Northumbria Research Link

www.northumbria.ac.uk/nrl

northumbria
UNIVERSITY NEWCASTLE

The Persistence of Power?
Trade Union Workplace Organisation and Industrial Relations in
the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry

Joanne McBride

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the School of Arts and Social Sciences

2005

Abstract

This thesis examines trade union workplace organisation, industrial relations and the nature of power in the employment relationship in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry (TMCI). It explores this in a context where trade union organisation could be expected to be severely challenged, but has proved to be remarkably resilient. The analysis was constructed from the literature and empirically grounded in the data. Firstly, it draws upon the union renewal debate and examines three themes identified as being the central features of workplace unionism; the effectiveness of shop steward organisation, levels of activity in membership participation and the significance of workplace democracy. The findings support other contributions to a thesis of workplace union resilience and add a further development to the debates by presenting evidence that suggests 'resilient renewal'. Secondly, the main intellectual approach adopted were models based upon mobilisation and social movement theories. Using these approaches in a micro level analysis of industrial relations helped to break down the employment relationship and draw out some significant issues. The key issues drawn out from this analysis suggest three significant features of the TMCI employment relationship. Firstly, that the workplace union organisation is *resilient,* secondly, that its influence in the employment relationship is *powerful,* and thirdly, that it is the *collective identity* that exists in the industry that gives them that power.

List of Contents

CHAPTER THREE

An overview of the theoretical literature associated with workplace power, union renewal and mobilisation

CHAPTER FOUR

Case Study Outline and Research Methodology

CHAPTER FIVE

Union Renewal or Resilience? The Persistence of Shop Steward Organisation in the Industry

CHAPTER SIX

Worker Collectivism and Mobilisation in the TMCI

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Dynamics of Power in the Employment Relationship in TMCI

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion and Conclusions

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures

Acknowledgements

Author's declaration

I declare that no portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning and is the work of the candidate alone.

Abbreviations

AEEU	Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (now Amicus)
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union (now Amicus)
ALL	Amalgamated Labour League
ASB	Boilermakers and Shipwrights Society
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers
BS	Boilermakers' Society
CIR	Commission on Industrial Relations
CSEU	Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions
EEF	Engineering Employers' Federation
FPSO	Floating Production Storage and Offloading vessel
FTO	Full Time Officer
GMB	General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union
GMWU	General Municipal Workers Union
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JSSC	Joint Shop Stewards Committee
MSF	Manufacturing Science Finance (now Amicus)
NLF	National Labour Federation
NSS	National Shipbuilders Security
SAC	Shipbuilding Advisory Committee
SEF	Shipbuilding Employers Federation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
TCLA	Tyneside Collective Labour Agreement
TMCG	Tyneside Maritime Cluster Group

TMCI Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry

UCATT Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians

WERS Workplace Employee Relations Survey

WIRS Workplace Industrial Relations Survey

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis provides a detailed examination of workplace trade union organisation and the nature of power in the employment relationship in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry (TMCI). Traditionally referred to as the shipbuilding industry, this sector has experienced severe economic decline through a dramatic period of restructuring since the 1960s onwards, when post war order books and lucrative government contracts for home ordered warships rapidly declined in the face of foreign competition. Nationalisation of the industry was quickly followed by privatisation that witnessed a move to company bargaining, which in some cases, was severely challenged by union non-recognition strategies. Trade union organisation was inevitably challenged through the decline of the shipbuilding industry, the period of trade union mergers which challenged the old sectional strengths, and a managerial offensive leading to a temporary and itinerant workforce. Yet despite this, the research conducted for this study reveals a powerful, resilient workplace union organisation still capable of challenging management decisions.

This is very significant when it is considered that Britain in general has witnessed a weakening of trade union influence at the workplace. This subject has been a major focus in much contemporary industrial relations literature with academic analysis increasingly turning attention to prognosis for union survival and growth. An abundance of literature has

1

emerged concerned with the development of national trade union strategies to assist in the survival and growth of membership (for example Fairbrother 2000; Heery 1996). Much of this focuses upon 'organising' with the view that trade unions must renew themselves if they are to continue to represent their members and negotiate successfully with employers (Heery 1999; Heery *et al.* 2000a, 2000b). In an overview of this literature in chapter 3, it is argued that, although national driven developments are important, trade unions may be neglecting their traditional areas of active organisation at the workplace and how to maintain these sources of power. One of the central arguments of this thesis is that the impetus of trade union renewal depends crucially on organisation activity and membership participation at the workplace level, for it is within the workplace in which lies the reality of unionism for most members, and where unions constantly organise and renew (for example Fairbrother 1989; Fosh 1993). Furthermore, some empirical studies (Beale 1999; Danford *et al.* 2003; Darlington 1994, 2001, 2002; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996) have illustrated how workplace union organisation has remained resilient in some areas without a need to rebuild workplace activity through 'organising'. However, the nature and extent of such workplace union resilience remains only partially examined within the literature, and reference to traditional industries renowned for solidaristic trade unionism remains sparse. Indeed, some commentators have raised caution that traditional areas of union organisation in the heartlands of the labour movement, *"...run the risk of being ignored in academic research and writing"* (Danford *et al.* 2003:171), yet have the potential to provide

positive examples of everyday workplace union organisation. Therefore, it is one of the intentions of this study to contribute to this area by providing data on workplace union organisation, from a traditional industry where there has historically existed a strong trade union presence and solidaristic organisation. From an overview of the literature in chapter 3, the study draws upon three themes identified as being the central features of workplace unionism; the significance of workplace union democracy, levels of activity in membership participation and the effectiveness of shop steward organisation. Clearly, an examination of such issues will require a micro level analysis of the employment relationship in the TMCI.

Such an in-depth examination of social processes at the workplace is essential, for as some authors have suggested, there is a paucity in workplace-based studies in contemporary industrial relations literature (Danford *et al.* 2003; Darlington 1994; Cully *et al.* 1999; Heyes 1999). Furthermore, suggestions have been raised that there is a need to refocus attention on the processes involved in the role of the shop steward (Terry 1995; Cully *et al.* 1999). Although there have been some recent notable studies on the role of shop stewards, these have been few (Greene 2001; Darlington 2001, 2002; Upchurch *et al.* 2002). By focusing more qualitative attention on the activities, pressures and constraints that influence shop stewards' role in the present day, such studies provide a balance to more quantitative large-scale surveys that suggest that shop steward influence in the workplace has weakened

(Cully *et al.* 1999; Millward *et al.* 1992). The suggested decline of shop steward and trade union influence at the workplace has also led to comparable propositions that there has been an alleged decline of worker collectivism at the expense of a move to individualism, (Bassett & Cave 1993; Bacon & Storey 1993,1996) and that worker self-confidence and incentive to mobilise and act collectively may have reduced (Danford 1997; Kelly 1997). All of these issues relating to influence, confidence, mobilisation, collectivism and leadership inevitably raise issues relating to the notion of power in the employment relationship. Yet, despite the crucial importance of the concept of power to the study of industrial relations, it is argued that it remains theoretically elusive and does not appear to have been applied extensively in empirical research (Kirkbride 1985; Martin 1992; Kelly 1998). In an examination of how power is applied in industrial relations theory in chapter 3, it is demonstrated that one of the major problems is that there are contested definitions of power, and consequently, there is no reliable way of measuring it. The chapter seeks to construct a detailed analysis of the central problems surrounding the key issues addressed thus far; the debates surrounding union renewal, the role of the shop steward and shop steward organisation, collectivism and the collective identity and the nature of power in the employment relationship.

The thesis provides evidence to suggest that there are inadequate analyses of the supposed crisis of organised labour, due to inherent contradictory tensions within these debates, and a lack of conceptual and

empirical rigour. This has *"...sparked a search for a new paradigm to define the field"* (Brown Johnson & Jarley 2004:543) of industrial relations. John Kelly's (1998) intervention with the offer of approaches associated with mobilisation theory has been described as *"...an important contribution to the debate..."* as it *"...offers a way forward"* (Gall 2000a:328). Gall also suggests that, *"This work will no doubt be referred to as seminal work...* (Ibid.) This clearly indicates the significance of this work and is a key reason why it is the major theoretical approach adopted in this thesis, as it is argued that this intellectual approach has opened up new areas for debate. Kelly argues that these theories are useful to the study of industrial relations, as they help to construct conceptual frameworks to help us think rigorously and analytically about the conditions under which individual workers come to define their interests and identities in collective terms, based around the notion of 'injustice',

> *...it is the perception of, and response to, injustice that should form the core intellectual agenda for industrial relations.* (Ibid:26)

However, as a fairly recent contribution to the field, any empirical work as yet is fairly sparse, based primarily on public sector analysis with a focus of a more quantitative than qualitative nature (Metochi 2002; Brown Johnson & Jarley 2004). Furthermore, it is suggested that where there is empirical work undertaken, some of it does not incorporate a rigorous analysis of the theoretical components associated with the approaches (for example Gall 2000b). Therefore it is the intention of this thesis to contribute to a growing synthesis of studies in this area by focusing on a private sector industry, using methodological tools in a combination of

5

both qualitative and quantitative research methods, and contextualising it within the debate on union renewal informed by mobilisation theory.

The preferred research strategy chosen is the exploratory case study because of its ability to deal with a whole range of methods of data collection, and the research design is described in detail in chapter 4. The main methodological tool used was the semi-structured interview with management, union officials, full time officers (FTOs) and shop stewards. A self-completion questionnaire was used with the workforce[1]. In order to achieve more qualitative data from the workforce, this was supplemented by the use of multiple methods such as observation of workforce meetings with shop stewards, direct participation by 'training' as a welder on the shop floor, and generally 'hanging around' the shop stewards' offices and meeting workers on an impromptu basis as they visited the office for various reasons. Together with this, continuous non-participant observation was used when visiting each site to conduct interviews. Finally, observation of shop steward committee meetings, shop steward meetings with FTOs, with management and with Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) offsite, were all used as a source of data collection. Full use was also made of archival records and documentary material from the unions[2], companies and local press.

---

[1] The workforce is constantly referred to in the masculine for there were no female blue-collar workers at the time of fieldwork.

[2] The unions involved at the time of fieldwork were AEEU, GMB, MSF and UCATT. During fieldwork there was a merger of the MSF and AEEU to what is now Amicus. All interviews, except with one 'Amicus' shop steward at Refit PLC, were conducted prior to the merger and therefore remain with their original union title at the time of the interview.

The thesis begins in chapter 2 with an examination of the historical evolution of union organisation and industrial relations in the industry. It is argued that this is of great significance due to the distinctive and specific character of industrial relations and trade union organisation that is peculiar to the industry. Indeed, this was an issue highlighted in an independent inquiry by the government in 1966 that focused on industrial relations in the shipbuilding industry,

> ...throughout the evolution, shipbuilding has retained certain special characteristics, of which some are historical survivals while others are probably inherent, and these distinguish shipbuilding from the general run of engineering and manufacturing industry. (Cm.2937:12)

An appreciation of this distinctiveness is crucial to our understanding of contemporary industrial relations in the industry and workplace trade unionism. Chapter 3 examines the literature associated with the key themes for exploration in this thesis as discussed previously; workplace union organisation issues of renewal, the role of the shop steward and shop steward organisation, collectivism and the collective identity, and the theoretical approaches associated with the issues of mobilisation and power. Chapter 4 provides a detailed analysis of the research strategy and methods used in this study. It also presents a case study outline of the industry and each case study company involved in the research.

The three data chapters reflect the dominant theoretical themes of the thesis. Chapter 5 draws upon the three themes identified in the literature

as being the central features of workplace unionism; the effectiveness of shop steward organisation, levels of activity in membership participation and the significance of workplace union democracy. Chapter 6 employs mobilisation and social movement theories as models to measure workplace collectivism in the TMCI. This is conducted by breaking down all of the elements associated with the theories into their subcomponents to examine how individual workers come to define their identities and interests in collective terms. In order to understand how the data informs the theories, there is an explicit connection throughout the case studies between the theoretical literature and the data allowing for the evidence to support the literature. The final data chapter explores the exercise of power in the employment relationship in the TMCI, and provides evidence to illustrate how power can be dynamic in the way it continuously shifts within a multifaceted set of workplace relationships. Chapter 8 then pulls together the significant issues that are drawn out of the study, providing an overview of the thesis with a discussion suggesting a variety of substantive contributions to knowledge.

Chapter Two

The historical significance of union organisation and industrial relations in the shipbuilding industry on Tyneside

Introduction

The opening line of Brown *et al.*'s (1972) seminal study of shipbuilding on Tyneside maintains that,

> *In any consideration of industrial relations in Britain the shipbuilding industry must claim a significant place.*

There are several reasons for such a statement. Firstly, the industry's renowned propensity to stoppages of work, particularly in the period up to nationalisation in the late 1970s. Secondly, the repeated government intervention leading to reports providing recommendations to resolve the problematic industrial relations in the industry. Finally, and of most relevance to this thesis, the distinctive and specific character of industrial relations and trade union organisation that is peculiar to the industry. Clearly, such an assertion can only be fully understood through an examination of the historical evolution of union organisation and industrial relations in the industry. An appreciation of this distinctiveness is crucial to our understanding of contemporary industrial relations in the industry that is the central issue of this thesis. Hence, the primary purpose of this chapter is to provide such an examination. The specific focus will be upon the River Tyne as this is also the focus of the thesis, although it is acknowledged that generalisations concerning the development of industrial relations in British shipbuilding from one locality must be considered carefully. For this reason, some information is also presented

from previous studies in other shipbuilding regions, together with government reports into the entire national industry to support evidence relating to the Tyneside region.

In what follows, I will argue that the key features that characterise current industrial relations in the industry have their roots in the historical past and cannot be properly understood outside of this context. Trade union organisation and industrial relations outcomes are organically related to the labour process in the industry, which is itself structured by technological change.

2.1 Technological Change and Entrenched Sectionalism

2.1.1 Early development of union organisation in shipbuilding on Tyneside – the period of the wooden ship

The earliest account of shipbuilding on the River Tyne is recorded in 1294 (Dougan 1968:19) the year in which a galley is reported to have been built for King Edward I. However, from this period Dougan claims that "...*shipbuilding disappears from the records...*" (Ibid:20) until the 17th Century, from which time chronicles of the Newcastle Shipwrights Company provide comprehensive accounts of the development of the industry. The shipwrights were efficiently organised, enjoying the prestige of their own Guild from the late medieval period. What is noteworthy about the shipwrights is the way in which they produced clear sets of rules and regulations that controlled craft standards and entry into the trade. They also provide the earliest evidence of apprentice

regulation in the shipbuilding industry, going as far back as 1720. This is significant to this study, in that the control of craft standards and entry into a trade by the organised workers, eventually became embedded in the industry. However, it is acknowledged that there is no evidence to claim that trade unions descended directly from craft guilds (see S&B Webb 1920a:14-17) and the shipwrights of this period were most likely master craftsmen, organised as producers to protect the interests of their members, trade and profit. Nonetheless, it has been claimed that the Shipwrights Union, which formed the following century, was the first shipbuilding union in the UK (MacDermott no date:5).

The date of the establishment of the first Shipwrights' Union on Tyneside is disputed among commentators, possibly due to the difficulties with the Combination Laws that regarded trade unions as illegal until their repeal in 1824. In this same year, 400 shipwrights conducted a strike for 17 weeks in an attempt to regulate the number of apprentices entering the industry. Then,

> ...in 1851 over 1000 shipwrights on the Tyne struck when their employers refused to accept the seven-year apprenticeship period laid down by the men as the minimum period in which they felt the youngsters could gain sufficient skill. (Dougan 1968:56)

Apprentice regulation was the principal means by which the skilled craft workers of the 19th Century sought to protect their employment and retain the importance of the *skill* required to conduct the job. Despite objections from the employers, the persistence of these skilled workers

11

led to the eventual establishment of an apprenticeship system agreed between the Shipwrights Union and the employers. Elmbaum (in Lorenz 1991:14) argued that the apprenticeship system made a positive contribution to the industry's competitive success in permitting employers to make low cost investments in industry-specific skills. The system also clearly allowed apprentices some stability of employment. Hence, despite industrial relations problems due to the controlling of craft standards into the trade, the end results appeared to provide some advantages to both parties in the employment relationship. However, the technological advancement of iron into the industry during this period challenged the identity of the shipwright as the principal craft in shipbuilding.

2.1.2 The advent of iron ships

The advent of iron introduced a different labour process to the production of ships with new distinct phases from design to fitting out, all of which required a wider range of skills and machine tools and this process remains central to modern shipbuilding. This led to a move from the traditional shipwright to a number of other trades being introduced to the industry. Angle-iron smiths, platers, riveters, caulkers, holders-up and drillers eventually became the group of skilled trades that were central to the different phases of the construction of iron ships. To begin with, it was possible for workers to be upgraded in different levels of skill and between trades. However, as Lorenz & Wilkinson note,

> *As the main shipbuilding trades became organised by separate unions of Boilermakers, Shipwrights and Blacksmiths, the tendency was for all occupational groups to be classified as skilled with the means of entry confined to apprenticeship.* (in Elmbaum & Lazonick 1968:114)

Hence, the introduction of these different trades into the industry clearly led to each trade attempting to protect their employment by emphasising the importance of skill required to conduct their work. This was reinforced with the development of union organisation around the job or trade. It was even further reinforced in the apprenticeship, which now clearly indicated an identification with the craft and skill allowing for a clear social definition of group membership (Eldridge 1968:93). The trade union sectionalism and demarcation disputes characteristic of modern shipbuilding became embedded in these divisions in the labour process. As Clarke notes, this social identification with group membership led to divisions and disputes and,

> *...labour relations was no less a problem between the workers themselves than of masters and men.* (1966:5)

There were clear reasons why there were tensions between the workers in the industry at this time.

The new main shipbuilding trades became collectively known as the 'black squad'. Each trade had its own 'squad system', whereby groups of workers would contract for a specific job and then precise tasks would be divided up between each squad's skilled workers. Any perceived 'less

specialised' task within this specific 'squad' contract would be allocated to workers referred to as 'helpers'. Consequently, if platers are taken as an example, the employers paid the platers as leading craftsmen for the work done, and in turn, the platers paid their helpers at standard time rates, whilst also being responsible for the supervision of their labour. Indeed, Clarke (Ibid:307) and Clegg *et al.* (1964:66) note that,

> ...*the role of the platers [was] virtually sub-employers of the helpers.*

There are three significant issues arising from this information. Firstly, the 'squad system' clearly reinforced the craft identity in that a task allocated to a specific group provided the basis for specialisation within a framework of general skills (Lorenz & Wilkinson 1968:115). Secondly, the self-imposed supervision of tasks and labour provides a two-fold issue in that it was beneficial to the employer, as the cost of supervisory management was reduced (Ibid.) but also it clearly provided a great deal of job autonomy to the workers (see also Cm.4756 1971:109-118; Roberts 1993:4-6). A final significant issue is that the new iron ships were now built in different phases, hence requiring particular skills at certain stages of production. Consequently, the need to protect the craft content of a skill of a specific group would be further reinforced due to the threat of cyclical redundancy. Nonetheless, on Tyneside, workers with specialised skills were able to move from yard to yard when demand for their skills was required. This was possible due to the heavy concentration of shipyards in the region during this period. However, although the resilience in the specialisation of the trade afforded

protection to skilled workers and their apprentices, it was most certainly not beneficial to the unskilled workers, and the helpers in particular voiced their grievances on many occasions.

Helpers were barred entry into the 'skilled' trade, which was recruited solely through apprenticeship and they were also, therefore, ineligible for trade union membership. Clegg *et al.* note that the platers' helpers,

> *...resented the platers' power of summary dismissal, and considered themselves exploited, and sometimes even cheated, by their masters.* (1964:132)

The skilled craftsman's responsibility to direct both pay and labour resulted in a deepening division amongst the workforce. Clarke claims that such divisions were an obstacle in the development of trade unionism,

> *Trade unionism...was a force only among a limited labour aristocracy...which was concerned to defend its position against the less skilled workers as well as against employers...* (Clarke in McCord:1977:4)

In terms of the development of union organisation on Tyneside, the Boilermakers' Society, with a branch established on the Tyne in 1846, was, according to the Webbs, incomparably the most powerful (Webb, S&B 1920a:430). The Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) established on the Tyne in 1851, was also considered powerful by the Webbs although it,

...had to compete with compact sectional or local unions admitting one or more of the numerous classes of workmen in the engineering and machine-making trades. (Ibid.)

There were numerous of these competing local societies in engineering and the 'anarchic rivalry' (Ibid:206) that existed inhibited trade union activity. However, the ASE began to incorporate small local societies and gained a larger membership and a National Office from which to conduct their affairs. Yet, despite the national growth of the ASE as the 'new model union' (Ibid:204), Wilkinson (1939:84) claims that trade union branches on Tyneside were not very well organised and membership was fairly low. Nonetheless, there were dramatic changes when, in 1865, shipbuilding employers locked out their workforce in an attempt to impede the development of trade union organisation. On Tyneside, the men held a meeting in Jarrow and passed a resolution that before the yards re-opened, trade union membership amongst the skilled men would be required to achieve 100%. By the end of the lockout, the workforce were apparently left with *"...a new and exciting sense of solidarity."* (Ibid:89). The strength of this solidarity led to the 'Nine Hour Movement' which has been referred to as,

...one of the most significant strikes in the history of the British working class...in that its final victory secured a general reduction of working hours for a whole national industry... (Dougan 1968:66)

However, despite this sense of a 'new solidarity', unskilled workers remained barred from entry into the skilled workers' trade unions and despite many grievances, from the helpers in particular, to the

Boilermakers Society, MacDermott notes that they *"...would have nothing to do with the labouring man."* (no date:21). After continual rejection from the now well-established trade unions, the helpers proceeded with an attempt to organise themselves.

An early attempt in 1875 to organise the helpers resulted in a branch of the Amalgamated Labour League (ALL). This organisation offered to accept all non-craft workers in the shipyards and attracted many unskilled men as members. However, the Boilermakers Society was extremely resistant to ALL as they perceived the helpers to be 'employed' by the craftsmen and therefore also by the union (Webb, S&B 1920a:353; Clegg *et al.* 1964:66). They were also concerned that organisation would provide the unskilled with the ability to conduct sectional industrial action against the skilled workers. In reaction to these concerns raised by the Boilermakers, many employers, perceiving there may be potential industrial unrest, began to replace the organised helpers with labour from Leeds and Scotland. Such an outcome, encouraged by the powerful Boilermakers Society, not surprisingly provoked much resentment and hostility from other trade unions (Clarke in McCord 1977:124). The eventual outcome of this situation resulted in the limited success of ALL, although Clarke notes that,

> *...the seeds were sown from which a stronger plant was to emerge during the growth of trade unions amongst the unskilled in the late 1880's.* (Ibid:125)

This historical narrative suggests that, not only was sectionalism between skilled trades endemic, but that those trades, whilst employing unskilled helpers, distanced themselves from them in terms of their union organisation. Thus, shipbuilding generated a production process that required a high degree of integration and cooperation but at the same time was characterised by diversity. The historical evidence also provides some indication of the relationships between the workers themselves and the struggles and challenges faced by the unskilled from both capital and labour when attempting to organise. Together with this, it illustrates how powerful the Boilermakers Society, built up from the black squad trades, had actually become. However, they did not totally prevent the unskilled workers from organising, as the National Labour Federation (NLF) was established on Tyneside in 1886, and it is claimed by MacDermott (no date:20) and Clegg *et al.* (1964:65), that the larger and well established ASE assisted with its formation. This may have possibly been due to the inter union conflict between the two major unions, the Boilermakers Society and ASE, at that time. Nonetheless, an upsurge in trade union organisation during this period meant that any privileges that these major craft unions had maintained, were becoming doubtful for the future. This became more evident with the introduction of steel and new working methods that relied more upon unskilled labour and yet more trades being introduced into the industry.

2.1.3 The introduction of steel

Production innovation was rapid in the shipbuilding industry during the 1880's, although this was not necessarily coupled with economic success, as a depression lasting from 1884-1887 made an enormous impact on Tyneside. In some yards, there were no vessels launched for two years and many workers either accepted wage reductions or became unemployed. Those workers who did maintain their employment became even more protective towards their trade, as Clarke (1966:413) notes,

> ...the depth and protracted character of the Depression of the 1880's would seem ... to have been a major factor in aggravating the craftsman's normal protective attitude to his job

The depression also impacted upon the trade unions, as 'out-of-work' donations began to negatively affect their funds and they became,

> ...inclined to look more narrowly into cases of 'encroachment' upon the work which each regarded as the legitimate sphere of their own members" (Webb, S& B 1920a:353).

However, problems with demarcation were even further exacerbated during the 1890s with the introduction of steel, new types of ships such as oil tankers and bulk carriers (Lorenz & Wilkinson 1968:113), together with the new machinery that came with all of these changes, which increased the need for a specialisation of tasks.

These technological changes once more introduced new trades into the shipbuilding industry, such as sheet metal workers, plumbers, electricians

and painters. Many of these groups had already established craft unions outside of the shipbuilding industry and their addition caused a growing complication in trade union structure. Furthermore, the introduction of new working methods, new machinery, new trades and new trade unions, led to even more competition between the occupational groups concerning the maintenance and establishment of job tasks. As specific trades began to claim exclusive rights to work tasks, conflict was instigated between the trades involved and their trade unions. The sectionalism that had evolved was now extremely complex and problems with demarcation disputes in the Tyneside industry during this period reached enormous proportions. So much so that it was estimated that,

> *Within the space of thirty five months... there were no fewer than thirty five weeks in which one or other of the four most important sections of skilled men on Tyneside were idle because work to which they laid claim was being done by others* (Webb S&B,1920b:513)

Furthermore, the ever-changing trade union structure led to numerous wage disputes between trades, to the extent that employers began to attempt to secure an industry-wide uniform wage structure, and in doing so, created the National Federation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Employers (Clegg *et al.* 1964:151). The Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades of the United Kingdom[3] was established in 1891, partly to act as a counterbalance to the Employers' Federation, but also

---

[3] This was the forerunner to the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) that was constituted in its present form in 1936.

to attempt to resolve inter union disputes, particularly with regards to demarcation problems.

The severity of the industrial relations problems on Tyneside at this time, in particular the escalating demarcation issues, led to an investigation by the Royal Commission, which discovered that the major demarcation disputes involved the shipwrights and joiners and repeated attempts were made to solve their disagreements. In order to illustrate the extent of the concern with this issue on Tyneside, Thomas Burt MP conducted an exhaustive inquiry into the problem, which resulted in 96 of the jobs in dispute given to the joiners and 72 to the shipwrights (see Webb S&B 1920b:511; Dougan 1968:125). The joiners refused to accept this decision, partly due to the fact that they argued that Burt had no *"expert knowledge of the trade"* (Dougan Ibid.) and 1000 men went on strike for three months, refusing to return to work until a conciliation board was established.

This example provides an illustration of the intensity of the resilience in retaining the craft division of labour and the strength and power of the workgroups. Indeed, it could be suggested that such resilience had successful outcomes for the workers, in that the major effect of the changes of the new technology and machinery was a proliferation in the number of skills rather than any evidence of deskilling. However, the following major technical development of the introduction of welding, did

indeed threaten the preservation of certain skills and trades in the industry.

2.1.4 The emergence of welding and prefabrication techniques

After a worldwide depression, it was not until 1936 that output began to increase on Tyneside, although North East shipbuilders remained to face some unexpected difficulties. The first complication was in the supply of steel, as there was a shortage after the First World War. The second problem was in the chief innovation in shipbuilding of the time, electric and oxy-acetylene welding. The major dilemma facing employers this time was not in the introduction of a new technological development, or different trades to the industry, rather the proposed creation of a new skilled trade, to be recruited from the existing labour force and organised outside the existing union structure. Lorenz (in Roberts 1993:45) noted that,

> The scheme marked the first attempt by employers to determine in advance through national negotiations the terms upon which new techniques would be introduced to the industry...

However, the skill content required for the job, and hence the training required to conduct the work, appeared to be unclear to those involved in the industry. This was particularly evident in the now renamed Shipbuilding Employers Federation's (SEF) initial evaluation, that training to undertake welding might only require as little as two weeks. Negotiations were held between the SEF and the CSEU and the duration

of training for a welder was proposed at two years. The Boilermakers did not agree and argued that these proposals were an attempt at dilution, in allowing unskilled labourers to become tradesmen after only two years, and argued that their skilled members were more than capable of conducting the work associated with welding. The dispute was eventually settled yard by yard, with the SEF agreeing to the proposal of a five-year apprenticeship and the Boilermakers dominating the greater part of welding. Lorenz (in Roberts 1993:46) suggested that,

> *Any other proposal would have provoked a crisis in industrial relations, as it would have challenged the control the unions had been able to exercise over entry to the skilled trades through apprenticeship; the employers were evidently unwilling to confront the unions on this general principle".*

McGoldrick (1983:200) suggested that such 'complacency and conservatism' by the employers, and their failure to use the introduction of welding and its potentially new methods of construction to thoroughly re-organise the division of labour, led to further entrenchment of trade sectionalism, for

> *Welders, as a relatively new trade, were quick to assert their own sectional identity and closely restricted entry to their trade through the apprenticeship system* (Ibid:202)

However, other trades were threatened by the introduction of this new skill and the trade structure was gradually altered in that welding replaced riveting, although the new trade increased the importance of the work of the plater. Indeed, the welders and platers eventually became the

dominant trade in the industry and remain so in the present day. Nonetheless, welders were the last 'skilled' trade to be developed in the industry and, although there have been many more new technologies introduced, the machinery has not required the introduction of any new trades.

What is evident is that the different degrees of technical development, combined with the cyclical nature of the industry's market, led to an entrenchment of sectionalism due to the protection of jobs, hence a rise in demarcation disputes. However, it has been argued that this protection of employment was not only associated with job security but also arguably related to the issue of *control* (Eldridge 1968;Roberts 1967). In conducting demarcation disputes, the workers and their trade unions were restricting management in reducing flexibility. Together with this, they also limited management's ability to introduce unskilled workers to skilled areas. This is evident in the control over apprenticeships and in the restrictions on dilution. However, not all of these effects were necessarily negative to the employers, for a highly skilled workforce is arguably beneficial for production and also for the industry on the Tyne as a whole, in that the skills that were developed allowed inter yard specialisation. Furthermore, the trade unions were, in effect, a form of a labour exchange, as they assisted with the movement of labour between the yards. As Lorenz & Wilkinson (1968:115) also suggest, the trade unions provided social welfare services to their members such as health and employment benefits, which would help to maintain the workforce

and its connection to the industry. It would appear then, that the most challenging period for all of the actors in the employment relationship was during periods of technological change, when the industry faced immense industrial relations problems in a rush of demarcation disputes that were not resolved until the main lines of the division of work were agreed. Together with this, the complex sectional bargaining structure would also involve negotiations over pay differentials generally being negotiated separately to demarcation issues. Clearly then, due to the number of trades that existed in the industry at that time, it could be assumed that there was an extremely complicated bargaining structure. Hence, it might also be assumed, that due to the regularity of sectional bargaining, there would be some form of agreed constitutional set of procedures between the trade unions and employers. However, McGoldrick claims that,

> *...to talk of procedures tends to suggest a set of clearly defined 'constitutional' stages in bargaining. This was not the case in shipbuilding.* (1983:203)

Therefore, the question must be raised as to how the employers and unions attempted to deal with these problems. The following section considers some key turning points and the attempts to alleviate problems of the huge number of disputes.

2.2 Process and Practice: Substantive and Procedural Bargaining

2.2.1 Demarcation

Collective disputes in the industry can be defined by two linked characteristics: sectional bargaining over pay to preserve differentials and sectional bargaining over jobs to protect employment and also preserve pay. This latter characteristic is clearly evident from the previous section and S & B Webb illustrated how demarcation disputes reached immense proportions at the end of the 19th Century to the point that,

> *On one occasion, indeed, a great shipbuilder on the Tyne, finding his whole establishment laid idle by such a quarrel, and utterly unable to bring the men to reason, finally took off his coat and did the disputed work with his own hands.* (Webb S&B, 1920b:510)

The following table (2.1) illustrates the wide-ranging scope of demarcation between trades, and also provides some indication as to the number of sectional bargaining units that developed. However, the key long running dispute of that particular period was between the shipwrights and joiners.

Table 2.1 Trades involved in demarcation disputes at the end of the Nineteenth Century

1.	shipwright - joiner
2.	fitter - plumber
3.	fitter - driller
4.	fitter - caulkers and hold-cutter
5.	fitter - blacksmith
6.	plumber - tin and iron plate worker
7.	tin and iron worker - plater
8.	angle ironsmith - blacksmith
9.	iron shipwright - caulker
10.	plater - caulker
11.	caulker - driller
12.	painter - red leader

(Clarke 1966:414;Clarke in McCord 1977:121)

This particular dispute between shipwrights and joiners became so problematic that it led to external political intervention. In an attempt to arbitrate in the situation, the Tyne Joint Committee of Shipwrights and Joiners was created in 1893 and, although this did not end the disputes, it did reduce their duration (Dougan 1968:125). It was also during this period that S & B Webb note (1920b:132) that it was the influential leader of the Boilermakers' Society, Robert Knight, who attempted to draw together the majority of trade unions involved in engineering and shipbuilding to form the 'Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades of the United Kingdom', in part to help alleviate demarcation

problems and act as a counterbalance to the SEF. Although the Webbs noted (1920b:132) that this was a significant achievement, they also argued that any potential of whole industry collective bargaining for the trade unions was hampered due to the ASE's refusal to take part in the Federation. Nonetheless, another important consequence of Knight's reign was the establishment of a new negotiating procedure agreement between the Trade Union Federation and the SEF. This agreement was signed in 1898 and some of the main features are outlined in Appendix One at the end of this thesis.

