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## Fighting Back in Hard Times: the 1990 Strike in Waterford Crystal

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**FIGHTING BACK IN HARD TIMES:  
THE 1990 STRIKE IN WATERFORD CRYSTAL**

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## **Section A: Introduction**

A strike is a social phenomenon of enormous complexity which, in its totality, is never susceptible to complete description, let alone complete explanation (Gouldner 1955 p65)

There is insufficient time to explore in detail the many issues arising from a strike involving over 2,000 workers, which lasted for over 14 weeks and was aimed at resisting a 54 point company restructuring plan. A strike where no negotiations took place for eight weeks and only then after two interventions by the Minister for Labour.

My concern here is not complete description but an exploration of the ability of workers to take successful strike action. I want to look at the process of mobilisation and ask how a large strike can be sustained for 14 weeks given the huge obstacles facing the workforce. I want to explore the possibilities for resistance in adverse economic conditions and examine the effect of globalisation on workers capacities as it emerged as a key issue in the course of the research.

The turnaround in WG has been hailed by many business commentators and some trade union leaders as a model for others to follow. In 1987 the company recorded losses of almost £60m, the largest ever sustained by an Irish quoted company. It was shackled with debts and turnover was falling. In that year it offered 750 redundancies but over 1,000 decided to go deserting what they perceived to be a sinking ship. This desertion led to production problems which contributed to a spiral of further losses and more borrowing. To add to company ills the Chief Executive, Paddy Hayes, was forced to resign in 1988 after presenting misleading information to the board. A key result of all this was that a corporate culture based on a paternalistic management style was shattered leading to high levels of distrust on the shop floor.

The contrast with the current position of the company could not be greater. In 1995

operating profits were £15.5m, debts were under control and the labour process had been transformed, especially in the main factory in Waterford City, with new automated glass blowing replacing craft workers. The workforce has been reduced to less than 1500. It is argued that the company represents a model of the partnership approach much sought after by trade union leaders. A joint management union task force which is examining profit margins on all products is seen as the embodiment of a new approach to industrial relations based on consensus and co-operation. This approach is said to have replaced adversarialism with union militancy being forsaken for a more "modern" approach. The strike is seen as a key event in effecting this transition.

In this paper I want to do three things:

- Briefly outline an approach to studying strikes.
- Look at some of the factors contributing to an effective mobilisation.
- Consider the effects of the threat of production relocation on the strike outcome

I want to argue that the interaction of structure and agency must be explored in order to understand strike outcomes. An overly structuralist approach leads to the underestimation of the possibilities for resistance in hard times. While possibilities for resistance exist constraints cannot be wished away. The dynamic nature of capitalism constantly throws up new challenges for workers. Currently a challenge is being presented by the globalisation process. This came to have an effect in WG because of specific factors operating within the industry which have tipped the balance of forces in management's favour since the strike. Currently, the trade union movement is ill equipped to deal with this challenge

My research was conducted in July and August 1990. My main source of information is open ended interviews conducted with 34 shop stewards in Waterford and Dungarvan. Union officials and a representative of management were also

interviewed. Newspaper coverage of the strike was examined and I gleaned much information and insights as a member of the Dublin based WG Support Group.

### **Section B: Studying Strikes**

The action/structure dichotomy is reflected in the literature on strikes (Hyman 1989 p180). There are two dominant strands in the literature one focusing on strike causes concentrating on structural factors, such as economic conditions, to explain 'strike proneness' and variations in strike levels across countries and over time (Kelly and Nicholson 1980), while the other consists of case studies which tend to suffer from descriptive bias offering what might be termed 'interesting, but so what?' accounts (ibid p855).

