AT THE POINT OF PRODUCTION: SOME ASPECTS OF

WORKPLACE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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Introduction

This paper presents some of the findings from a recent observational study of shop floor rulemaking in three factories in the Manchester area. A full report of the research is available elsewhere. The main purpose here is to consider some observations about the process of bargaining, particularly emphasising the underlying values of the participants as revealed in their handling of a variety of (non-wage) incidents and events of the kind which arise frequently in manufacturing establishments.

It is acknowledged that, ultimately, power and the capacity and willingness to deploy power is crucial to the determination of such issues. The focus of the paper, however, is not on power or interests but on the notions of legitimacy held and used by the participants - workers, shop stewards and managers. Although, in the end, power is important, both parties are conscious of a continuing relationship, and this continuing interdependence demands some modus operandi. Mutual recognition of 'role' is only a preliminary, however, which sets the stage. Much of the action is determined by values, for example the way in which an 'issue' becomes an 'issue', in the way it is articulated, shaped and processed, as well as in the negotiation process itself. In view of this partial and limited objective little attention is given here to structures and structural variables.
Background

Workplace industrial relations rather than external institutional arrangements have become much more central to the study of private sector industrial relations in the U.K. for a number of reasons.

1. The diminished regulative effect of industry-wide (multi-employer) collective agreements.
2. The poverty of the content of such agreements, e.g. minimum wage levels, though typically they fix standard terms for the length of the work-week, and premia for overtime and shiftwork.
3. The pattern of strike activity in the private sector.
4. Recent evidence on incidence and diffusion of collective sanctions in manufacturing.
5. The size of the 'earnings gap', and failure of studies of wage drift to show any close relationship with external local labour market conditions.
6. Local labour market studies showing the uniqueness of internal wage structures.
7. Evidence of the broadened scope of workplace bargaining, with shop stewards exercising bargaining power not only on wage but also on manpower utilization and work organisation issues.
8. The transformation of the role of union full-time officials from hierarchic senior positions to that of adviser and consultant to stewards, now possibly outnumbered by full-time shop steward conveners.
9. The increased emphasis given to the operation of internal labour markets, following Doeringer and Piore, and the debate about on-the-job training.
10. The growth of personnel/IR management as a specialism, and greater emphasis on enterprise autonomy in I.R. vis-a-vis employer association membership, raising more clearly issues of management strategy and behaviour in industrial relations.

The focus of much recent study of workplace industrial relations has been the role of shopsteward, and the forms taken by workplace trade union organisation. Extensive surveys have given useful data on the distribution, density, electoral methods and other structural aspects of the shopsteward 'system'. Rather less attention, however, has been given to behavioural studies of shopstewards in bargaining, although Batstone et al. and Partridge have done some useful initial work, whilst others (notably Hill) have added clarity to the study of work groups. Research work on the role of management is much less substantial, and has still to take off although there
is some preliminary survey data on the distribution of specialist staff and managerial attitudes to industrial democracy.

The employment relationship is both an economic relationship, and one of control. Indeed Flanders emphasises the 'jurisprudential' aspects of collective bargaining rather than the more obviously economic. However, the question of control has been less studied than have bargaining and wage structures, rates of wage change and similar issues on which data are more readily available. The topic is one of direct interest both to the established disciplines of economics (X-efficiency, internal labour markets, etc.) and sociology, as well as to the growing (and increasingly taught) subjects of industrial relations and management. At one level 'control' is more concerned with management (or authority) relations than it is with market relations, although at the margin that distinction is somewhat tenuous. However, it is obviously the case that labour management within the firm supplements the (rather crude) controls of the labour market with a battery of more detailed techniques including (variously) direct supervision, job or task definitions, methods and time study, costing and budgets, machine-paced production, reward systems, disciplinary procedures etc. Two particularly absorbing aspects of the application of management control techniques to labour are that compliance is contingent, day-to-day, and the degree of co-operation variable, and that the rationale of economics emphasising both a maximising logic and the antithetical interests of buyer and seller may appear (in a limited sense) at variance with the approaches advocated by influential management writers of the human relations school.