The agreement outlined a procedure for dispute settlement, which stated that work should continue pending a settlement. Despite the North East organiser of the ASE being in 'open revolt' to the agreement, the Webbs argued that it, *"...fulfilled a useful function in settling disputes between different unions"* (Ibid.) mainly with reference to demarcation problems. However, Knight received some hostility from the union membership for several reasons. One was due to his cautioning of the holding of shop meetings, which inevitably led to unofficial disputes, and the warning that members would be fined if taking precipitate strike action when work was plentiful. A further source of hostility was an instance when Knight accused shop stewards of exceeding their power by bargaining for fixed piecework rates (Mortimer 1973;Clarke 1966). The autonomous workgroups were all represented by shop stewards who were involved in the continued rounds of negotiations, hence it is suggested that the

membership resented these accusations by Knight as it threatened their local autonomy, together with

> ...his undoubted tendency towards personal dictatorial control (Mortimer 1973:168).

On the other hand, comments such as,

> ...there is so much in common between the employers and ourselves that we should remove everything that tends to cause unnecessary expenditure of their capital (Clarke 1966:195)

was a possible reason why shipbuilding employers approved of Knight's policies. Their joint negotiations led to the establishment of conciliation boards on Tyneside that did minimise the effects of disputes as the following table (2.2) illustrates.

**Table 2.2 Number of Strikes in Engineering and Shipbuilding 1896 –
1906**

Year	Great Britain	North East Coast
1896	187	24
1897	159	21
1898	98	16
1899	72	12
1900	64	7
1901	63	11
1902	53	4
1903	56	2
1904	57	4
1905	53	4
1906	101	6

Source: Clarke 1966:499

However, any depiction of good relations was short lived as another economic downturn on the Tyne in 1907 led to a request by employers to a reduction in wages.

2.2.2 Wages

Disputes over wages generally involved sectional bargaining by shop stewards over piecework rates and pay differentials. However, on this particular occasion in 1907, the engineers had been requested to take a

5% reduction in piecework and time rates, and the ASE, together with other engineering unions, balloted their members. More than 20 of the unions accepted the reductions, with the exception of the ASE membership, which resulted in more than 8000 engineers conducting strike action for over 179 days, much to the frustration of the national leaders of the ASE (Clarke 1997a:356). The dispute was so high profile that Lloyd George intervened, to the annoyance of the Employers' Federation who decided that if there was no return to work, they would lock out all engineers. A suggestion to resolve the dispute was put forward by the engineering workers through their representatives that a minimum wage should be applied, below which the employers would not be able to fall. However, it was reported that,

> ...employers saw minimum wages as socialist agitation
> (Ibid:331)

and refused to introduce a minimum wage. They decided to treat this problem as a national issue arguing that,

> The action of the men in discarding the advice of their leaders will tend to greatly weaken all arrangements that have been made with the unions for the amicable settlement of labour questions. (Ibid.)

Due to this threat, and the refusal of the men to return to work despite recommendations from their union leadership to do so, the General Secretary of the ASE resigned, regarding the "...North East men as undermining collective bargaining". (Ibid.) A further ballot was conducted by a commission instructed by Lloyd George, which led to a provisional

agreement being established by the Board of Trade stating that no further reductions in wages would be made for a further 6 months.

This dispute has been claimed to be a high point in the campaign for local autonomy (Ibid.) and the outcome was a further procedural agreement for engineers signed in 1909. Seventeen trade unions signed this agreement, which is outlined in Appendix Two. The notable exceptions to this agreement were the Plumbers' Union and the ASE, although it ought to be noted that the ASE were involved in a separate engineering agreement, revised in 1907 to outlaw traditions such as non-working with non-trade unionists and bans on overtime.

2.2.3 The issue of overtime and the development of machinery for collective bargaining

Industrial relations problems concerning overtime were a regular feature, particularly with the engineers,

> Overtime was always held to be wrong by active trade unionists when other members were out of work. (Ibid:338)

In October 1904, ASE members on Tyneside voted that no one would work overtime on newly introduced work whilst members were unemployed. This action by North East District Committees caused serious problems with stoppages in overtime that led to a Central Conference being held in London. Clarke (Ibid.) notes that it was agreed at this meeting that a total ban on overtime was not necessarily a means of protecting jobs, as other trades were able to provide the labour to

conduct the tasks. The national leaders of the ASE subsequently changed the rule and signed a new procedural agreement with employers in 1907. This was significant as it gave some advantage to the national engineering trade unions, for the new agreement provided, in effect, some form of machinery for collective bargaining. By 1910, collective bargaining was the established way of changing rates of pay, hours of work and other conditions of work in the shipbuilding industry. However, as noted earlier, other more informal bargaining machinery already existed in the industry, as also noted by S & B Webb,

> ...a gang of platers will bargain...as to the exact terms upon which they will undertake a job. (1920b:176).

The new collective bargaining machinery that had developed did not replace nor weaken these traditional informal procedures.

Yet, this spirit of informality and local autonomy was an issue, which nationally, trade unionism had to constantly struggle against. Therefore, any realistic notion of peaceful negotiations under the new agreements were optimistic, and as early as 1910, an alleged breach of procedure by the Boilermakers' Society caused a long dispute that led to their exclusion from the shipbuilding procedures for many years. This may have influenced their preference not to be signatories of the 1912 General Demarcation Agreement, despite the fact that their trades were the principal participants in the majority of disputes. Nonetheless, by 1914 when war broke out, Clegg notes that the Labour party requested all

unions "...*to make a determined effort to terminate all existing disputes.*" (1985:120).

As the shipbuilding industry was crucial to the war effort, employers met with all major craft unions and requested a dilution of labour. However, the unions did not perceive that their membership would be agreeable and suggested some alternatives that the employers found inadequate. Once more, the Government realised it may have to intervene directly into the industry and a proposal by the War Office declared that,

> *The Government should assume control of the principal armament and shipbuilding firms.* (Ibid:123)

However, employers in the industry argued that they would not allow such a proposal to proceed. Therefore, the Government moved towards attempting to avert disputes in the industry through the Munitions of War Act 1915, which banned strikes and aimed to increase the effective supply of skilled workers for munitions work through the relaxation of the now customary trade practices. It was also during this period, 1915-1919, when the role of the shop steward began to assume more significance in engineering (see Webb, S&B 1920a:489; Clegg 1985:253) as committees of shop stewards began to take part in the conduct of negotiations locally. However, during the war, national negotiations on wages were maintained and the Employers Federation were advised by Government to expect a reduction in the working week. This led to a 47-hour week agreement signed to begin operation in 1919 (Dougan 1968:153).

2.2.4 Industrial relations in the inter war years

The year of 1919 was an important year in relation to the development of trade unionism as Clegg (1985:304) observes that interest in union amalgamations *'grew into a fever'* after the war. He notes that the Machine Workers, Toolmakers, Steam Engine Makers and six other engineering unions formed to establish the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU). However, in terms of industrial relations during this period, a depression steadily grew worse for the shipbuilding industry and proposals for wage cuts put forward by employers led to three shipbuilding lock-outs in 3 years. By 1925, the problems with industrial relations in the industry led the Employers Federation to approach the Union Federation to begin an investigation into their problems and propose some form of solution. Both sides attempted to reach an agreement and amongst the proposals there was a request by employers to enhance greater interchangeability and flexibility amongst the workforce. The unions however maintained that,

> *...all questions of interchangeability must be settled amongst the*
> *trades concerned as occasion arises...* (Ibid:433)

Hence, sectional bargaining at yard level was to remain the customary practice in terms of the control over the labour process. However, with regards to substantive terms, in 1928 an agreement was reached that established standard national time rates (Ibid:434). Nonetheless, the industry as a whole was faced with a much wider problem as a world-wide depression resulted in 80% of the workforce in Tyneside becoming

unemployed during 1932-33 resulting in the notable Jarrow March in 1936.

As the depression lifted and output increased in the Tyneside yards, the industry began to experience some unexpected difficulties. North East shipbuilders were allocated an overwhelming bulk of warship building and realised that they would have to secure the return of workers who had found employment in other industries during the depression. By 1939, *"...it was considered a matter of urgency..."* (Clarke 1997b:335) that women should be employed in the shipyards. This caused some serious industrial relations problems due to accusations of dilution, predominantly by the ASE. Nonetheless, the SEF and the now named CSEU met with regard to the employment of women and an agreement was reached in 1941, accepting female employment but only *"...where suitable male labour is no longer available..."* (Ibid.) Clarke notes that during the Second World War, there was a closer collaboration between the unions and employers,

> *...but little indication that they were likely to change their approach*
>
> *to industrial relations* (Ibid:349)

Shop stewards also gained a new status during the war with the establishment of the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council. However, employers remained wary as to the perceived threat of communism and the Economic League was employed by Swan Hunter to 'gather intelligence' on their shop stewards' activities. These exercises were being conducted in spite of Clarke's claims that

any conflictual industrial relations during this period were considerably reduced,

> *...by and large the shipbuilding industry was free from disputes until 1944...* (Ibid:350)

This year witnessed some hostility between the Boilermakers' union and their membership as they refused to support striking workers resisting employer attempts to introduce new skills to work new machinery. The striking workers were threatened with legal threats from the employers and were asked by their union to return to work. When they refused, summonses were taken out against the striking workers and magistrates found them guilty. Clarke (Ibid:351) notes that due to this,

> *Clearly there was some hostility to the union leadership...but despite the stress of war, these craftsmen, who felt their fundamental rights were being threatened, sought to defend them.*

Hence, it can be plainly observed how important the protection of the trade was to the workers in the industry despite legal intimidation and the pressures from the Second World War.

The decade following World War Two marked a key turning point in British shipbuilding's competitive fortunes and was one of relatively full employment and consistently high profits. Yet despite this, claims for a wage increase by the CSEU in the late 1940s and early 1950s *"...were rejected on the grounds that the industry could not afford them."* (McGoldrick 1983:199). Consequently, wage issues became such a

continual source of dispute that, in his account of the industry, McGoldrick was resigned to note,

> *"In the period of 1949-1979, there were so many local wage disputes, involving so many different trades, under conditions which would vary from yard to yard, and district to district, that it would be impossible to cover anything but broad themes."*
> (Ibid:205)

A further problem in attempting to clarify the extent of wage disputes in the industry is that many disputes settled at yard level tended to go unrecorded. Perhaps a major reason for this is highlighted in information provided in the Census of 1951, which demonstrates that there could be almost 50 different classes of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in one shipyard and practically the whole of these were in at least 21 different unions. (Clarke 1997b:436). Each of the different trades would be represented by shop stewards from each of these different unions, the number of shop stewards for each trade reflected the number of workers employed for that particular trade, and they would negotiate on behalf of the specific trade they represented. To illustrate the complexity of the bargaining structure even further, Stirling & Bridgford (1985) note how there was a traditional bargaining structure of national, district, company and yard agreements, although,

> *Within the yards a further bargaining sub-system was identified. Yards were subdivided into craft groups and then further subdivided by which berth men were working on and at which stage of production they were employed.* (Ibid:12)

Furthermore, they note how there was an 'auto-bargaining' system which was based upon the squad system and interpreted rates for the job, piecework rates and overtime rates (Ibid.). Therefore, there could be at any one time, many different wage negotiations being conducted at national, district and yard level simultaneously, and at the yard level, for different work groups. Indeed, an ACAS discussion paper noted how, in one yard on the River Tyne,

> ...there were a large number of different rates of pay covering tradesmen and ancillary workers. Among the steel trades alone there were 183 different rates of pay, there were 15 for outfit tradesmen and a complete lack of uniformity of pay for ancillary workers. (1977:24)

Such a complexity exacerbated industrial relations problems and McGoldrick (1983:206) argues that,

> The wages question during the 1950's and 1960's represents almost a paradigm case of wage-drift and the elimination of localised wage bargaining became a central concern of the shipbuilding employers.

A major issue was identified to be in relation to the customary 'informal' negotiating procedures. Shipbuilding employers realised this was a chief source of their problems and continually attempted to secure an agreement on formal procedures, as well as the renegotiation of the 1912 Demarcation Agreement. However, these attempts failed, as the Boilermakers, who were not party to this agreement, resisted such

attempts in order to retain their isolated position. Nonetheless, fortunes began to reverse again as an increase in world output reflected the dramatic decline in Britain's share in the world export market to only 6.9% in the years 1956 – 1960 (Lorenz & Wilkinson 1968:116-117).

One of the most cited reasons for the declining fortunes of British shipbuilding during this period was world advancement in technical change and production methods. Many British producers were reluctant to adopt such changes preferring to maintain the use of labour intensive methods in order to reduce overheads (Lorenz 1991; Lorenz & Wilkinson 1968). It could be suggested that such reluctance to change was reasonable under conditions of market uncertainty, although Lorenz notes that,

> *The British shipbuilding industry's development after World War Two is striking, not only because producers modernised their facilities in a piecemeal manner, but also because they retained traditional methods of enterprise organisation.* (Lorenz Ibid:92)

Yet despite this, an attempt in 1962 to reconstruct the division of labour, as well as establish a formal disputes procedure, was presented to the CSEU by the SEF. The proposed plan is outlined in Appendix Three and despite the radical changes proposed in the plan, the Boilermakers did not outwardly reject it and were prepared to negotiate with employers in relation to the introduction of flexibility, as long as there was a long-term financial gain for the workforce. This plan is viewed as significant, not because of its attempts to reorganise the division of labour, rather in that

it *set an agenda* for the negotiation of the reorganisation of labour (McGoldrick 1983:211). Nonetheless, by this point in time, the crisis of the industry was so serious that it was increasingly affected by the growth of state involvement.

2.3   The Legacy of the Labour Process

State involvement was piecemeal in the immediate post war period. A Shipbuilding Advisory Committee (SAC) was established in 1946 and it was not until 1962 that a report was produced with a call for urgent assistance from the Government. An outline of these recommendations is provided in Appendix Four, although none of these recommendations were addressed as an immediate matter of concern, and it was only after 1964 that a serious effort was made to reform the industry's structure.

The incoming Labour Government of 1964 decided early in its term of office to conduct an independent inquiry into the shipbuilding industry. Chaired by R.M. Geddes, the report begins with a description of the industry that also reflects the main focus of this chapter, in that the development of trade unionism and industrial relations in the shipbuilding industry are different to other traditional industrial sectors.

> *...throughout the evolution, shipbuilding has retained certain special characteristics, of which some are historical survivals while others are probably inherent, and these distinguish shipbuilding*

from the general run of engineering and manufacturing industry.
(Cm.2937:12)

Such 'special characteristics' are highlighted in the report as the slow

adaptation to modern industrial conditions, problematic wage negotiating

procedures, demarcation, the division of labour and sectionalism,

> *...the early development of division of labour among shipyard*
>
> *workers has hardened into a rigid craft structure under which each*
>
> *man has been trained to keep his own job.* (Ibid.)

The report claimed that it was a deep feeling of insecurity which was the

root of demarcation issues *"...commonly known as 'restrictive' but which*

the workers describe as 'protective'." (Ibid:103). In order to solve

demarcation problems, the report recommended a solution that had been

attempted to be pioneered for decades; the introduction of flexibility and

interchangeability. The report also highlighted another issue mentioned

earlier, in the problem with informality of negotiating procedures and the

scale of shop steward organisation and representation,

> *A consequence of the lack of formal machinery for consultation*
>
> *and negotiation is that teams tend to be large when general*
>
> *matters are under consideration...As each union has its own shop*
>
> *steward in the yard - and some unions are sectionalised so that*
>
> *there may be nine shop stewards for the different trades in the*
>
> *Amalgamated Society - in a large yard there may be upward of fifty*
>
> *shop stewards.* (Ibid:107)

Furthermore, in terms of procedures, the report noted the absence of involvement of the largest trade unions, the now Amalgamated Society of Boilermakers (ASB) and Amalgamated Engineering Unions (AEU), in the long-standing disputes and demarcation agreements. It also highlighted the problems with the complexity of the trade union structure in the industry. The report noted that there were, at that time, 13 unions for craft workers and 2 unions for non-manual and technical workers and recommended that the trade unions review their structure and,

> ...tentatively suggest that five unions might cover all shipbuilding operatives. (Ibid:163)

They also recommended that relationships between employers and unions required evaluation,

> ...both management and unions must seriously and urgently review their attitudes with a view to overcoming the costly and debilitating lack of confidence which exists between them. (Ibid:110)

In attempting to help resolve the noted industrial relations problems in the industry, the report recommended a National Procedure Agreement for avoidance of disputes, and a National Demarcation Agreement to update the 1912 agreement. Both of these agreements were established in 1967 and 1969 consecutively. Overall, McGoldrick (1983:213), on considering the Geddes report, notes that, although it "...did not in itself lead to a radical restructuring of industrial relations, it pointed the way towards a more centralised system". Nonetheless, another report, which did seek to

43

present a strategy of reform in industrial relations in the shipbuilding industry, was produced soon after in 1971.

The Commission on Industrial Relations (CIR) Report on Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing was designed to assess progress in the industry since the Geddes Report. It also aimed to consider developments achieved under the 1967 and 1969 Acts and found that, although some advances had been attained, 'independent control' and 'sectional interests' combined together remained to prevent measures of reform and the achievement of full success (Cm.4756:141). It found that there continued to be 'independent control' by trade unions over a wide area of common concern. It strongly suggested that the key problem was the persistence of sectionalism and, as had been recommended several times previously, suggested that this could only be overcome by formalising bargaining procedures. It proposed such procedures could be in the form of Company Joint Councils and Company Procedure Agreements. However, McGoldrick (1983:213-214) argues that,

> ...the sectionalism which it sought to combat had its deepest roots which would not be removed by setting up company procedures...In practice the CIR report had little impact on industrial relations in the industry.

Nonetheless, there was yet another inquiry conducted into the crisis of UK shipbuilding, on this occasion focusing more upon the long-term prospects of the industry.

The Booz-Allen Report dedicated only one chapter to industrial relations in the shipbuilding industry, and following the Geddes and CIR reports, also highlighted problems of craft differentials and the trade unions' independent control. However, by the time the Booz-Allen Report was published, a resolution was already being moved with regard to the nationalisation of the shipbuilding industry. This resolution was passed by the Labour Party Conference in 1971 and became law on 17 March 1977.

Nationalisation by the Labour Government in 1977 formed British Shipbuilders, who negotiated a number of national agreements with the CSEU in 'phases' aimed at improving labour productivity. These agreements covered such issues as the mobility of employees, flexibility within and between occupational groups and the greater use of both fixed-term contract labour and subcontracting. The 1984 phase 5 agreement accepted the principle of full interchangeability of tasks between various trades, (Goodman 1989:606) and even the principle of complete flexibility was approved (Cumbers 1995:46). This could be due to the suggestion put forward by Cumbers (1994:546) that,

> *The most significant consequence for employment relations was that the balance of power shifted decisively in favour of the employers, to the extent that they were able to implement strategies that may have been unthinkable in the past.*

Yet despite this assertion, it would appear that gaining approval was not such an easy task for the employers, for nationally, the agreement was

accepted only after an 18-month pay freeze and a threat of an industry wide strike (Anon. BJIR, 1984). The agreement itself has also been suggested to be a desperate bid to reduce redundancies (McKinlay & Taylor 1994), as from nationalisation in 1977 to 1983, 26,000 jobs had been lost in the industry with a further 3000 in early 1983, and a later 9000 redundancies with a wage freeze for a year across the industry (Anon. BJIR, 1983). By the end of 1984, British Shipbuilders were facing the prospect of a national strike, although by this time, many workers were accepting voluntary redundancy. This may have been due to the acute awareness of the deep crisis in the industry and doubts as to its future, but also, as Goodman (1989:605) explains,

> *Under British law an employer can dismiss striking workers without compensation if that action breaches their employment contracts. Hence taking industrial action against closures...was likely to entail the risk of dismissal and loss of some or all potential redundancy benefits.*

However, in response to the workforce acceptance of voluntary redundancies, the North East GMWU Regional Secretary resigned claiming,

> *They are betraying their forefathers, throwing away – for short sighted and selfish reasons – job opportunities for the young...I say the shipyard workers on the Tyne and Wear need a bit of fight in their bellies like the miners* (Roberts 1993:181).

However, the industry was in a deep recession and in any case, privatisation of the industry eventually led to the abandonment of the British Shipbuilders' agreement. As Stirling & Bridgford note,

> *...the first national agreement concluded by British Shipbuilders and strongly supported by management and unions as an 'historic breakthrough' is to be abandoned little more than seven years after being introduced.* (1985:12)

Once again, companies began to seek to negotiate their own agreements and simply fell back on old traditions in order to gain short term profits as Cumbers (1995:48) also notes,

> *Firms entering the industry have been unwilling to depart from existing and well established local bargaining arrangements.*

Indeed, recent studies of North East shipbuilding industries, by Cumbers (1994, 1995) and Roberts (1993), demonstrate how the traditional forms of industrial relations remained rooted in the industry despite, as McKinlay & Taylor (1994) note, the decimation of the British industry in terms of competitiveness, together with dramatic losses in the workforce.

Cumbers examines the extent to which 'new' forms of work and employment, brought to the North East shipbuilding industries with the introduction of offshore construction work, have changed 'old' traditional forms of working. With a focus on the Rivers Tees and Tyne, he reveals that, where there *were* changes to work and employment, these were simply extensions of past working practices and notes that,

...there remains considerable resistance (especially on Tyneside where the shipbuilding legacy is the strongest) to the introduction of certain forms of flexibility which undermine core craft groups. (1994:545)

He draws attention to the level of continuity that exists in the industry in terms of work and employment. In concurrence with Roberts (1993), he finds that it is the identity of the 'skilled worker' and the autonomy that the craftsman has over his work that helps the worker to retain the exercise of control on decisions of work and employment.

Roberts' is a sociological study conducted during the 1980s, concerning the nature of the division of labour on the River Wear in Sunderland. He discovered that, despite the technical advances during this period, there were few indications of a radical restructuring of the division of labour. Roberts argued that a major reason for this was due to the 'negotiation of control' in the shipyards, through the non-formal negotiation of order, which was attained through the daily interactions with one another (1993:116). He emphasises the importance of this non-formal negotiation of order whilst stressing the importance of the identity of the sectional groups of trades/skilled workers in the shipbuilding industry as he claims,

There is an important sense in which a degree of responsible autonomy has historically been given or allowed, and taken or accepted by craftsmen in the British shipbuilding industry as part of an existential identity. This feature should not be underestimated

insofar as it has contributed to the tenacity of the craft division of labour. (Ibid:138)

He also points out how, historically, management have not made any real attempt to attack those boundaries and claims that this is perhaps due to the fact that *"...the work gets done."* (Ibid:139). However, by the time his study was complete in 1988, the final closure of all the shipyards on the River Wear occurred.

Indeed, by this time, the entire national workforce had been dramatically reduced to only 9000 and by 1993, Swan Hunter Shipbuilders, the largest yard on the River Tyne which had been shipbuilding for 130 years, went into receivership creating a dramatic impact on the Tyneside community. In 1995, the full contents of the yard were set out on display in a 3-day auction sale. Fortunately, a Dutch shipbuilder salvaged the yard, together with re-establishing shipbuilding on the river which to date has been successful. However, the current employer chose to endorse a recognition agreement with only one trade union, despite employing a range of trades from other unions. Indeed, trade union organisation has inevitably been challenged through the decline of the shipbuilding industry, the period of trade union mergers which challenged the old sectional strengths and a managerial offensive leading to a temporary workforce and, in some companies, trade union derecognition. One of the major aims of this study is to examine the situation in the present day with a particular focus upon contemporary union organisation and industrial relations in the Tyneside industry. Clearly, such an examination

requires an acknowledgement of the historical development of these issues, which has been addressed within this chapter and the major points of issue are summarised in the following section.

Discussion and Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter it was proposed that industrial relations and the development of trade unionism in the shipbuilding industry have a distinctive and specific character. It was suggested that an understanding of this peculiarity could only be fully appreciated through an examination of the historical evolution of the industry, which has been the purpose of this chapter. The key factors that contribute to the distinctive character of industrial relations in the industry are examined in the following discussion.

The emphasis has been firmly placed on how union organisation developed in the industry and became strongly identified with the craft, or the trade. This was different to the development in many other manufacturing industries, for instance, such as car production, where trade unionism was developed with a broad mass of semi skilled production line workers. The differentiation of occupation through identification with skill in shipbuilding became further entrenched with the introduction of technological changes such as iron, steel and welding. What is also significant to note from these periods of change is in the struggle at the point of production over the introduction of new technology

and new working methods. It was emphasised how conflict was not merely between capital and labour but also between the workers themselves as they sought to retain tasks specific to their job. What is also important to note is that this conflict was, not only horizontal between the different trades, but also vertical between different levels of 'skill', demonstrating how an occupational hierarchy was formed that also assisted in the reinforcement of sectionalism. As the unskilled workers began to organise themselves, the trade union structure in the yards became more complex and this was exacerbated in the introduction of new trades with the new technology who brought their existing union organisation to shipbuilding. Finally on this point, given that the trades are employed at different stages of production and the workers work in gangs or squads, the craft identity was also reinforced socially. The sectional unionism that eventually developed, led to considerable job autonomy for the workers, which also gave support for more informal bargaining techniques to be generated in the industry. Employers effectively accepted this whole situation, as it was efficient for them until a new technology came along that they wanted to introduce and challenge the existing craft divisions. Their attempted solutions to these problems are addressed in the second main section of this chapter.

This section illustrates how collective disputes were defined by two linked characteristics. Firstly, in sectional bargaining over pay to preserve differentials, and secondly, in the demarcation disputes to protect jobs. It demonstrates how employers and trade unions attempted to deal with

these issues in establishing numerous procedural agreements. However, these agreements effectively failed, largely because of the sectional autonomy that had developed in the industry. As the decline of the industry worsened, poor industrial relations were attributed as a major source of the industry's problems and repeated state intervention led to numerous post war reports that eventually led to nationalisation of the industry. Nonetheless, historical traditions continued to shape post war industrial relations and employers failed to tackle long term issues in favour of short term profits.

There is one final factor that contributed to the specific character of industrial relations in the shipbuilding industry, which is interwoven throughout this chapter - the role of the shop stewards. Many commentators perceived the emergence of shop steward organisation and their relative power and autonomy as the defining characteristic of post war industrial relations. However, as is evident from this chapter, their existence was already entrenched in shipbuilding by this time. What differentiated them from the new generation of shop stewards was the historical role examined previously. Shop steward organisation in shipbuilding was rooted in highly differentiated, skilled work rather than vested on mass membership across undifferentiated semi skilled work as in other manufacturing industries. This is not to neglect the growth of unskilled work and union organisation, but it was the skilled workers' unions and their shop stewards that were the key to understanding the development of industrial relations and union organisation in the industry.

In effect, the shop stewards represented the autonomous sectional workgroups and encompassed the power of the union. In the post war period, the role of the shop steward grew in significance, not only in the workplace but also in academic interest. An abundance of research during this period was aimed at how shop stewards operate in the workplace at shop floor level. As this literature focuses upon the general, rather than the shipbuilding industry and Tyneside specifically, and is also a key issue to this thesis, it is discussed in depth in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

An overview of the theoretical literature associated with workplace power, union renewal and mobilisation.

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the historical development of trade unionism in an industry that, along with much of British manufacturing, eventually faced severe decline. This has been one of the many reasons cited for the parallel decline of trade union membership during this period. Indeed, discussions relating to trade union decline are well rehearsed in the literature as academic analysis turned to prognosis for union survival and growth. This chapter is an evaluation of that literature in relation to the shipbuilding industry, or what is now referred to as the Maritime Construction Industry. The focus is on 5 key areas, that of union renewal, the role of the shop steward and shop steward organisation, collectivism and the collective identity, theories associated with mobilisation and the issue of power. A major theme that has emerged from such analyses is the debate surrounding 'union renewal', and this will be examined in the first section of this chapter.

Within this debate, some have focused on the changing strategies of national trade unions to rebuilding their membership in terms of a move from 'servicing' to 'organising'. Others have suggested that the locus for union renewal will not succeed through a 'top down' process, but rather the focus should be concerned with a 'bottom up' regeneration at workplace level. The central argument from this perspective is that, while

developments at national level may be important, the impetus of trade union renewal depends crucially on organisation and activity at the workplace. It is claimed that it is within the workplace where recruitment and replenishment of union members is predominantly achieved and maintained. However, there have been concerns raised as to representation and organising at the workplace, mainly due to the decline of shop steward organisation and the role of the workplace representative, as indicated in large scale surveys such as the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (WIRS) series (Millward *et al.* 1992) and the most recent Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) (Cully *et al.* 1999). As outlined in the previous chapter, the role of the shop stewards was influential in the way in which industrial relations and union organisation developed in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry (TMCI). For this reason, together with the fact that 'leadership' is a central theme to the renewal debate, the role of the shop steward is considered in the second section of this chapter.

The third feature addressed in this chapter is associated with the topic of trade union decline and the weakening of union organisation in the workplace, for a further underlying theme in much of the debate is the alleged parallel decline of workplace collectivism at the expense of a move to individualism. This section seeks to establish the central problems surrounding this debate and argues that it is full of contradictory tensions. A major reason for this is that the entire debate appears to be lacking in conceptual and empirical rigour. It has been suggested by

Kelly (1998) that the most promising way to overcome this, is to use the theoretical approaches associated with both social movement and mobilisation theory, as their combination provides a conceptual framework that enables us to think rigorously and analytically about the conditions under which individual workers define their interests and identities in collective terms. Kelly's approach is clearly central to an analysis of union organisation in the shipbuilding industry and is adopted here. In order to demonstrate the potential usefulness of this approach to empirical study, it is considered in detail in the fourth section of this chapter. The issues of collectivism, leadership and mobilisation inevitably raise questions of power and this is the final theme examined in this chapter.

The final section suggests that the concept of power forms part of the 'taken for granted' language in the industrial relations arena. Despite the crucial significance of power to this area of study, it is argued that few attempts to conceptually analyse power have been conducted and little empirical research undertaken. The main intention of this section is to consider the shortcomings in industrial relations literature in terms of our understanding of power. The aim is to explore how the concept of power has been applied in industrial relations research, outlining its role within industrial relations theory. It is discovered that there appears to be no agreed definition of power, and due to this, there is also no reliable way of measuring it. Finally, the conclusion summarises the key issues

that emerge from a discussion of the literature in this chapter in order to draw out the potential implications for this thesis.

3.1 The Debate on Union Renewal

As the decline of trade unionism gathered pace after almost two decades of extensive legislative reforms to restrict union activities, together with employer strategies seeking to demobilise trade unionism, academic analysis turned attention to strategies for union survival. Such strategies have included a series of mergers of trade unions (Willman & Cave 1994; Waddington 1995), internal reorganisation of structures (for example Heery 1996; Fairbrother 2000) and the promotion of services to members with the focus largely upon encouraging recruitment and retention (for example Heery 1996). Approaches such as these were adopted through recommendations by the Special Review Body (SRB) of the TUC who conducted a series of reviews with the focus largely upon addressing concerns of falling membership levels.

In 1994, the TUC re-launched itself (TUC 1997; Heery 1998) with the adoption of a 'new unionism' policy encouraging a move from 'servicing' to 'organising'. A 'New Unionism Task Force' was established in 1996, which initiated the TUC 'Organising Academy' in 1998. The Organising Academy provides a 12-month training programme to trainees who then become 'new organisers' for individual trade unions participating in the programme, organising new activists and recruiting new members. At the centre of the organising approach is the notion of 'empowerment', in

which workers identify their own problems and their own agendas through collective organisation. Although there are suggestions that this approach has had some positive effects on recruitment strategies (New Unionism Research Projects 1998-2000), there is also evidence of negative outcomes for the new organisers themselves, such as long working hours and conflict in their employment relationship with unions with some resulting in dismissals. (Heery *et al.* 2000b:404; New Unionism Research Project 1998a, 1998c). There is also evidence of some resistance within unions towards new organisers, with pressure from union activists to reserve organising positions for internal representatives. Yet, despite what could be perceived as pessimistic evidence, there have been some positive recruitment outcomes (Heery *et al.* Ibid.), which suggests that this approach has been successful to some extent. Heery *et al.* (Ibid:410) demonstrate that the first two cohorts of Academy trainees were successful in directly recruiting more than 7,500 new union members and more than 18,000 members from associated campaigns. However, they acknowledge that, although no doubt an achievement, it is a small proportion to the 500,000 recruits required annually by the TUC unions if they are to maintain the current density level. Hence, crucial questions need to be raised in terms of solely relying on this method for union survival and growth. If the organisers' sole objective is that of recruitment, then what happens to the newly recruited members in terms of support at the workplace? How is this 'new' membership to be retained? What are the implications of a strategy that emphasises workplace self-activity for 'new' union members? In sum, if a major aim is

to support unions' survival and growth, then should more of a focus not be placed upon supporting new union members at the workplace in order to build effective and self-sustaining local organisation?