The problem with the first strand is its emphasis on structure at the expense of action. It cannot tell us "why strikes should occur in one firm but not in another working under similar socio-economic constraints" (ibid p854). Its focus on strike causes has led to a neglect of strike organisation (Hartley et al 1983). The second strand offers an overly voluntaristic analysis: concentrating on strike processes at the expense of "the relations of power that drive them" (Edwards 1992 p385). What emerges from the critical literature is the need to situate expressions of conflict within the broader framework of workplace relations (Edwards 1986,1988 and Hyman 1989). It is necessary to investigate the forces that shape these relations and whether they generate a capacity for effective action.

While the employment relationship under capitalism has generic features, primarily worker dependence and a consequent asymmetry of power (Burawoy 1985), workplace relations have a relative autonomy. Market conditions including the level of competition, the organisation of the labour process, workforce composition and management and union strategies affect day to day relations. A key factor determining the level of autonomy and the discretion of management is the ease with

which profits can be made (Martin 1992 p31). Product market conditions are also seen to affect union strength and the willingness of workers to use their bargaining power (Tilly 1988, Knowles 1952). It has been argued that worsening product market conditions reduce the likelihood of strikes, never mind successful strikes.

While structural factors place limits on what can be achieved it is important to be sensitive to the manner in which they are interpreted at the workplace. Changing product demand may force management to take a tough line which generates resistance (Gouldner 1955). The difficulty of altering long standing patterns of relationships has been highlighted in the literature. Workers get used to particular ways of doing things and will respond to management action in terms of their understandings of how the world ought to work (Edwards 1988). Because work relations have a relative autonomy from the imperatives of the mode of production it is possible that strikes will occur in some workplaces but not on others operating under similar constraints. What is important in this context is the ability of workers to mobilise resistance.

This will depend on what Wright (1979) calls structural and organisational capacities. The former derive from features of the industry/workplace: some workers derive power from working in large profitable companies, being highly skilled, being strategically located either in terms of the economy or the industry and/or being part of an occupational community. This highlights what Giddens (1984) has called the duality of structure and the way in which structural features of the work environment provide a basis for worker power. These factors give workers potential power which must be mobilised by organisational capacities which centre on the level and form of organisation, the extent to which workers accept the legitimacy of management and their willingness to take action. There are strong social values which depreciate strikes but these can be counteracted by the experience of work, occupational ideologies, the orientation of unions and political beliefs.

Structural and organisational capacities vary between groups of workers. Analysis of strike processes should be concerned with the application of capacities to completing a particular set of tasks aimed at achieving particular goals. This lays the basis for adopting what Hyman (1989, see also Turnbull 1992) calls a "dialectical approach" to strike analysis. What occurs during strikes "is not simply the mechanical outcome of large-scale forces". Strikes can only be understood

by reference to the perceptions, intentions and strategies of the men and women involved. Yet at the same time, peoples' consciousness and wills are the product of material social relations, and **these conditions set limits** to what can be achieved (p179, emphasis added).

Thus the interplay between the constraints of structures and agents autonomy must be recognised. Strike mobilisation involves a capacity to effectively stop production, the deployment of legitimating arguments by strike leaders and an effective organisation to ensure that the strike is maintained. These three aspects of strike mobilisation will now be selectively examined.

### **Section B: Shutting the Place Down: Structural Facilitators.**

The most fundamental aim of strike action is to bring all work to halt (Crouch 1982). In doing this the union was aided by structural features of the industry. These features provided an important source of collective belief in the efficacy of the action.

Firstly, the concentration of production in Waterford and Dungarvan meant that once an all out strike was called all production was stopped. The strikers did not have to confront the problem of multi-sourcing. Secondly, the hand-crafted nature of the product and its unique standing meant it had a low "elasticity of substitution" (Martin 1992 p31). The stewards do not believe that their unique product could be reproduced elsewhere.

The centrality of the industry to the local economy was also a significant factor in

mobilising the action. Wright (1979) argues that the structural capacity of the workers is not only determined in the production process but can also be rooted in the community. While some theorists (Kerr and Siegal 1954) have been criticised for trying to explain differential strike levels on the basis of the nature of community/work linkages (Edwards 1988) it is recognised that strong community ties can provide the basis for sustaining strikes when they do occur (Turnball 1992).

