to be done. They had several shops, also a laboratory which he was in charge of. The head of their plant was an old cadre, an administrator. The plant made western style medicines.

In the past several years there were some changes in the plant. They had new leaders transferred in from outside. They strengthened management systems, especially quality inspection. They introduced some automation in the production process. They had not had any elections, nor were they preparing for them when he left, although he has heard of them in other plants. At the time they abolished the RC in 1978 or so, they took the head of the RC and made him into a plant director, just changed his title. In a small plant like this he was at the same time party secretary.