Whilst not denying that such nationally driven developments are important, it is also suggested that by solely using a 'top down' approach, unions may be neglecting their traditional areas of active organisation at the workplace and how to maintain these sources of power. Indeed, such arguments are central to this thesis and can be identified in the union workplace renewal literature, which argues that the focus for union renewal should be more concerned with a 'bottom up' regeneration at the workplace.

The central argument from this approach is that it is the workplace which is the reality of unionism for most members and where unions constantly organise and renew (Fairbrother 1989,1996,2000;Fosh 1993). Hence, from this perspective, union renewal can become a possibility through the regeneration of active workplace based structures. In this view, attention is drawn to features of trade union organisation neglected in analyses concerned with top down strategies. The focus lies on three important features of workplace unionism; the importance of collective bargaining, the significance of union democracy and the role of workplace activists. The first two features are outlined in Fairbrother's (1996,2000) analysis of renewal and other empirical studies also provide evidence of opportunities for union activity in these areas (see for example Dundon

1997; Fosh 1993). For Fosh, the main focus for union renewal at the workplace is through *"...a careful choice of leadership style"* (1993:589) which encourages collective participation and interest of members, thereby increasing the strength of workplace unionism. Fairbrother (1996, 2000) also suggests that more participative forms of workplace unionism are critical, particularly where there has traditionally been more centralised and hierarchical organisation (see also Fairbrother & Waddington 1990). However, it would appear that a major issue with this area is that workplace renewal arguments have been made principally in relation to public sector unionism. Although the private sphere is acknowledged in some of the literature, evidence suggests that there is some tentative pessimism relating to workplace renewal in this sector. One example is in Fairbrother's (1989) analysis of traditional manufacturing in the Midlands where unionism was severely challenged. His argument becomes one concerning the 'hollowing out' of the traditional steward form, with bureaucratisation becoming part of the defence of unionism. He cautions that, in the private sector, bureaucratised shop steward organisation and sectionalism, often found in traditional manufacturing, may weaken the resistance of workplace organisation. On the other hand, some studies have found that such a scale of bureaucratisation has been exaggerated (for example see Darlington 1994:17). In addition to this, Gall (1998:154) suggests that care needs to be taken in criticising sectionalism, for he claims it can play a positive role in helping to create solidarity. From his and others'

perspective, it is argued that the workplace renewal literature neglects the role of political activism amongst workplace representatives.

Within this view is the argument that priority in the 'renewal' literature is given to 'structural' barriers to potential renewal rather than an understanding of aims, objectives, historical, economical and political influences (Kelly 1996; Gall 1995, 1999; Darlington 1994, 2002). Darlington's (1994, 2001, 2002) empirical studies illustrate the crucial role that left-wing activists can play in shaping the nature of collective workplace relations. Equally significant in his findings is the illustration of how shop stewards and rank and file members' self-activity remains very strong in some sectors. Other empirical studies have also illustrated that workplace organisation has persisted in some areas without the 'need' to build workplace activity through a 'new' generation of activists (see for example Beale 1999; Fitzgerald et al. 1996). Therefore, it is suggested that resilience, rather than renewal, may be a more appropriate term to apply to such workplaces. However, evidence would suggest that the nature and extent of resilience remains only partially examined within the literature, and reference to traditional industries renowned for solidaristic trade unionism remains sparse. Indeed, Danford et al. (2003:171) put forward this argument claiming that,

> ...in those areas where a strong union tradition has been established, and where the necessary critical mass of members is present, it has been possible to renew and revive union power and organisation...These are traditional areas of union organisation –

the heartlands of the labour movement...there is a danger that

such areas run the risk of being ignored in academic research and

writing. But it is in these sectors that we can find the most positive

examples of union engagement with the employer and of member

participation in everyday union life.

Hence, this would suggest that more empirical research in such areas

may be required to contribute support to the resilience debate, which is a

major intention of this thesis. A further suggestion proposed by Danford

et al. is that,

...there has been a general absence (with some notable

exceptions) of workplace-based studies since the 1970s...

They include examples such as Batstone *et al's* (1977) study of

leadership styles of shop stewards and Beynon's (1973) account of the

active interplay between shop stewards and their members. As

membership participation and the role of the shop steward are important

features of workplace unionism and the renewal/resilience debate, these

studies therefore require further examination.

3.2 The Role of the Shop Steward

During the late 1960s and 1970s, the role of the shop steward grew in

significance, not only in organisational strength at the workplace, but also

in academic interest (for e.g. Batstone 1977, 1978; Beynon 1973;

Goodman & Whittingham 1969; Lane & Roberts 1971). Terry (1995)

proposes several factors that he believes contributed to the growth in

shop steward organisation, particularly during the 1970s. Firstly, he suggests that white collar and public sector workers joining trade unions in 'unprecedented numbers' during this period was a major reason for the growth (Ibid:205). Secondly, he states that the development of centralised steward-based systems *"...were seen as an effective and democratic form of unionism, appropriate to the environment of the time"* (Ibid.). A third factor he suggests, is in management acceptance of the Donovan Commission's 1968 recommendations for the formalising of collective bargaining at plant level (Ibid:206). Finally, he proposes that state support, particularly in the form of legislation providing rights to time off and training for shop stewards, aided in the growth of their organisation (Ibid). An abundance of research emerged during this period, demonstrating how shop stewards operate in the workplace at shop floor level. Full of rich descriptive accounts, this literature considerably extended our understanding of the processes involved in the role of the shop steward. For example, Goodman & Whittingham (1969) describe in detail the functions, attitudes and activities of shop stewards, whilst also demonstrating the pressures and constraints that influenced their role. Beynon (1973) provides a much more dynamic account of the active interplay between shop stewards and their members, and his work is discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Lane & Roberts (1971) also provide a rich source of insight into the role of shop stewards in the history of the Pilkington strike. There were several other workplace-based case studies during this period that graphically conveyed the role of the shop steward within the employment relationship (for e.g. see

Nichols & Armstrong 1976), however, perhaps the most influential work relating to the role of shop stewards is that of Batstone *et al.* (1977).

At the heart of Batstone *et al*'s analysis is the organisational aspects of shop stewards' behaviour and the development of typologies attempting to categorise this behaviour. Their major focus of attention was twofold; to examine the 'representative' role of the shop steward and the extent to which there was a 'commitment to union principles', with an emphasis on unity and collectivity (Ibid:11-12, 69). Using these two dimensions, they developed a four-fold classification of ideal types of shop steward. Firstly, they devised the notion of a 'sophisticated' shop stewards organisation, consisting of a network of 'leader' stewards, who coordinated a centralised organisational structure that contained the resources to improve the interests of their members. Together with this, through close informal contacts with management, the 'leader' stewards were able to bargain favourable outcomes for their members with little need for confrontation. Also identified was the 'populist' steward, who had less commitment to union principles, and who, as Darlington (1994:15) suggests, *"...confine themselves to a 'mouthpiece' role, placing greater emphasis on the pursuit of sectional interests"* and acting as a delegate rather than a representative (Batstone *et al.* 1977:35). The other two typologies, the 'cowboy', who was not committed to union principles and *"...typically concerned with maximising the short-run earnings of his own particular group of members"* (Ibid), and the 'nascent leader', who was committed to union principles but unable to gain support from other

'leader' shop stewards or the shop floor, received more of a minor role in Batstone *et al's* study, as their numbers were small in the case study organisations (Ibid.). Although it is argued that their work offers a very useful tool for analysis and a redefinition of their typologies has been attempted (Marchington & Armstrong 1983), their seminal study has met with some criticism. This has been directed at, firstly their underlying analytical framework (Darlington 1994:18-26), secondly in relation to the vagueness and ambiguity of the "union principles" dimension (Willman 1980) and finally in the oversimplification in their theoretical approach to 'leadership' (Broad 1983). However, perhaps the major source of academic debate surrounding Batstone *et al's* study is that concerning their denial of the dangers of bureaucratisation of shop steward organisation. This led to a long-term debate relating to shop stewards' power and autonomy (see Hyman 1979), although, during the 1980s and 1990s, this debate was replaced in the academic literature with a focus on the apparent 'marginalisation' of shop steward workplace organisation.

During the 1980s, a rapidly declining trade union membership led to corresponding suggestions that shop steward organisation in the workplace had also been weakened. Large-scale surveys, such as the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (WIRS) (Millward *et al.* 1992), illustrated a fall in shop steward presence in all of the organisations in the survey, from 54% in 1984 to 38% in 1990 (Ibid:110). The more recent Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) (Cully *et al.* 1999:96) also charted a decline in workplace representation, illustrating that 28% of

all establishments in their study had a 'union representative only' and 4% 'both union and non-union representatives'. The bulk of research that has been conducted into measuring the comparative strength of shop steward organisation has concentrated upon two categories of indices. Firstly, the majority of survey work has focused upon 'organisational' indices such as union density, methods of shop steward election, existence of a closed shop and the nature and frequency of shop steward committee meetings (Terry 1986:171-172). However, Terry (Ibid.) argues that this form of evidence does "...*nothing to support the thesis of shop steward decline*" and suggests that it needs to be supported by 'substantive' indices that measure "...*what impact shop stewards 'have' rather than what organisational forms they take*" (Ibid.). These second type of indices measure strike statistics and other forms of industrial action; bargaining outcomes, particularly locally negotiated outcomes; and finally, restrictive practices or job controls by management (Ibid:172-173). It has been argued that results from some of these surveys suggest that, the recession of the 1980s may well have weakened stewards' *bargaining power*, but not necessarily their *organisation* that remained durable and resilient (Godfrey & Marchington 1996; Spencer 1985, 1989; Terry 1995). Furthermore, as Terry (Ibid:215) argues, "...*the survey data only tell one part of the story*" and evidence suggests that there is a need to (re)focus attention on the social processes of the role of the shop steward on the shop floor. Indeed, as Cully *et al.* (1999:198) also indicate,

Relatively little detailed research has been undertaken into the activities of union representatives since the seminal work of Batstone et al. (1977) two decades ago.

This would suggest that there is a need for further research in this area, although as Kessler & Heron (2001:368) point out, it also underestimates more recent research that has focused upon shop steward organisation.

According to Greene *et al.* (2000:76), contemporary research relating to the role of shop stewards tends to fall into two categories, a *participatory* style and a *collectivist* approach. They claim that the participatory style stresses the importance of communication and member involvement in decision-making, while in the collectivist approach workplace issues are viewed by shop stewards as reflecting a shared situation of work rather than individual grievances. Yet despite the importance of research in this area, the empirical work has been conducted principally, although not exclusively, in the public sector. This would suggest that there is a need for further research in the private sector, perhaps even more so in 'old traditional industries' that, as has already been suggested, *"...run the risk of being ignored in academic research and writing"* (Danford *et al.* 2003:171). Furthermore, with the exception of recent research conducted by Upchurch *et al.* (2002), many contemporary studies of shop stewards tend to focus upon 'leadership styles' rather than day-to-day activities with rank and file membership on the shop floor. A further problem highlighted by Broad (1983) and Darlington (2002) is that there is a tendency to assume that leadership is essentially a one-way relationship

and there is a failure to acknowledge shop floor organisation. As Darlington (Ibid:98) notes,

> *Workers are not the passive recipients or objects of structural processes but are constructively engaged in the processes of collective mobilisation.*

Although Darlington's central focus is on political left-wing activism and organisation, it remains of high significance given his concentration on the complex relationship between shop steward leadership and collective workplace union organisation. He devises a threefold analytical framework to enable us to understand the dynamics in the role of the shop steward in the employment relationship (Darlington 1994:26-33). Firstly, their relationship with management is characterised by a tension between *resistance* and *accommodation*. Secondly, the shop stewards' relationship with their members is one between *democracy* and *bureaucracy* and finally with Full Time Officers (FTOs), their relationship is characterised by a tension between *independence* and *dependence*. He illustrates how none of these relationships can be understood as fixed at either polar position, for they are, rather, constantly in motion as each of the relationships are extremely dynamic. This is also an issue at the heart of Beynon's (1973) influential work, that not only demonstrates the tensions and complexities in the employment relationship, but also the dynamics surrounding the issue of control.

The main theme of Beynon's work is the contradictory interplay, on the one hand, of the shop steward leadership attempting to govern workplace organisation,

> *The steward organisation was developed to protect the members against management and as such an important part of its function was to obtain a degree of internal discipline within the workforce... Controlling the membership is part of the steward's job* (Ibid:140)

and, on the other hand, in the daily struggle of the shop floor workers who, on occasion, imposed their own judgment on the appropriate order of work,

> *On a number of sections, where particular arduous or monotonous jobs exist, the lads decide to share the work out by rotating jobs.* (Ibid:311)

This illustrates how control may not simply be an issue between management and worker, but can also be an intraorganisational concern within groups in the industrial relations system. To illustrate this point further, Beynon demonstrates how the shop stewards in his study were frustrated when, on one occasion, the workforce walked out with no dispute outstanding with management, threatening their own employment,

> *...sometimes the lads just don't want to work. All talk of procedures and negotiations tends to break down here"* (Ibid:140)

This illustrates a complexity in terms of the possession of control in the employment relationship, with an indication of a shift in what has been referred to as the 'frontier of control' (Edwards 1979) between

management and shop stewards, and shop stewards and their members. What appears to be evident is a very multifaceted relationship in terms of control at the point of production. Batstone *et al.* (1977) add to this complexity by demonstrating how such shifts in the frontier of control can be conducted through informal as well as formal means. They demonstrate this by illustrating how general day-to-day discussions of shop stewards with shop floor workers led to more informal agreements being established. In this way, the shop stewards were maintaining the frontier of control at the same time as generating and upholding collectivism, whilst undermining managerial legitimacy. The study also illustrates how achieving control is not necessarily always through adversarial means, but may also be through cooperation with management. Batstone *et al.* demonstrate this by illustrating how, on occasion, some workers would provisionally be willing to cooperate with management through temporarily relaxing their *"...restrictive practices which were embodied in custom and practice"* (Ibid:240) and agree to a certain amount of flexibility. However, in emphasising to management that such flexibility was not to be considered the 'norm', the same group of workers would use their 'restrictive practices' the following day (Ibid:241).

Burawoy (1979) also makes a useful attempt to illustrate such complexities in the 'negotiation' of job controls. He suggests that it is also important to consider the ways in which management actively seek to 'manufacture consent' amongst the workforce to help to achieve the goals

70

of the organisation, despite the fact that these may not be in the best interests of the employer or employee. Despite the contradictions this may contain, the study suggests that it could be performed in order to sustain the relations between capital and labour, particularly when there is competition between capitals. He later (1985) focused on why workers sometimes work harder than is required, or work 'beyond contract'. It was discovered that, from the perception of the workers, this was simply viewed as 'playing games' or conducting 'fiddles' in order to gain more earnings through working beyond the constraints set by management. Although he has been criticised for presenting workers' actions as *"...serving to reproduce the structure of capitalism..."* (Heyes 1999:41), his work, together with those mentioned thus far, illustrate how the frontier of control is never static or stable and is, as Hyman states,

> *"...a frontier which is defined and redefined in a 'continuous'*
> *process of pressure and counterpressure, conflict and*
> *accommodation, overt and tacit struggle"* (Hyman 1975:26)

Indeed, it is apparent from these studies that the issue of control at the point of production involves a complex set of relationships within the workplace, based upon formally agreed rules and procedures and informal rules embedded in custom and practice. They also help us to further understand the dynamics in the role of the shop steward within the employment relationship. However, although these are extremely valuable studies, they were predominantly conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, and as discussed earlier, it has been suggested that the role of the shop steward is in decline and that shop steward organisation has

weakened. Such suggestions have led to further debate in the assertions that traditional workplace collectivism has also waned. It is claimed within this debate that this is due to a rise in the emphasis on individual interest at the workplace.

3.3 A Move from Collectivism to Individualism?

Discussion related to the decline of trade unionism and challenges to shop steward organisation has resulted in the emergence of a further significant body of literature. Major reasons proposed for their rapid weakening position have included shifts in the composition of employment, economic recession, a rise in derecognition, political exclusion from tripartism and the Conservative Government's hostile legislation. Shifts in this framework of employment legislation have led to the suggestion that worker self-confidence and incentive to act collectively may have been reduced (Danford 1997:128; Kelly 1997:400). Indeed, evidence of a decline in collective industrial action in Britain has been confirmed by the most recent WERS survey (Cully et al. 1999), although this is contested by Stirling (2001) due to discrepancies between accounts of workers and workplace representatives, and also challenged by some case study evidence such as that by Danford et al. (2003). The WERS survey also depicts a decline in union power and influence at workplaces with well-established union recognition, together with a decline in collective bargaining.

Bassett & Cave (1993) claim that a decrease in collective bargaining suggests a parallel decline in workplace collectivism, which they argue, is *"...enshrined most obviously in collective bargaining"* (Ibid:5). Their major argument is that Britain's workplaces are witnessing a decline in collectivism at the expense of a rise in individualism. They propose that, for most individuals at the workplace, trade unionism (and hence collectivism) is not as important as other elements of their lives and suggest that individuals join trade unions for wholly instrumental reasons (Ibid:7). Such statements have been challenged by later research, such as that conducted by Waddington & Whitson (1997), although it should be noted that Bassett & Cave do not totally abandon collectivism, rather their key proposal is that trade unions need to embrace the notion of 'new individualism' at the workplace in order to survive. Other commentators, such as Bacon & Storey (1993,1996), also focus on the challenged role of trade unions at the workplace in the face of, what they refer to, as a 'fracturing of collectivism'. In accord with the argument that the framework of employment law, in dismantling support for collective bargaining, has challenged collectivism, their central argument leans more towards the introduction of new management initiatives as a major reason for this 'fracturing'.

The nature of new management strategies has emerged as the dominant theme (see also Ackers & Payne 1998) in relation to the proposed move from collectivism to individualism at the workplace. Many commentators believe that the introduction of managerial initiatives, such as Human

Resource Management (HRM) and Japanisation with lean production, quality circles and team working, all emphasise individual interest at the expense of 'traditional' collectivism. Danford *et al.* (2003) explain how such propositions suggest the emergence of a 'new model worker'. As a presumed direct product of HRM techniques, such an employee is understood to be willing to abandon collective solidarity with work colleagues in favour of supporting the goals of the employer. The 'new worker' has also supposedly emerged as the rapid development of ICT at work has led to a situation whereby 'knowledge' work is taking over manual labour. From a postmodernist perspective, Hassard claims that

> "...the social and economic structures reproduced since the industrial revolution are now fragmenting into diverse networks held together by IT" (1993:3)

In relation to such fragmentation, Lash & Urry (1994:323) claim that the hierarchy of social classes is also rapidly dissolving. They (Lash & Urry 1987) claim that this is due to 'disorganized capitalism' that has constructed an economy in which services dominate manufacturing, with consumption becoming a more significant part of people's lives. Hence, from their perspective, such developments have resulted in a decline in the collective identity of the working class.

Although not within the postmodernist approach, such an argument is closely associated in a claim made by Phelps Brown (1990). He argues that worker collectivism has eroded due to a rise in the standard of living and consumerism, in particular due to a growth in home ownership with

the mortgage being *"...a powerful deterrent to strike action"* (Ibid:10). In relation to this, he also argues that an increase in the possession of the 'automobile' has aided in the breaking up of social and occupational communities. All of these issues, he claims, have affected the traditional collectivist *"...social structure and the attitudes that are linked with it"* (Ibid:13). However, Kelly (1998:40) argues that Phelps Brown tends to present a rather broad-brush romanticised view, rooting worker collectivism in poverty and deprivation, and concludes this discussion claiming that Phelps Brown's argument for the decline of worker collectivism is seriously flawed (Ibid:42). Kelly is also critical of the postmodern perspective of the subject arguing that, despite all of the postmodern research on the issue of declining collectivism, it is

> *...based on superficial and incoherent categories and on sloppy use of evidence...and is not only bleak, but it is ill-informed to the extreme* (Ibid:125).

A major criticism of the postmodernist perspective is in relation to its epistemology, which believes that the world is constituted only by our shared language with nothing existing outside the text. As argued by Thompson & Ackroyd (1995:626) and as Hassard (1993:197) also notes, *"Such an epistemological position fails to account for the everyday experiences of social actors".* Furthermore, as asserted by Martinez Lucio & Stewart (1997:53) *"Under...the capitalist mode of production work is never an individual process..."* which raises questions in terms of claims of a move to individualism, particularly when *"...the necessarily co-*

operative character of the capitalist labour process..." (Ibid:49) is taken into consideration. Such statements also serve to highlight a major concern raised by many commentators (Danford *et al.* 2003; Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997; Thompson & Ackroyd 1995), of the neglected role of labour as a subject in its own right, and an absence in the literature of the 'collective worker'. The concern that *"...labour is being taken out of the debate"* (Thompson & Ackroyd 1995:615) has been attributed to the claim that an interest in the *"...centrality of workers' own action shaping their environment"* (Danford *et al.* 2003:4) has become 'unfashionable' (Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997:54). Other commentators have also suggested that research focusing on the social processes of interests at the workplace has waned (for e.g. see Heyes, 1999:35; Cully *et al.* 1999:198). As highlighted by Kelly (1998:7) and Scott (1994:29) the value of such studies lies in the rich description of the observations and explanations of social processes at the workplace. Such research also helps us to understand the ways in which workers define their collective interests. However, in considering such a study for contemporary empirical research, a major problem appears to be in conflicting conceptualisations of the term 'workplace collectivism'.

In the first instance, Metochi (2002) argues that, in contemporary debate, no real attempt has been made to either define collectivism itself, or indeed empirically test any propositions that have emerged on the theme. In this analysis, it is concluded that a definition of 'workplace collectivism' is an,

...identification with different social units/groups/collectivities within the individual's working environment with which he(she) shares values and interests that forge bonds of solidarity between the individual and these social unit(s)... (Ibid:91)

Martinez Lucio & Stewart (1997) also question the definition of collectivism in recent debates and argue that stereotyped understandings of collectivism have evolved mainly due to a one-dimensional treatment,

...where it would seem that management are now the only agents able to effect change. (Ibid:54)

They suggest that the problem may be better understood by (re)focusing upon the definition of the 'collective worker'

By 'collective worker' we mean the conditions and circumstances of workers producing surplus value...under capital. (Ibid:53)

These authors, together with Kelly (1998) and Stephenson & Stewart (2001), argue that one of the major problems in the definitions of collectivism within the debate is that they do not adequately engage with the problem of collectivism in its various forms. Stephenson & Stewart (2001) distinguish three forms of collectivism from two manufacturing plants. Firstly, 'trade union collectivism' where active trade unionists 'lead' pro union employees in trade union organised collective activity. (Ibid:8). Secondly, 'work place collectivism' referring to the willingness on the part of employees to provide support to one another in the workplace, regardless of whether the issues are work or non-work (Ibid). Finally, 'the collectivism of everyday life' refers to the friendship, support and care that employees offer one another outside of the workplace (Ibid:9). However,

despite these offerings, it would still appear that the claim of a move from collectivism to individualism is problematic due to contradictory definitions of collectivism. It has also been argued that the concept of individualism itself is fraught with difficulties *"...because it is based on a simplistic notion of declining collectivism."* (Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997:56). Indeed, some commentators have provided evidence to challenge the alleged extent of a decline of collectivism at the workplace.

Warhurst & Thompson (1998) present empirical research which suggests that the idea of the 'new workplace' emerging due to HRM and other management initiatives is a myth. Further evidence provided by Gallie *et al.* (1996:31) demonstrates that, despite a weakening of the trade union movement in Britain during the 1980s, at a local level its influence remained relatively healthy. Indeed, as also highlighted earlier, other positive empirical studies have illustrated how the decline in trade unionism has not been universal, providing evidence of resilience in workplace collectivism and union organisation (Beale 1999; Fitzgerald *et al.* 1996; Danford *et al.* 2003). Hence, it could be suggested, as Gallie *et al.* conclude (1996:46), *"...that Britain has not shifted from a collectivist to an individualist system".* It would appear then, that the debates surrounding the claims of a decline in collectivism and a rise in individualism are full of contradictory tensions. A major reason for this, as evidence would suggest, is that the entire debate on workplace collectivism is lacking in conceptual and empirical rigour (Martinez Lucio,

M. & Stewart, P. 1997; Metochi 2002; Kelly 1998) and, as yet, solutions to this problem have only been tentatively offered.

Conceptually, Kelly proposes the most promising way in which to explain the gaps in our knowledge of workplace collectivism. He suggests that using theoretical approaches associated with both social movement theory and mobilisation theory may help to gain a clearer understanding of the ways in which workers define their interests and identities in collective terms (Ibid:24). Together with this, he suggests that these theories,

> ...should enable us to transcend the woolliness and imprecision that has marred debates about the alleged decline of worker collectivism. (Ibid.)

However, it would appear that empirical research using these theories is very sparse. One example is in Gall's (2000b) study of the provincial newspaper industry, wherein he uses mobilisation theory to assess collectivism. Although this is a noteworthy study, the theory is used fairly tentatively and without a rigorous explanation as to why, or how, the approach informs his analysis. Another significant recent study, drawing solely upon social movement theory, is provided by Metochi (2002). This study focuses on union leadership as a factor in influencing membership participation in Cypriot public sector trade unions. Although this is a very thorough study that seeks to develop the theory, and in this instance does incorporate a rigorous analysis of the theoretical background and hypothesis, the sole focus is on the role of leadership in inducing active

membership participation, rather than a consideration of different facets of workplace collectivism. Together with this, the methodology is drawn from the discipline of social psychology with a focus on a quantitative, rather than a qualitative approach. Another recent quantitative study is that by Brown, Johnson & Jarley (2004) who also use mobilisation theory to test union participation in public sector workers, in this instance, in the USA. Their major focus is on worker perceptions of organisational injustice and union justice in the workplace, in response to the suggestion that the field of industrial relations should be

> ...moving towards an examination of the processes that convert
>
> individual grievances into collective action. (Ibid.543).

However, the issue of 'injustice' is only one of the key factors of mobilisation theory, and this, together with social movement theory require examination in more detail in order to understand how they can help to gain a clearer understanding of the ways in which workers define their interests and identities in collective terms.

3.4 Social Movement Theory and Mobilisation Theory

Theories relating to mobilisation and social movements largely emanate from the USA and provide an analysis of collective behaviour through the social and psychological characteristics of groups. As there is no single theory from which to draw, the main theoretical approaches associated with industrial sociology, such as Gamson, Klandermans, McAdam and Tilly, will be examined for the purpose of this study.

Gamson (1992b) provides a social psychological explanation as an attempt to understand the social interaction and group processes involved in collective action. He identifies three processes which he states are interwoven (Ibid:55): *'collective identity'* which concerns the 'who we are', *'solidarity'* which relates to the individual's development of loyalty to collective actors, and *'consciousness'* in terms of how individuals give meanings to situations which are then developed into a shared definition. Crosscutting all of these processes is one that he, and McAdam (1988), refer to as the *'micromobilisation'* context, which is the collective setting of physical interaction in which all of these processes are brought together. Gamson illustrates how social psychologists, notably Snow *et al.* (1986:1992), have attempted to connect all of these processes into what they refer to as *'collective action frames'*.

In Snow & Benford's (1992) terms, such frames illustrate how an individual's ideologies 'frame' an issue, event or situation in their life space and these ideologies provide a set of categories and ideas that label the interests of one's own group. Thus the subjective meanings that individuals attach to their situations will help them to locate, perceive, identify and label events within the 'system' they find themselves in. McAdam (1988:132) suggests that if any aspects of this 'system' lose legitimacy, then there will be the belief that the rules and arrangements are 'illegitimate', 'wrong' or 'unjust'. This realisation of a sense of injustice in the status quo is a process that McAdam refers to as *'cognitive liberation'.* However, such grievances on their own, according to

McAdam, will not serve to motivate collective action. Two other processes; the assertion of the individuals' rights to their demands and the belief that they have the capacity to alter their situation, will also be required for motivation. These injustice frames are argued by Gamson (1992b) to be critical in understanding collective action. He (1992a) also illustrates how injustice can refer to something laden with emotion, or what he refers to as a 'hot cognition', which he describes as *"the righteous anger that puts fire in the belly and iron in the soul,"* (Ibid:32). However, he claims that, in the process of adopting an injustice frame, it is insufficient if individuals privately adopt a different interpretation of what is happening and, for the collective adoption of an injustice frame, the potential challengers must share it in a public way. This allows the participants to realise, not only that they share the injustice, but also that everyone is aware that it is being shared. In this way, situations are collectively defined as unjust and grievances are then transformed into demands. However, he also states that,

> *...if people already share a sense of moral indignation and injustice, think of themselves as a 'we' in opposition to some 'they' and have shared models of people like themselves acting to change conditions, the raw materials are already in place* (Ibid:111).

Such 'us and them' attitudes are associated with *'social identification'* and perceived as essential to mobilising frames, for it is suggested that the collective identity must be oppositional (Ibid:68; Fantasia 1988:14). The

reason for an action by one group will be explained by another group through what social movement theorists describe as *'attributions'*. Kelly (1998:30) outlines how such attributions are typically classified along 3 dimensions of causality; personal vs. external, stable vs. unstable and controllable vs. uncontrollable. For instance, someone will make an external stable attribution when they 'blame the system' rather than blaming themselves, which would be more of an internal, unstable attribution (Ibid:137). It is suggested by social movement theorists that these processes considered so far, *injustice, attribution* and *social identification,* are all critical for a group of individuals to develop a collective interest. However, when considering the move to collective action, it has been maintained that other factors also need to be taken into consideration.

B Klandermans (1984:584) and P.G. Klandermans (1984:107) both suggest that the *willingness to participate* in collective action is also an important part of the process and involves what they refer to as 'expectancy-value' theory, or calculating the costs and benefits of the perceived efficacy of being involved in collective action. B Klandermans (1984) suggests that there are three sets of expectations; about the number of participants, about one's own contribution to the probability of success and about the probability of success if many people participate. P.G. Klandermans (1984) also outlines 3 classifications of the perceived costs and benefits of participation; goal motives, social motives and reward motives. He suggests that a person will participate if they are

familiar with the means of action (knowledge), capable of participating (capacity) and prepared to do so (willingness). Therefore, it is also suggested that the move to taking collective action is a complex process of convincing and activating, hence persuasion, and by implication, *leadership* must play a major role in mobilising.

Examples of how such persuasion is applied in the work setting can be found in Fantasia (1988) and Batstone *et al's* (1977,1978) studies, that illustrate the importance of leadership in promoting group cohesion and identity. More contemporary studies include those of Darlington (2002,1994) who considers the interrelationship between leadership and membership and Metochi's (2002) study of the impact of union leaders on member participation. *'Leadership'*, from a social movement approach, is therefore also perceived as a significant factor in motivating a group into collective action. To sum up thus far, the major factors believed to be important to social movement theorists, in terms of what motivates people into taking collective action, are *leadership, social identification, attribution and injustice.* There is, however, one more approach that needs to be considered for this study, as it also examines factors that stimulate individuals into taking collective action. This is 'mobilisation theory' developed by Tilly (1978).

Tilly identifies five components in his analysis of collective action. The first, and at the centre of the approach, is the way in which people come to define their *interests* or as he describes,

...the gains and losses resulting from a group's interaction with other groups (1978:7).

The second factor, *organisation,* refers to

...the aspects of the group's structure which most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests (Ibid.)

Mobilisation is the third factor which he refers to as the

...process by which a group goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant (Ibid:69).

The fourth element, *opportunity,* is divided into three fairly straightforward factors; changes in the balance of power between groups, the costs of repression on the subordinate group by the ruling group and the opportunities available to the subordinate group to go in pursuit of their claims. On this point, Kelly (1998:25) notes that the ruling group may also engage in 'counter-mobilisation', whereby they try to prevent the subordinate group from achieving effective mobilisation or collective organisation. Finally, Tilly suggests that *collective action,* or people acting together in pursuit of common interests, results from the changing combinations of these four elements and can take diverse forms according to the different balances between the four components.

Kelly (1998:26) argues that Tilly's theory offers significant advantages in terms of helping us to surpass the debates concerning the alleged decline of collectivism discussed earlier in this chapter. He argues that it does this by providing a conceptual framework to help us think rigorously and analytically about the conditions under which individual workers define

their interests and identities in collective terms. Gall (2000a, 2000b) also agrees that mobilisation theory is useful in helping us to dissect and analyse the different processes by which workers acquire a collective definition of interests, although he argues that,

> *...it is unable to offer a dynamic or dynamics by which to explain how or why workers and their organisations can move from lower to higher forms of collectivism and from less effective to more effective forms of collectivism. (2000b:105)*

He argues that,

> *...mobilisation theory assumes that workers act in a rational, predictable and determinate manner. (2000a:338)*

Yet Tilly does appear to acknowledge the dynamics in mobilising for collective action, particularly when he states that,

> *The most persistent problem we face in analysing collective action is its lack of sharp edges: people vary continuously from intensive involvement to passive compliance, interests vary from quite individual to nearly universal. (1978:7)*

Perhaps one question that could be raised in relation to the theory is whether workplace collectivism and mobilisation necessarily means a constant endeavour to ultimately taking collective industrial action, which at times, Tilly's mobilisation theory would appear to imply. It is acknowledged, however, that 'collective action' may also relate to different forms of 'cooperative action' but Tilly does not clarify this. Nonetheless, the suggestion here is that worker collectivism and solidarity may be able to exist without the need to take collective action.