The Frontier of Control

Before examining some recent British evidence on the location of the frontier of control (i.e. those subjects formerly assumed to be within unilateral control by management and now subject to worker or joint regulation), one important point must be made about the nature of collective bargaining as typically conducted in Britain. As indicated above, the scope of conventional industry-wide agreements is limited largely to wages, hours and wage related topics. These industry-wide agreements, in so far as they regulate the work as opposed to the wage side of the employment contract are largely confined to pious statements e.g. about flexibility and management prerogatives, rather than any greater precision. Many single company agreements contain similar phrases, rather than detailed specifications covering various production contingencies, e.g. transfers, and in any event practice as observed on the
shopfloor has often 'grown' through time rather than following written pro-
visions (if any). This illustrates a major point relevant to the development
of shopsteward and workgroup influence over such practices in Britain, namely
that the American management adage of 'not losing in contract administration
what has not been conceded in contract negotiation' has relatively little sway
in Britain. As Flanders observed, although this may be changing with the
growth of more formal plant and company agreements, the parties have generally
given greater emphasis to the availability of procedures for dispute resolution
rather than to detailed substantive agreements. Consequently the admissibility
of work or control type 'grievances' has not been closely defined. In practice,
the evidence suggests that over the post-war period shop stewards have been
able to draw many topics of this kind within their 'bargaining rights' within
factories.

A key element in the control situation arises from the gaps or silences
in the employment contract on the work as opposed to the reward side of that
contract. Wages, hours, holidays etc. are usually defined fairly precisely,
and a job title (of greater or lesser specificity) is usually included also.
Moreover, within the law of contract, the employee owes a general duty of
obedience to the employer, in terms of complying with reasonable and relevant
instructions. However, there is wide scope for contesting reasonableness and
relevance of specific managerial decisions and actions. Secondly, the employ-
ment contract is not specific about what precisely the employer actually buys
or can reasonably expect, other than the attendance of the worker for a
specified period. The deployment of acquired skills is implicit, as is some
level of effort or activity although the precise level at which the latter
'settles' remains problematic and is possibly contingent on social norms in
the workplace as well as individual ambitions, managerial expectations and
the nature of the reward system. In practice it is, as Baldamus suggests,
a matter of virtually continuous 'negotiation' between supervisor and worker,
bounded by the maximum and minimum set by the limits of a) what the worker is
physiologically capable of, and b) the level of application which precipitates
disciplinary action, i.e. a somewhat elastic 'zone of tolerance'. Such
negotiations are not confined to effort levels, but also include many aspects
of job regulation. Thus it may be helpful to conceive the employment relation-
ships as an 'effort bargain' within the context of job control. These inter-
actions take place within a pre-existing context of power, of norms, and of what
is taken for granted by the participants.

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Bargaining on 'control' issues within grievance procedures, or through less formal contacts, is much less public and less easily quantifiable than is pay bargaining. Consequently, determining the actual location of the frontier of control is problematic, and there are certainly variations both situationally and through time. A comparison, for example, between the printing and textile industries would reveal a marked contrast. Traditionally craft unions, with their tightly defined job territories, high occupational attachment, controlled entry and greater unilateral rule-making make deeper inroads into managerial control than do other unions/groups. The literature in Britain is not very complete, in part because of the more limited degree to which issues of control form part of collective agreements, and in part because researchers face significant methodological difficulties in establishing the situation in an area where both parties often have either very different or very hazy knowledge of the actual position. Brown in his study of custom and practice notes, for example, that the C + P status of a particular practice often becomes apparent only when an attempt is made to change it. However, what broad evidence there is on the location of the 'frontier of control' in organised workplaces suggests that incursions into management prerogative is by no means confined to craft groups - if it ever was - and that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed widespread extensions in bargaining scope at workplace level. This evidence is restricted, however, mainly to surveys of the bargaining activities of shop stewards conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and occasional single plant studies. The last official survey, in 1973, however showed that (aside from wage questions) more than half the managers surveyed had dealt with shop stewards on the following eight issues: workplace conditions, health, safety, dismissals, other disciplinary action, overtime, transfers from one job to another, and the introduction of new machinery or jobs. Between 40 and 50 per cent of the managers mentioned the following nine issues: start and stop times, holidays, breaks in working time, suspension, allocation of work, quality of work, redundancy, taking on new labour, manning of machines. Much of the case study research has been concerned with industries, e.g. engineering, vehicles and printing, in which shop steward bargaining is known to be 'advanced' in terms of the security and coverage of workplace trade union organisation. A recent study by Storey has broadened the canvas, in that he examined the challenge to management control in five industries (brewing, man-made fibres, local bus transport, textiles and engineering) using both observation and questionnaire techniques and charting shifts in
the 'negotiability' of non-wage topics in the same establishments between 1971 and 1978. Not only did his study show that penetration of 'managerial functions' was relatively high in all these sectors (with the exception of textiles) but equally significantly that 'negotiability' had increased in the course of the 1970s despite the marked increase in the unemployment rate during the decade. With his rather more specific inquiry Storey listed 25 (non-wage) topics — with the following being of particular interest: manning (66%), job content (58%), speed of work (54%), production techniques and methods (32%), scheduling of operations (31%), level of output/service (29%), contracting work out (26%) and promotions (14%).