WG has dominated the south east being described by the IDA as "a key to the growth of the region" (Irish Times 7/4/90). The high earnings of the workforce meant that "every business in Waterford and the immediate surroundings feeds in various ways off the glass workers spending" (Irish Times 9/5/90). This dominance of the local area led to the union negotiating a freeze on all mortgage payments for the duration of the strike and enabled it to collect money from local businesses who were seen to be dependent on the workers goodwill and spending. The ESB agreed not to cut anybody off. The centrality of the industry to the local community was seen to be significant in two other ways:

1. In the context of hostility from the national media the local media was forced to take a neutral stance. The local radio station was used to advertise meetings.
2. There was intense pressure on the Minister for Labour to intervene in the dispute. His interventions eventually led to talks starting after the company had agreed to pay the short fortnight payment which it had unilaterally withdrawn. This had provided the immediate trigger for the strike.

### **Section C : Challenging Management: Making An Argument.**

A key argument that the workers had to face was that high wages were crippling the company and had led to the collapse in profits which necessitated restructuring. This idea was pushed very hard in the media and led one local correspondent to argue that



"by misinformation and innuendo, a public mood that it was the greedy workers who were the root cause of the industry's problems had been built up" (Munster Express 13/4/90). The workers were being told that they had to face the economic facts of life and that remedial action had to be taken to save the company.

The stewards believed it was necessary to establish that the source of the company's losses was not their wages. By doing this they could argue that wage cuts were not the solution. Further because the craft workers' were relatively higher paid than other sections of the workforce the company could sow division, by arguing that the whole workforce was suffering because of their greed. The stewards were acutely aware of the need to build an argument against the company in order to maintain internal solidarity. This concern was manifest in the decision to employ an accountancy specialist to draw up an alternative plan for company change. But central to countering the management was blaming them for company failure.

Batstone et al (1978) have highlighted the importance of the deployment of various kinds of vocabularies of motive by union leaders in mobilising strike action. An important aspect of these vocabularies is the blaming of management for causing strikes (pp49-9, 217). While many of the arguments put forward in considering strike action relate to the detail of the issues involved, detailed events are placed in a larger context which provides a means of explaining management actions and often involves reference to larger principles (see Armstrong et al 1981). Two key factors in the resistance to management was the reference to the past and the craft/product pride of the workers.

For 30 years up to 1985 WG recorded sustained profits. Its success was based on unlimited demand in the US market, its reputation for producing a high quality hand crafted product and a paternalistic style of management. The corporate culture was affected by the belief of Noel Griffen, the Chief Executive, "that the company should

be concerned for the individual" (Brophy 1985). Management strategy was characterised by an emphasis on the generation of consent. The workers were encouraged to identify with the company and be proud of the product they produced. Griffen was praised, by the stewards, for his appreciation of the craft workers' skills and his ability to listen to them. This paternalism was complemented by forms of control, especially in relation to the craft workers, which encouraged "responsible autonomy" (Freidman 1977). The craft workers controlled the pace at which they worked. Floor management were recruited from among them and were immersed in their traditions.

In the period leading up to the strike the Griffen era became highly symbolic, representing the litmus test against which others would be judged. In the post-Griffen period and leading up to the strike managers were seen to have done a number of things which offended the workers sense of craft and product pride. Bad management, according to union literature, had "reduced the company from its position of a profit making enterprise with gilt edged status...to a floundering loss maker with accumulated debts of £120m". It was alleged that management did not listen, had brought in outsiders to perform management functions and had increased levels of supervision especially in craft areas. Managers were seen as incompetent and fixated with cost cutting. Great emphasis was placed on the debacle of the 1987 redundancies, when 1000 workers left creating production problems. According to the union "every mistake that could happen with a rationalisation programme happened".