In addition to this, it could also be suggested that collectivism does not necessarily equate with uniformity, for day-to-day workplace behaviour can be full of conflicts and tensions and solidarity and collectivism can still exist (for e.g. see Stephenson & Stewart 2001). Nevertheless, even when taking such observations into consideration, the evidence would suggest that mobilisation theory, in combination with social movement theory, offer significant advantages in helping us to understand collective interest definition. It has also been suggested that mobilisation theory may be beneficial in our understanding of another concept in the study of industrial relations that is argued to remain theoretically elusive. That is the exercise of the balance of power between capital and labour at the workplace. Indeed, as Gall (2000a:329) argues, mobilisation theory is useful in examining this relationship as it,

> ...can help us to understand the upswings and downswings in the balance of power between capital and labour at both a macro and micro level [by] breaking down what we see into its sub components to better understand the dialectics and dynamics of the class struggle.

The major problems with the concept of 'power' appear to be similar to those encountered thus far with 'workplace collectivism'. Certainly, it is an area that, as Kirkbride (1985:44) argues, forms part of the 'taken for granted' language in the industrial relations arena. As Kelly (1998:5) also points out, it is perhaps one of the most widely used concepts in the field, yet notes that,

...the truly remarkable thing about 'power' is that for a concept which lies at the heart of industrial relations, it has received very little discussion by mainstream industrial relations researchers. (Ibid:9)

Others, such as Martin, have arrived at comparable judgements,

...industrial relations scholars have recognized the central importance of power, but not subjected it to conceptual analysis, or used it extensively in empirical research. (1992:2)

As one of the main intentions of this study is to examine workplace collective identity, the notion of 'power' also needs to be addressed, since the two may be viewed as inextricably linked. The reason for this is because evidence suggests that workers are better placed if they combine collectively, rather than act in their capacity as individuals, particularly in terms of seeking to control the power of capital, and in exercising influence over their everyday lives at the workplace. Therefore, the following section will consider the arguments as to why 'power' remains theoretically elusive and why it does not appear to be applied extensively in empirical research, despite the central importance of the concept to the study of industrial relations.

3.5 Power and Industrial Relations Theory

As mentioned above, the concept of power is a pervasive term in the field of industrial relations, yet despite the crucial significance of power to this area of study, evidence suggests that little empirical research and few attempts to conceptually analyse power have been conducted,

...to the extent that it now represents a major theoretical lacuna within the discipline. (Kirkbride 1985:44)

Although there is an historical, extensive and varied literature on the subject of power in the related fields of politics, psychology and sociology, remarkably little has infiltrated contemporary industrial relations literature, although there are some notable exceptions (for e.g. Kelly 1998; Kirkbride 1985; Martin 1992). It should perhaps be acknowledged at this point that, while it is recognised that industrial relations theory relating to power is grounded in sociological literature, this will not be examined in detail. The main aim of this section is to consider the suggested shortcomings in contemporary industrial relations literature in terms of gaps in our understanding on the issue of power. Therefore, the initial aim is to explore how the concept of power has been applied in industrial relations research, outlining the role of power within industrial relations theory and examining the ways in which 'power' has been conceptualised.

The emergence of theories relating to industrial relations may be traced directly to the work of Dunlop (1958) who introduced the 'systems approach'. Based upon Parsonian sociological thought, Dunlop regarded the industrial relations system *"...as an analytical subsystem of (industrial) society"* (Ibid:28) consisting of distinct social actors whose behaviour is influenced by the wider environment. Therefore, 'power' in the industrial relations 'subsystem' is interpreted as being a consequence of the distribution of power in the wider society reflecting the actors' *"...prestige, position and access to the ultimates of authority"* (Ibid:9-13).

In this way, power is construed as being exogenous to the industrial relations system rather than in terms of the internal processes of interaction between the social actors within the system. For this reason, amongst others, this theory has been persistently criticised to the point that Hyman states,

> *Why Dunlop's shoddily constructed essay should have assumed such seminal status is perhaps puzzling...* (1989:121)

One of the main reasons why the systems approach has received such severe criticism is that it rejects any analytical investigation into the processes of power *within* industrial relations (Clegg 1979; Kirkbride 1985; Poole 1981). Secondly, and in relation to this, it is also argued that it neglects the importance of *behavioural* processes in favour of structural processes (Schienstock 1981:171-173). A third criticism is that the perspective assumes a non zero-sum conception of power which is problematic as such a view conceives power in integral terms rather than being shared (Poole 1981), consequently ignoring *inequalities* in the balance of power. Although the importance of power to industrial relations is reinforced in the theoretical framework of the systems approach, it is argued that there is no attempt to *define* power and no analysis of the *processes* of power in industrial relations (Clegg 1979; Kirkbride 1985; Poole 1981). Hence, for all of these reasons, it is suggested that the systems theory of industrial relations brings us,

> *...no nearer to an understanding of the nature of power or its utilisation.* (Kirkbride 1985:45)

Furthermore, another *"...perennial complaint against systems theory..."* (Poole 1981:43) is that it does not recognise opposition, and for this reason, potential *conflict* within the industrial relations system. From this perspective, it is perceived that the approach tends to assume a continuation of harmonious relationships, which would also suggest that it is amenable to management initiatives, thereby acknowledging that management maintain a superior position in the employment relationship. Such criticisms are also closely related to those of the unitary theory of industrial relations.

The underlying assumption of the unitary theory is that the organisational body is an integrated whole, consisting of people with a common set of values which bind the employer and employee together. Within this unified system is one source of legitimate authority and loyalty, the employer, and trade unions are viewed as an external group endeavouring to 'force' themselves into an otherwise harmonious integrated system. Therefore, within this perspective, there is the assumption that any challenge to managerial authority is unlikely to occur, hence any opposition to management is perceived as irrational. This theory would appear to fail to recognise the reality of organisational life in the very genuine differences of interests between employers and employees and, akin to systems theory, tends to reflect a set of interests more accommodating to employers' initiatives than employees. Therefore, in the quest to discover how power is conceptualised in industrial relations theory, it is argued that it is largely neglected in the

unitarist approach (Kirkbride 1985:46), or at least, in the assumptions underpinning the perspective. In what he terms as a 'definite improvement' (Ibid:45), over theoretical neglect of the concept Kirkbride suggests that the 'action theory' of industrial relations provides at least some recognition of a basis of a theory of power in industrial relations.

As Schienstock (1981:173) points out, it is not possible to identify an absolute form of action theory as a number of different positions have been developed. However, two clear strands of analysis are evident, as a fundamental distinction can be drawn between, an analysis of *decision-making* of the various actors in the industrial relations framework and an analysis of their *interaction*. Clearly, in the interaction of exchanges, capital and labour are striving to achieve the best possible outcome for themselves, and their success will inevitably depend upon their relative bargaining power. This is perhaps a reason why it is argued that the action theory of industrial relations is an improvement, for *"...it focuses on the relative power of the parties in the exchange relationship"* (Kirkbride 1985:45). Indeed, the major focus of this theory is *bargaining* power and it adopts a positive sum approach whereby the relative power of the contending parties is unpredictable, leaving the principal determinant factor in the negotiating process being the *behavioural* pattern of the opposing factions (Schienstock 1981:174). However, action theorists appear to differ in what they perceive as important factors in the bargaining process in terms of power.

Firstly, there are those who place more of an economic emphasis upon the actors themselves, viewing the parties as decision makers, armed with a certain amount of resources and

> *...whose behaviour is oriented towards the outcome of an economically calculated risk* (Ibid:175)

Whatever risks are taken, according to these theorists, the parties will undoubtedly arrive at some kind of pact, with both achieving gains, simply because they are indispensable to one another. However, this theory has been criticised for failing to explain 'how' an agreement is reached during the bargaining process (Ibid.). Therefore, in complete contrast to systems theory, the action approach is disparaged for neglecting the *structural* basis of power in favour of *behavioural* processes. Yet this theory does provide more of an identifiable basis with which to analyse power because of its focus on behaviour, and this is possibly best illustrated in the work of Walton & McKersie (1965).

In Walton & McKersie's classic analysis of behavioural theory in negotiations, they divide the bargaining process into four sub processes, arguing that each is as important despite having different functions. *Distributive bargaining* (Ibid:11-125) reflects a basic distribution conflict over a limited resource and may be equated to a fixed sum approach whereby one contender wins what the other loses. It has been argued that the economic models mentioned previously, restrict themselves to this form of bargaining, rather than valuing the diverse functions in the bargaining process (Schienstock 1981:177). Nonetheless, the second

sub process identified by Walton & McKersie is *integrative bargaining* (1965:126-183), which identifies common interests between the two parties in order to achieve a co-operative solution, or a varying sum game wherein the contenders can increase the value of the resources available to them. They explain that this is intended to complement distributive bargaining rather than the two being distinct forms (Ibid.). The third sub process, *attitudinal structuring* (Ibid:184-280), is described as a socioemotional, rather than the cognitive process emphasised in integrative bargaining, (Ibid:279) therefore, it is evident how these processes are once more 'mutually enhancing' (Ibid.). The authors claim that bargaining theorists generally neglect this third aspect of the negotiating process (Ibid:184) and as they point out,

> *Since attitudes are not something that can be observed directly, each negotiator is constantly making inferences about his opponent based on his verbal behaviour, actions and other sorts of cues.* (Ibid:223)

This process may be viewed as important in terms of the issue of power as each party will be attempting to change or strengthen the attitudes of one towards the other. (Ibid:222). Finally, *intraorganisational bargaining* (Ibid:281-351) is designed to achieve internal consensus within each of the negotiating parties, as it is acknowledged that there is heterogeneity within each group and different elements of the organisation may have different wants and needs from the bargaining process. However, despite this extremely significant recognition of intraorganisational diversity, the action theory approach has been criticised by Schienstock

(1981:178) for its restricted focus on the negotiating table. He suggests (Ibid.) that the relationship between the rank and file membership and those bargaining on their behalf should also be examined for its effect on the behaviour of the bargainer. He argues that the greater involvement of the grass roots, the greater the likelihood of ratification, although he also claims that if there is no provision for rank and file participation it may be because of a hypothesis that,

> ...the demands made by the membership are usually too far-reaching to be met at the bargaining table. (Ibid:179)

Yet this also raises questions in terms of the issue of 'power', for if a decision needs approval by the membership prior to its conclusion, then where is the balance of 'power' positioned in the intraorganisational relationship? Indeed, Schienstock also criticises the action theory approach, as the bargaining

> ...objectives cannot be understood as being the expression of homogeneous interests shared by the entire membership. (Ibid:180).

Nonetheless, possibly the most significant criticism of the theory is that it neglects the more vibrant aspects of power processes, such as the use and exercise of power (Kirkbride 1985:46). Indeed, as mentioned above, it refrains from recognising different intraorganisational rival power groups who may oppose one another's requirements from the bargaining process. Therefore, it could also be suggested that it neglects the existence of conflict 'within' the different organisations in the industrial relations system. Recognition of the existence of conflict is central to the following strand of

industrial relations orthodoxy to be examined, that of the pluralist frame of reference.

Initially introduced as a major focus of discussion in Alan Fox's 1966 Research Paper *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations,* pluralism was perceived as an ideological tool for British industrial relations reform. The exponents of pluralist theory argued that the unitarist ideology, that had dominated industrial relations until the 1960s, was not realistic as it neglected the very real existence of conflicting interests at the workplace. Thus, the underlying assumption of the pluralist ideology is the recognition of distinct sectional groups within an organisation, each with their own *"...aspirations and perceptions which they naturally view as valid"* (Fox 1974:260). Such competing interests, according to pluralists, will result in a state of dynamic tensions that need, in some way, to be managed. The way in which this conflict is best managed, according to this approach, is in the course of its 'institutionalisation' through collective bargaining. (Ibid:257)

Perhaps the most significant contribution to our understanding of collective bargaining, institutions and processes is that by Allan Flanders (1970). He asserted that collective bargaining is essentially a rule-making process that, he claims, could more appropriately be termed 'joint regulation' (Ibid:94). As the 'principal theoretical architect' (Poole 1981:48) of the 'Oxford School' that also included Fox and Hugh Clegg, Flanders recognised that the diverse and competing interests within an

organisation needed to be regulated to avoid conflict. He argued that such regulation was conducted through the legitimate, independent representatives of those involved in the employment relationship, entering into negotiations whereby they jointly negotiate and agree the terms and conditions of employment, or, in other words, collective bargaining. He stated that there were three conditions for collective bargaining as job regulation; the parties must have a sufficient degree of organisation, they must be ready to enter into agreements with one another in mutual recognition and that the agreements must be observed to whom they apply. Fox (1974:264) argued that this represented a 'basic procedural consensus' of management and unions negotiating comprehensive, codified systems of regulation whereby each party ought to be 'morally' committed to observing the terms of the resulting conditions. However, such a perspective implies that there is an equal balance of power between the negotiating groups within the organisation and, despite power being a crucial variable to the pluralist theory in terms of contesting groups, it is argued that,

> *The distribution of power and resources is not considered and a balance of power not asserted* (Hyman 1989:67)

The pluralist approach has been criticised for its 'taken for granted' attitude to power (Rose 1994:33). As Kirkbride points out,

> *Despite the focus by writers such as Flanders...and the apparent centrality of power...they conspicuously fail to explain their use of the concept or indeed to address it directly, seemingly content to utilise it as an unexplicated common sense term.* (1985:45)

Indeed, he also notes (Ibid:46) that 'power' cannot be found in the index of leading pluralist text of industrial relations, a similar argument put forward by Kelly (1998:9) with regard to more contemporary mainstream industrial relations textbooks. Therefore, it would appear that it could be argued,

> ...that power remains a major lacuna and a problematic and equivocal concept within pluralist industrial relations. (Kirkbride 1985:47)

Hyman (1975:31) argues that it is the principal pluralist focus on 'regulation' that conceals the centrality of power in the processes of industrial relations. He maintains that the employment relationship "...can never be effectively frozen in a formal rule" (Ibid.) but is continuous and ever changing. His analysis is from a Marxist perspective that views the employment relationship as a "...continuous relationship of conflict." (Ibid.)

The issue of power has assumed a special prominence in Marxist expositions, and for this reason, it would appear that the theory offers a useful insight into the nature of power in industrial relations. Analyses based on this approach are characterised by their central position towards the historical development of the power relationship between capital and labour. A major focus is placed on the struggle of these two 'classes' attempting to strengthen their respective positions with the chief aim of exerting greater influence on the structure of work relations. The Marxist approach begins from the basic premise that there is a division

between those who own their labour and those who own the means of production, and the exchange relationship between them.

In this exchange relationship, the owners of labour offer themselves to the labour market in exchange for financial resources to support their existence. Capital presents itself to the market to purchase the labour they require for production and hence profit. It is here where a power struggle begins, in that labour, or the power to labour, is embodied in a person and that person has power only in as far as capital needs what they can provide. In order to gain sufficient means to sustain their existence, labour will aim to achieve the highest price for their asset, the power to labour. Capital, on the other hand, will endeavour to offer the lowest price for labour in order to achieve greater profit. At this stage there is clearly an asymmetrical distribution of power between the conflicting interests of the two classes, for labour will almost always present to the labour market as an individual whereas,

> ...the single 'capitalist has always confronted him (sic) as a representative of the social force known as moneyed interest'
> (Schienstock 1981:181)

This uneven distribution of wealth, due to the ownership of the means of production, gives capital a power advantage. Together with this, if the labour market has a healthy reserve industrial army, capital is once more at an advantage as labour will be freely available, more likely to be willing to provide interchangeability in skills, and possibly more willing to sell his/her labour at a lower price thereby increasing capital's profit and

hence power. Indeed, it would appear that for labour, it is best if it is restricted in availability and not compelled into becoming interchangeable, as Hyman notes,

> *It is true that the possession of scarce skills, or the existence of a tight labour market may help to lessen the imbalance.* (1975:23)

In order to overcome the imbalance of power in favour of capital, historically, labour's response has been to band together collectively through trade unions in order to gain *power for* themselves. To further their interests generally, labour has also utilised their interest group to put pressure on positions of social and political authorities. On occasion, due to the strength of this collective nature, it has been suggested that labour's power has equalled or exceeded that of capital, yet Hyman claims that *"...such a suggestion is fanciful"* (Ibid). To support this claim, he uses the example of an employer being able to threaten to, or even close down, a company and move elsewhere, whereas, although an individual worker is also able to threaten to, or leave an employer, an entire workforce realistically has no such option (Ibid.). Once more, an unequal distribution of power between these two classes is evident, with capital seemingly constantly gaining the advantage. However, Kelly (1998:134) cautions that,

> *...there is a corresponding danger in focusing on the undoubtedly immense power resources of capitalists and stressing the great imbalance of power between labour and capital. For if there is indeed such a power disparity it is hard to understand why workers ever succeed in winning disputes with their employers.*

Nonetheless, he does maintain that Hyman's discussion of power is 'sophisticated' (Ibid.), in particular in his recognition of the interdependent relationship between the two classes,

> *For while the powers of the employer are enormous he is at the same time 'dependent' on his labour force.* (Hyman 1975:25)

In fact, capital may be dependent upon labour in different ways, the most obvious being to maintain production thus increasing profit. Together with this, individual capitalists will be dependent upon the labour they employ, particularly if they are companies in a specific sector of the economy with strong competition in close proximity. Furthermore, strong markets and a strong market position generally implies stable employment, which may offer opportunities for labour to have the power advantage. Therefore, as implied by Hyman previously, the general power relationship between capital and labour may fluctuate. Certainly, historically, capital has attempted to reduce its dependency on labour in the forms of; reducing labour's skill by using 'new' managerial techniques to improve flexibility and interchangeability; attempting to control labour's collective organisation through restrictions on trade unions and replacing skills with machinery. Indeed, as Hyman points out,

> *...control over the productive system carries with it the control over those whom they employ.* (Ibid:22)

The issue of 'control' has also assumed a special prominence in the Marxist approach. Despite criticisms due to its predominant view of power as a zero-sum phenomenon (Kirkbride 1985:47), and for not fully

101

exploring or developing the notion of power, particularly at the micro level (Ibid:48), Marxist theory does offer another important insight in its association of power with 'control' (Poole 1981:95). The approach views organisations as being controlled by ruling interest groups who exercise power through various forms, from visible authority relations to the use of less visible ideological resources as a source of power and control. However, despite a vast amount of literature in relation to the issue of 'control at work' during the 1980s and 1990s, it would appear that this is dominated by the subject of 'managerial strategies' for control over the labour process. It should be noted at this point that it *is* recognised that Braverman's (1974) seminal work was a catalyst for debate on 'labour process theory', and re-igniting extensive debate on managerial control of the labour process. However, it is not the intention to rehearse these debates in this study as this task has already been performed elsewhere (see for e.g. Heyes 1999). The main point that is attempting to be addressed here is that within the literature, there does not appear to be any agreed definition of 'power', despite it being a pervasive term in the study of industrial relations. There are also further problems in relation to the issue of power for, as there does not appear to be an agreed definition of power, there are also inherent problems associated with the measurement of power.

3.6 The Measurement of Power in Industrial Relations

Although the measurement of 'trade union' power is discussed in various ways in the literature, there have been no serious attempts to measure 'management' power (Martin 1992:9). Even in terms of union power it is also argued that only meagre attempts have been made to create any kind of measurement (Kelly 1998:10;Martin Ibid.). The most widely used form of measurement of trade union power, according to Martin, is membership density,

> *It is a priori plausible to assume that the higher the level of membership density the greater the level of union power. A high level of union density is likely to be associated with solidarity...* (Ibid:10)

However, he also acknowledges that there are clear problems in using membership density as a form of measurement of union power (Ibid.). In the first instance, it would be misleading to assume a difference in intensity of union power between areas of the private sector with low levels of density, compared to some areas with high levels in the public sector. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that high density in one particular union is necessarily associated with solidarity, as trade unions now invariably consist of numerous different occupations due to the many mergers that have taken place over the years. Distribution of membership may also be comparable between industries in one sector, different organisations and indeed the workplace itself if it maintains multi union recognition. Together with this, with a drive for recruitment high on

the current trade union agenda, unions will be reluctant to publish

membership figures due to the competitive nature of organising, therefore

union density figures may be either unavailable or misleading.   For all of

these reasons, it is argued that it cannot be assumed that union

membership density is a valid and reliable measure of 'union power' (see

also Armstrong *et al.* 1977:91-92; Kelly 1998:10; Martin Ibid.). However,

one further point to note is that these arguments are mainly based upon

'macro' density at national levels, rather than 'micro' density at the

workplace, which could also make a difference in terms of the

measurement of union 'power'.

A second form of measurement of union power focuses on strike

frequency statistics,

> *...on the grounds that striking constitutes the most visible*
>
> *expression of union power.* (Kelly:Ibid).

However straightforward this may initially appear, there are clearly

problems in this form of measurement.   In the first instance, if it *is*

assumed that the most powerful unions are those with the highest

membership density, it could be found that they may be only rarely

involved in strike action. Furthermore, the strike may be a less effective

tool than other strategies available to union members, and as Darlington

also notes,

> *...the lack of strike action by some strategically placed groups of*
>
> *workers (particularly in the manufacturing industry) might reflect*
>
> *their strength, not their weakness...* (1994:35)

On the other hand, the strike may illustrate that the power in the employment relationship lies with the employer as Martin points out,

> *...strikes are more likely where employers are sufficiently confident of their power as to attack established working practices.* (1992:11)

On this point, it may also be misleading to assume that every strike results in the favour of the trade union and its members. Together with this, an increase in frequency of, particularly unofficial strikes, may be due to a decline in the ability of trade union officials to control their members. Moreover, Armstrong *et al.* argue that the method of collecting the official data is inadequate and *"...small demonstration strikes are not covered by the records..."* (1977:93). Consequently, once more it could be argued that the measurement of power using strike frequency statistics is unreliable and has problems of validity.

Bargaining outcomes are a further source of measurement of union power which was discussed earlier when examining the 'action theory' of industrial relations. Usually associated with the 'effect theorists' (Kirkbride 1985:46), this is a typically economistic style of measurement, viewing observable outcomes of the result of a bargaining exercise between unions and management. However, Kelly argues that, although this certainly throws light on the 'results' of exercising power,

> *...it does not tell us much about the processes by which groups acquire and mobilize power resources in the first place.* (1998:11)

A similar point is also proposed by Kirkbride who argues that, by examining the end result, *"...power can only be determined after the fact"*

105

(1985:46). Martin also cautions as to using this type of measurement to calculate 'power' for he argues that,

> ...the focus upon specific conflicts, and their outcomes, results in a very misleading picture of power relations. Conflicts are likely to occur when the balance of power is unstable or uncertain, not when it is asymmetric; the outcomes of such conflicts are therefore a poor guide to the overall distribution of power. (1992:12)

Hence the main focus is upon outcomes and observable results rather than preconditions and processes. Another measurement of power using observable results has also met with criticism. Structural factors have been used to measure union power in terms of the demand for labour, changes in the distribution of income, the product markets, management control systems and management strategies (Ibid:14-16). However, Kelly argues that the impact of these variables on the balance of power is not at all apparent,

> On the one hand, union power is likely to be weakened in recession by product market competition and mass unemployment. On the other hand, increasingly competitive product markets may also weaken employers since they will be anxious to avoid interruptions to production... 'as long as the employer wants production, the workers will have some degree of power'. (1998:11)

This is a significant point as it takes the discussion back to Hyman's recognition of the interdependent relationship between capital and labour.

Hyman also offered a further insight into the understanding of power in recognising the use of ideological resources and leadership as sources of power (Hyman 1975; Kirkbride 1985:48). In terms of the measurement of union power and leadership, Kelly (1998:10) suggests that the degree of sophistication of shop steward organisation could prove a useful index for the balance of power. However, Terry (1986) used this organisational measure, which proved to be unsuccessful, although this is not to dismiss the importance of the efficiency of sophisticated shop steward organisation, which is discussed extensively elsewhere in this chapter. In terms of the use of ideological resources, subjective elements of measuring union power are highlighted in Lukes' (1974) 'third dimension' of power, that of 'consciousness'. Although more sociologically based, this suggests that 'group consciousness' may be used to measure union power in industrial relations. However, Kelly cautions that,

> *Once we admit subjective variables such as group consciousness, that may be implicated in the awareness and acquisition of power, the issues of conceptualisation and measurement become immensely more difficult"* (1998:11-12)

It is clear then, that the notion of 'power' is fraught with difficulties in terms of its conceptualisation and measurement. Indeed, this chapter has attempted to discover why it has remained theoretically elusive and also how it has not been applied extensively in empirical research. These same issues were raised when considering the debate on workplace collectivism, where the evidence suggested that this also lacked conceptual and empirical rigour. The key themes that emerged from

these in-depth discussions are summarised in the following concluding section.

Summary and Overview

This chapter has offered an evaluation of 5 key areas within the field of contemporary industrial relations that have led to some important discussion in recent years. The evidence presented suggests that there are inherent contradictory tensions in some of the debates. In particular, problems were identified in concepts that are frequently used, and central to the field, but have no clear, agreed definition. In addition to this, a problem was identified in that there are areas in which empirical research is suggested to have waned in some central themes within the discipline. One of these areas was highlighted in the debate on union renewal.

It was illustrated in this section that empirical studies have found that workplace organisation is able to persist in some areas without the need to build workplace activity through a 'new' generation of activists, hence, it has been suggested that union resilience is perhaps a more appropriate term to apply to such workplaces. However, evidence suggested that union renewal arguments have been made principally, although not exclusively, to the public sector and the nature and extent of union resilience remains only partially examined in the literature. Furthermore, within this literature, reference to traditional industries renowned for solidaristic trade unionism remains sparse. Indeed, Danford *et al.*

(2003:171) have raised concern as to the threat of such industries being neglected in academic research and writing. Hence, taking this information into consideration, it is one of the intentions of this thesis to examine the three key factors within the union renewal/resilience debate in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry, a traditional area of union organisation. The three main areas are: the effectiveness of shop steward organisation in the industry, levels of activity in membership participation and its significance for union democracy. The main intention is to observe trade union organisation in the industry today with a particular focus on shop steward and workplace organisation, a second key theme addressed in this chapter.

The role of the shop steward and shop steward organisation was the third key debate addressed in this chapter in relation to the claims of an alleged move from collectivism to individualism. The evidence suggested that the challenges to shop steward organisation over recent decades is one of the potential factors that has led to a decline in collectivism at the workplace. However, it was demonstrated how the debate concerning a move to individualism appears to be marred by contradictory tensions and conflicting conceptualisations of 'workplace collectivism'. Concerns have also been raised in relation to a declining academic interest in the 'collective worker' and that *"...labour is being taken out of the debate"* (Thompson & Ackroyd 1995:615). It has been suggested by some commentators that one of the reasons for this potential problem is attributed to the fact that the subject has become 'unfashionable'

(Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997:54) and some commentators have advocated a return to rigorous investigation of social processes at the workplace (Danford *et al.* 2003; Heyes 1999; Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997; Thompson & Ackroyd 1995). However, as the evidence would suggest that the issue of workplace collectivism is lacking in conceptual and empirical rigour, there are therefore potential problems in embarking on such a project, for assessing what is exactly meant by 'collectivism' in the workplace is difficult. It was suggested that, conceptually, Kelly (1998) proposes the most promising way in which to explain the gaps in knowledge in terms of workplace collectivism. He (Ibid:24) suggests that using theoretical approaches associated with both social movement theory and mobilisation theory, may help to provide a conceptual framework to help us to think rigorously and analytically about the conditions under which individual workers define their interests and identities in collective terms. These theories were examined in depth in this chapter and it is another intention of this thesis to use both of these approaches to examine whether a strong workplace collective identity exists in the TMCI. It was also suggested by Gall (1998:329) that mobilisation theory might also be beneficial in our understanding of the exercise of the balance of power between capital and labour in the employment relationship.

The notion of 'power' is possibly one of the most broadly used concepts in the field of industrial relations, yet it has received little attention, either theoretically or empirically, in industrial relations literature. It was

demonstrated how even the major theoretical developments in the discipline devoted little attention to the concept, leaving it unexplicated and undefined. Therefore, given that there is no agreed definition of power, it was also explained that this has led to inherent problems associated with the measurement of power. It was noted that the main focus of measurement is upon outcomes and observable results rather than preconditions and processes. Therefore, it would appear that using mobilisation theory could be beneficial, as it dissects and analyses processes by which workers acquire power resources in the first place. Gall suggests that breaking these down into sub components should help in a greater understanding of *"the dialectics and dynamics of the class struggle"*. (Ibid.) This thesis will attempt to conduct such an examination by focusing upon three key issues of the employment relationship:

- How power in the employment relationship is generated and utilised on a day to day basis through interpersonal social interactions

- The dynamics of the power relationship and the methods by which power is exercised

- How power is used as a form of control in the employment relationship.

The findings associated with the issues raised in this chapter are outlined in chapters 5, 6 and 7 and a detailed discussion of the research strategy pursued is outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Case Study Outline and Research Methodology

Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to describe the research strategy and methods used in this study and explain why these were the most appropriate tools for this particular project. The chapter begins by outlining the case study companies, providing contextual information such as where they are situated, their main products, how many blue-collar workers are employed, the workforce characteristics and the trade unions recognised by the companies. The concentration is on blue-collar workers only, as the main aim of the research was to focus on the social processes in the employment relationship, mainly at shop floor level. For principles of confidentiality, each of the companies, together with individuals mentioned, are provided with a pseudonym.

Following the description of each company, the chapter then focuses on the research methodology beginning with the research strategy chosen, the exploratory case study approach. A rationale is provided in support of this choice, and its limitations are also documented. Then this section turns to the research method selected in order to address potential problems with validity and reliability. Challenges encountered during both the research design and access phase are subsequently described, followed by an account of all of the data collected during fieldwork. Attention is then focused on the perceived advantages of the chosen research design during data collection and the challenges encountered

throughout this phase. Finally, the conclusion discusses the key points raised, together with an identification of the limitations of the research.

4.1 Case Study Outline

There is some difficulty in defining an industry still commonly known on Tyneside as 'the yards'. This study is using the term Maritime Construction Industry to encompass the building of ships, ship repair, ship conversion, offshore fabrication and the decommissioning of oil rigs which are all part of the Tyneside 'yards'. Although each of these would appear to be separate industries with different products, markets and demands, the common factor is the workforce, which is able to work in any one of these sectors. The workforce in this industry is itinerant. Workers are sometimes directly employed and sometimes rely on agency work, although the most common type of contract is short term, since the demand for labour is dependent upon the stage of the construction or repair process. The demand for labour also depends on the achievement of orders, as in this industry there is an unstable, fluctuating market and at times, there might be no contracts and hence, no workforce required. The three companies involved in this study are the largest employers in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry (TMCI) and, for reasons of confidentiality, are referred to as Ship Repair Ltd, Shipbuilders.Co and Refit PLC.

4.1.1 Ship Repair Ltd

Ship Repair (Tyne) Ltd is a subsidiary of the UK's largest ship repair company that comprises of six separate sites across the UK and is supported by a network of global agents. Their major products and services are ship repair and marine conversions, including floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) vessels. The Tyneside site has six dry docks, one of which was recently acquired in Hebburn following Shields Shiprepairer's shift into receivership (see McBride & Stirling 2002). Also in recent years, Ship Repair Ltd obtained the former Shipbuilders.Co 'Mermaid' shipyard making them one of the largest employers on the River Tyne. In terms of size, the Tyneside site covers approximately 80 acres.

At the time of fieldwork there were 541 blue-collar workers employed in this company. Of these, 205 were on permanent contracts, the others on short term contracts. Ship Repair Ltd is the only company on the Tyne to retain a core permanent workforce. The major reason for this is the competitive nature of the industry, particularly in terms of attaining the skills required to undertake contracts at busy times. Due to the nature of the work, in ship repair there is a much more rapid and constant turnaround of business than in construction, creating a demand for a stable pool of workers. The fact that they have a core workforce is also reflected in the workforce characteristics, which demonstrate that their employees are older than in other companies and have worked in one company for a longer period as outlined in Table 4.2.

At Ship Repair Ltd four unions are recognised forming the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) that includes the GMB, AEEU, MSF and UCATT. These unions work together through a joint shop stewards committee (JSSC) that consists of 4 convenors, two each from the GMB and AEEU, the largest unions in the yard, and eight shop stewards representing each trade and union in the yard. There are sixteen separate trades required in this yard and Ship Repair Ltd is the only company on the Tyne to continue to recognise some of these trades that are listed in Table 4.1. Although it will be noted that there are eighteen listed here, labourer and apprentice are not included under the heading of a 'trade'. Together with this, the numbers of some of these trades and their representatives fluctuated at the time of fieldwork depending on the situation with orders and stage of production.