Storey's research covered 96 establishments in the five industries. Although aware of the dangers of structural determinist explanations of the variations in the incursions into management prerogative he did attempt some analysis of structural factors influencing the frontier of control. The establishments were divided into three groups on the basis of the range of (non-wage) issues negotiated or subject to workers' control, which gave 32 plants (14 + issues) in the high category, 31 plants (9-13 issues) in the medium category, and 33 plants (0-8 issues) in the low category. He found that establishment size (workforce) was an important variable when the extremes were considered, but did not emerge as a discriminating variable in the intermediate ranges. The 'type of industry' variable was more significant, with relatively high proportions in his 'high' category in transport and engineering, and large numbers in his 'low' category in textiles and brewing. This variable, of course, subsumes many others. Level of unemployment and short-time working were highest in textiles and lowest in engineering and brewing — which also had the highest overtime level. That may give some support for a relationship between labour market tightness and the range of bargaining, but regression analysis suggested that the trend in employment over the past six years was not significantly associated with the trend in scope of bargaining over the same period. He concluded that, on his admittedly imperfect data and measures, job regulation practices were not particularly sensitive to fluctuations in local labour market conditions. Nor were capitalization per employee or the presence of PBR schemes very discriminating variables. On the other hand the degree of development of shop steward organisation (presence of senior stewards and steward committees), the presence of highly developed personnel departments and of formal plant-wide negotiating committees — all associated in part with size — were also associated with high bargaining scope, although the direction of causation is not clear!
The formation of formal plant or company bargaining committees was strongly advocated by the Donovan Commission, and Brown's survey evidence from manufacturing suggests that there has been marked development of such formalised structures and allied procedural reform during the 1970s. Plant-wide negotiating committees of this type offer the opportunity to formalise and institutionalize plant relationships, and perhaps control the thrust of the shopfloor challenge. They also bolster the central steward organization but, of course, there cannot be any guarantees about the ways in which that enhanced strength will be used. This is, in many ways, the central dilemma facing British managements in its approach to workplace bargaining.

The Manchester Research

The objective of the research was to examine, through a series of case studies, the processes of informal job control in medium sized factories, with particular emphasis on the concept of custom and practice and on management behaviour. The three factories were in three different industries (footwear, plastic materials and light electrical fittings), in relatively close proximity, and with different payment systems. All three were of similar size, employing between 300 and 700; all three faced depressed and competitive product markets. Both manual and white collar trade unions were recognised, with de facto post-entry closed shops for manual workers. The manual unions had between 10 and 13 shop stewards in each factory.

In view of the nature of our interest, namely the processes of workplace industrial relations, the main methodology was one of direct observation and mainly unstructured interviews. The researchers spent about four months full time in each factory, and were given full access to shadow various participants, sit in on meetings etc. Our initial expectations were that we might find some marked variations in the frontier of control and the coverage of 'custom and practice' related possibly to some structural features including different levels of bargaining awareness associated with the different bargaining opportunities implicit in the different payment systems (individual piecework, measured day work plus factory bonus, and job-evaluated time rates). Although we found greater group consciousness amongst certain groups (the clickers in the footwear firm, maintenance tradesmen at both the plastics firm, and the electrical fittings company) and variations in group cohesion within and between the different factories, the scope of contested areas was fairly similar. In all three factories issues such as transfer of workers, work allocation, notification and allocation of overtime and short-time, job content,
discipline, production scheduling, quality and re-working, demarcation, changes in factory lay-out, etc. were the subject of 'negotiations' although the degree of constraint felt by management varied, and was least in the footwear firm. On some of these subjects, notably transfers, allocation of overtime and short-time fairly clear jointly agreed rules were operated, but on other subjects the substantive content of the understandings was less fixed although there was mutual recognition that there would be ad hoc negotiation prior to the implementation of change or to cope with day-to-day exigencies and events such as machine breakdowns and absence. Such discussions between foremen and departmental managers and shop stewards were a daily occurrence, though many were relatively brief—particularly when a particular 'happening' was to be handled by applying familiar and accepted coping mechanisms.