Here we can see the effective operation of what Gouldner (1955) has called the Rebecca Myth. This involves evaluating the present in light of the past in order to legitimate resistance and shows how the rationality for action is often to be found in the past experience of actors rather than exclusively in terms of their future aims. The former friendly relations were contrasted with the distrust towards the efficiency

minded hard men whom the company had head hunted from other companies which had been restructured. This image of management was reinforced when a consortium led by Tony O Reilly took a 30% stake in the company prior to the strike. The social cohesion of the industry was disturbed by the changes in management and their failure to secure the future of the industry. In the years since 1987 management actions were seen to have fuelled a strong sense of us and them. Managers were described as "totally incompetent", "dishonest", and "a crowd of morons". Management breached all the expectations which had been developed under a different regime generating anger which was illustrated by the overwhelming vote in favour of the strike (only 16 workers voted against striking).

The other major factor underlying opposition to management was the existence of a craft and product pride amongst the workers. The literature highlights the ability of craft workers to challenge the technical competency of managers (Armstrong et al 1981). Further craft pride provides a basis for solidarity among craft workers part of which is resistance to detailed management control of their work. The workers in Waterford did not believe that the new management either understood their pride in the product they produced or the operation of the industry. Their origins outside of the industry were seen to disqualify them for duty :

You have to know the glass industry. In particular you have to know Waterford Glass because it is such a big place and so much can go wrong. Some of the floor management have never seen glass before. You do not tell a man who is blowing glass how to blow when you are only in the factory six months (Female shop steward).

What is significant here is that you have a unskilled women worker defending skilled male craft workers. This is indicative of a product pride amongst all grades of workers based on an occupational culture generated by the high status which working in WG conferred on all (see Turnball 1992). This combined with the local dominance of the industry, the form of union organisation and the existence of numerous social clubs to

"dissolve occupational identities and highlight interests and goals of wider appeal" (Haydu 1988 p218). This undermined company efforts to create divisions during the strike. This sense of unity was reinforced by the manner in which the strike was organised.

#### **Section D: Organising United Action**

It would be understatement to say that the union in WG has had a militant reputation. In the context of a soft product market, the large size of the industry, the extensive use of piece work and a tolerant management the union gained significant influence. There was a strong bargaining awareness and a proven capacity to deliver gains.

WG operated as a closed shop and thus a high membership density was ensured. All workers, except for maintenance staff were members of the ATGWU. Thus a high density was combined with a broad scope. The importance of shop stewards in the ATGWU was reflected in the local organisation with 33 stewards in Waterford and 16 in Dungarvan plus two convenors in both locations. Shop stewards represented relatively small and coherent constituencies and had the resources to enable them to represent their members with almost unrestricted release time costing the company over £600,000 a year. The union had an office on the main Waterford site and a dedicated full time official.

A key feature of the workforce is its fragmentation into numerous grades (especially unskilled workers who were divided across 34 different job categories grouped into 4 different grades) and across three different locations (Table 1). The structure of the union provided both for sectional autonomy and sectional representation (regardless of size) on all co-ordinating committees especially branch committees (Figure 1 p12). This ensured that all sections had a forum in which to raise grievances. The aim was to tie the strong to the weaker sections and ensure the workforce was dealt with as a whole in all major negotiations.