Table 4.1 List of trades in Ship Repair Ltd
Welder
Plater
Shipwright
Driller
Burner
Plumber
Rigger
Pipefitter
Joiner
Painter
Electrician
Engineer
Blacksmith
Abseiler
Crane driver
Scaffolder
Other
Labourer
Apprentice

Table 4.2 Profile of workforce in TMCI

	Ship Repair Ltd	Shipbuilders.Co	Refit PLC
Age range	50-59	40-49	40-49
Number of years working for this company	2-10	<1	<1
Number of years working in industry	31-40	21-30	21-30
Percentage of workers employed for less than one year	34	60	79
Average number of companies worked for in industry	5	15	17

The importance of the identification with 'skill' is of high significance in this company. From the workforce questionnaires, 78% of the respondents stated that they were skilled, 5% identified themselves as 'semi-skilled' and the rest consisted of those who named themselves 'ancillary' workers. In terms of trade union membership, the interviews conducted in this yard indicated a figure of 90-99% membership with 90% of questionnaire respondents claiming they were union members. 7% of those who were not members indicated that they had 'been a member in the past', and when queried as to why they were no longer in a trade union, one stated that he 'stopped paying when his last job finished' and the others responded that they 'didn't feel the union was doing anything for them'. Only 3 workers claimed that they had never been trade union members. Of those who were union members, their reasons for joining a trade union are outlined in Table 4.3. As noted later in this chapter, the indicators used for this question were taken from research conducted by Waddington & Whitson (1997) whose work aimed to discover the extent to which collective reasons influenced the decision to join a trade union.

Table 4.3 Reasons for joining a trade union at Ship Repair Ltd

Rank order	Reasons for joining	%
1	Support if I had a problem at work	68
2	Improved pay and conditions	58
3	Because I believe in trade unions	52
4	Free legal advice	50
5	Industrial injury benefits	44
6	Most people at work are members	28
7	Professional services	17
8	Training and education	10
8	Financial services	10
9	Other	9
		(n=99)

As in Waddington & Whitson's findings, the top three ranks in the above table provide evidence to support their suggestion that collective reasons are more significant than individual ones for joining a trade union. However, ranks 4 and 5 received a much higher response than in their study. There may be a comparatively straightforward explanation for this, as Waddington & Whitson's sample majority was mainly the NHS and local government. Clearly, these will have a very different working environment to a shipyard. In this industry, issues of health and safety are of utmost importance to both employers and employees and historically there have been comparatively high levels of accidents and deaths. It is also acknowledged that there is a much lower level of respondents in this study as compared to that of Waddington & Whitson. Together with this, as they also indicated, it is not necessarily representative of new trade union members as a whole. However the point here is to attempt to establish whether collective reasons remained

118

central to joining a union and Waddington & Whitson's indicators were considered the most useful for this task. In terms of trade union membership, the AEEU and GMB had the highest membership in this yard with UCATT third and MSF retaining only a handful of members. However, Ship Repair Ltd are the only company on the Tyne to have a joint recognition agreement with all of the unions that represent all of the trades in the yard. The other two companies in this study did not recognise the latter two trade unions at all.

4.1.2 Refit PLC

Refit PLC is a fabricator of integrated decks, modules and jackets for offshore oil and gas platforms. It is also involved in the design and construction of FPSOs and has docked the largest vessels ever witnessed on Tyneside with the most recent being 800,000 tonnes. Due to the instability in fluctuations of orders in this company, they are constantly managing uncertainty. Therefore, rather than maintaining a core workforce as in Ship Repair, this company employs only workers with trades either essential to certain contracts, or required at different stages of production. The employees are all on short term contracts to the length of time of the order, or phase of production, then made redundant once the work is finished. At the beginning of the fieldwork, there was no blue-collar workforce at all in this company, as there had recently been a mass redundancy due to a lack of work. On the achievement of a new contract, they began to rebuild the workforce and,

by the end of the fieldwork there were 100 blue-collar employees made up of predominantly welders and platers.

Despite the predominance of GMB trades, Refit PLC has a recognition agreement with both the AEEU and GMB, with one shop steward from each union to represent the workers in the yard. When questioned as to levels of trade union membership in this yard, the shop stewards explained that they were actively recruiting again to rebuild the numbers, as the last confirmation of membership through a 'show of union cards' only revealed a figure of 60-70%. Responses from workforce questionnaires also collated a figure of 72%, with 20% having 'been a member in the past' and only one person indicating that he had never been a member. The reason for this was that he 'felt that he could best represent himself', while the ex-members 'didn't feel that the union was doing anything for me'. For those who were members, they were also questioned as to why they had joined a trade union and, in order to compare with Ship Repair Ltd, these figures are set out in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Reasons for joining a union at Refit PLC

Rank Order	Reasons for joining a union	%
1	Support if I had a problem at work	54
2	Improved pay and conditions	36
3	Because I believe in trade unions	32
4	Most people at work are members	25
5	Free legal advice	21
6	Industrial injury benefits	18
7	Training and education	10
7	Professional services	10
7	Other	10
8	Financial services	3

(n=28)

In comparison to Ship Repair Ltd the first 3 ranks are no different, and these respondents also believed that 'most people at work being members' was one of the major reasons why they joined a union, despite the fact that the membership figures are much lower than in Ship Repair. Once more, this supports Waddington & Whitson's suggestion that collectivism remains central to joining a trade union. However, there was only a 28% questionnaire response from Refit PLC largely owing to problems encountered with a gatekeeper, which is discussed at length later. Nonetheless, from these questionnaires, once again, the identification with skill was significant in this company, with 89% of respondents describing themselves as 'skilled'. This did not appear to be as significant in the final case study company, Shipbuilders.Co.

4.1.3 Shipbuilders.Co

As its title suggests, this company's main activity has historically involved the building of ships. It continues to offer this service and, in more recent

decades, has expanded to include the conversion of marine vessels, FPSOs, hull structural units, offshore and onshore structures including subsea templates and manifolds, modules, jackets, deck sections, spool pieces and riser systems. The present owner acquired the facility through an auction in 1995, after being placed in receivership in 1993 following 130 years in shipbuilding. Unlike the previous two companies, it is privately owned, and at the beginning of fieldwork employed 343 blue-collar workers. The dominant trade was that of platers, with 83 employed, followed by welders who accounted for 53 of the total shopfloor workers. Table 4.5 provides a full list of the trades employed in the yard at the time of fieldwork, taken directly from the yard manager's weekly 'Manning Levels' document.

Table 4.5 List of trades in Shipbuilders.Co

Direct trades	
Pipefitter	17
Plater	83
Welder	53
Apprentices (Trades)	94
Indirect trades	
Rigger	19
Crane drivers	11
Painter/shotblaster	2
Blaster sprayer	3
Remedial painter	1
Scaffolder	13
Scaffolder's mate	4
Trade assistant	10
Labourer	8
Janitor	2
Maintenance	
Maintenance Fitter	10
Maintenance Electrician	9
Maintenance Pipefitter	2
Senior Joiner	2

Despite this wide array of trades, which does not include trades employed via subcontractors, Shipbuilders.Co have a recognition agreement with only one union, the GMB. At the time of fieldwork, there were 5 representatives, one full time convenor, 3 shop stewards and a nightshift spokesperson, representing the main GMB trades in the yard, the platers and the welders. The way that other trades were represented is discussed in depth in chapter 5, which demonstrates the sophisticated shop steward organisation that prevailed in this company. The interviews conducted in this yard indicated a union membership figure of approximately 99%. The workforce questionnaire puts the figure at 97%, with only 3 non-union members, two having 'been in a union in the past' and the other 'never a member of a union'. Of these, one specified that he 'didn't feel the union was doing anything for me', one said that, 'my workmates left so I left too' and the third claimed that 'no-one had approached him to join'. Shipbuilders.Co workers' reasons for joining a union are illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6   Reasons for joining a trade union at Shipbuilders.Co

Rank order	Reasons for joining a trade union	%
1	Support if I had a problem at work	66
2	Improved pay and conditions	46
3	Because I believe in trade unions	44.3
4	Industrial injury benefits	30.4
5	Free legal advice	29.5
6	Most people at work are members	28.7
7	Other	25.2
8	Professional services	9.5
9	Financial services	8.6
10	Training and education	7.8

(n=115)

As with the other organisations, the three most highly rated factors are again those that confirm collective reasons for joining, according to Waddington & Whitson. Again, legal advice and industrial injury benefits are considered fairly important to this workforce, possibly due to the hazardous nature of work in this industry. Interestingly, in contrast to Ship Repair Ltd and Refit PLC, only 60% of these respondents considered themselves to be 'skilled', with 36% describing their job grade as 'semi skilled', one person claiming to be 'unskilled' and 3 of the respondents indicated that they were apprentices. With reference to apprenticeships, Shipbuilders.Co were the only company on the Tyne with a reasonable number of apprentices at a figure of 100. This is a concern, for there is a skills shortage in the industry and all of these companies rely heavily on this pool of skilled workers in an industry with a constantly fluctuating market. This uncertain market can sometimes

prove to be critical to some companies as discussed in the following sections.

4.2 Research Methodology

4.2.1 Research Strategy

This thesis focuses on the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry (TMCI) and explores the dynamics of the employment relationship within this industry. Prior to choosing a research strategy and method, it was recognised that such an analysis would need to engage with my ontological view of social reality and epistemological view of how that reality can be known. As the ontological position of this research project suggests that individuals' knowledge, experiences, views and actions are meaningful properties of the social reality I intend to explore, and the epistemological position suggests that a legitimate way in which to conduct this is to interact with individuals in the industry and gain access to their real life perspectives, the preferred research strategy chosen was the exploratory case study (Yin, 1994).

Exploratory case studies can provide explanations and aid the understanding of complex social processes. Although it could be argued that workplace ethnography is also a more suitable strategy to use in terms of the ontological and epistemological perspectives mentioned above, a major problem using pure workplace ethnography would be in terms of gaining access. As a female without a skilled trade, it was perceived at the outset to be impossible to adopt the role of a worker and

become fully immersed in the culture due to the fact that it is a predominantly male, time served skilled craftsman orientated industry. Nevertheless, it is recognised that ethnography can be somewhat more expansive in its definition and that participant observation would be an appropriate form of evidence to use within the case study approach.

A further reason why the case study was chosen for this study is due to the recently raised concerns regarding industrial relations research as discussed in chapter 3. Evidence suggested that, despite the wealth of information provided by survey data sets such as WERS (Cully *et al.* 1999), there has been a comparative decline of detailed workplace based research. Many commentators have advocated a return to rigorous investigation of social processes in the workplace (Danford *et al.* 2003; Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997; Thompson & Ackroyd 1995). It has been suggested that the value of such workplace based research lies in the 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of the observations and explanations of social processes, or perhaps more importantly, the attitudes, behaviours and characters of the actors in the employment relationship (Kelly 1998:7; Scott 1994:29). This thesis attempts to investigate social relations such as these through observing the contexts in which they occur, whilst endeavouring to generate an understanding of the perspectives of the people being studied. Greene (2001) argues that one way in which this can be accomplished is through 'voicing' the accounts of those actors and building up rich description with this information. Using this process should also help in developing an understanding of the social processes

as they are revealed through the data collected, hence the case study being chosen as the most appropriate research strategy.

The case study's unique strength is in its ability to deal with a whole range of methods of data collection. The employment relationship involves a rich set of researchable issues centred upon how the social actors adjust to each other's needs and wants. Using the case study strategy allows the researcher to conduct detailed investigations of social processes in their real life complex settings. Furthermore, using this approach should allow for the development of categories and theories to emerge from the data, or what is referred to as 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss 1967). These categories and theories can then be systematically compared in terms of their similarities and their differences, or a 'constant comparative method' (Lindesmith 1968). Categories to be compared will include interactions, social meanings, contexts, social actions and cultural groups and explanations will be grounded in the everyday perspectives of everyday people and their working lives. Theories derived from this fieldwork process will be refined and tested during, and at the end of, fieldwork. Hence the intention is not to test a theory through a set of rigid research questions, but rather to delineate theoretical ideas that are meaningful to the subjects of research, which is a further reason why the case study is the most suitable research strategy. Nevertheless, despite these values of using the case study approach, it is common to encounter the view that case studies are weak

in terms of external validity, as many critics argue that using merely a single case offers a poor base for generalisation.

In the first instance it should be acknowledged that, despite the fact that three separate companies are involved in this study, they have been selected as a single industry on account of their similarity in the operating environment and physical process of production. The intention of the research is to design a 'single embedded case study' (Yin, 1994), as attention will need to be given to different subunits of analysis. These would include for example, the different companies, the individual trade unions, the individuals who work for the companies and the unions including those on the shop floor. Nonetheless, one further point to note in terms of external validity is that, rather than striving to generalise to populations, this study is relying upon 'analytical generalisation' (Ibid:36) whereby the aim is to generalise the data set of collected results to broader theories.

Scott (1994:30) suggests that case studies are about helping one to understand how situations come to be the way they are, rather than indicating how common a particular phenomenon is. Furthermore, Stake (2000) argues that case studies need not make any claims about the generalisability of their findings and that what is crucial is how others make use of them and that they feed into the process of what he terms 'naturalistic generalisation' (Ibid:22). He suggests that if research is to be of any value to people, then it needs to be portrayed in the same way that

people experience the world and argues that a great strength of the case study is in its 'full and thorough knowledge of the particular'. Using 'naturalistic generalisation', Lincoln & Guba (2000) take the argument further in suggesting that 'The only generalisation is: there is no generalisation'. However, although some of these arguments are reasonable, for the purpose of this particular study, it is acknowledged that as a social science researcher, I am required to search for explanations that tell of order in my discipline. Therefore, the criticism that the case study may be perceived as weak in terms of the ability to generalise to wider populations is recognised. However, this study is relying upon analytical generalisation and uses a single embedded case study design in order to overcome this proposed limitation. All of this ought to be taken into account on examination of the findings.

This study's purpose is to develop patterns of theoretical importance from data that is grounded in the reality of organisational life. However, such an inductive qualitative research strategy is also often criticised for subjectivity bias and being weak in terms of construct validity and reliability. A further concern is related to the potential of a lack of rigour in case study research. Such limitations relating to the chosen research strategy and method, and the way in which this study coped with them, are discussed in the following section.

4.2.2 Research Method

In order to address the potential problem of construct validity, a primary aim was to ensure that a sufficiently operational set of measures to collect data was developed. Using multiple sources of evidence provides multiple measures of the same phenomenon, allowing the researcher to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues. However, the most important advantage of such data triangulation is the development of converging lines of inquiry, therefore any finding in a case study is likely to be more accurate if it is based on several different sources of information. Using a case study strategy allows for evidence to be collected from documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation and participant observation. For this project, the use of the semi-structured in-depth interview was considered most appropriate, as it would allow the respondents to expand upon their ideas with greater freedom. A further way in which the project aims to address the potential methodological problem of determining construct validity, is through maintaining a chain of evidence between the original aims, the data collected and the conclusions drawn. This should also help in increasing the reliability of the study, although this will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

In relation to the problem of the potential of a lack of rigour in case study research, it was considered that a good research design would support the findings from this study and this is provided in Table 4.7. Whilst

designing this case study, it became clear that a wide range of information would need to be collected and this would require the use of more than one research method. Using methodological triangulation has numerous advantages. Firstly, it provides the advantage of checking the validity of findings. Secondly, it allows access to different levels of reality, consequently the ultimate findings may be richer. Table 4.7 illustrates how both data and methodological triangulation were to be achieved in the case study. It should also be acknowledged that this is not a strict set of guidelines and was intended to be revisited during fieldwork, and refined relating to categories that emerged from the data.

Table 4.7 – Case Study Research Design

Evidence to collect	Social Actor	Reasons for this collection of data
Semi structured interviews	1. Senior management	May provide a broader view of company policies, accounts of how the employment relationship is managed. Allows for requesting permission to interview shop stewards and any other potential respondents. Collection of documentation – company information May provide for permission of tour of shop floor.
	2. FTOs, convenors Shop stewards of unions	In order to discover how these actors create and legitimise their daily working world May also allow for the introduction to further interviews Collection of documentation on union, company etc.
Continuous non participant observation	Generally when onsite conducting interviews	Observing intermittently with little immersion in the setting may help with reflexivity and understanding of culture
Management meetings with Union	Management and FTO Management and Shop stewards	Should provide an illustration of the parties' relationship
Minutes	Trade union	To discover whether any meetings with management from companies under consideration give any information useful to research
Coding cards	Management, FTOs, Convenors, shop stewards	In conjunction with interviews to help with numerical data such as union membership, industrial action figures, respondent characteristics.
Self completion questionnaire	Shop floor workers	As a means of canvassing a large number of workers in confidence.

4.2.3 Access and Sampling

The initial step was to identify key informants, and two Full Time Officers (FTOs) interviewed in earlier research projects were contacted in mid 2000 in order to begin pilot interviewing. There were several reasons why pilot interviews were considered essential. Firstly, as the goal of reliability is to minimise errors and involves the accuracy of research methods and techniques, these pilot interviews were used to maximise reliability through extracting irrelevant variables and refining interview questions. Secondly, these interviews would be able to provide background information on the industry and the companies to be included in the study. Some crucial information was indeed provided, as it was explained how the TMCI could not be viewed as a static observable piece of evidence, for the firms operated in an uncertain fluctuating market. This issue was discussed above in the case study outline, but it was also of relevance when designing the project, since two further companies were initially intended to be included in this study. One of these, Oilers.com, did not achieve an order throughout the entire period of fieldwork and, although interviews were conducted with management in anticipation of an order, this company was eventually eliminated from the study, as with no orders there were no shop floor employees. The other business also intended to be involved in the study unfortunately went into receivership at the beginning of fieldwork and was later acquired by Ship Repair Ltd. Nonetheless, the final advantage of the pilot interviews was the way in which they introduced the researcher to key figures for research purposes. Typically, a convenience sample, using 'snowballing'

as a sampling technique was the main method used for this project by way of working through networks of personal introductions.

In the pilot interviews, the FTOs provided a list of names of convenors and senior shop stewards in the companies where they had recognition. Two of the convenors were telephoned directly in order to make an appointment to conduct more pilot testing. It was at this point that I first encountered a potential problem with gatekeepers, for both convenors explained they might require management permission for my presence in the yard, mainly due to health and safety reasons, and recommended that I write a letter explaining my research objectives. Letters were forwarded to management of the three companies requesting a meeting with both themselves and their union representatives. In the meantime, the FTO interview questions were refined and fieldwork continued with union official interviews. The data collected from these interviews is presented in Table 4.8 and the list of questions posed to these respondents, together with a coding sheet, is illustrated in Appendix 5. These interviews produced some fascinating information, together with the collection of other forms of data and the evidence is provided in Tables 4.8 and 4.9 at the end of this section. The information from FTO interviews also helped in the refining of questions to be posed to shop stewards. However, an unanticipated gatekeeper was discovered during this process in the negative attitude of a union officer in the AEEU who initially refused to grant an interview. He eventually agreed to meet on the condition that I send a list of questions I intended to ask prior to the

interview. In fact, this interview was eventually fairly constructive and this officer later introduced me to other key figures in the AEEU who proved to be very useful.

During an early interview with one of the AEEU officers, I mentioned that I was waiting for responses from management in the companies involved in the study. He then telephoned the employee relations manager at Refit PLC whilst I was in his office, explained about the research project and handed the phone to me so that I could make an appointment for an interview with this manager. At our second meeting, this same FTO offered me the opportunity to attend the next meeting he had with the industry convenors. It was from this meeting that I met a convenor Dave, who proved to be a crucial figure to the future of the research project as he introduced me to many other people and data collection opportunities.

In the first instance, at our initial interview at Ship Repair Ltd, Dave introduced me to the human resources director and we made an appointment for an interview. This led to the opportunity of meeting the managing director and operations manager, both of whom I interviewed before requesting permission to attend the site in order to interview all of the shop stewards individually. However, it was the convenor Dave, who managed the organisation of the shop steward interviews at Ship Repair Ltd on my behalf. He explained that these were easy to arrange as he simply told the shop stewards it was acceptable to talk to me as I was brought up in a shipbuilding community across the river in Hebburn and

also that my father is a welder. At first, this appeared to be part of the jovial repartee of the convenors in Ship Repair, although I later came to realise that my social background was in fact one of the major reasons why I gained the opportunity to attend meetings where other researchers had, according to several respondents, not previously been allowed. I became aware of the fact that as a 'researcher from a University' I gained access to managers and as a 'welder's daughter from Hebburn' I gained very easy access to numerous sources of evidence from the shop stewards and shop floor workers at both Ship Repair Ltd and Shipbuilders.Co. In particular, at the latter company I was allowed access to a union members and employee only 'grouse meeting', a type of meeting which is explained in depth in later chapters. The Ship Repair convenors either telephoned me at work or at home, particularly if there was the potential of an opportune mass meeting to observe. These two convenors also arranged access and transport to attend and observe a CSEU Combine Committee Meeting in Carlisle, comprising of shop stewards from Glasgow, Newcastle, Belfast, Southampton and Teesside. In terms of interviews, I was fortunate to have gained access to all of the shop stewards in both of the yards for interviews. I also achieved access to the shop stewards at Refit Ltd although this was via management rather than FTOs or convenors.

One of the interviews that the AEEU FTO helped to arrange was with the employee relations manager at Refit. As the research progressed, it became clear that she was keen to maintain control over both the

interviews and my attendance on site. In Ship Repair Ltd and Shipbuilders.Co I was able to visit whenever I required, as long as I notified the convenors of my arrival for health and safety reasons. At Refit, the employee relations manager had me wait an hour before her interview and asked me to leave the room when she received a phone call from one of the GMB FTOs during our meeting. She also informed me that there were no shop stewards on site to interview due to recent redundancies and no workforce. This was despite the fact that I'd been given the names of Refit shop stewards by the FTOs prior to this visit. I continued to telephone fortnightly, then monthly, to discover whether a 'new' workforce had been employed until eventually, a year later, she suggested she would contact the very recently 'previous' shop steward. She later telephoned to inform me that she had arranged an interview with one of the recently elected shop stewards, and this interview was held in an office in the main building rather than the shop stewards' office. This was the case with the three shop stewards I eventually got to interview in this company. Although this venue may have had an effect upon the behaviour of the shop stewards, it did not appear to hinder them in their interviews where all were extremely forthright in their opinions and information. It transpired from these interviews that there had been a period of poor industrial relations at Refit prior to the redundancies, to the extent that some of the employees had taken legal proceedings against the company (see chapter 6). This may have been one of the reasons why the employee relations manager was reluctant to grant access. At all visits to Refit, this manager attempted to make some input to the

137

research and insisted on handing out and collecting the workforce questionnaires. This could be a reason for the lower response rate from Refit that amounted to 28% compared to 59% from Shipbuilders and 65% from Ship Repair. The figures and data collected from all the above is provided in the following tables 4.8 and 4.9.

Table 4.8 – Data collected from the trade unions March 2001 – July 2002

Trade Unions	GMB	AEEU	MSF	UCATT
Interviews with union officials	3	1	0	0
Interviews with FTOs	5	2	1	1
Union information	y	y	n	n
Minutes of meetings	y	n	n	n
Historical records of industry	y	y	n	n
Cluster Group meeting minutes	y	n	n	n
Tyneside Collective Labour Agreement	y	y	n	n

Table 4.9 – Data collected from the companies March 2001 – July 2002

Companies	Ship Repair Ltd	Shipbuilders.Co	Refit PLC
Interviews with management	3	2	2
Interviews with shop stewards	12	5	3
Coding cards from shop stewards	12	5	3
Yard agreements	3	1	1
Company information	y	y	y
Mass meeting	1	0	0
Grouse meeting	0	1	0
CSEU meeting	1	0	0
Management/ shop stewards meeting	1	1	0
Shop stewards/ FTO meeting	1	1	0
Working on shop floor	0	1	0
'Sitting in' in shop stewards cabin	20	10	0
Shop stewards' meeting	3	2	1
Workforce questionnaire response	65%	59%	28%

4.2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

A wide range of data was collected from the different sub units of analysis and different methods were used in the collection of data. The most valuable evidence was uncovered from the in depth interviews which were all tape recorded and transcribed verbatim, the transcriptions being content-analysed without the use of technological tools. The data was read literally, interpretively and reflexively (Mason 1996). It was discovered that in the course of repeated and extensive discussions, people recounted their versions of what was happening, slowly these interviews made it possible to establish a chronology of significant issues and understand more about the dynamics of the employment relationship. Coding cards were used throughout the interviews to help collect numerical data such as personal details and attitude scales. The majority of interviews lasted 60-90 minutes, although one, with the GMB Regional Secretary, lasted for four hours. The reason for this was that he had only recently been involved in a skiing accident and was at home with a leg in plaster, so it may be that he felt isolated at home and I was simply someone with whom to converse. However, this accident did not prevent him from working and, during the interview, his fax machine, telephone and mobile were constant sources of distraction. Nonetheless, this was a very intriguing interview, as were the majority.

All of the interview question scripts are provided in Appendices 6 - 8 at the end of this thesis. These scripts were intended to serve as a guide or

a prompt sheet rather than a strict set of variables, and respondents were allowed to talk freely for the majority of the interview. A major reason for this was to attempt to uncover the personal perceptions, attitudes and experiences of the individuals involved in the industry to build up a picture of the dynamics of the employment relationship through their own observations and recollections. As in Greene's (2001:7) recent study, this research emphasises the 'voicing' of the accounts of the individuals who were interviewed, giving prominence to the words, interpretations and experiences of the respondents. This evidence is supported by observations of details of the contexts of the individuals' surroundings and their social interactions. This was enabled through the use of a reflexive file and intellectual diary that were maintained throughout the entire research process. Reflection was not only upon the social roles, interactions and processes which resulted in the kinds of observations and conclusions that occurred, but also upon my personal reflections during this process (Glaze 2002). These research tools also ensured rigour in the research process to increase reliability and to establish a chain of evidence to ensure construct validity. Another way in which construct validity was guaranteed was through the use of methodological triangulation, one of which was in the form of a questionnaire.

4.2.5 Questionnaire Design

A self completion questionnaire was used to collect responses from the workforce for various reasons. Firstly, to gain a larger sample of views,

for it was realised that the in depth interview would be an ineffective tool, mainly due to gaining access to the workers, as they could not be taken off production and their spare time was a 15 minute tea break in the morning and a half an hour lunch break. A second reason was to collect data to compare with the interviews conducted, in order to analyse the employment relationship from the perspective of all of the social actors involved. However, the actual 'voice' of the worker as an actor in the relationship could not be articulated and arguably, survey data is an ineffective tool for exploring social processes at the workplace. In order to overcome this potential limitation, the data from the questionnaires was supplemented through the use of multiple methods such as observation of workforce meetings with shop stewards, direct participation by 'training' as a welder on the shop floor and generally 'hanging around' the shop stewards' offices and meeting workers on an impromptu basis as they visited the office for various reasons. Together with this, the questionnaire design was a rigorous exercise using indicators from significant issues that had arisen in the interviews, and a mixture of variables used from literature relating to social processes at the workplace. A copy of the questionnaire is given in Appendix 9 and the design is summarised below.

Outline of Questionnaire

Section One – 'Attribute' questions were used to define workers' characteristics. This section was purposefully simple to encourage the respondents to continue with questionnaire. In question 5 the 'attitude' to work questions were indicators taken from the WERS 98 Employee Questionnaire (www.niesr.ac.uk/niesr/wers98/SEQ/Employee.pdf.) and Batstone *et al.* (1977:113,123). Question 6 uses 'belief' questions to examine loyalty to employer and workmates. Again these were WERS 98 indicators.

Section Two - Questions 7&8 are 'behavioural' questions to discover whether the respondent is a union member and why they joined a union. The indicators are a mixture of WERS 98 and Waddington & Whitson (1997) indicators. The idea for question 9 resulted from issues raised by Kelly (1998:100) and Fosh (1993) relating to collectivism through organisation. Question 10 consists of mixed indicators from WERS 98 & Batstone *et. al* (1977:121) on personal perceptions of trade unions at the workplace together with members' expectations of unions. This could also translate into the respondents' 'knowledge' of the union that would also allow the research to measure social psychology cognitive questions.

Section Three – Consists of 'behavioural' and 'attitudinal' questions relating to shop stewards, the indicators to be used to compare with the same questions posed to shop stewards. Question 15 uses indicators from Batstone *et al.* (1977:112, 188) on members' expectations of shop stewards. Again this has the potential of linking into social psychology cognitive questions on what the workforce think, or their knowledge of what the shop stewards *should* do.

Section Four - These questions were used in an attempt to measure 'social identity' from an affective approach in social psychology. If the cognitive questions measure highly in collective interest definition, and the affective questions measure highly then social identity is high. If the reverse is illustrated, then social identity is low. The final question is included to measure responses to co-operation between management and trade unions.

The questionnaires were pilot tested prior to distribution in order to refine questions and increase reliability. Then they were handed to the shop stewards at Shipbuilders.Co and Ship Repair Ltd as they suggested that they might achieve a higher return if they distributed the questionnaires themselves.

The shop stewards at Shipbuilders.Co introduced me to the workforce at a grouse meeting prior to handing out the questionnaire in order to explain the research and advise the workforce of the 'importance' of the forthcoming questionnaires. After that, the shop stewards conducted most of the work with the questionnaires, handing them out in the canteen at breaks over a period of time and collecting the completed forms themselves. 200 questionnaires were given to the shop stewards on 22nd March 2002 and 118 were collected by April 15th giving a 59% return.

The return from Ship Repair Ltd was also very positive, although was over a longer period than Shipbuilders.Co. The reason for this was that a health and safety survey was being conducted with the workforce by management, and the convenor advised that the questionnaires for my research project might be mistaken as being management questionnaires, an issue that could have affected the respondents' replies. Therefore, we waited until this survey had been completed prior to distributing the questionnaires. The initial plan put forward by the convenor was to place a questionnaire with all of the workers' time cards

so that everyone received a copy. However, he noted that this had not been effective with the management survey. Consequently, he allocated sets of questionnaires to the shop stewards and asked that they hand them out at section meetings to the workers in their division. As these section meetings were held on different occasions, the questionnaires were returned in a piecemeal way and I collected them on numerous separate visits to the yard. The shop stewards had provided envelopes themselves so that the workforce could be satisfied that the questionnaires would not be scrutinised before being returned. The convenor was handed 150 questionnaires on the 15th April 2002 and 98 were finally completed by 4th July 2002 giving a very positive 65% return. The results from Refit PLC were not as encouraging.

As mentioned earlier, I encountered problems at Refit from the employee relations manager who acted as gatekeeper. When the shop stewards were being interviewed, I asked about the best way of disseminating the questionnaires to the shop floor. One suggested that I request that an extra 5 minutes be added to the morning tea break in the following week, so that we could take the questionnaires to the canteen and the shop stewards would help me with the distribution. However, when I addressed this with the manager, she said it would be impossible, because the client would know that the 'boys' were not working on their contract for those 5 minutes and would ask why. She suggested that I leave the questionnaires in her hands and she would request one of the field managers to hand them out at 'tool box talks', regular meetings over

health and safety. As these meetings are conducted with all of the workers, it was suggested that there was a good chance of a high response rate. However, given the low trust environment in this organisation, I had reservations about this and anticipated that this might result in a low return, or misleading responses if workers assumed that the questionnaires were for management use because they were being handed out by management. 100 questionnaires were handed to the employee relations manager on 4th July 2002 and she telephoned to advise me that they had been completed on 24th July. The response rate was very disappointing and the questionnaires were returned in a disorderly state. They came in two well-used folders, sealed very tightly and untidily in industrial tape with the words 'sorry for the poor response' scrawled hastily on the front in black marker pen. When I opened the folders the questionnaires were all mixed up in terms of completed questionnaires and uncompleted. Altogether, only 80 questionnaires were in the folder with 20 missing and of these, only 29 were completed and one spoilt leaving a 28% return. Despite this, the questionnaire responses from Refit PLC did prove useful and I was certainly satisfied with the responses received from Shipbuilders.Co and Ship Repair Ltd, as they provided some interesting data for the study. All of the questionnaires were analysed using Excel and information from the findings is provided in the empirical chapters 5,6 and 7.

Overview and summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methodology utilised in this study. An exploratory case study approach (Yin 1994) was adopted, as it was argued that this strategy was the most appropriate way in which to gain an insight and provide explanations of the complex social processes involved in the employment relationship. The research was flexible enough to allow a natural development of categories and theories through collecting data from the social actors' points of view, in so far as theoretical constructs could be based upon the everyday constructs of actors. These categories were then refined and tested during the entire course of fieldwork, allowing the eventual explanations to be grounded in the everyday perspectives of everyday people and their working lives. The case study was considered the most appropriate strategy for this type of research, mainly due to its ability to incorporate a whole range of methods of data collection with which to examine the complexities of the employment relationship.