Underlying these processes of day-to-day workshop production and labour control was a backdrop of power and interests—perhaps the central concepts in any discussion of workplace industrial relations. Certainly it would not be possible to explain either de facto terms of operation or indeed the outcome of major negotiations without reference to the power situation. Such an analysis would obviously need to consider a range of both structural (e.g. product market, local labour market, level of unionisation) and behavioural factors (e.g. group cohesion, bargaining awareness, preparedness to use sanctions). What struck us, however, was that many day-to-day contests are conducted against a relatively static perception of these matters, and issues are settled, variously favourable to one side or the other, following linguistic exchanges in which the power situation is largely taken as given. Consequently, factors such as stamina in monitoring practices, information, and bargaining skills were of considerable significance in determining particular outcomes.

Our analysis is essentially a conflict model, in which the short-term interests of employees and management are taken to differ. Management's central interest is taken to be that of minimising unit labour costs subject to the constraints of achieving high levels of internal certainty and regularity of production, whilst preserving high levels of control in order to maintain future flexibility in pursuit of labour cost minimization. Whilst there may be differences of interest between individual employees and those of stewards, these are taken to include some combination of maximising income levels and income security and reducing exposure to potentially arbitrary acts of management. This includes replacing unilateral management control by forms of negotiated order. Differences of approach are acknowledged within both groups, for example the more overtly profit-oriented approach of senior management...
vis-a-vis the more career oriented but possibly more accommodative orientation of junior and middle managers.

Within this framework our initial interest was in the fairly-widely publicised part played by 'custom and practice' in job control. However, in the light of the processes observed this concentration seemed somewhat restrictive, and the richness of the observational data suggested that a wider view of the processes of the 'negotiation of order' would be more fruitful. In this way the variety of specific topics negotiated could be accommodated. The main concept used is that of attempted legitimization. This seems a particularly appropriate concept for whilst on occasion either side (particularly management in the footwear factory) might use force majeur to secure a victory, or to dominate employees most managers were aware of the potentially alienating effects of such an approach and felt it important to justify both their positions and actions in the face of shop steward challenges. The price in subsequent resentment and guerilla warfare may be too high. Management styles varied between individuals, issues and situations, but only in the footwear firm did we find evidence of the legitimacy of steward inquiries presented on the grounds that some work organisation issues were felt to fall so clearly within managerial jurisdiction as to be not a 'legitimate' concern to employees. Managers were generally concerned not only with securing the compliance of employees and employee representatives, but with securing their acceptance of the legitimacy of a particular action or regime. Thus even where one party, usually management, had sufficient power to impose a rule unilaterally, long term considerations may counsel some compromise with the other side's concept of what is legitimate.

In common with other studies we found a high degree of worker acceptance of the inevitability of hierarchic organisation, of shop steward acceptance of the notion of managerial prerogative on issues remote from the shopfloor (such as pricing policy, marketing, financial structure) and of the imperatives of market production in a capitalist society.

Managerial Legitimizing Principles

The ideology and justificatory principles deployed by managers showed a greater range and were of much wider applicability than those of the stewards. They were in a sense dominant, because they corresponded more closely with the values and logic of the wider society, which were for the most part accepted by the stewards. They included the following:
(1) **Property Rights**

Managers were the agents of the owners, and residually had the legal right to do as they chose with the physical property of the owners. Although this argument tended to be used only rarely and in extremis, (and in fact is debatable since property rights are more firm in defending property against trespass than in conferring rights to use it for particular purposes) it was deployed in less conclusive fashion in an attempt to prevent workers 'wasting their energy' by playing soccer on company premises during the lunch break - and was successfully opposed by workers on grounds of both relevance and contract. i.e. what they did during the lunch break was 'their affair'.