Table 1: THE WORKFORCE: CATEGORY AND LOCATION

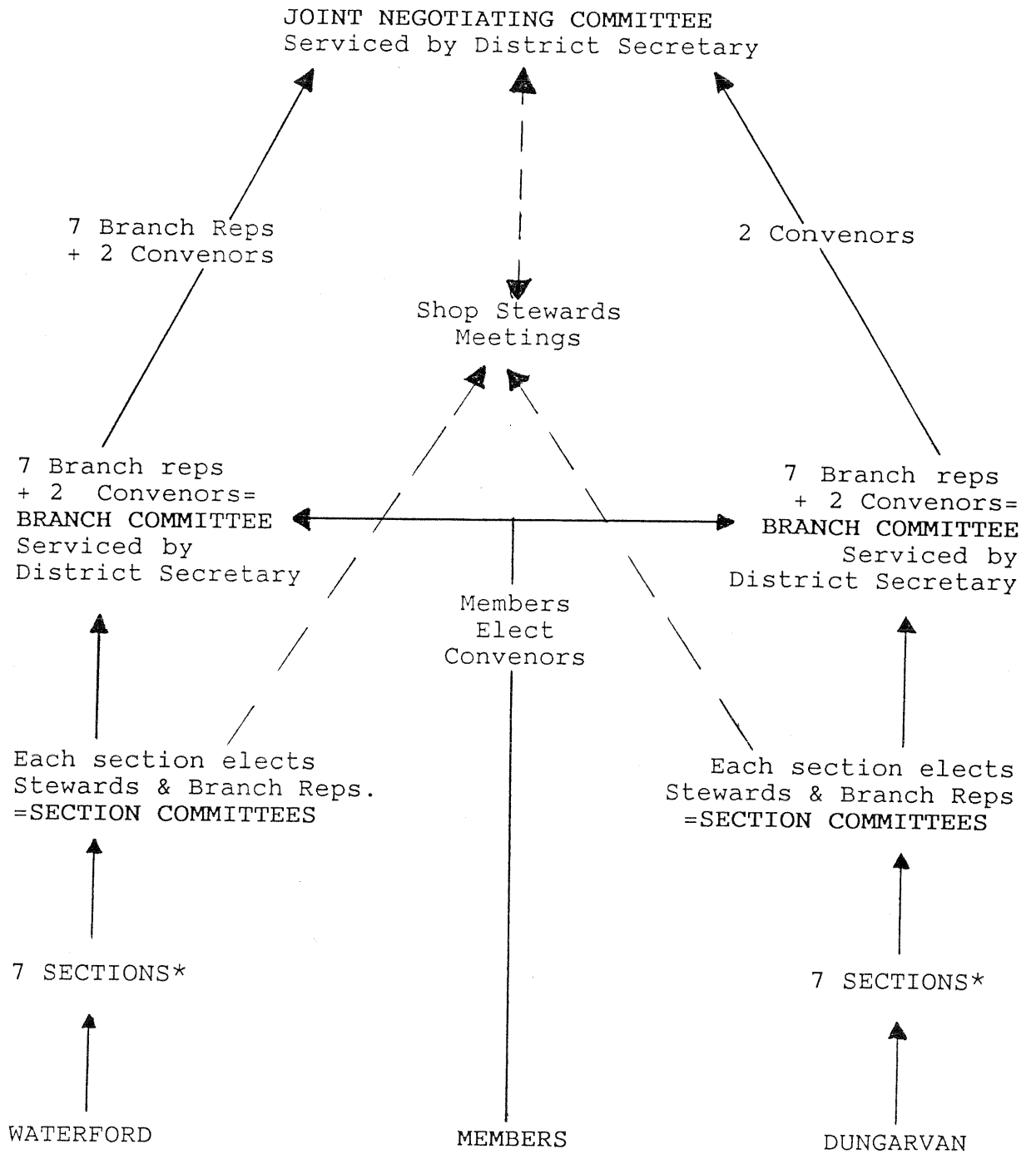
<b>Category</b>	<b>Kilbarry</b>	<b>Butlerstown</b>	<b>Dungarvan</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cutters	459	49	117	625
Blowers	302	50	76	428
Semi-skilled	63	28	23	114
General	230	45	49	324
Clerical	76	5	6	87
Female	191	49	34	274
Maintenance	19	5	10	34
Contract & Work experience	128	23	122	273
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1468</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>2159</b>

Source: Waterford Crystal Employee Analysis 13/3/90.

The literature on craft workers highlights craft exclusiveness and separation from non-craft workers as key features of their ideology (Terry and Edwards 1988, Cockburn 1983). What is significant in the WG case is the dominance of a perspective emphasising the unity of the sections. This resulted both from the orientation of the ATGWU, as a general union, and the influence of local political activists. The scope of the union provided the basis for the development of a perspective which encouraged the workers to identify common interests.

