
PERSONAL DATA

Age: 30

Sex: Male

Education: middle school graduate

Total Years Relevant Experience: 12

Last Year of Relevant Experience: 1979

Year Left China: 1979

Initial Immigration Status: Legal

Native Place/Overseas Connections: Malaysian OS, date of return unknown

Class Background/Political Designation: unknown

OCCUPATIONAL HISTORY SUMMARY

Positions Held: 1) Contract worker, Metallurgy Plant, small Guangdong city,
1968-69

2) Coal Mining Bureau, Guangdong, 1970-79

a) Worker, Coal Loading Platform, 1970

b) Worker, Group Leader, Machinery Repair Plant, 1971-2

c) Office Staff, Production Control, Shop Office,
Machinery Repair Plant, 1972-74

d) Office Staff, General Affairs Department, Machinery
Repair Plant, 1975-79

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

1) Municipal or county/(300)

2) Province/2b,2c,2d(400)

APPOINTMENTS: 2

TOTAL HOURS: 4

PAGES TEXT: 5

Occupational History (5/11/80, 2.25 hrs.)

The informant is a Malaysian overseas Chinese. He graduated from middle school in a county seat of about 30,000 people in Guangdong. He lived in a neighborhood in the city. He was given work as a contract laborer in a metallurgy plant in the town, which later turned to steel production. When he began, in 1968, it had about 300 employees.

After a little over one year, in 1970, he went to work in one of the local provincial coal mining bureaus. The coalfield was just started in 1968, and previously it had been a labor reform camp. So when he first arrived they were having lots of workers dispatched to the mining bureau, and he was among a large batch sent from his county seat. The bureau had asked the county for X amount of workers, and the demands were split up among the street committees of the city, and he was assigned by the street committee. He was not very happy about this, because it was dangerous work and hard work, and was 50 kilometers from his home town.

During his first year he worked at a coal platform, where they transported coal above ground for storage and processing at various plant and refineries under the bureau and in the vicinity. After one year of this, he moved to the machinery repair plant in the mining bureau. The work was to repair and serve the mining operations. They repaired any machine that needed work. Mostly coal cars. There were about 400 workers, mostly young ones, because they had started the plant so recently. There were no fixed products or production lines, since they had no fixed tasks or products.

He did several types of jobs here. He worked as a worker in iron smelting, and in the casting shop. Eventually, he went to work in the general affairs office, which ran the canteen. But he worked for the longest time in the casting department. During this period in the mining bureau he was a permanent worker, no longer a contract worker. He worked for a period of time as a group leader, and later did production control work in the shop office. He did this work right up until the beginning of 1979 when he came legally to Hong Kong.

Wages

For contract work, the work is the same as regular workers. Wages are different, as in labor insurance and old age welfare provisions. Contract workers got 24¥, while grade 1 workers got 29.7¥. They did have a contract between the labor bureau or the street committee and the plant. The worker signed the first time--and if they extended it thereafter they didn't need to sign anymore. In 1972 all the temporary and contract workers were turned to permanent ones. If the work of a contract worker was bad before the CR, they would fire him readily. From 1966-72, it was rare for them to be fired for bad work. Managers were afraid after 1966, and didn't dare fire these workers, and didn't want to be criticized for following the 'theory of the primacy of the productive forces'.

The contract workers had fixed work groups, got rations, supplements, and simple welfare provisions,, and did the same work as regular workers. They participated in all meetings that regular workers did. It was not unusual for a contract worker to work in the same plant on these 3 month contracts for years. But even if they did work this long, there was no change in wages. All the contract workers got the same wage regardless of the type of work done. But he had heard of some other units where the contract workers received varying wages.

After his transfer to the Coal bureau, he was a grade 1 worker, 32¥. He was a grade one worker, then raised to grade 2, 37.6¥. This was the regulation in the plant, after one year the grade one workers were promoted to grade 2. But after being raised to grade 2, you needed to wait for a central document before you could get another opportunity for a raise. He was still grade 2 when he left, but during the intervening period they had changed grade 2 wages to 40¥.

Bonuses

There were no bonuses until after 1978, after the Gang of 4 fell and Deng came back. At first, the new bonus system was divided into 3 grades, and workers were assessed in monthly group meetings. Grade 1 was 8¥, grade 2 5¥, grade 3, 3¥. Afterwards, they raised it to 12, 9, and 6¥. The methods went through many changes, and he can't remember them all very clearly.