The case study has been criticised due to a potential weakness in external validity, although this study, rather than striving to generalise to populations, relies upon 'analytical generalisation' (Yin 1994:36) whereby the aim is to examine the unique and interrelated elements of specific cases and generalise the emerging data to broader theories. In relation to criticisms concerning weaknesses in construct validity in case studies, it was demonstrated how this study addresses this potential limitation

through the use of data triangulation. A crucial advantage of using such data triangulation is in the development of converging lines of inquiry, therefore, any finding in a case study is likely to be more accurate if it is based on several different sources of information. Another way in which construct validity was addressed was through the use of methodological triangulation. The use of more than one method in a research project has numerous advantages. Firstly, it helps to validate findings so that if two methods lead to the same conclusion, the findings may be more robust and the ultimate findings will be richer. Again, this is a further advantage of the case study as it is one of the main domains in which quantitative and qualitative research can be combined (Bryman 1989:175). Finally, all of these issues were supported through the use of the maintenance of a chain of evidence during the research process, which should also increase the reliability of the study.

Any potential issues regarding weaknesses in reliability were also addressed, in that the categories that emerged from the data were systematically compared in terms of their similarities and their differences using the 'constant comparative method' (Lindesmith 1968). The maximising of reliability was also dealt with through the use of pilot testing, together with the use of a reflexive file and intellectual diary maintained throughout the entire research process. This was also useful in that it helped to record the challenges that needed to be addressed by the researcher.

The first of the challenges encountered was in the initial stages of the research during which two companies were eliminated from the study. This was disappointing and a potential threat to the research as the constant uncertainty due to economic fluctuations in the market meant that a company could be 'mothballed'[4] at any time during the research. Fortunately, indeed for the organisations and their workforces more so than the research project, the achievement of orders for the case study companies was successful throughout the fieldwork. A second challenge emerged in difficulties during the access stage with the employee relations manager at Refit PLC. As a gatekeeper, she exercised a formidable influence on the research process in this company, in particular in the distribution and collection of workforce questionnaires. In retrospect, if this study were to be repeated, perhaps it would have been beneficial to persevere until the numbers of the workforce at Refit PLC increased, which they did eventually, in order to receive a greater return on the questionnaires. In addition to this, as outlined in depth in the following chapters, as workforce numbers increase, so do the number of shop stewards. In this way, perhaps continuing until numbers increased may have also been beneficial to the research as it may have been possible to deal directly with the shop stewards in Refit PLC as in the other companies. This is not to suggest that an increase in numbers would have changed the employee relations manager's attitude, although she might not have had so much of an influence due to time constraints.

---

[4] 'Mothballed' is the term used for the stage at which a company is in between orders, there are no blue collar employees and the yard is empty.

Nonetheless, due to the constant fluctuating nature of the business, these are inherent risks when conducting research into this particular sector.

A further way in which this research project could have been improved is through gaining a more qualitative response from the workforce. After all, it was one of the major aims of this research to use the 'voices' (Greene 2001) of the accounts of individuals in the employment relationship, giving prominence to the words, interpretations and experiences of the respondents. However, due to certain constraints, a quantitative method, in the form of a self completion questionnaire, was used for the workforce response. Section 4.2.5 described how the questionnaire was designed rigorously in order to retrieve effective data for the purpose of this study. Indeed, arguably, the responses achieved from the workforce questionnaires were certainly useful in providing information on attitudes and perspectives that would have been left unheard without the application of a questionnaire. This data was also supplemented through the use of more qualitative methods in the form of observing the workforce at mass meetings and grouse meetings, observation on the shop floor when 'training' as a welder and generally 'hanging around' the shop stewards offices. On reflection, it is suggested that 'focus groups' may have been a potential method of collecting data from the workforce and organised after the grouse meetings in order that small groups of workers could be interviewed at the same time. Grouse meetings are not held at Ship Repair Ltd, but perhaps permission could have been granted to attend section meetings with shop stewards in order to gain more

qualitative data on the workers' views of the employment relationship. However, permission from management might have proved difficult due to the time taken off production, for the interviews would require additional time. There may have also been potential problems in obtaining focus groups after grouse meetings in Refit PLC and Shipbuilders.Co. The reason for this is because the grouse meeting is held on Friday lunchtime immediately prior to the workforce leaving for home, therefore the interviews would be in unpaid time and volunteers may have proved difficult to find.

These are all issues that would require consideration if this project were to be replicated. However, it ought to also be noted that despite these potential identified shortcomings in the research project, some extremely interesting categories emerged from the data to provide both a coherent explanatory framework and opportunity to compare the data with broader theories. It is suggested that all of these issues be taken into account when considering the empirical data as outlined in the following chapters.

Chapter Five

Union Renewal or Resilience? The Persistence of Shop Steward
Organisation in the Industry

Introduction

In chapter 3, the debates surrounding the strategies to overcome trade
union decline were discussed. Alternative views ranged from a focus on
national trade union 'top down' approaches to rebuild membership, whilst
others argue that the locus for trade union survival will depend on 'bottom
up' regeneration from the workplace level. The central argument from
this latter perspective is that, while national developments may be
important, the impetus of trade union survival depends crucially on
organisation and activity at the workplace. Furthermore, as empirical
studies have demonstrated that strong workplace organisation has
persisted in some areas without the need to rebuild workplace activity,
the concern has been raised that, by focusing solely on top down
strategies, trade unions could be neglecting their existing traditional
sources of power. However, it was discussed how the nature and extent
of such resilience remains only partially examined, and the renewal
arguments have been made principally, although not exclusively, in
relation to the public sector. Hence it is the intention of this chapter to
provide some new empirical data, from a traditional industry in the private
sector, to contribute to this debate.

The chapter draws upon three themes identified as being the central
features of workplace unionism in the literature; the effectiveness of shop

steward organisation, levels of activity in membership participation and the significance of workplace union democracy. Each of these features is examined within each separate case study company and the findings are very positive, indicating support for a thesis of resilience. However, it is also suggested that the empirical data pushes the resilience arguments further than most, in that it illustrates, not simply resilience in a reactive form, but a proactive and on-going form of unionism. Together with this, it introduces a further development to the debate in that, in the last two case studies it is illustrated how union organisation has to be rebuilt with each new contract. There is therefore, a constant, ongoing process of rebuilding an undoubtedly well-organised and vigorous unionism. Some consideration of the conditions of this process of rebuilding unionism is presented in the conclusion.

5.1 Ship Repair Ltd

At Ship Repair Ltd, four unions, forming the CSEU, were recognised at the time of fieldwork, and included the GMB, AEEU, MSF and UCATT. Occupational segregation remains to distinguish the unions, however, despite separate membership, they work together through a joint shop stewards committee (JSSC). The JSSC consists of 4 convenors, two from each of the largest unions in the yard, the GMB and AEEU, and eight shop stewards representing each trade and union in the yard. Only one convenor has full time status and works from the trade unions' office supplied by management with the use of items such as telephone, photocopier and PC. The 4 convenors also form the 'yard committee'

153

which negotiates directly with management on most industrial relations issues including collective bargaining at plant level. Despite this form of organisation illustrating characteristics of centralised, hierarchical organisation and bureaucratisation, which has led to pessimistic accounts of workplace union renewal (see Fairbrother,1989,1996) due to causing less participative forms of unionism through minimising/excluding steward and member involvement, the findings which follow serve to contest this.

The yard committee, following meetings with management on any issue, takes full report-backs of discussions/negotiations with management to the JSSC where any decisions to be taken are arrived at collectively. The JSSC then identify any potential matters of concern to their members and, if necessary, take such issues to section meetings or mass meetings. In this way, the shop stewards' 'leadership' involve members in activities and decision-making rather than 'act' on behalf of the workforce. This evidence illustrates the significance of union democracy and the collective interest and participation of members essential to workplace unionism. Indeed, observation of a mass meeting did provide evidence of the active participation of the rank-and-file membership of this workplace.

During fieldwork, a series of mass meetings were being held in relation to annual pay bargaining, together with alterations to the yard agreement, between the CSEU and Ship Repair Ltd. It transpired that these issues

were causing many industrial relations problems in the yard as the convenor explained,

> We still haven't settled up for the wage claim for this year yet and we're into the seventh month. The company's put about 30 proposals to us and every one has been rejected, well the negotiating team have the power to reject it. If we think there's a possibility that everyone out there would accept it, we take it to a mass meeting which we did the last time and they hoyed[5] it out. It doesn't matter at the end of the day what we say, we either go to a mass meeting with the recommendation to accept or reject, they've {the workforce} got the final say because it's their terms and conditions as well as ours.

In this way, the shop stewards at Ship Repair Ltd do not view the membership as passive agents and the relationship can be viewed as a two-way interaction between the members and stewards, as was also highlighted in previous research by Darlington (1994, 1999). Certainly, observation of a meeting provided evidence of the two-way process with discussions and arguments between the stewards and members. When questioned as to whether this was an unusual occurrence due to the current circumstances, the convenor noted that the meeting that had been observed was typical of a mass meeting,

> ...where there's 500 blokes swearing and shouting at us...

The convenors were asked if the workforce needed to be encouraged to attend mass meetings and I was informed that they never needed persuasion to attend such meetings which usually achieved 100% turnout. However, the problems with the current negotiations were

---

[5] 'Hoy' is a Geordie colloquialism for 'throw'.

causing industrial unrest and as the industrial relations manager informed me,

> It's been going on for about 20 months now and we're all sick of it, negotiating, or trying to negotiate, a new pay deal with new working conditions etc. I mean we recently thought that we'd actually cracked it and got the agreement through and we had the national officials in from London as well as the local full time officials and they, the yard committee and the shop stewards, all of them recommended that the agreement they had reached with the company could be accepted. Then at a mass meeting it was turned down.

The problem escalated and industrial action was threatened by the workforce in the form of a strike and overtime ban. However, this action did not take place as the shop stewards re-negotiated the agreement and the issue was resolved. What was striking about this agreement was that it was re-written and negotiated primarily with the JSSC and the management at plant level. The full time officials (FTOs) were approached to attend negotiations at Ship Repair Ltd only when industrial unrest became volatile. Hence, it was clear that the shop stewards in this company were able to work independently of the local and national officials which was a feature also raised by Gall (1998:153) in an example of the Clyde Workers Committee. Another of his articles (1995:60) also addresses the issue of workplace union independence where he examines Darlington's (1993) postulation of three contradictory tendencies of shopfloor unionism; those of resistance/accommodation, democracy/bureaucracy and independence/dependence. In this case study of Ship Repair Ltd there is strong evidence of resistance,

156

democracy and independence that all assumes the relative health of workplace unionism, and hence resilience, in that shop steward organisation has remained stable.

A further form of resilience from this case study can be identified in the number of shop stewards in the yard representing each trade. Although in previous years the number of stewards was much higher, the decrease has occurred due to a reduction in the workforce numbers and also trades which now cease to exist. The management are evidently frustrated at the number of shop stewards in the yard as illustrated by the industrial relations manager,

> We've got 14 actual shop stewards. Too many. The problem is that the current agreement says that there will be one shop steward for each recognised union and their deputies, but the GMB is broken up into welders, shipwrights, platers, burners, caulkers, drillers, blacksmiths, boilersmiths, riggers, they all insist on having one each. It's historical, they feel that a welder can't represent a plater for example, which in the old days may have been the case because there was strict demarcation between them all. But some trades are now becoming outdated and we don't recruit any more of them.

This was an issue evident on the shop floor with some trades having only 3 or 4 workers employed. However, these workers persisted in maintaining the protection of their trade and were insistent in having shop steward representation as the blacksmiths' steward explained,

> I'm a blacksmith by trade, there's only 3 of us left now, one is a team leader and there's only me and my mate and that's it so basically I'm

doing it just to keep us in a job. Cos obviously a lot of the work has died out but the little bit that's left we've got to try and keep cos y'knaa your worthy brother's love is just 'stab him in the back and pinch a little bit here, there and everywhere'.

Again, this evidence implies a form of resilience in that, despite management's frustration at the number of shop stewards and the 'dying' trades, each trade has remained to be represented despite the small numbers. Together with this, resilience is evident in the determination to protect the work of the trades. The underpinning of resilience in this yard appears to be that the organisation has not had to change and remains stable. However, there is also a clear indication of the possible 'historical' problems with sectionalism and demarcation in the above quote. Indeed, one steward commented that there could be friction on occasion amongst the shop stewards due to demarcation issues. Although it has been argued that such sectionalism may weaken the resistance of workplace organisation as cautioned by Fairbrother (1989,1996), it was clear in this study that sectionalism did not appear to divide the workforce or the shop steward organisation as illustrated below.

All of the shop stewards reported that they had frequent formal sectional meetings with their trades, and were also available to members on an informal daily basis at tea and dinner breaks. Issues brought up at such meetings by the membership were either taken directly to the convenor, or discussed collectively at the JSSC monthly meeting. Shop stewards in the yard meet together 'at least once a month' on 'informative' issues and emergency meetings are usually held during annual pay bargaining. The

general view of all shop stewards interviewed was that their relationship with the members was very good as they were 'also their workmates'. The only evidence of sectionalism appeared to be in the preservation of the 'dying' trades and the skills required to conduct a job to protect employment. There were no indications to suggest a sectionalism that was hostile or a threat to workplace organisation. However, some hostility was implied in that the relationship with management was perceived as 'very poor' as noted by one convenor, Dave,

> I cannot trust any of them {management} and what they say. At the end of the day they're all here to make money and make as much as possible and I'm here to protect them down there {shop floor workers}.

The view from management was much of the same on their relationship with shop stewards,

> I would say honestly not very good. The shop stewards think the management are incompetent...it's not one-sided, it is both sides, there is a culture of 'us and them' and it's not just from the union side, certain managers have it too and don't see why we should have unions, they consider them to be taking away their responsibility and power and authority, they see them as being destructive, negative in approach...to be honest, I don't think they use them properly, they don't use the unions to the full extent. I think there's room for improvement on both sides.

Nonetheless, despite these suggestions of a poor working relationship, I was informed by both sides that the convenors and management communicated on an almost daily basis, either by email on the company intranet system, or in the industrial relations manager's office. Most of these meetings concerned informal day-to-day issues rather than formal

negotiation processes. Some of the stewards less experienced in negotiating techniques found formal meetings with the management frustrating. These new stewards are encouraged by the yard committee to 'sit in' on meetings with management in order to gain experience in negotiating techniques from the more experienced stewards. Despite finding meetings with management fairly frustrating initially, the less experienced stewards explained that they 'learned' from the 'older' stewards. This, again, could arguably demonstrate resilience in that this group of shop stewards are attempting to stabilise the shop steward organisation in the yard. However, this is not to make a claim that shop steward organisation in this yard has remained absolutely consistent over the years, for as Darlington also notes, 'the nature of shop steward organisation is not a fixed static phenomenon' (1994:4). Nevertheless, the research conducted in this yard provided evidence of strong shop steward organisation and healthy workplace union democracy. Rather than illustrating the 'building' of a workplace union 'renewal', it is argued that 'resilience' is more appropriate to this organisation as there have evidently been no external constraining factors that have challenged the union organisation, allowing it to remain stable. However, such stability is not present throughout the TMCI as is demonstrated in the following case studies.

5.2 Shipbuilders.Co

At Shipbuilders.Co there is a single union agreement with the GMB. The previous owner had recognised unions combined in the CSEU prior to

liquidation in 1993, although the new owner was prepared to recognise only one union. The yard agreement and employment contracts were negotiated between GMB union officials and the new employer prior to the re-opening of the yard. At the time of the fieldwork study, there were 5 representatives, one full time convenor, 3 shop stewards and a nightshift spokesperson, each representing the two main GMB trades in the yard, the platers and the welders. They are supplied with a union office with a telephone but no PC, however, use of other equipment is freely available to the shop stewards in the main administration office. Although it initially appeared that shop steward organisation and relationship with their members was fairly similar to Ship Repair Ltd, it was discovered that there was a different structure in this yard due to certain internal and external constraining factors causing more instability than in the previous case study.

First of all, the workforce in this company are all employed on temporary contracts and redundancies occur frequently when a client contract reaches completion. In these instances, there is no workforce or shop stewards at all in the yard. When a new contract is acquired and workers employed, the 'new', usually the same, workforce are entitled to elect 'new' representatives who I was informed are 'usually the previous post-holders'. In addition to this, a further difference as compared to Ship Repair Ltd was that, when there is a full quota of 'temporary' workers and more employees are required to complete a client contract within the

desired time-scale, sub-contractors are employed, and as the convenor Billy explained,

> When we start to get more and more contractors in, they come in with their own representatives, their shop stewards will address their problems, initially through their own company, and then if that doesn't get addressed, their shop stewards will come in and talk to me and I will take the problem on, so I'm like the go-between between all the shop stewards and all the management.

These subcontractor workers have their own representatives as they are in trades of other unions as opposed to the GMB, the only recognised union in the yard. The initial assumption of this relationship was one of sectionalism although the convenor noted that all of the shop stewards worked together,

> What happens is that we broker a deal and that information gets passed down to them, if they're not extremely happy with it, I get feedback from them all and we look at that, then we try to make sure that everybody's happy.

However, it was noted on several occasions by the shop stewards that this yard was a 'GMB yard' as this was the only recognised union, although it became apparent that this does not mean that the yard employs only GMB trades. In shipbuilding, when a new contract begins, the initial skills required are predominantly those of the GMB trades, half way through a contract it is likely to be 50/50 GMB and AEEU trades, then at the final outfitting stage, predominantly AEEU trades are required. Indeed, the GMB convenor noted that on occasions, other union trades outnumbered those of the recognised union,

It got to the point once when they outnumbered us. If they had got a yard meeting together, if it was allowed to happen, the GMB could find themselves being voted out of a situation or outvoted in a situation and the electricians holding the day.

Again this quote implies that sectionalism may be a problem in shop steward and workplace organisation in this yard. However, it became clear during fieldwork that the shop stewards frequently worked together to try to alleviate and control problems of sectionalism amongst the trades in the workforce, the issues usually centring upon differential pay rates. Despite the bargaining of pay for this company being set at national level, sectional disputes have arisen over pay arrangements, either between different union trades or between trades in the same union. In one instance, welders were being paid a bonus rate for working in smaller spaces and the platers viewed this as an injustice and demanded the same rates of pay. The shop stewards met with management to negotiate the differential rates of pay and the problem was resolved. In another instance, subcontractors working in the yard were not receiving the same rates of pay as the full time workforce and unofficial strike action was conducted by the subcontractors. Shipbuilders.Co workforce began to hold unofficial meetings without the attendance of the shop stewards to consider whether to support those out on strike. Management viewed this as a breach of contract and locked out the workforce. The shop stewards again met with management in an attempt to alleviate the situation then held a mass meeting with the workforce. However, no compromise could be established and the local FTO was called in an attempt to progress the situation. Although this evidence

would imply that the leadership of the shop stewards in this yard, in terms of their relationship with members, was weaker than the previous case study, it ought to be noted, as Darlington (2000:8) points out, that

> ...*rank-and-file members' self-activity {is} absolutely central to workplace unionism.*

The shop stewards in this yard evidently had to deal with a more dynamic workforce and try to control their independent initiatives,

> You get accused of being a lackey and a management mouthpiece, things like that. By certain ones. And if that kind of thing affects you then you're in the wrong job. You have to have skin like a rhino.

However, the leadership and organisation of the shop stewards in this yard was not a cause for concern by the larger external local union and they were left to their own independent decision making, as one FTO commented,

> We have a seasoned shop steward in there, I just let things be. When you've got the right individuals in place then you'll be okay

Indeed, the 'right individuals' are chosen by the workforce in shop steward elections which occur on an annual basis. Again, this evidence illustrates the importance of union democracy in this yard. However, it was noted during fieldwork that obtaining shop stewards for the representation of some trades had been a problem to the convenor.

> The rigging department should have a steward...but I cannot for the life of me get one of them to stand up and be counted. I've tried, I've struggled, I've cajoled, I've embarrassed them, I've threatened them, I've had the delegate come in and talk to them, now the best you can get is to get someone to do their rota for them.

It became clear that a problem in this industry, when attempting to obtain a representative, was the issue of job security due to the temporary contracts and a fear of being blacklisted by employers for being a shop steward. The convenor explained that he had previously been blacklisted by all of the employers on the River Tyne for 10 years, due to being actively involved in the shop steward leadership of a long dispute, and was forced to find work in another region. When Shipbuilders.Co re-opened, it was explained that they were 'desperate' for skilled workers and he was eventually employed 'back on the river'. However, as he illustrated,

> When I first started here, the ex-shop steward here knew me from years ago at Oilers.com and also at what was {AN Other Company}. I was shop steward there as well, a gobby gobshite. He said 'pleased to see you're here, do you fancy this job as shoppie?' Then the engineer {foreman} came over, a lad who I worked with in Southern Ireland in 1976 and he said 'do you fancy a foreman's hat? He'd been told by the other lads, 'this is a potential shop steward' so one of the ways to undermine the shop stewards is to give him a white hat and he joins the enemy territory, you know the 'us and them' type thing. So give a shop steward a white hat and you've got control of him.

This evidence, together with the issue of 'blacklisting', illustrates how management aim to impede effective shop steward organisation through attempting to eliminate those with strong leadership style. As is clear, however, in this instance their attempts to undermine this potentially effective shop steward failed. The above quote also provides more

evidence of a culture of 'us and them' in the industry and when asked about the existence of such a culture in this yard I was informed,

Of course there is. That emanates from the shop floor. They {workers} still see 'them' {management} as the enemy. "'Them bastards up there".

Despite this, the convenor perceived the relationship between the management and shop stewards as 'very good'. In addition to this, when questioned as to the relationship between the shop stewards I was informed that it was also very good as 'we're workmates'. Certainly, the evidence of the shop steward organisation in this yard did appear to be proactive. One factor that confirmed this was that when fieldwork began in the yard, there were only 3 stewards and on the last visit this had risen to 5 due to the persistence of the stewards to expand shop steward organisation. The stewards were also in the process of re-establishing a shop stewards committee and met together on a daily basis to discuss issues of members. They had also negotiated with management to re-establish the yard's historical, traditional 'grouse meeting', whereby once a month they meet with the workforce onsite, during working hours, in order to identify any grievances of the members. In this way, the shop stewards are not isolated from the membership and the meetings are a two-way interaction between the two parties. During fieldwork, I was allowed to attend a grouse meeting and observed this two-way interaction and this is outlined in great detail in chapter 6. It was clear that the workforce were not passive and there was evidence of the membership articulating their grievances and attempting to influence the stewards on issues they perceived were a sense of injustice. The attendance was of

very high numbers which provided evidence that workplace unionism in this yard was healthy in terms of the membership taking collective forms of activity to defend their immediate interests. Indeed, I was informed that the usual attendance to such meetings was 90-99%. After such meetings, the stewards then attend a 'post grouse meeting' with management to articulate the grievances of the shop floor and negotiate on any issues of importance to the membership. Results of such meetings are recorded and cascaded back to the workforce via sectional meetings and leaflet handouts, which include a summary of discussions with management on issues raised at grouse meetings.

Communication with the membership is of high significance to the shop stewards in this yard. Due to the small numbers of shop stewards at the time of the fieldwork, they aim to ensure they are available to members continuously during the working day. One of the ways in which this is conducted is through what the convenor describes as being 'highly visible' to members,

> Part of the job is walking and talking and being highly visible, that's why I wear a blue hat and apart from visitors, that's one of the only blue hats you see on site.

The colour of the hard hat at this yard distinguishes between workers and seniority with the shop floor manual workers wearing red hats and foremen, superintendents and management wearing white hats. Only visitors wear a blue hard hat which raises attention when walking through the yard. Hence, by wearing a blue hard hat, the convenor is highly

detectable on the shop floor. However, this has posed a problem with management as noted by the convenor,

> I wear this hat because I want to be visible so the lads can see me. Even though I've been told on numerous occasions to get the right coloured hat and say 'yes, ok I'll do that straight away' and then I go away and do whatever I want. I'll do my own thing. It's a minor quibble, he's {manager} just being pedantic, he's got a bee in his bonnet about something else you know...and he's having a go at me and whatever, but I still wear my blue hat.

A further contentious issue between shop stewards and management was the use of mobile phones. Lower management complained that the shop floor workers were using mobiles whilst working, which they claimed was interfering with the production process. A meeting between management and shop stewards on this issue resulted in the use of mobile phones only being allowed during breaks. However, the shop stewards maintained that they used their mobile phones for communication with their membership on day-to-day issues due to the small number of stewards and the size of the yard. After some negotiation, management supplied the shop stewards with pagers in order that they were available for any grievances or problems that arose from the shop floor. In this way, the shop stewards were displaying a way in which continuity of activism is maintained in this yard in their resistance to a management attempt to impede communication of one form between shop stewards and their members. This proactive style of unionism was also presented in other ways, particularly in sustaining union organisation as illustrated below.

168

In terms of maintaining workplace unionism, fieldwork at this yard provided evidence to illustrate how the shop stewards ensured they maintained high levels of union membership. The first is the 'show of union cards' held on random occasions in the yard as outlined by the convenor,

> I've got a show of cards on next week, a GMB show of cards. Most of the lads are on check off which means that the money comes out of their wages every week. Now all I then have to do is go up and see the timekeeper and say 'can you give me a print out for check off reasons' and that gives me everybody at that time who's on check off. So those guys don't have to do anything with regards to a show of cards, it's the other ones, they have to either bring their card in, I'll sign it or mark them off, or they'll bring their membership slip, which lets me know their number. Now some of the fly buggers will come in and say 'here' and I'll say 'yep, okay' and they look at you cos you're writing the number down and they say 'oh so you need to take the number?' 'Yeah, because I will ring up membership with that number and they will confirm or otherwise that you are still financially compliant'

When questioned as to what happened with those workers who did not own a union card, he explained,

> Well if they haven't got a card, two things. If it's a welder I then asterisk him on the list and when I go out asking people what they want to do for overtime, I walk past this person. Cos I'm a GMB shop steward running a rota for GMB members for overtime. Now he makes his own arrangements. Now I then go and see the foreman at about 11 o clock on a Monday morning and say 'Right, what's the requirements?' I get an overtime request sheet which gives me numbers of welders for each day.

I then write that up with the list I have. Now if he's not fast enough to go and see his foreman, or a foreman, he doesn't get any overtime. Not my fault, not my problem, that's his problem. If he has an accident he has a dispute with the foreman. If he has to follow disciplinary procedures, nowt to do with me, 'sling your hook sunshine, I don't represent you, you represent yourself' and when it comes to the grouse meeting, I will notify his foreman that he's not GMB and I'll expect him to be working on his job when we're sitting in the canteen having our meeting. He isn't entitled to one. He works on his job and I make sure the foreman has these bastards out there working. It's not subtle, it's not clever but it's very effective.

It also became apparent, that despite this evidence providing implications of the now illegal 'closed shop', management did not intervene in this activity, as they would prefer to avoid conflictual tensions arising in the workplace. This was highlighted when a senior shop steward was asked about union recruitment and membership figures,

We've got 99% on the shop floor. In the previous contract, I had one guy, one welder on dayshift who wouldn't join. He didn't want to work overtime either. The chance of him getting back here are nil because they {management} realised that I had problems with this person because he wouldn't join the union. The company don't want problems of that nature. So he's shit in his own nest. The guy who makes the decisions to bring people in, the welding superintendent, he knows that certain people aren't compliant and he doesn't want any chew.

Union recruitment is the second way in which shop stewards maintained high levels of union membership. Evidence from interviews illustrated

that the shop stewards were extremely active in recruitment despite ineffectual attempts by some management to reduce the time they use to recruit members,

> Tomorrow I've got 5 welders starting and they'll come in the canteen cos they're all ex, well it's not that long since they've been away, so they'll come in, they've all got their swipe cards ready to start. They'll swipe in, go into the canteen, have a cup of tea or whatever, get their overalls on, then they'll come out of the canteen, the foremen are there, hand their cards over etc. Now I've already seen them, told them I'd see them after the 10 o clock break. So after the 10 o clock break, I'll see the Head Superintendent and I say 'I'll see these lot after tea'. 'Do you need that much time?' 'I'll cut it as tight as I can John' you know you play the game he says 'Do you really need this time can you not go round...' 'No John, I can't, I need them all in one place, nice and quiet where I can talk to them where it's seen to do an induction'. I mean he's playing a little game, I'm playing a little game but I'm given 10 minutes tomorrow morning with new starters same as we did on Monday morning.

It also became clear that the shop stewards received a list of all new employees beginning employment. If they do not receive a list from the main office, I was informed that,

> If we don't get it {a list} it gets shoved in our letterbox by the security lads.

In this way, such channels of communication again provide evidence of strong workplace union organisation and a united activity in this yard. One final further piece of illustrative evidence to support this claim is in the organisation of a benevolent fund which was set up by the shop stewards.

We also do an in-house benevolent fund which is our own, so we also get them {the workforce} involved that as well, that's £1.50 a week. Once you've been off sick for 4 weeks, you get £200. It's got nothing to do with the union, that's purely and simply the workforce. Nothing to do with the social or anything like that, it's between us and them, it's a private arrangement. And at the end of the year we look at what we've got in the pot and how many people we've got on the sick and how the workforce is either increasing or decreasing, we make a decision on that and might give, say we've got a few grand spare, to charities.

Again, this demonstrates how shop stewards at this workplace proactively shape workers' collective activity and organisation. All of the evidence above provides confirmation of a healthy workplace unionism with effective shop steward organisation, high levels of membership participation and evidence of union democracy. However, despite demonstrating these features, which were also found at Ship Repair Ltd, I would doubt the adequacy of a thesis of resilience at Shipbuilders.Co as the two case studies are very different. In this yard there is persistent contract renewal and the unionism in the yard therefore must be re-established again and again. This re-establishment clearly draws on past experience and indeed often involves the same persons, but it is important to note this process of rebuilding unionism as it brings a further dimension to the renewal/resilience debate. Indeed, such a process was also discovered in the final case study, although this was at a very different stage of the 'rebuilding' process as outlined in the following section.

5.3 Refit PLC

The evidence collected at Refit PLC reflects much of the situation at Shipbuilders.Co in that there is also persistent contract renewal and the unionism in the yard needs to be re-established again and again. However, at the time of fieldwork, Refit was at a very different phase of the 'rebuilding' workplace unionism process, in that it was at a very early and relatively unpredictable stage. This became clear when, in attempting to gain initial access, the employee relations manager explained that the shop floor workforce consisted of only 6 blue-collar employees due to a recently completed order and mass redundancies. However, by the second visit, a few small contracts had increased the numbers of the workforce, and by the end of the fieldwork, there were 100 manual workers. Management anticipated that this number would increase ten fold due to the forthcoming arrival of a substantial refitting contract. Together with this, and akin to the Shipbuilders.Co case study, when a new contract is acquired and workers employed, the 'new', usually the same, workforce are entitled to elect 'new' representatives. Two shop stewards, representing the two recognised unions, the newly renamed Amicus and the GMB, had recently been (re-)elected at Refit. Another 'ex' steward of only 6 months was also included in the interviews. There were several reasons for this, the first being that his experience and knowledge of the yard would be useful to the study and that he anticipated being re-elected when the workforce numbers increased. Also, due to the early stage of the 'rebuilding' period, it was considered valuable in order to compare the effectiveness of shop steward

organisation, and how the 'new' shop stewards were attempting to rebuild this organisation from a very early stage of a new contract and 'new' workforce.

The ex shop steward, Terry, described the workplace organisation prior to the recent redundancies as consisting of approximately 12 shop stewards with full time status, as well as a number of deputy shop stewards representing the GMB, AEEU and MSF unions,

> The structure in here was that you had a full time shop steward for a discipline, so you'd have a full time welders shop steward, platers shop steward, at the time you had the caulkers, you had labourers, so you had a full time shop steward for all of those different trades then you also had deputy shop stewards who would help them out so that gives you an indication of how many men were here.

Terry also explained that, as the welders full time shop steward, he had been responsible for approximately 450 welders with the help of a deputy shop steward. As is evident from the above statement, and similar to Ship Repair Ltd, occupational segregation distinguished the unions, however, once again, the unions worked together through a joint shop stewards committee (JSSC) and all shared a large cabin with the use of PCs and telephones. However, in comparison to Ship Repair, the Refit stewards communicated with their membership using different methods, which was mainly due to the larger numbers of workers involved.

In Ship Repair, the shop stewards were able to hold informal section meetings at tea breaks and other occasions, whereas in Refit, more

174

formal meetings were conducted fortnightly in the form of a grouse meeting for each separate trade. Although this indicates potential problems with sectionalism, I was informed that the shop stewards consistently aimed to work collectively via the JSSC and met together prior to, and after the meetings, in order to discuss issues raised by the membership as described by Terry,

> The grouse meeting really was trade specific so we would have different venues throughout the yard but they were always held at the same time. Prior to a grouse meeting, we would all sit together, the stewards, and say 'right, this is what we need to tell the lads blah, blah' and anything that was contentious at the time, we all knew what we were going to say and how we would respond to that, then we'd go away to our individual respective meetings, take the meeting, anything that came back from that we'd get together the next day...say 'right I've got a problem with x,y,z', 'So have I', 'So have I', 'Well I haven't ' and then we'd just take it from there.

Any issues that were considered to be matters of concern to all of their members would then be taken to a mass meeting in order that any decisions to be made were arrived at collectively.