(2) **Employment Contract**

Again a residual argument but one which was used with some frequency in the footwear firm, mainly in terms of "you freely entered into a contract of employment to work here, and if you don't like things as they are you can leave". This argument was frequently deployed by foremen in the face of individual complaints, but with more reserve when a grievance was collectivised and being articulated by a representative since (apparently by definition) the stewards' role was accepted as incorporating attempts to improve members' conditions. (The questionable stance of the law in its assertion that the the parties to the employment contract are equal in any meaningful sense was never argued - even by the stewards, though if challenged they would assert their right/duty to defend members with a grievance).

(3) **Profitability**

A more frequently deployed argument, particularly by senior managers, who on occasion used the argument as a 'clincher' to over-rule potential agreements based on other principles. More often used in relation to overtly financial issues e.g. wages and hours, shift working and redundancy, welfare facilities, than to 'control' issues. Stewards generally did not contest this argument, which was frequently used interchangeably with 'survival' by top management.

(4) **Efficiency**

In some ways the middle managers' equivalent of profitability and which avoids the contentious distributive arguments associated with the term profit. Managers justified their role very largely in terms of the pursuit of efficiency - a principle (or in the abstract) with which
stewards could not (or did not) contest. To challenge efficiency per se, was to invite defeat on the grounds of 'common sense'. However, whilst the generalised managerial pursuit of efficiency was not argued, the terms of specific actions taken in its name very frequently were. The linguistic contests were most commonly attempts by stewards to reduce or regularise the repercussions on labour of efficiency or productivity — raising proposals from management. It was in this area that contests were most frequent. One implication of this aspect of management, of course, is that the pursuit of efficiency is open-ended and unending — thus giving a continuous writ to managers to initiate or propose rule-changes. This can be compared with the much more restricted initiative — taking scope of workers legitimising principles — see below. Finally, although the managerial obligation constantly to improve efficiency was not contested, the practical probability that a proposed change would actually result in higher efficiency often was. In this sense the managerial claim to a monopoly of expertise was by no means fully conceded.

(5) **Special/Unique Competence**

In companies where the divorce of ownership and control is marked this source of legitimacy for management authority is often the most explicit, i.e. that those occupying managerial positions have particular skills and expertise based on either or both of special training and experience or innate ability. Against an assumed meritocratic promotion system and an acknowledged functional need for hierarchy the occupants of managerial positions are held to have expert knowledge which in the interests of all they should be free to exercise. This 'authority through position' thus has two elements: a position towards the top of a labour hierarchy demands these qualities of its occupant, who, by occupancy, is presumed to have them. The nature of those qualities, however, seemed to influence the degree to which decisions made by the occupants were contested. Generally where decisions were of a higher order technical nature e.g. the sequencing of operations or methods of shoe upper machining workers generally accepted managerial dictat (though sometimes resignedly and/or with amusement) accepting the argument that managers and not they were paid to make such decisions. However, on more organisational decisions e.g. manning, shifts, discipline, etc. the unique competence of management was not accepted. Whilst on occasion managers would argue that
they had a wider vision, broader information etc. (as well as position) these claims were seldom accepted by stewards as decisive.

This rationale for managerial authority leads onto a final category, that is

(6) Management as Dispenser of Fairness

This justificatory principle rests much more obviously on a self-image of management as a largely neutralist but decisive co-ordinating function in an organisational coalition than on that of management as agent for the owners or as profit maximisers. However on occasion senior management, especially in the electrical fittings firm, sought to justify their right to take certain decisions (often ones with a high 'equity' content) on the grounds of both their wider vision and their quasi-judicial role in settling disputes between sectional interests.

Workers' Resistance Principles

Generally, the linguistic expressions used and values appealed to by workers and their representatives constitute something of an alternative value structure, although as indicated above some elements of managerial ideology are accepted (certainly in principle) by workers, as are some worker arguments by management although in the last analysis worker values were generally secondary. Again for clarity of expression these will be distinguished, although they frequently overlap or merge into each other.

(1) Equity/Fairness

This is perhaps the most frequently used and most broadly based of all 'principles', and its wider societal influence is reflected in a specialist branch of the law and legal administration. It is, of course, a widely used criterion in wage bargaining, for example in relation to inflation (real wages), the internal wage structure (differentials), external comparisons (relativities), shares of profit and productivity growth, etc. On non-wage issues within the workplace 'fairness' is normally argued in relation to uniform treatment within and between different categories of worker, e.g. in the application of disciplinary rules, in the allocation of overtime opportunities, in transfer rotas etc. In this uniformity sense fairness is a defence against favouritism, and supports the application of common standards. In many respects worker representatives found common ground with personnel specialists in seeking both clarity and uniformity of treatment, and both appeared to have
an interest in bureaucratic regulation via agreed rules. In contrast, line managers seemed resistant to this development, in part because foremen in particular wished (and found it necessary to) retain differential rewards (in terms of minor concessions) to individuals whom they rated more highly or who were more co-operative.