The wage system up to that time had, in his words "poured cold water on worker enthusiasm". But the first small bonuses did not do much to improve the situation, because they were too small, and there was no way really to tell how much work someone was doing. This got better later as the amount of money got bigger. There were no piece rates because given the nature of their constantly shifting work, it was impossible to set rates.

During the first period when they had these bonuses and the amounts were increased, it had some affect on worker activism, but gradually the effect wore off because workers figured that there was really not much difference in the amount of money between different grades. So this method was not really that effective.

The informant feels that some of the methods not used in the plant would be more effective--he mentions forms of profit sharing where the plant keeps and distributes a portion of profit for bonuses. He notes that when there are no bonuses, workers don't care whether their coworkers work hard or not, but when they have group bonuses they will tell their coworkers to hurry up. Also, the leaders should consider using time and not money to give workers incentives. A 'contract' (baogong) method could be used. Give workers a fixed time to complete a task, and if they finish early they can rest or go home.

The leaders in his unit didn't use material incentives too enthusiastically in the plant, they were a bit conservative. They had not seen any document from above ordering them to do things in a specific way, or explaining how to run a good bonus system. So they stuck to small bonuses which were not of much use.

They didn't have collective 'slowdowns' (daigong), strikes, resistance, or anything like that. But at the individual level they certainly had daigong. People would refuse to do certain types of work, and would ask for a lot of sick leave. Before the bonuses were instituted, especially among the younger workers who made up such a large part of the workforce, there was a problem with worker activism. On the other hand, there was also a problem with leadership which didn't dare set clear goals and lead actively. So things went very slowly with production, and workers were very lax (suibian) in their work. The plant lost money, and did not turn a profit or turned very little profit, if any.

Small Group Management

Because he had a couple of years of experience in metallurgy, he was appointed by the leaders to be a group leader after a couple of months

in the plant. He held this position in two different shops in the plant, for a total of almost 2 years, before being transferred to production control (diaodu) work in the shop. Being a group leader really wasn't anything special. He had to hold meetings, attend other meetings by himself, pick up dues, etc. But for 90% of the time he was a worker just like everybody else. His group in the iron smelting shop had 6-7 workers. His group in the casting shop had 14 workers. The group leaders were appointed, not elected.

Group leader responsibilities were different in different groups, but generally speaking they had to keep track of progress, make work assignments. They also had to attend meetings at the shop level, pick up documents, find out what the group's responsibilities were, then go back to the group and hold a meeting to disseminate the information. The job of the group leader in the casting shop was more complex than in the smelting shop. He had more reports to fill out, very simple ones involving counts of how much of what type of thing they produced. They sent the reports to the shop. But these reports were very simple.

Generally, every person inspected their own work. If there was a problem, it was up to the group leader to find it and solve it. If he couldn't handle it, then he would go to the shop office for help from the shop technicians. After articles left his group, it was the responsibility of the quality inspectors in the shop to inspect the goods.

There were no workers in the group appointed to help the group leaders. Some big groups had vice-leaders, but outside of this there were none. The group leaders knew who the backbone elements (gugan) were in the group, and relied on them. These were people with good work habits, maybe Party or youth league members, who could be relied on and were easy to get along with. Group leaders would turn to these people for advice, and for help in arranging the group's work. There weren't many party members in the plant, so most of the group leaders were not party members. But in bigger plants with more party and youth league members, most would be. He is not a party member.

Casting Shop Management (5/18/80, 1.75 hrs.)

He worked for over two years in the shop director's office, and was responsible for production control (diao du). The shop office had one director and 3 vice-directors, one production control supervisor (diaodu yuan), and after 1974 a quality inspector (before 1974 the production control supervisor handled quality control). There were 70 workers in all. There were 3 groups responsible for setting molds, using sand. One shift was in front of the furnace, and was divided into 3 groups, one for each shift. One group was responsible for making models to set in the sand molds. But this structure was continually changing, whenever they needed to reassign people they could change the size of groups, break up groups into smaller ones, assign people to different shifts, etc. The shop leader had the power to do this.

The shop director was a state cadre, but the 3 vice-directors were of worker backgrounds, and still were paid according to worker scale. One of these men was a demobilized soldier. These three were slightly older and more experienced, and they were trusted by the shop director. The shop director was also the party branch secretary. One vice-director was the branch vice-secretary (the demobilized soldier), and one of the other vice-directors was a party member. The third was not. The vice-directors didn't have any fixed posts, and if there were no meeting or problem to attend to, they would go to the groups and take part in manual labor. This

is what is called being a 'semi non-production' (ban tuochan) personnel. The shop director was 'non-production', and he was a state cadre. The vice-directors were capable of solving problems in different areas of the shop. One was for molding, one for casting, and one for building models.