> So if we needed to come to a decision on something, we would get the lads together in a mass meeting. So initially you'd start off with a grouse meeting, carry on with that and then once you came to a point where you needed to say 'right we either need to go that way or that way' get the lads together into a mass meeting and then we'd find out from that which way they wanted to go.

The issues described thus far demonstrate effectiveness in shop steward organisation in terms of the proactive, well-organised discussions and

consultation with the JSSC and the membership. Together with this, and akin to the previous case studies, the evidence demonstrates how the shop stewards involved members in activities and decision making rather than acting 'on behalf of' the workforce. Terry explained how the workforce were proactive actors in the relationship, requiring no encouragement to attend grouse or mass meetings that usually generated a 99% turnout. In addition to this, he described how, almost every Monday morning there was a long queue of union members outside the shop stewards' cabin waiting to raise their concerns on matters such as overtime payments, non-payment of lieu days or holiday pay. He also illustrated how, on such occasions, some workers would insist that the shop stewards held a meeting on matters they personally considered highly significant,

> I mean there's times when I've had people banging at my office door, 'we want a meeting now' they demand a meeting I say 'what for?' they say 'they've started a Mackem[6] or they've started this or they've done x,y,z and I think we should have a meeting'.

However, he explained how the shop stewards attempted to avoid such meetings on a Monday as this would usually result in a half day 'protest'. As outlined in chapter 6, such a 'form of protest' appears to be an established part of the custom and practice in the yards and the Monday 'half-day' accepted as such by the majority of the respondents interviewed, as highlighted by a GMB FTO,

---

[6] A 'Mackem' is usually associated with a person who lives in the Sunderland, or Wearside, area of the North East. Discussion with the problems of 'starting a Mackem' is considered at length in chapter 7.

...the odd Monday afternoon people are looking for that little bit rest and it doesn't take a great deal to get people upset on a Monday afternoon...they wouldn't get upset on a Sunday cos it's double time...

Nonetheless, such actions by the workforce would certainly suggest that they involved themselves in self-activity, which as Darlington (2000:8) notes is central to workplace unionism. Indeed the evidence presented thus far is all arguably essential to workplace unionism in the demonstration of effective shop steward organisation, participation of members and workplace union democracy. Therefore, this evidence would appear to be similar to the previous studies and it could be argued that there is some support for resilient workplace unionism. However, as mentioned at the outset of this case study, this evidence was rather an explanation of the very recent past organisation rather than at the time of fieldwork in that particular company. Together with this, as in the Shipbuilders.Co study, there is also evidence of a continuous process of union renewal at Refit PLC that would again doubt the adequacy of a thesis of resilience. It is therefore considered necessary to examine this process of rebuilding unionism, which will also prove useful in allowing for a comparison between the two different stages between Shipbuilders.Co and Refit PLC.

In contrast to Shipbuilders.Co, where the shop steward organisation remained largely independent of FTOs, at Refit, union officers involved themselves more readily in the process of rebuilding unionism due to the early stages of development. An MSF FTO described how he attempted

to contribute to this process, at the stage in between the redundancies and re-employment,

> ...what we try to do is to get people to a meeting somewhere in a local club or whatever and discuss how we can try and co-ordinate them so we can develop the organisation again.

This also provides some evidence to suggest that union organisation extends beyond the boundaries of the organisation. Indeed, it was explained that a further reason for these general meetings offsite was to try and discover where ex-employees were currently employed. One of the major problems when mobilising at this stage was that, when a contract is initially completed with no guarantee of forthcoming contracts, many of the workforce become itinerant in order to locate employment elsewhere as explained by this FTO,

> The unfortunate thing is that because people's labour becomes so mobile, you find that when things are quiet in shipbuilding on the Tyne, people move to Barrow in Furness, the Clyde or abroad...so you have a job rebuilding the organisation again.

However, it was explained by several respondents that this temporary employment elsewhere is generally sought 'in between' River Tyne contract work, and many of these workers return to the Tyne when work is available. Nonetheless, in terms of beginning to rebuild the workplace union organisation at Refit, this appeared to be the main responsibility of the recently re-elected shop stewards with the support of their FTOs. One shop steward, Kevin, explained how the GMB and MSF FTOs had assisted the workforce in gaining the right to 'new' representation at Refit

PLC. It emerged that this was such a controversial issue that it involved a week of unofficial industrial action,

> Well at the time there was only about 20 of us and everybody was whingeing that we had nobody {shop stewards} and one or two of the lads phoned {FTO's name} up and we had a little bit of a meeting outside the gate there one dinnertime and we brought the union in and {FTO's name} started negotiating. And a month or so after that, the lads had a week off and they got their shop steward, but then it was only one for the boilermakers and one for Amicus.

Arguably, this achievement of gaining 2 representatives for a workforce of only 20 demonstrates a proactive and strong 'rebuilding' of workplace organisation by the workers themselves. It also arguably demonstrates 'resilience' in the determination to achieve a shop steward to represent each trade in the yard, as has historically been the form of union organisation. Kevin and Doug were both asked if they anticipated this number of shop stewards to increase with the expected enlargement of the workforce and Kevin, a plater and the GMB steward noted,

> Well I'm going to have to because we'll be getting loads of pipe welders in soon. Probably a few more platers too and when you start all the outfitting trades it might end up that we have 3-400 so we'll need more, even if it's just for holiday cover.

Doug, representing the recently renamed Amicus or old AEEU trades, agreed with this statement,

> All of the different trades need a representative, you've got a representative for an electrician, a rigger, a pipefitter, a mechy fitter, a plater, a crafty and there's 6 blokes...

He also indicated how they would prefer to have more experienced shop stewards to take the 'new' positions, although this was proving to be a fairly slow process,

> There's only 14 workers started recently and there's no, well none of them has been a shop steward before, do you know what I mean? So I'm waiting until somebody comes in who has been a shop steward in the past.

It would appear therefore from this statement, that the role of the shop stewards in terms of recruitment, is not only confined to union members, but also shop stewards. However, although the shop stewards were anticipating recruiting more representatives, the employee relations manager was preparing to conversely reduce the amount of shop stewards for the separate trades in the yard, as she explained,

> When I start recruiting again for {name of contract} I will have shop stewards but how many is a concern to me, we need to negotiate where we are with that...obviously for the unions the more shop stewards they have, the better it is. That is an issue that is going to be negotiated. More stewards? No, not if I could manage it, and if it happens I'm afraid you're going to have to get me a razor blade.

When questioned as to why she perceived more shop stewards to be a problematic issue, she claimed that,

> When a welder's got a problem I'm supposed to be talking to the welders' steward, when the plater's got a problem, I'm supposed to be talking to the platers' steward etc...and what I'm suggesting is that if we've got one shop steward for a union, why doesn't he bring somebody off the shop floor who knows what they're talking about, so I may have a shop steward who is GMB, but does it really matter what trade he is?

180

It appeared that a major problem perceived by the management was the large number of shop stewards with whom they had to negotiate in the previous contract. However, what also emerged from the interviews was a problem in terms of the cost of maintaining full time shop stewards.

> They're not productive. Say you've got 6 of them on 25-30 grand a year, add it up and it's half a million and before you can even win a contract you've just thrown away, well not thrown away, you've got nothing to show for half a million. It's not about them sitting in the cabin, it's not about whether you're bothered about them sitting in the cabin, it's when you look at your costs and you've got to write off half a million.

As a result of these conversations it appeared initially that the employment relationship between the shop stewards and management was fairly poor, yet when questioned as to this relationship, the employee relations manager claimed that it was,

> Very, very good, I would never have been able to do the job without their support and back up. I don't know what goes on out there...you {shop stewards} tell me what's going on and how we can resolve it...but if there's a problem that can't be resolved and it's walky out of the door time, I'm management and they're blue collar...they're not there to help management sort things out, they're there to get for the men what the men want them to get for them.

When the shop stewards were asked about this relationship, Kevin described it as 'all right', as did Doug, although he added another perspective to this in claiming,

> She's all right but I wish she was a bloke.

He was then questioned as to why this was a concern to him and he explained,

> Well you can relate more to a bloke and 9 times out of 10 he's been on the shop floor, he's been out there working, he's been there, done it, got the tee shirt, it's hard discussing conditions with somebody who has never been out there. To be honest, to me, when I go in there and I start to hear her shouting her mouth off and swearing and shouting and balling...if it was a bloke I could get out of hand with him but if it's a woman you're actually more polite. I've been taken aback a few times with her when she's let fly and lost it but at the end of the day, I suppose it's still us and them again...

Indeed, despite the indication of a potential problem with their relationship being due to either a gender difference or work experience, it eventually emerged that it was essentially concerning a culture of 'us and them'. An in-depth discussion relating to this culture is outlined in the previous case studies, and in terms of this company in other chapters, therefore needs no replication at this stage. However, what is important to note at this point is that, at this early stage of the rebuilding process, there is evidence of strong proactive unionism through the contribution of the FTOs, shop stewards and the workforce working together in helping to, once more, achieve a secure union organisation in this yard. In particular, the shop stewards were clearly proactive in seeking to recruit who they perceived to be efficient leaders, in order to secure an effective shop steward organisation in the yard. Together with this, they were also proactively re-recruiting union members in order to build up the workplace union organisation.

In terms of union membership, it was fairly unsurprising to discover that, when the workforce are made redundant at the end of a contract, some also stop paying their subscriptions to their trade union. Therefore, Kevin explained that, when 'new' starters begin to arrive, the shop stewards need to determine whether they are still union members,

> We're having another show of cards next week but...they've been coming back in dribs and drabs just through me. {GMB FTO} has been coming in and talking to them and trying to get them back in the union and slowly they're coming back in. You'll always get the hardcore that's never going to come back in but there's nothing you can do about that, you can't make it a closed shop anymore...I've got to try and entice them back in...or argue with them or shout at them, I mean you have to have unions.

Doug perceived these particular workers to be 'disillusioned' and outlined how he attempted to re-recruit members,

> You see the attitude, that's the hardcore, they'll say, "they're {unions} a waste of time, them {management} will just impose whatever they want on us anyway." So I say, "Well if you don't go and fight them {management}, they will do "... But there's only a few of us here and we haven't been back for long. Say out of 14 of us {riggers} there's 10 in the union, so that's like 70% of us...I give them all forms to fill in and we asked the management if we could meet with the new starters but we're still waiting for a reply about it.

It is therefore clear from this evidence that, despite the smaller numbers of workers and shop stewards as compared to the previous case studies, the activity and organisation in the yard still appears to be proactive. Indeed, as in the Shipbuilders.Co case study, another factor which

183

confirmed this, was that the shop stewards negotiated successfully with management to re-establish the yard's 'grouse meeting', although this was now to be conducted monthly, rather than fortnightly, due to the smaller numbers. Clearly, maintaining the grouse meeting was perceived as important to the shop stewards, primarily to maintain communication with their members, particularly whilst the workplace organisation remains small. When queried as to the attendance of the grouse meetings, I was informed that there was on average a 95% turnout. Also in terms of maintaining communication with members, Doug explained that, after shop steward meetings with management,

> I go back down and tell the lads point blank what we have been talking about. And then the next day you get a report off {employee relations manager} of minutes of the meeting and I've got to sign it and I leave copies on the tables {in the canteen} so the lads can read it.

Kevin also mentioned that, due to the smaller numbers at this stage, they were able to discuss issues with members in the canteen or 'on the pad'[7] informally during the working day.

A final point to note with reference to this particular company is that, despite the insistence of management to reduce shop steward numbers to one for each recognised union, the GMB and Amicus, on the last visit to the yard, the number had risen to 4 due to the persistence of the stewards. Arguably, this illustrates resilience in terms of the perseverance of the shop stewards to re-build their organisation. Indeed,

---

[7] The 'pad' is a very large level platform normally associated with the flat level platforms on an oil rig. The 'pad' in Refit PLC is a permanent feature on which the majority of the work is conducted.

184

this yard provides much evidence to illustrate how the shop stewards are proactively attempting to mould collective activity and organisation. As with the other case studies, it provides confirmation of a healthy and effective shop steward organisation, high levels of membership participation and there is once more evidence of union democracy. Although these appear to be at a lower intensity than the previous case studies, what is important to note from this study is that rebuilding workplace organisation can be a very slow laborious, constantly renegotiated process, which is achieved through patience, persistence and a vigorous determination as provided by the evidence of those who work in this yard. However, as the in Shipbuilders.Co case study, I would doubt the adequacy of a thesis of resilience. Once more, in this yard there is persistent contract renewal and the unionism in the yard must be re-established again and again and it is important to note this process of rebuilding unionism as it brings a further dimension to the renewal/resilience debate in the identification of a form of 'resilient renewal'. Some consideration of the conditions of this process of rebuilding will be examined in the following discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide new empirical evidence to contribute to the union renewal/resilience debate as discussed in chapter 3. Together with offering data from a neglected industrial sector in the literature, it is also argued that this evidence pushes the resilience

argument further by presenting a proactive, rather than reactive, form of workplace union resilience. In addition to this, the latter two studies provide a further development to the debate by introducing evidence of an on-going process of rebuilding a dynamic unionism. Given the vitality of this unionism and the way in which the continuity of activism is maintained, this could be considered union resilience. On the other hand, as the unionism of the yards needs to be rebuilt with each new contract, it could also be considered union renewal. Indeed, it is suggested that this evidence demonstrates a form of 'resilient renewal' which is suggested to be a contribution to knowledge provided by this thesis, as the literature refers to either union renewal or resilience and no one has, as yet, identified evidence of a connection of the two together. Some consideration of this constant process of rebuilding workplace unionism will be examined later in this section.

The aim of the study was a focus on the effectiveness of shop steward organisation in the industry, levels of activity in membership participation and its significance for union democracy, all of which are important factors in the renewal/resilience debate. The case studies illustrate how workplace and shop steward organisation has survived and remains relatively powerful in a sector of the economy that has experienced severe economic decline. This would suggest support for a thesis of resilience, however, the case studies are very different and the evidence produces some issues that would appear to have been neglected in the renewal/resilience literature to date.

The first case study clearly demonstrates support for a thesis of resilience rather than renewal. In terms of the first issue under consideration, the effectiveness of shop steward organisation in the industry, the overall findings suggest that shop steward organisation is durable and effective in terms of their role at the workplace. As noted in most of the literature in the union renewal debate, the effectiveness of the role of representatives in the workplace is critical to workplace unionism. Such competence was evident in all of the yards where the stewards involved members in activities and decision-making rather than simply 'acting on behalf of' the workforce. This evidence also illustrates the significance of union democracy and the collective interest and participation of members essential to workplace unionism.

Levels of activity in membership participation and the significance of union democracy were the other issues considered in this chapter. The case studies demonstrate high levels of participation of the membership at collective meetings. Together with this, is the evidence to suggest that the workforce are not passive agents in the process and the collective negotiation and decision-making demonstrated in the studies provides strong evidence of union democracy. However, despite the yards demonstrating these similar traits that would suggest an argument for resilience rather than renewal, the latter two case studies are very different from the first. It is because of this difference that the adequacy of the resilience argument for the latter two case studies must be in doubt and why the term 'resilient renewal' might be more appropriate. As

mentioned previously, the conditions of this on-going process of rebuilding unionism requires some consideration.

Firstly, the case studies illustrate how the continual 'new' workforce elects 'new' shop stewards who are generally the same individuals. These new stewards succeed in building up shop steward numbers in the yard each time they are re-elected. Their effective leadership qualities can be discerned in their positive negotiations with management, and the meetings with membership demonstrate their commitment to democratic participation. This is also emphasised in the importance attached to communication with membership when shop steward numbers are low. The drive to maintain high levels of membership is also an important consideration in the process of rebuilding unionism. The shop stewards achieve this in different ways including the show of cards, lists of new employees to check off membership and persistence in attending 'new' worker induction programmes.

All of these issues illustrate a constant rebuilding of a vibrant form of unionism, which was earlier referred to as 'resilient renewal'. This term is arguably appropriate as the evidence presents a continual process of renewing to retain a proactive workplace unionism. Such proactivity is suggested to be another contribution to the resilience debate as highlighted earlier in this chapter. The case studies point to the vitality of unionism in the TMCI and the way in which continuity of activism is maintained. It would appear that the conditions for this activism lie in a

combination of accountable and responsive leadership, as well as an ongoing and practical commitment to forms of democratic participation, reflected in the formal and informal exchanges between stewards and their membership. This would appear to push the resilience argument further than most, in that it is not simply resilience in a reactive form, but is an ongoing form of proactive unionism that changes and adapts to maintain a well-established and well organised workplace unionism.

Chapter Six

Worker Collectivism and Mobilisation in the TMCI

Introduction

In chapter 3, the discussion considered the debate surrounding the notion of a decline in workplace collectivism at the expense of a move to individualism. One of the major criticisms raised about this claim is that it is deficient, in that it appears to fail to account for the everyday workplace experiences of the 'human subject' (Thompson & Ackroyd 1995). This has raised parallel concerns that empirical research focusing on the reality of social processes of everyday life at the workplace is waning (Danford *et al.* 2003; Heyes 1999; Martinez Lucio & Stewart 1997). Furthermore, where there *has* been contemporary research in this area, there appears to be conflicting conceptualisations of the term 'workplace collectivism' (Metochi 2002; Stephenson & Stewart 2001). A major problem appears to be that the entire debate on workplace collectivism is lacking in conceptual and empirical rigour and, as yet, any solutions to this problem have been tentatively offered.

It was suggested that conceptually, Kelly (1998) proposes the most promising way in which to explain these gaps in our knowledge. He (Ibid:24) suggests that using theoretical approaches associated with both social movement theory and mobilisation theory, may help to provide a conceptual framework to help us to think, rigorously and analytically, about the conditions under which individual workers define their interests

and identities in collective terms. These approaches were discussed in depth in chapter 3, where it was also discovered that any empirical work using these theories is, as yet, fairly sparse (Gall 2000b; Metochi 2002; Brown Johnson & Jarley 2004). Therefore, it is a major intention of this chapter to contribute to a growing synthesis of studies and employ mobilisation and social movement theories to assess the workplace collective identity in the TMCI. This will be conducted by breaking down all of the elements associated with the theories into their subcomponents to examine how individual workers' interests develop into a collective identity. In order to understand how the data informs the theories, there is an explicit connection throughout the case studies between the theoretical literature and the data, allowing for the evidence to support the literature.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first three focus on each one of the case study companies, offering different forms of evidence from each to demonstrate how there are different stages and elements to the collective identity that can be combined together in various ways. Case Study One demonstrates how a strong collective identity is maintained in Refit PLC despite the constant uncertainty of the market, the frequent redundancies and short-term contracts. Case Study Two differs, as it has a larger workforce of more varying trades, many of whom benefit from permanent employment contracts. This case study demonstrates how the workers in Ship Repair Ltd share their grievances, through informal and formal means, within a more complicated structure.

It emphasises how there can be different stages in the development of a collective identity, from the sectional trade meeting to the mass meeting. The third case study provides evidence of possibly the best example of a 'micromobilisation' context in the TMCI, that of the grouse meeting. The social and organisational features of these meetings are extremely significant as they link together all of the aspects of injustice and sharing of grievances highlighted in the previous two case studies, in a larger group setting. It also addresses the issue of 'leadership' within the context of mobilising frames and the relationship between the shop stewards and membership in Shipbuilders.Co.

The fourth section provides further examples of evidence of a strong workplace collectivism without using mobilisation or social movement theories. This can be identified in the benevolent funds organised by the shop stewards and a 'collectivism of everyday life' (Stephenson & Stewart 2001) in the supportive nature of the workforce both internally and externally to the workplace. The final section provides a further example of how the development of a collective identity can extend beyond the boundaries of the organisation. It reveals how an issue perceived to be an injustice by more than one company workforce, can lead to the development of a regional industry collective identity. This was demonstrated in an unofficial mass walk out by workers in three companies in the TMCI, in solidarity with sacked colleagues in one of the yards. This evidence also expresses a continued presence of the TMCI workers' self-confidence and self-belief in themselves as a group in their

ability to mobilise to achieve successful outcomes. The significance of all this evidence is then discussed in the final conclusion section.

6.1 Refit PLC

As described in the case study outline in chapter 4, in Refit PLC, two unions are recognised, the AEEU and GMB who represent the main trades in the yard. Due to fluctuations in orders in this industry, Refit PLC do not have a core workforce, rather they employ workers when they require trades essential to certain orders. Therefore, the workforce are on short term contracts to the length of time of the order, then made redundant at the end of the contract. Indeed, it could be argued that in light of these frequent redundancies, it may not be surprising to find high-level support for 'injustice' frames, however, an important finding in this case study is the strength of a collective identity in the face of constant uncertainty. At the beginning of the fieldwork there was no blue-collar workforce employed in this company, as there had recently been a mass redundancy due to a lack of contracts. However, by the end of the fieldwork there was a workforce of 100 made up of predominantly welders and platers with 2 shop stewards representing the AEEU and GMB who have a joint recognition agreement at this yard. In relation to identifying components that would indicate support for injustice frames, the evidence collected from this company produced some positive findings.

In the first instance, one shop steward, Doug, illustrated how an event that had occurred the previous year had been strongly perceived by the

workforce as 'wrong' or 'illegitimate' (Gamson 1992,1995; McAdam 1988; Snow *et al.*1986, 1992; Klandermans' 1984).

> ...they {management} came up to us and said 'there's no work for the yard, if we don't reduce our costs there'll be no work here so we want you to take a pay freeze for 2 year'. So we did that and then they closed the yard.

Clearly, the shop stewards and the workforce felt that management actions had conflicted with a perceived shared belief that, if the workers co-operated in taking a pay freeze, then they would have remained in employment. Nonetheless, before long, the achievement of a new contract re-opened the yard and the majority of the redundant workforce were re-employed by Refit PLC, although this time, the employment was under a different set of circumstances that was once more sensed to be 'wrong' or 'unjust'.

> They fetched all the lads in again, the same lads on an agreement and on an agency contract, and they were working exactly the same hours for less money, no tea breaks. Can you imagine working out there in the middle of winter right?, 12 hours a day, half an hour for your dinner and no tea breaks? And that's what they actually done in here. So we all went out on strike to get them out, {Inca}, the agency, that's what it was all about. So that, that to all the lads down there, every time you mention anything down there now, the lads bring that up, they hold a grudge and they do hold a grudge, make no bones about it.

When questioned as to the circumstances surrounding the decision to take strike action, it was explained that this was through section meetings with each trade and their shop stewards, as well as altogether in mass

meetings. Clearly then, what all of this indicates so far, is that the workforce acquired a sense of injustice against their employer, developed a sense of their grievance being collective through the various meetings, and believed that they had the capacity to alter their situation which they achieved through collective action. According to social movement theorists, (Gamson 1992; McAdam 1988; Snow *et al.* 1986) these injustice, or collective action frames, are perceived as essential to understanding how a group develops a collective interest. This evidence also has the necessary components for Tilly's (1978:7) mobilisation model in terms of firstly *interests*, in relation to the gains resulting from the group's interaction, and secondly, *organisation,* in terms of an identification with the group structure which affected its ability to act in a certain way. Thirdly, *mobilisation* can be identified in both the section and mass meetings and the way in which individuals can be transformed into collective actors. This also applies to the fourth component *opportunity,* wherein the group clearly had the confidence and ability to go in pursuit of their claims by taking the final element of *collective action* in the form of an unofficial strike. Hence, all of Tilly's necessary components for mobilisation are fairly apparent in this yard in terms of, not only having the capability to acquire the resources to take collective action, but also the exercise of them. What the case study also demonstrates is an indication of a culture of 'us and them' which was confirmed by Doug,

> There's always them and us. They {the workforce} don't trust them {the management}. I don't trust them, I don't trust management, don't trust them at all. In no way, shape or form.

This also bore clear indications that the workforce viewed management as a distinct out group or agency on which to apply blame, or in terms of social movement theory, they made a direct *attribution* of blame. However, the dimensions of causality (Kelly 1998:30,137) in this situation are not so straightforward. It would certainly appear that the direct reason for making the attribution is 'external' with the out group *agency* being management, yet there are also underlying indications of a potential attribution to a *situation* in the *uncontrollable* circumstances of fluctuating markets and regular redundancies. In an industry characterised by these conditions, it would be reasonable to assume that the attribution of blame for such injustices would be directed at such a situation. However, in this study this was not the case, for the workforce attributed blame to an agency rather than a situation, the agency being the direct employer or subcontracted employer. This is extremely significant, for as according to social movement theorists, it is vital that blame is attributed to an agency rather than a situation for the successful development of collective organisation and action. Nonetheless, what is clear from the evidence thus far is an attribution directly relating to the identification of 'us and them'.

Such 'us and them' attitudes are associated with *social identification* and perceived as essential to mobilising frames, for it is suggested that the collective identity must be oppositional (Fantasia 1988; Gamson 1992a). This was confirmed by shop steward Kevin when asked about the culture of 'us and them' between the workforce and management.

> They {shopfloor workers} hate the management, they hate anything to do with the people up here. What we get off them down there {shopfloor workers} about these people up here {management} is, 'they're lying horrible bastards'. Oh the patter we get at the meetings, they just don't trust them. You see it's the thinking of the workforce here, there's a lot of deep-seated mistrust on that shop floor. I've been in this industry all of my life and it's always been them and us, no matter what people say. You can talk to anybody on this river and if they're honest and open enough they'll tell you point blank, 'it's them and us'.

This was also acknowledged by management who assumed it simply to be part of a "traditional culture" as expressed by the operations manager,

> It's part of the culture to have it that way on the Tyne, the culture's been here for 50, 100 year...us and them...and it still prevails

It is suggested by social movement theorists that the processes identified thus far, *injustice*, *social identification* and *attribution* are all critical for a group of individuals to develop a collective interest. Indeed the strength of collective interest and 'us and them' attitude continued to be revealed throughout the fieldwork.

The intensity of the 'us and them' attitude in Refit PLC was highlighted in the continuity of the grievance with the Inca agency contracts mentioned earlier. After the strike action, leading to the loss of employees to other yards due to the intensity of the collective grievance, Refit PLC abandoned the Inca agency agreement and re-employed the workforce on new Refit PLC employment contracts. However, the shop stewards explained of their knowledge that the company had not given 90 days

notice to change their contracts. As a result, through the recognised trade unions, they took legal action against the company. At this stage, I was simply informed that *"the employees were asked to sign a form"* indicating their agreement with, and support for, the legal action. However, this resulted in some misunderstanding as Kevin explained,

> I thought, "well we've just been on strike to get them out, the agency", and I looked at the form and I thought "well we won't win nowt[8] there, cos we fought for that, we fought them and we made them do it". So I looked at the form and I chucked it in the bin. So I lost £3K[9] and there was a lot of us did that, but we got started again.

When questioned further as to this loss of money and re-employment, he explained,

> They won {the workforce}. But all the lads that signed that form, well I'd say 90% of them didn't get back in the yard, they'd all won £3K each.

Therefore, it was revealed that, during the misunderstanding, those employees who had signed 'the form' indicating their support for legal action against the company had secured compensation, but were not re-employed by Refit PLC management. It was claimed that the other 10% who *were* re-employed were workers described in the yards as 'royals' or 'blue eyed boys' as they are generally a group who are the first to be employed on new contracts and the last to be made redundant. This is an enduring lineage of the working culture on the Tyne, which was mentioned in almost all the interviews conducted in the industry and which Cumbers (1994:544) refers to as 'persistent and often archaic'.

---

[8] Meaning 'nothing'. It should also be noted that this phrase is a double negative which is an omnipresent feature of Geordie English and should be taken as 'we will win nothing'

[9] In compensation from the company.

He uses a quote from a study of the Tyne in the 1920s to emphasise the point of this strong culture,

> *"In most crafts there are 'royals', i.e. the men who are taken on before others when work is unavailable. Usually the list of royals is kept in a definite order..."* (Mess 1928:19)

It was claimed by the shop stewards that it was indeed the 'royals' who were those immediately re-employed by Refit management. The chain of events that occurred in this situation could be perceived as a form of 'counter-mobilisation' by management (Kelly 1998:25), as they knowledgeably re-employed only 'some' of those workers who had received compensation and placed them among their colleagues who had not received any payment, despite striking over the same issue. In this way, it could be suggested that this action had the potential to create divisions in the workforce, thereby preventing the re-creation of effective collective organisation. Indeed, it emerged that this re-employment had began to cause some unrest on the shop floor, particularly from the workforce who had not received a payment.

> Some of the blue eyes, we know they're blue eyes, got back in...she {the employee relations manager} hadn't blacked them all. Anyway, he's a royal cos he was first in, he was the first one amongst the lads who got the £3K, he was a first one in and he was bragging about it saying, 'I got the £3K and I still got in'. He was going to get lynched down there cos he was shouting his mouth off about it. If you're working alongside a bloke who got 3 grand and you didn't, it's shite. And plus he's rubbing your nose in it.

What is suggested in this quote is that injustice was beginning to be attributed to other members of the workforce, thereby fracturing the 'us' in 'us and them' framework, hence potentially also the identity of collectivism. However, as suggested in chapter 3, the 'collective identity' may not necessarily be assumed to mean uniformity and homogeneity, and in the reality of complex organisational life, day-to-day behaviour may be full of conflicts and tensions but collectivism can still exist. It was certainly stressed by the shop stewards that the majority of blame was attributed to management's actions rather than their colleagues. Indeed, to clarify the allegiance to their colleagues, the workforce questionnaire responses revealed high levels of loyalty with work colleagues as outlined in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 - Worker loyalty to company and work colleagues in Refit PLC (n=28)
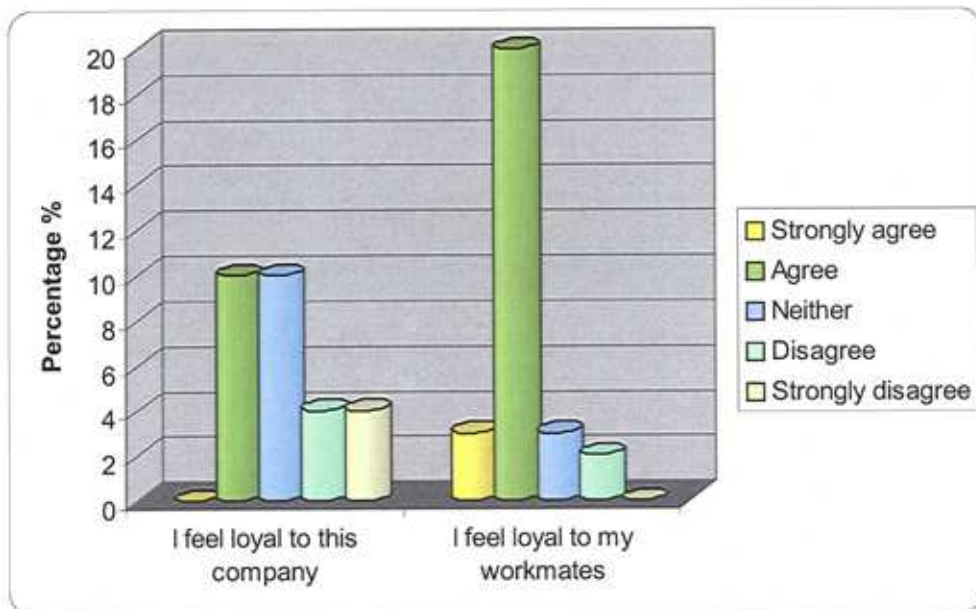
This would not appear to suggest a 'fracturing' of collectivism but rather illustrates a strong loyalty, hence strong identification with work colleagues. It was interesting to discover that it is not only 'within' the workplace where such a strong collective identity could be recognised.

During the interviews, it became apparent that the notion of a 'collective identity' exists in Refit PLC that extends beyond the boundaries of the organisation. One example of this is when negotiations on pay and conditions are being conducted between the shop stewards and management. Shop steward Doug explained that, when the workforce numbers are low, and pay negotiations with management are taking place, the shop stewards need to consider pay and conditions for, not only those presently employed, but also those who might be re-employed in the near future. What appears to be evident here, is a sense of 'solidarity' in terms of loyalty to collective actors whether internal or external to the organisation. This was also confirmed by one of the industrial relations management team, albeit viewing it more as 'peer pressure',

> What they do {the shop stewards} is represent anyone who has ever worked here or who ever might likely work here again...that's a problem because if they agree something they are in a really difficult position. Let's say they turned something down, and we thought 'well why did they turn that down?' The catch is simple, that's all right for the 100 guys who are here 'hey that's a good deal'...but 'it's our buddies who we have to go and have a drink with etc. What are they going to say?' 'Oh you've

got it all right now haven't you, you've seen you're all right' so it's that sort of peer pressure that is extremely difficult to break out from.