It can be argued that the influence of radical socialists contributed to undermining exclusionary practices amongst the craft workers. The Socialist Workers Movement had 40 members in WG in the 1970s. Its influence was such that O' Connor claims that the "exuberant solidarity displayed during the 1974 walkout..., the first ever total strike in the company's history, reflected a spirit cultivated by the SWM" (1989 p340). The influence of socialists worked to ensure that attempts by craft workers to dominate the union and to use it for their own ends were defeated. In this context

FIGURE 1: THE ATGWU IN WATERFORD GLASS



\*Wedge, Rhinetour  
Blowers, Semi-skilled,  
Female, General and  
Clerical.

\*Wedge, Rhinetour  
Blowers, Semi-skilled,  
Female, General and  
Furnace.

traditions of solidarity developed between the sections and more generally with workers involved in struggle. The radicalism of these workers was allowed to develop within the context of the ATGWU. The WG union developed a tradition of supporting other workers and causes outside the industry (see Irish Times 9/5/90). This kind of activity meant that it developed a high profile among trade unionists and political activists. Informal contacts based on solidarity and/or political work were established which came into play during the strike.

The point in highlighting these features of the union is that they contributed to the ability of the workers to mobilise strike action. They "provide(d) established avenues and recipes for action" (Batstone et al 1978 p96). In the context of the management trying to create divisions the union had both the structures and orientation for establishing and maintaining unity as the strike developed. The manner in which organisational resources were used based on traditions of encouraging participation and self activity reinforced unity. This was manifested in the calling of regular mass meetings (on average every 14 days) "even when there was little happening" and the organisation of picketing to ensure that workers from different sections picketed together.

Traditions of activism and solidarity with other workers helped fund raising efforts, which were extensive. While the strikers were unhappy at the manner in which the official trade union movement supported them they relied on traditions of activism to collect money. Delegations were sent around the country and to Britain. Their success was based on their generosity in the past (particularly in Britain where their support for the Miners Strike was remembered) and their access to activists who they had worked with. Large sums of money were raised.

A final crucial component of the organisational resources of the strikers related to their ability to end the strike in a disciplined manner. Given their concern about the future

it was important that the union retained a capacity to influence management. There is always a concern in long strikes that it will all fall apart and the strikers will gradually troop back to work divided (Crouch 1982).

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) had a well established role in the decision making process. Throughout the strike the JNC put forward recommendations to be voted on. None of these were defeated and majorities were such that "we never had to have a count". This was taken, by some stewards, as an indication of the extent to which the JNC was in touch with the membership. But this would be to deny the ability of the JNC to shape the views of the strikers. This ability was based on the definition of the role of the JNC as one of leadership and its ability to influence significant numbers of the members (see Batstone et al 1978). As well as enjoying prestige and the right to make recommendations, the JNC possessed the ability to ensure that its decisions were accepted. Firstly, it was composed of members of all sections and geographical areas. Secondly, it operated on the basis of collective responsibility. Thus in any discussion with the members only one point of view came from the JNC. Because recommendations were made in consultation with the shop stewards it meant that the JNC could use the influence of the stewards to gain the support of the members (see *ibid* pp76-8).

The result of this was that the JNC was able to shape the discussions at mass meetings. Alternatives to its recommendations were rarely offered. This was so even at the end of the strike when it split on recommending a return to work. Despite these divisions no alternative was put to the final mass meeting. While there were other factors at play at this stage the style of leadership and the operation of collective responsibility worked to ensure that the return to work was supported. Thus the operation of the JNC worked to generate unity even when there were clear divisions of opinion within the JNC itself.