(2) Consistency

Consistency can have a number of meanings. It may require uniform treatment as between individuals or departments when faced with a common set of circumstances – as outlined above. Secondly, the notion of consistency may be applied through time, in that if a similar incident or set of circumstances recur, then the action to be taken in each should be similar. For example, if shop stewards are consulted before management introduces new machine on one occasion then the stewards will expect to be consulted about such things in future. The principle of consistency is broadly based, and many of the exchanges we observed were managerial attempts to refute charges of inconsistency by seeking to demonstrate the crucial nature of often minor variations in the circumstances of particular cases so as to justify different actions being taken. In a third sense, consistency is often applied by stewards in accusing managers of 'shifting their ground' in negotiations, and stressing the desirability of a 'consistent' stance as between different managers or the same managers through time. Thus consistency is seen as a measure of 'fair dealing' and inconsistency as an indicator of insincerity, justifying a more calculative and combative approach by workers.

(3) Custom/Precedent

In many ways conservatism, what is, contains its own justification, whereas change requires a new justification. This can work in the interest of either side – on wage matters it tends to work against the unions, in production organisation and methods it tends to work against management. Precipitate changes in the latter introduced by managers may be regarded as breaches of agreement by stewards, although the existing arrangements are typically more acknowledged implicitly than explicitly. The rule-making potential of 'precedent' is perhaps more clearly understood, and considerable attention was given to what might be called the 'management of precedent'. Brown has argued that stewards do not necessarily exploit and generalise each and every 'error' by a foreman, and our work supports this somewhat selective rather than 'maximising' approach. Similarly there
were many occasions when more senior managers in agreeing to a certain resolution of an issue, sought to emphasise that it 'does not constitute a precedent'.

(4) Relevance

Another element in workers attempts to restrict the jurisdiction of management control of worker behaviour is to contain it very closely to the 'letter' of the contract. Thus, in the example cited above, how the workers spent their lunch break — however energy sapping — was 'their own affair'. Less consensual were the debates about clothing, particularly safety headgear and its effects on expensively acquired female hairdos.

(5) The Effort Bargain

As noted above, the work obligations embodied in the employment contract are not specific, and this lack of specificity means that there is considerable obscenity about a manager's right to decide which tasks a worker shall perform and how much he shall do. Workers on the other hand are usually acutely conscious of the 'effort bargain', and generally seek to ensure there is no deterioration in the ratio of reward to effort. One of the sources of managerial difficulty, however, arises from the separate determination of wages and work obligations, and in the non-observation (or absence) of detailed job descriptions.

(6) Property Rights in Jobs

Despite their lack of awareness of this as a slogan, the concept clearly had deep meaning for most workers, and was the basis of often intricate agreements concerning temporary transfers. 'Leaving individual operatives in the same job without interruption may maximise the employer's return on training, and under payment by results, allows some flexibility and movement in the effort bargain to the satisfaction of both parties. However, tenacious claims to highly specific tasks can obviously reduce flexibility. Arbitrary transfers were successfully resisted in all three factories, in which the main criterion (apart from new starters) was equality of inconvenience and 'fair shares'. The issue of compensation for disturbance was also developed in terms of periods of time on new jobs at the guaranteed average earnings levels on former jobs both where transfers were 'permanent' and of short duration.

Concluding Comments

The above account of the grounds and values on which workers and managers may initiate or resist the rule-making activities of the other is obviously
not intended to be exhaustive. Nor are the classificatory headings intended as attempts to establish a cut-and-dried typology; certainly some managers and many workers accepted the force of arguments posed by the 'other side'. Much evidence supports the view that individuals on both sides have 'world views' which are often ambivalent and not necessarily consistent.