Production Controls: The quality inspector, after he was appointed in 1974, would inspect all goods before leaving the shop. But before the QC inspector came back, the informant himself was responsible for inspecting in his position of production controller. But he didn't have much time and he couldn't do a real thorough job, he only could catch the most striking flaws. The groups themselves did not have any quality inspectors, but each person was responsible for inspecting his own work, and the group leader was responsible for generally checking up on quality. But there was not a fixed system. They had a method of 3 levels of inspection (self, group, and shop).

The production controller (diaodu yuan) was to keep an eye on the production situation in each group, and make sure that things proceeded in a balanced way, keep an eye on the number of parts and materials available in their storage area, and make sure that the production in each group is coordinated with that of the others. He had to decide, for example, when to shut down the smelting furnaces, when to work on molds. He also had the power to dispatch people or whole groups to different jobs. Of course he did all of this in his capacity as advisor to the director and the orders came through him after his advice was given.

Part of the production controller's job was to fill out forms each time they started up the furnaces. For the entire period from the time they stoked up the furnace until they stopped, he would record and report on the amount of worker-hours, fuel, materials expended, and the production output. These reports were based on the statistics sent up by the groups. After the shop's report was filled out, it was sent to the production department in the plant office. So there was no fixed system of daily reporting. They took the month as the basic unit, and had to report at least once a month. They ran the furnaces for 2 purposes. First, to make steel, and second, to melt down the ingots for the casting process. They ran furnaces for making steel about 10 days per month, and melted down ingots about 3-4 days.

The work rhythm in the shop was as follows. It was very busy at the beginning of each month, while more relaxed at the end. They wanted to make their targets, and also wanted to make sure they could prepare at the month's end for the next period. There was another incentive. The plant was far from any city, and most workers were away from their family. So they wanted to get work over with and be able to take leave. The first 10 days people worked 7 days a week, and after the 10th, took days off, gradually many workers took several days off in a row, and it became more common as the month went on. This was also the period when preparations for the next month were made, and repairs and renovations finished.

The biggest problem in shop management was twofold. First, most of the leaders, since this was a new plant and since many workers were raised to leading positions after the CR, did not have much production experience. Also, there were coordination problems between shops. They often had to wait on other shops to finish their parts before they could begin work. This was a major cause of waste of time. The plant, because of these problems, lost money each year.

Meetings: At the end of the month, on about the 30th or the 31st, they would have an all-plant planning meeting (jihua huiyi). The shop directors participated and brought along their production controllers.

The plant director, the production department staff, and leading cadres from all the other departments would attend. They report on the past month's production results. Each department will report problems in their areas of responsibility. If there are problems, for example being unable to finish the monthly plan, they will discuss and try to come to a solution. Then they will prepare for the next month's production. Are supplies enough? are personnel sufficient? Does it look like they will be able to finish the quarterly plan? Is there a major breakdown or renovation that has or will cause problems or a slowdown? Are other shops and groups not keeping up and slowing down your unit? These are the kinds of questions they discuss and resolve.

They also have 'discussion meetings' (pengtong hui) whenever they are needed. Usually every 1-3 weeks. Situations change, problems pop up within the monthly period, so the people concerned from the shops go to all-plant meetings to discuss and solve.

After the shop gets the month's production responsibilities, the shop's leading group arranges production for the month. Run the furnaces how many days? How many molds to produce? Are changes in work assignments or group organization in the shop necessary? Also, when a problem of any sort popped up, they would immediately call a meeting. There was no fixed schedule. Production meetings were called in the shop whenever needed. Generally speaking, whenever a meeting was held at the plant level, they will hold parallel meetings on the same topics within each shop and production group.

Generally speaking, the meetings which involved leading cadres took place during work time, while other meetings, including political study, took time after work and in the evenings. They also had a number of elections of delegates of workers congresses, advanced workers, women's committee delegates. These were elected by 'democratic centralism' methods, where the leading cadres picked a list of candidates and the workers discussed, then sent comments back up and the list of candidates was revised. According to mass opinions, the delegates list was revised, then you could choose from among the final list.

They had workers' congresses after they re-established the union formally in 1974. They did not have any elections of leading cadres, group leaders or any others in the plant. Up until 1979 when he left, all the people in any leading position were appointed by the above levels.