### **Section E: The Outcome: Confronting Globalisation**

The goals of the strike centred on the negotiation rights of the union, the wages and conditions of the workers and union survival. The stewards knew that concessions would have to be made and saw the strike as a way of "trying to control the amount of change". They pointed to a number of achievements including:

1. By refusing to negotiate until the special payments were restored they believed they had forced the company to deal with the union and recognise that agreement had to be respected.
2. While the company sought changes worth £10m it ended up with £7m. Lower paid workers won a wage increase and a modified bonus scheme was retained. The general feeling was that change would have been a lot worse without a strike.
3. A strengthening of commitment to the union. The stewards believed the union had been strengthened by the strike. The fact that the workers held together and that no major splits emerged was especially important in view of the belief that the issues which started the strike were, to an extent, unresolved.

While gains were highlighted it cannot be suggested that the stewards were happy with the outcome. They pointed to a number of constraints including the financial position of the company, the timing of the strike and the threat of production relocation which limited the effectiveness of their action. But what can be suggested is that while structural factors "make some outcomes more likely than others" (Edwards 1988 p 201) they should not be seen as having a completely determinate effect. The danger of an economically determined view of power resources is that it disguises the potential challenge that exists even in a hostile climate (Darlington 1994 p212). Despite adverse factors, such as recession, unions can still mobilise sufficient resources to constrain management. The ability of a union to do so will be affected

by its character and organisation :

A successful organisation with a proven record for reliability and toughness, combined with an active and involved membership can defeat management intentions, particularly if the site organisation is outward looking and has developed external relations both within and outside the official union structure (Spencer 1985 p11).

That is not to say that the union will always be successful. But it is important to make a distinction between "having to compromise" in unfavourable circumstances and the "active celebration of retreat" which embraces a managerial logic to such an extent that it demobilises rank and file activity (Darlington 1994). The problem in co-operating too closely with change is that members become alienated and blame the union when they end up working harder or out of work. It is possible to mobilise in such a manner as to build loyalty to the union and ensure management has to deal with it. As such strikes outcomes should be addressed in political as well as economic terms.

But this is not to suggest that everything is possible and that the real constraints that the workers faced could be simply wished away. It was clear that the fear of job losses through production relocation became a major concern as the strike developed. Throughout the strike the management used the threat of outsourcing. The union argued that it was not possible due to the hand crafted nature of the product and its association with Waterford. But in discussing the outcome of the strike it was described as "decisive" and the "biggest threat". It is clear that the stewards became concerned about their ability to stop the company moving production abroad. It was made clear, according to a JNC member, "that the place would close".

Post strike commentary on Waterford Glass (see IRN 26/8/93, 2/9/93 and EIRR 239 Dec 1993) suggests that the quest for control has been replaced by the generation of consent as the key management strategy. It is suggested that the workforce have responded to this and sought to deepen the consensus. An alternative interpretation

would be that they had no choice due to the decision of the company to outsource some of its production. It can be suggested that the factory regime within the industry has been transformed in the manner suggested by Michael Burawoy (1985). He has argued that within capitalism the "generic character" of "factory regimes" lies in the changing nature of workers' dependence on employers. He suggests that with the globalisation of capitalism an era of "hegemonic despotism" is emerging where capital mobility leads to the fear of being fired being replaced "by the fear of capital flight, plant closure, transfer of operations and plant disinvestment" (p150).

It can be argued that Burawoy is overgeneralising in arguing that the threat of capital mobility is the dominant or only strategy available to employers. Capital mobility is affected by skill requirements, labour productivity, infrastructure arrangements, state incentive policies, political and industrial relations stability and the ease with which existing facilities can be restructured (See Schoenberger 1989, Jacoby 1995, Cooke 1996). Further, new production methods emphasise the importance of physical proximity between producers and suppliers (Weiss 1997). Another consideration is that the threat of relocating may not have the desired effect. Cho (1985) highlights the variable effect of the threat of plant closure and relocation on South Korean and United States electronics workers. In Korea the threat of plant closure has had little effect. The workers "never experienced plant closings on a massive scale" (p209).

If the general feasibility of a shift to hegemonic despotism is questioned it thus becomes necessary to investigate the conditions under which a fear of relocation can have an effect. The following is relevant in the case of WG.