Nor is it the intention to assert that the outcome of day-to-day contests in the shop-floor are the outcome simply of debating matches in which each tries to engage the interests of the other. Ultimately, the major outcomes are decided by the balance of power. However the rules are moulded by reference to principles accepted by those who possess significant power. Rule changes do not only occur as a consequence of a shift in the balance of power, and do occur with no discernible change in the relative power of the parties. Both managers and stewards seek to 'economise' on the overt use of power, and it is within this context that this discussion is set. Phelps Brown's comment, in relation to wage bargaining, may be relevant here. 'It is fortunate that even in the pursuit of self-interest we all feel the need for legitimisation... not only for the purpose of bargaining but also as a matter of self-respect'.

Much of the negotiation we observed could be described as attempts by each side to assert the predominant weight of one or the other of the values within its particular repertoire, often aided by judicious use of any of the 'oppositions' principles which seemed appropriate. However there is one important implication which deserves emphasis, and which is relevant to the question of control. There is a significant asymmetry between the relatively coherent - if multi-faceted doctrine of management ideology which is comprehensively expressive of management interests, and the rather more fragmentary and ambivalent counter-ideology available to workers. This asymmetry is most clear where an extension of the frontier of control is at issue. Managers could represent any extension or re-assertion of their own control as an application of management prerogative. Whilst workers might resist the threat to their control on a particular issue, for example on grounds of C & P, they would not normally be able to legitimise extensions to their own control in such general terms. Where management prerogative is questioned workers representatives needed both to define the issue to their own side in ways which engaged their values, and subsequently achieve managerial acceptance of the legitimacy of their involvement and the proposed practice or rule change.
This combination proved exceptionally difficult. 'Threats' of stoppages etc. did not form an explicit part of the negotiations on any non-wage issue during the fieldwork.

The purpose of case study research in industrial relations is more commonly that of providing insights rather than providing bases for generalization. However, in comparing the three factories one or two suggestions may be made. The three factories contained differing technologies, but the plastics materials firm (Pennine) was largely a process technology, whereas the footwear firm (MoFoL) was small batch and the light electrical fittings company (LEF) might be characterised as large batch. Of the three, LEF had the strongest market position, whilst the product markets faced by Pennine and MoFoL were both depressed and at MoFoL in particular competition was intense. These factors are important to any explanation of the pattern and style of industrial relations, and can be expected to exert a direct influence. Aside from these factors, the main variable which appeared to influence the range and stature of steward bargaining was the attitude of management. We came across no instance of a steward being inhibited from raising any 'issue' - though the nature of the managerial response varied quite markedly between the firms. Indeed a crude comparative measure could be given by the speed and frequency with which managers introduced and pressed particular arguments in discussing an issue. Generalizing across each firm (and there were variations between individual managers) those at MoFoL quite often dismissed steward or worker 'inquiries' by referring to arguments based on property rights, the special status/hierarchic role of management, and the employment contract. These are, in a sense, less negotiable and much more pre-emptive than some others indicated above. At LEF such arguments were less frequently encountered, and certainly the (MBA) Managing Director and the equally well qualified Personnel Director never used them. Both were committed to a more open pluralist approach, and set much greater store by persuasion through discussion than on pre-emptive dismissals. In this sense the stewards were never ruled 'out of order'. In any case the presence of a factory-wide bonus scheme (based on output) gave the stewards a much firmer basis on which to operate, since they could argue that virtually every production matter affected their members via the bonus scheme. By contrast at MoFoL the payment scheme was individual piecework, and the management style - led by the Works Manager - was power-based. Pennine occupied an intermediate position. The production technology and process was largely fixed, with only the volume of throughput varying. There was a simple job evaluated pay structure, with overtime being
the only pay variable. Fewer incidents arose, with the main ones being manning amongst the maintenance tradesmen and the use of sub-contract labour during holiday maintenance. Management was largely able to deflect attacks on the latter by the functional argument that major overhauls could only be undertaken during the annual plant shutdown, although the stewards were able to secure an agreement that union-only subcontractors would be used. Management attempts at reduced manning were repeatedly 'defeated' by steward arguments about safety.

Clearly market, wage system and technological factors influenced managerial behaviour, but the 'choice of style' by the top management at LEF (in part reflected in its choice of a plant-wide bonus scheme) and its emphasis on persuading rather than dominating the labour force (c.f. MoPoL) assisted the stewards greatly in establishing a wide range of bargaining activity.
REFERENCES


4. For the most recent, see W. Brown (1981) op.cit.