Firstly, the company had the motivation to pursue outsourcing. A strategy of cost cutting in the existing plants met resistance from the workforce. The strike demonstrated that the workers were willing to resist production changes. For the CEO the strike "was the watershed...We learned from it that you had to have more

options"(Sunday Tribune 5/9/93). The failure of management to achieve more direct forms of detailed control led to it seeking general control through generating insecurity in the employment relationship.

Secondly the political changes in Eastern Europe opened up a pool of cheap labour with skills and traditions in crystal making. A strategy of relocation makes greater sense when labour costs make up a large proportion of costs, 70% in the case of WG, and there are large differentials between regions (Cho 1985). A consideration in this context was that the production process in Waterford was fragmented consisting of distinct stages, primarily blowing and cutting, which did not need to be carried out in the same location. Thus it was possible to source blanks (uncut crystal) and have them cut in Waterford and thus maintain the link with Ireland that the stewards argued was vital to company success. The relevance of this is that it was possible for the stewards to visualise an internationalised production process. Thus the fear of it had an effect.

Thirdly, the ownership structure of the company had changed. It had shifted from an Irish family dominated concern to a company with multinational owners. These owners were perceived to be profit orientated with no romantic attachments to the traditions of the company. They were seen as "bottom-line merchants" (see IRN 2/9/93). The stewards believed they "had no romantic attachment to the Waterford area".

A fourth more general factor is the significant role which multi-national capital plays in Ireland. Jobs in foreign companies are perceived to be unstable with a substantial turnover in the companies located here (O Malley 1992) Thus there is an awareness of the instability of employment in multi-national firms. The significance of this is that unlike Cho's Korean workers the Irish working class has experienced plant closings.

What is suggested here is that the basis of workers' opposition can be undermined by

the threat of capital flight. It has been seen that this threat has been used in Waterford to restrict the ability of a traditionally well organised (and skilled) group of workers to resist management. Management's resort to this tactic can be understood as a response to market failure. The extent of market failure led to a determination to make the workers responsive to the logic of capital. Management had to breach the relative autonomy of the workplace by making the workers responsive to market forces.

This factor more than any has shaped relations in WG since the strike. A new product range has been introduced which is not produced in Waterford. Almost a quarter of production has been outsourced. In a sense workers have been left with no choice but to co-operate with change including major restructuring in 1993 and 1994. To suggest that this process of change is primarily based on consensus is to misread the situation.

The issue arises as to how unions should respond to increasingly mobile capital. In the aftermath of the strike the union faced further demands for change and more threats of outsourcing. The union responded by launching a public campaign to "Keep Waterford Crystal Jobs in Waterford" and called on the state "to take an equity stake in, or nationalise, Waterford Crystal in order to save 2300 well paid jobs" (Campaign to Keep Waterford Crystal Jobs in Waterford, Bulletin No 1). This campaign never really took off due, I believe, to the political climate that existed after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent lack of support from the broader trade union movement for the idea of nationalisation. In considering how one builds against multinational capital two considerations are relevant. Firstly, the Irish state has no interest in preventing Irish based companies locating abroad. To introduce impediments to mobility would be to undermine industrial policy given the centrality of attracting mobile capital here. (probably illegal as well)

\* However a one union case was put on out on 1983

Secondly, the Irish trade union movement is ill equipped to deal with globalisation. The leadership is locked into a partnership model which operates in a nationalist framework (Moody 1997). Indeed the voice of partnership constantly advises that defensive struggles are hopeless in the global economy. The struggle against global capital requires a regeneration of internationalism within the trade union movement at a rank and file level and this has to be linked to a renewal of activism within the unions generally:

Simply drawing up abstract plans for crippling internationalised production will be an exercise in futility...if the unions involved are too bureaucratic to mobilise their members for the fight and the leadership are committed to partnership and the nationalist thinking it implies (ibid p62).

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