Such 'peer pressure' could also be defined as a strong alliance with a solid definition of interests among workers whether or not currently employed at Refit PLC. It provides an implication to suggest that there is another way in which we can understand how individuals define their interests and identities in collective terms, for the 'collective identity' extends to the 'pool' of transient workers who are associated with the TMCI. This is an extremely interesting finding that will be revisited in the conclusions. On returning to Refit PLC, a strong collective identity can be discerned in the workers' attitudes to supporting workmates when taking industrial action as illustrated in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 Attitudes to taking industrial action in Refit PLC (n=28)
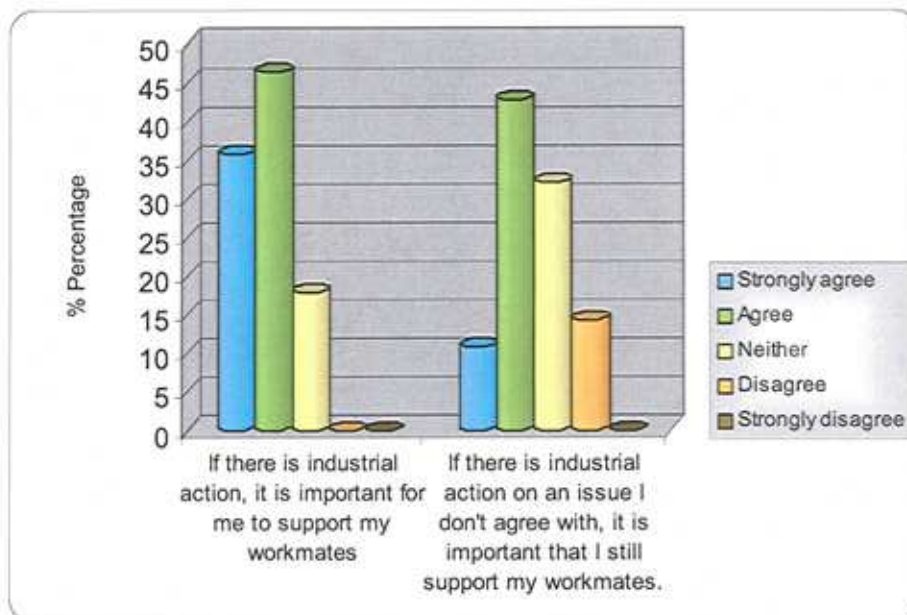
As is evident from this graph, there are high levels of cooperation in taking industrial action to support work colleagues. However, a very small percentage of 14% indicated that they disagreed in terms of 'supporting workmates in industrial action on an issue they didn't agree with', which raises questions in relation to the calculation of the perceived costs and benefits of taking action or, of 'expectancy-value theory' (B. and P.G. Klandermans 1984). As discussed in chapter 4, there were no formal interviews conducted with the workforce, therefore more general calculations were identified from information retrieved in interviews with shop stewards, management and FTOs. Whilst it is acknowledged that the attitudes and understandings of FTOs and shop stewards should not be read as the voice of the shopfloor, it ought to be noted that the shop stewards remain to work on the shop floor and the FTOs in the study have all worked in the TMCI as shop floor workers and shop stewards. Together with this, when there are incidents of industrial action, the FTOs and shop stewards are heavily involved 'hands on' in these situations. Nonetheless, this issue does require acknowledgement when examining the findings relating to the perceived costs and benefits of taking industrial action.

In line with B. Klandermans (1984a) theory in relation to expectations, it was suggested that taking industrial action would be calculated upon the involvement of the number of participants and the probability of success if many people participate. As one FTO explained,

The only way the lads get to improve their terms and conditions is when

the work's there and they're in a position of strength. The lads know for a

fact that the only time they can improve their lot at the end of the day is

from a position where they're all united, there's plenty on the patch and

they'll fight because they know when they {the management} run the

numbers down it's conquer and divide isn't it and unity is strength.

This was also confirmed by shop steward Kevin,

Whenever there's a big workforce you see, the lads have got more

power and they've got more say. Likes of now, you probably wouldn't

get a militant attitude down there {shop floor} compared to if you come

back in 6-8 months time when the yard is chock-a-block[10]...

Comments by management also verified these statements, together with

evidence to support Klanderman's theory of expectation,

Just lets say for instance you've got a couple of hundred blokes here,

and a couple of hundred blokes will just say 'right, we'll down tools and

walk out if you don't get it sorted out'. They'll do something about it, cos

there's a lot of them here and a lot of production lost but then if there's

only so many here, they might just say 'well please yourself, if you want

to walk out, walk out, or if you want to sit in the cabin, sit in it'

P.G. Klandermans (1984) also suggested that persuasion must play a

major factor in mobilising and this was illustrated in the examination of

leadership and the effectiveness of shop steward organisation in the

previous chapter. It was demonstrated then, that due to the small

workforce in this yard at the time of fieldwork, it was easy for the shop

stewards to deal with day-to-day grievances, or a sense of injustice that

they attributed to an external agency. Issues highlighted by the shop

---

[10] Normally used informally meaning extremely full.

stewards included repeated requests for welding masks that had not been approved by management as explained by Kevin,

> We've been onto them {management} all the time and there hasn't been any sign, the last meeting they told us again they were getting them and they finally got them, but the grief from the lads...

Another grievance was the issue of clothing for bad weather,

> They {management} won't even give you a coat, won't give you a coat. They'll give you a thermal that goes underneath your boiler suit, but what good is that when it's whacking down with rain?

These were typical day-to-day examples identified by the shop stewards of complaints from individual workers that could be perceived as a sense of injustice. However, it is claimed by Gamson (1992a) that it is not enough for an individual to adopt a private interpretation of what is happening in terms of a grievance, and that it needs to be shared in a public way. In this way, he claims that events or situations are collectively defined as unjust and grievances are then transformed into demands. Certainly, the mass meetings mentioned earlier could be described as such a context. However, it is perhaps the traditional grouse meeting that provides the most relevant example of a micromobilisation context as outlined in great detail later in the Shipbuilders.Co case study. The grouse meeting is also a monthly event at Refit PLC and, although I did not have the opportunity to attend and observe a meeting in this particular company, interviews with shop stewards and FTOs implied that they were very similar in both yards. Once more, perhaps it ought to be reiterated that the shop stewards and FTOs have worked in both yards and the FTOs have attended recent

205

grouse meetings at both yards. Nonetheless, the research conducted in this yard arguably provides evidence to demonstrate a strong collective workplace identity, likewise with the other yards as the following case studies demonstrate.

6.2 Ship Repair Ltd

In terms of this company, evidence gathered provided strong indications of a collective identity, together with a loyalty to collective actors, although this manifested itself in different ways to Refit PLC. In the first instance, as is evident in the case study outline in chapter 4, there are many more recognised trades in Ship Repair as compared to Refit PLC and each trade has a shop steward, therefore, a more complicated structure. As also stressed in Roberts' (1993) study of shipbuilding on the River Wear and Brown *et al.*'s (1972) study of the Tyne, it is vital to stress the importance of the identity of the skilled craftsman in this industry. The wide variety of distinct occupational identities is also examined in chapter 4 and is important to draw attention to once more, as it provides implications for what Gamson (1992a;1992b) refers to as the 'who we are', or collective identity. The significance of the identity as a skilled worker in this company is provided in evidence from workforce questionnaires wherein 78% of the respondents stated that they were skilled, 5% semi-skilled and the others consisted of those who named themselves 'ancillary' workers. Although this would initially appear to be an individualistic attribute rather than collective, interviews with shop

stewards confirmed the importance of the collective identity of the skilled

craftsmen, as stated by the riggers shop steward Mick,

> At the end of the day, I'm here to represent the boilermakers but to be
>
> honest with you, the people that I prefer and always will put first will be
>
> the rigging department. I don't make no bones about it with the blokes
>
> either, at the end of the day if it's going to be the riggers or another
>
> boilermaker trade, for me it's always going to be the riggers.

It is without doubt that this presents evidence of potential sectionalism in

the association with the occupational identity that allows for a clear

definition of group membership with one's own trade, which is a source of

sectionalism in the 'favouring of one's own group over others'. However,

what is also interesting from this quote is the individual association with

two collective identities, the 'boilermakers' *trade union group* and the

'riggers' as a *trade group*. Overall, the evidence from the TMCI suggests

that the 'collective identity' can divide as well as unite, and can take

different forms depending on an individual's association with a group or

groups and this is discussed at length when the conclusions are drawn

together in the final chapter. What is important to note at this point, is

that this form of sectionalism is part of the historical tradition that

continues to manifest itself in the yard, yet does not appear to affect the

'whole' collective identity with the rest of the workforce as illustrated in

Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3 Social identification with the workforce in Ship Repair Ltd (n=98)
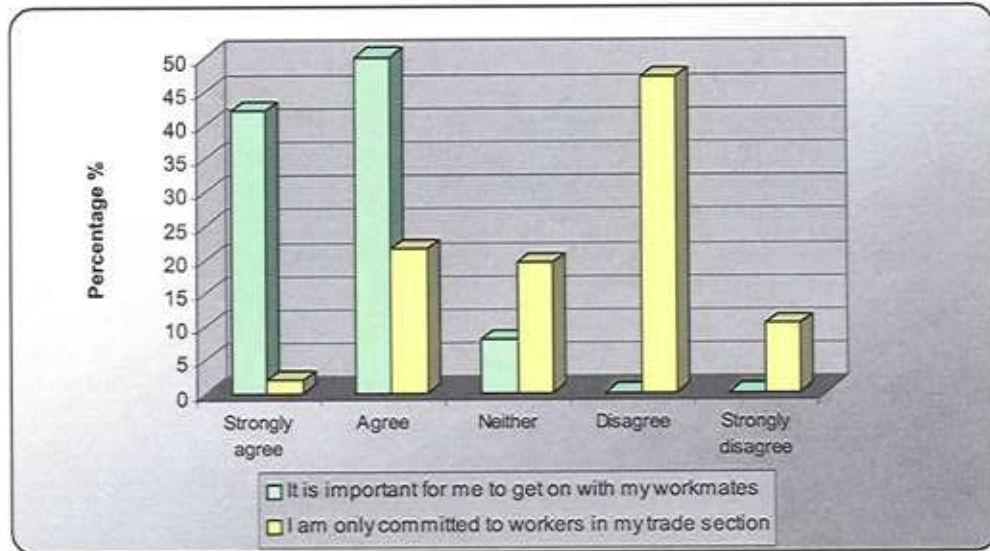
Together with this, when questioned as to the relationship between trades in the yard and the workforce as a whole, shop steward Chris explained, *"It's good, cos we've been together for so long..."*. He also described how the shop stewards' relationship had not always been particularly agreeable and how 'in house' disputes used to be settled,

> Oh we've had our fights in disputes, not so much now, but when we used to have our boilermakers meetings, there used to be hair and teeth flying, we used to have some good laughs...in the old days there used to be a cabin along there and they used to settle disputes on their own...round the back, get in there...you used to be walking past and you used to hear the odd thud but we never, I wouldn't actually say that anybody's fell out...even though the last time I had a go at the shipwrights shop steward he got a hammering, but we still speak, you've got to man, cos they're all mates...we're all mates...

This demonstrates, perhaps in a more severe form, of how there can be frictions in the day-to-day working life, but it also indicates that despite conflictual sectional tensions, there remains a sense of a collective identity in the acknowledgement that 'we're all mates'. Together with this, a collective identity external to the boundaries of the organisation was apparent once more, as it was also noted that, when the men moved around the different companies on the Tyne following the employment contracts, *"...you know them all, they're all mates, we know everyone"*. Indeed, with the focus on this particular company, the workforce questionnaires also demonstrated a strong loyalty to collective actors with 23% in 'strong agreement' and 61% in 'agreement' that they 'felt loyal to their workmates'. Again, this indicates a strong sense of *social identification* considered by social movement theorists as one of the fundamental processes for a group of individuals to develop a collective interest. A further important process associated with developing a collective interest is that of *attribution*, which was initially indicated through evidence collected from workforce questionnaires.

In contrast to the high percentage of loyalty to workmates as above, only 2% of the workforce 'strongly agreed' and 19% 'agreed' that they 'felt loyal to the company', despite the permanent contracts offered in this yard. As in the Refit case study, this indicated potential evidence of a culture of 'us and them' that was confirmed by both shop stewards and management. The managing director described his view as,

> There's 100 years of 'us and them'. They just don't trust you. There's a barrier, there's one or two enlightened and there's one or two violently against management, despise the thought that I'm even talking to them... cos there isn't anything sinister I mean I don't sit up here with a board and say 'let's plan a way of screwing the workforce tomorrow'

Such issues of trust were also raised by the convenor who suggested that,

> Unfortunately I'm working for a company that cannot be trusted. At the end of the day they are just out to try and make as much profit as possible and if they think they can con the men down there, they'll do it.

Using Tilly's mobilisation theory, it is implied from these views that the workers' *interests* are different from, and opposed to, management's. Indeed, it would appear that, in determining the dimensions of causality (Kelly 1998:30,137) this is a *stable attribution* in that the issue of mistrust and 'us and them' appears to be a fixed constraint within which they have always, and continue to, operate. In fact, there were some indications that the employment relationship between the workforce and management was unstable for a period of time during fieldwork, and when questioned as to the relative health of the relationship I was informed,

> I would say it's rock bottom, the morale of the blokes towards the gaffers and the management...they're nit-picking, they're like standing on the gangway, treating you like school kids and most blokes just cannot be bothered now...

Although this last comment would appear to imply that the workforce were apathetic in terms of the capacity to assert their rights to their

demands, further comments proved this to certainly be a false assumption.

At the time of fieldwork, a new agreement was being negotiated between the management and the shop stewards committee, which is discussed at length in the previous chapter. In this case, it emerged that these negotiations had lasted for 20 months as the workforce continued to reject some of the offers put forward to them concerning flexibility and annualised hours. Evidently the workforce perceived the proposals to be 'wrong' or 'unjust', for they refused to accept recommended changes to the yard agreement. In the process of collectively adopting such an injustice frame, Gamson (1992a,1992b) and McAdam (1988) argue that the interpretation of 'injustice' must be shared in a public way, and everyone must be aware that it is being shared. In Ship Repair Ltd, this is performed through the mass meeting, which is possibly the best example of a setting in which individual interpretations are shared publicly and developed into a shared definition, or what Gamson (1992a;1992b) and McAdam (1988) refer to as the *micromobilisation* context.

I attended and observed a mass meeting at this yard and the workforce were certainly active participants, with many proactively offering reasons as to why they felt they had a grievance over some of the management proposals for changes to the agreement. This would suggest not only an indication of McAdam's (Ibid.) *cognitive liberation* but it also provides evidence of an assertion of rights to demands and the belief that they

have the capacity to alter the situation. Such injustice frames, according to Gamson (1992b), are critical in understanding collective action. However, despite having a series of mass meetings at this particular time, I was informed that these are generally held only on the annual pay bargaining rounds, or if there is an immediacy concerning a particular grievance that is considered strong enough to motivate industrial action. Therefore, the mass meeting is not necessarily a regular setting wherein the workers are able to collectively air their grievances. However, it was discovered from shop steward interviews that the extremely efficient organised group structure in the yard does allow for the workforce to share their grievances in different ways.

The strong shop steward organisation and healthy workplace union democracy in this yard was discussed at length in the previous chapter. In terms of worker collectivism and mobilisation, the shop stewards aim to ensure that the rank and file membership are kept informed of any issues that might affect their employment and that they are able to have an active part in decision making. However, one of the stewards acknowledged that not all of the men are willing to raise issues at mass meetings,

> There's a lot of people who are unhappy about things but not prepared to say it, which I can understand. I mean if you've got a situation where you've got 200 blokes there, you mightn't feel very comfortable speaking out.

In order to try to alleviate this problem and ensure participation, the shop stewards take issues raised from the JSSC meetings to section meetings

and hold discussions with workers on the shop floor in smaller numbers, as explained by shop steward John,

> ...at other times I get them in little groups and explain different things rather than take them into a big meeting, bearing in mind we've only got 22 plumbers, and I'll explain the situation.

They then return any concerns or questions to the following JSSC meeting which I was informed is held at least once a month. Another way in which the workforce are able to share any grievances is on an informal day to day basis, particularly if they are small trades, as highlighted by the drillers' shop steward Graeme,

> Well it's more or less when you're sitting have your tea together, if there's anything to discuss or anything that needs to be brought up...in my department anyway, I don't know about the other departments...I mean there's only 3 or 4 of us and we sit and have our tea up in the shed so if there's any problems or anything like that we talk about it then.

As these settings are so small in numbers, they could possibly be expanded upon McAdam's notion of *micromobilisation,* and referred to as a *micromicromobilisation* context. What is important to note here, is the way in which the shared definition of a collective identity does not necessarily develop in only one context of physical interaction, but can develop in different stages, from the small section meeting in the cabin through to the mass meeting. A further way in which a collective identity is maintained in this yard, is the way in which the shop stewards aim to ensure that the majority of the workforce has the opportunity to be an active agent in decision-making. The welders' shop steward, Terry, explained how some workers on a later shift had felt aggrieved that they

213

were not able to participate in decision-making or air their grievances at mass meetings due to the time that they were held in the yard,

> So we have mass meetings at 2 o clock now, so it involves the backshift[11] cos we used to have them earlier and they weren't prepared to come in at 7 o'clock for a mass meeting...go home and then come back to work, so it's been adjusted now for 2 o'clock cos they can be there at 2 and the dayshift are there as well...they were complaining that they weren't getting a say, cos they weren't getting a say and weren't getting a vote so it's been put right.

What is evident thus far, is what Gamson (1992b) refers to as a *collective identity* in terms of 'who we are', a *consciousness* in terms of how individuals give meanings to situations which is then developed into a shared definition, and a *solidarity* which relates to the individual's development of loyalty to collective actors. Together with this, in terms of Tilly's model there are very positive aspects relating to *interests*, *organisation* and *mobilisation* in this yard, implying a strong workplace collectivism. In relation to the fourth component, *opportunity*, it was discovered that this once more extends externally to other workers in the industry. In this instance, rather than merely the Tyneside industry, the factor of *opportunity* extends nationally, through Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union (CSEU) meetings as explained by Barry,

> We go to combine meetings at Carlisle...so we find out what's going on up and down the country...we meet through the CSEU either bi-monthly or tri-monthly and basically all the lads from all over the country come

---

[11] Also described as a continental shift, the TMCI operates 24 hour production with a dayshift from 7am – 3pm, a backshift from 3pm to 11pm and a nightshift 11pm to 7am.

and meet there. What we do is, we have a strategy where they tell us what's going on in their yards and we see if we can do anything to help them, and we tell them what's going on on the Tyne and they think of anything that can help us.

Dave also described how useful these meetings were in terms of finding out what opportunities were available to the shop stewards to go in pursuit of their rank and file membership's claims, once more demonstrating a collective identity and solidarity,

The beauty of them is that you sit down and basically find out what's going on throughout the rest of the country...and if you're ever getting problems the likes of, if it ever got to the situation where we took industrial action, I think you know what people get, they get about £30 off the union and nowt off the DSS, we'd basically approach all the other shipbuilders and shiprepairers in this country and ask for financial support...and normally what happens is, whatever place you approach, shop stewards will call a meeting and there'll be a recommendation from the shop stewards, what we normally do is levy all of them.

Indeed, in terms of shop steward organisation in this yard, the leadership proved to be very effective as outlined in detail in chapter 5. From a social movement approach, *leadership* is certainly perceived as a significant factor in terms of motivating a group into collective action. In terms of Tilly's fifth component of *collective action*, there is certainly evidence of people acting together in pursuit of common interests, not only internally in the yard itself, but also externally through the CSEU meetings. However, in terms of *collective industrial action*, Dave and

Barry explained that they prefer to avoid taking strike action due to the potential loss of earnings for the membership,

> ...and we never get that back so what is the point...but if they {management} won't concede and these {the workforce} won't concede you're on a collision course so you've got to take some form of action haven't you to achieve it?

I was informed, at the time of fieldwork, that the last time industrial action took place was in 1996 and lasted six weeks, although it later became apparent that this was the last 'official' recorded dispute. One shop steward, Mick, said *"there's regular disputes in here all of the time".* However, this was not intended to imply a 'dispute' in the form of industrial action, rather a demonstration of how, in the reality of day-to-day working, conflicts and tensions arise. However, he also stated that some disputes did lead to industrial action, usually in the form of unofficial walkouts. Unfortunately none of these events were recorded, although a recent example was provided by the convenor who reported that, during the previous year, there had been a grievance concerning pay rates for short term employees,

> ...so we had a mass meeting and we all walked out and it was resolved in about a week.

When the convenor was asked about the last time management were threatened with industrial action, he said, *"yesterday, a strike and overtime ban".* It emerged that this was a continuation of the lengthy agreement dispute between the workers and management and did lead to official strike action by all unions in the yard after the fieldwork was completed. This was eventually abandoned when the company offered a

substantial wage increase of 9% in comparison to their initial rejected offer of 2.9%[12].

In terms of B. and P.G. Klandermans' 'expectancy-value approach', this evidence would all suggest that in this yard, the workers and their shop stewards certainly appear familiar with the means of action (knowledge), are capable of participating (capacity) and prepared to do so (willingness). In doing this collectively, they achieve successful outcomes, however in the move to taking collective action it has been suggested by social movement theorists that persuasion must play a major role in mobilising. When questioned 'if and how' the shop stewards mobilised the workers, one of the stewards, Terry, explained that they do not necessarily need to persuade the workers to share their grievances,

> They'll tell you they want a meeting, they'll say 'we want a meeting at half past twelve about backshift, or overtime or travelling' they'll come and tell you, you don't tell them. If they've got any grievances from the morning they'll come in at dinnertime and say 'oh such and such...we want that sorted out'...or they'll just come over off their job and come to me and say 'such and such, we're not happy with that'.

Further evidence to support this point was provided when questioned about attendance figures at the mass meetings. All of the shop stewards claimed that 90-100% of the workforce participated, clearly indicating a high attendance. In addition to this, as illustrated in Figure 6.4, the responses from the workforce questionnaires indicated that the collective identity was important to this workforce, as a large percentage of

---

[12] Source –www.icnewcastle.co.uk July 29th 2003

respondents claimed that their attitude to supporting their workmates in industrial action was important. Therefore, it could be proposed that their interests are more common to their working group than any other agency in the employment relationship, indicating a strong collective identity in Ship Repair Ltd.

Figure 6.4 Attitudes to taking industrial action in Ship Repair Ltd (n=98)
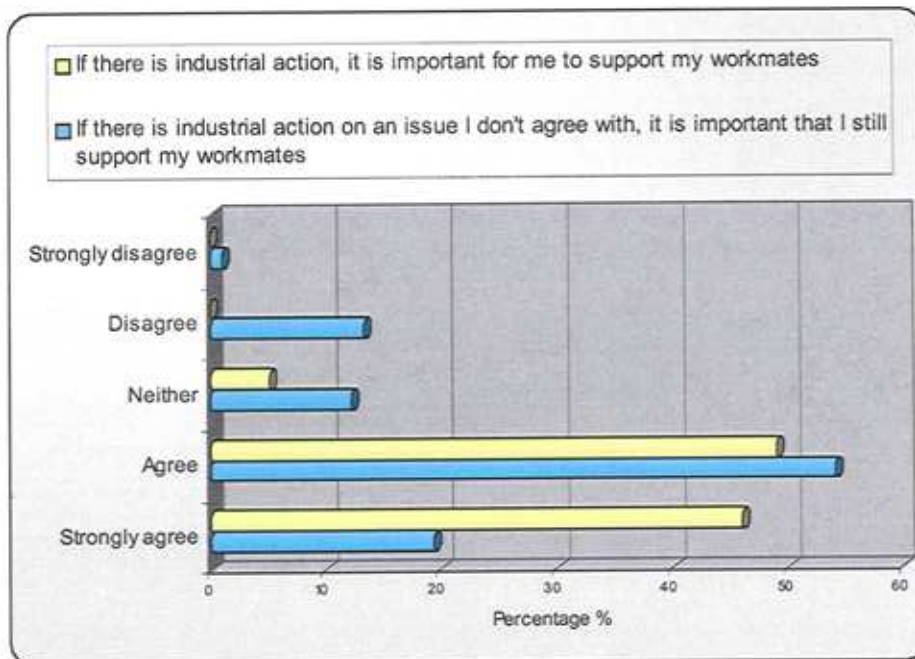
Indeed, overall, the findings from Ship Repair Ltd provide evidence of a strong collective identity when measured using the components of social movement and mobilisation theories. Some consideration of the processes identified will be discussed after the final case study has been analysed.

6.3 Shipbuilders.Co

As with the entire industry, the workforce numbers in Shipbuilders.Co have declined drastically, even more so since its closure in the early 1990s. Its takeover in 1995 may have delivered some optimism, yet compared to the approximate figures given in interviews that 50,000 people used to work on the river, the initial requirement of 1200 shop floor workers was a drastic reduction in numbers. It now stands in the region of approximately 3000 across the industry on the River Tyne and, in this yard, I was informed there were approximately 370 shop floor workers. It is not surprising then, as also pointed out by Brown *et al.* (1972:29) thirty years ago, that job security is an issue. As with the previous case studies, it could once more be reasonable to assume that this situation may have some effect upon collectivism and union organisation. Yet, it was illustrated in the previous chapter that, despite numbers being drastically reduced, in workplace union terms, this industry remains very well organised. It is the intention of this section to consider whether this is also reflected in a strong collective identity. What is required is the need to gain a clearer understanding of the social processes involved in the ways in which workers in this industry define their interests and identities in collective terms. This case study will introduce a different form of evidence to illustrate this, through the traditional 'grouse meeting' where a vibrant social interaction can be discerned, giving a much clearer depiction of the social processes of collective interests at the workplace.

6.3.1 The Grouse Meeting

The traditional 'grouse' meeting is whereby once a month, the yard shop stewards meet with the workforce, onsite during working hours, in order to discuss any grievances raised by the members. It is also used as a means by management and external trade union to inform and communicate with the shop floor workforce through the shop stewards. Only trade union members and shop floor workers are allowed to attend these meetings. I was granted permission by the shop stewards and the workforce to attend a grouse meeting and the stewards explained what to expect at the meeting by describing some of their experiences. The convenor Billy described where the meetings were held,

> If you have a look in that big canteen it's fucking massive. There's men standing as well and when the yard's full to capacity, you're looking at the excess of 2000 men and I don't use the PA system then. I shout. Extremely effective.

It transpired that the reason why he was required to shout was due to the fact that he generally received a 'slating' from the shop floor workers, although he and the rest of the shop stewards took this in good humour. As described by Ben,

> You'll find it's a good laugh actually cos when Billy takes them, all hell breaks loose, we don't know what it is with Billy but with him it normally lasts an hour cos they're all hoying[13] questions at him... me and Keith took it on Friday. It lasted quarter of an hour.

---

[13] Geordie colloquialism for 'throwing'.

When asked why he thought Billy received such a reaction from the shop floor, Ben said,

> Oh, in the past he's got absolutely hammered! But he can take it, he's got the experience to talk his way out of things, I don't think many people like him cos he's got like a...how can I put it...personality...he's very confident in himself and he knows he can get round things and some of the lads try to wind him up...but like I told them, 'if you want to vote him out, vote him out' but no-one puts up against him. They couldn't do it because it's a very hard job to do...

Yet, despite being regarded in this way, and obtaining, what could be considered by some an insult in the nickname 'Handbag' from his work colleagues, apparently owing to his "goatee beard and earring", Billy is extremely well respected by the shop stewards who had not been looking forward to chairing a grouse meeting without him the previous week,

> He {Billy} wasn't here on Friday and me and Beef were expecting a load of trouble on Friday cos the platers were going mad saying 'we're not getting this, we're not getting that' and before we went in Keith said 'I'll tell you what it is, we're in trouble here like'

However, as mentioned previously, the meeting only lasted a short while and Billy conveyed his satisfaction with the results of the meeting in a later interview. Indeed, it became clear from interviews that, not only the shop stewards respected this convenor but also FTOs as outlined by a GMB officer,

> We've got the Handbag at {Shipbuilders} I go back a bit with Billy, and I know most of the shop stewards because they've worked with me at

some time or another or we've come across each other's path. So I

know most of them and I know Billy very well...good lad.

In terms of leadership skills, Billy's organisation of the shop stewards and workforce was extremely effective as discussed in chapter 5. His effective leadership skills were also demonstrated at the grouse meeting.

The grouse meeting is possibly the best example of a setting in which individual interpretations are shared publicly and developed into a shared definition, or what Gamson (1992a;1992b) and McAdam (1988) refer to as the *micromobilisation* context. What follows is an intentionally descriptive illustration of an observation of a grouse meeting in an attempt to express the social processes and interactions of the collective meeting. Due to ethics of research, and one of the conditions of access to the meeting, some of the issues raised were requested to be held in confidence, therefore these issues are illustrated as *Issue 1* etcetera.

Prior to the meeting, I assembled with all of the shop stewards in the trade union cabin as they discussed the issues that were to be addressed at the meeting. This is referred to as the 'pre-grouse meeting'. It was decided unanimously that Billy would chair the meeting with a list of issues raised from their previous shop stewards meeting and also a meeting with management. Management issues to be raised were in relation to housekeeping[14] and mobile phone use in yard. One of the stewards, Beef, appeared to be quite nervous before going to the meeting, despite the fact he was simply going to take notes. I speculated

---

[14] This concerned cleaning up the yard when finishing a job

as to whether this could be due to the anticipation of a long meeting as the main issue was the new pay settlement, or whether he was simply nervous of having to face hundreds of men. Nonetheless, once all the issues had been discussed, we all walked to the canteen.

At the meeting itself, the shop stewards sat along one wall facing the canteen tables and I sat at one of the tables on an orange plastic chair with my back to the shop stewards. I noticed that it was a huge, grey, cold concrete canteen, which, when the men began to stroll into, became very noisy. For the first, and only, time in the yards, I was conscious of feeling uncomfortable as an outsider but as the canteen began to fill, a group of men eventually came over and asked if they could sit with me which made the situation a lot more reassuring as they began to chat generally. I noted around the canteen that many of the men had brought home-prepared food and began to consume the contents. One of the men on my table offered me a cup of tea from his thermos flask but I had recently finished a cup of coffee so declined. The group began to enlighten me about a questionnaire they had received in the post from the GMB relating to skills. It transpired that Shipbuilders.Co were competing for a large order with enough work to last a decade, however concerns had been raised in relation to a potential lack of skills on the Tyne. Therefore, the union were conducting a survey in order to support the claim that there was an ample pool of skilled workers. One of the men sitting at my table also claimed that when television station Channel 4 were recently filming a documentary in this yard, the men had refused to allow them

access to the grouse meeting, but I was told that Billy had persuaded the men at the last grouse meeting to permit my attendance.

Eventually, Billy took up the mike of the PA and I was a little awkwardly shocked as he began my unexpected introduction saying, 'You'll have probably noticed we have a female in our midst' and continued to explain about this study and the questionnaires they would be receiving the following Monday. I noted that when he began talking there was absolute silence in the canteen, however, on one occasion he made a mistake and there were a few good-humoured whistles and jeers. A group of men sitting at the back of the canteen were in discussion and Billy stopped talking to ask if they had a problem. They fell quiet and there was a clear uncomfortable pause. He then continued to address the issues raised at the pre-grouse meeting, fleeting through each topic, receiving a few reasonable and unquestioned suggestions as to how they could avoid the car parking chaos in the change around from nightshift to dayshift. Even the issue of the new pay rates passed with only a few queries and Freddie, on my table, whispered to me that the rates were set at national level and 'We can't do anything here to change it'. Then Billy asked for any other business and the canteen erupted.

Freddie began by querying about *issue 1* and *issue 2* and some discussion began in the crowd when they were answering the questions so Billy asked for quiet as a 'brother' was trying to make a point. Calm fell and someone shouted a question from the back to which Billy reminded him that if he wanted to ask a question he had to raise his hand, which

caused a little rouse. Then the question returned to *issue 1* and *issue 2* and some queries were raised concerning matters relating to this, that they felt were unjust. An angry argument pursued between a group of men and this spread around the canteen whilst Billy tried to calm this down claiming they were getting too emotive. He suggested that they think about the issues they had raised for a few days and then come back to him, however, one of the men pointed out that a proposal had been made and they had to have a vote on it. Then someone on my table said that he counter proposed it and a man sitting next to him said he would second it. Billy had to take control of the situation and the person who originally spoke on this issue began to get quite angry and started shouting with others joining in. At this point, the strength of the anger was very evident and I surprisingly felt a little anxious for a fleeting moment, though Billy calmed the situation down very swiftly. By this time I noticed that no one except myself appeared to have been disturbed by this eruption of emotion and some men were simply reading their newspapers or eating their home-prepared food amongst the anger. There were large mugs of tea, pint bottles of milk and thermos flasks on almost every table.

Someone then came back to *issue 1* and asked how the external union were pursuing this issue. The Wallsend Branch Secretary of the GMB took the microphone to try to explain although there was a lot of shouting over him. People began to talk in groups on the tables about the issues raised and Billy asked if there were any other issues anyone wanted to

raise. Someone at the back of the canteen decided that they wanted a vote across the floor on the by now pressing matter of *issue 2* and an argument was again set in motion. Billy said he was not prepared to call a vote as the issue had been withdrawn and told them that the meeting was closed with many jeers that this time were not so good humoured. Nonetheless, the majority of men began to leave the canteen and a cluster of men gathered around the shop stewards raising more issues whilst the crowd dispersed on their way home.

6.3.2 Post Grouse Meeting Analysis

This evidence certainly provides indications of elements of both social movement and mobilisation theories. It was clear at the meeting that the workforce were not passive in the evidence of the membership articulating their grievances and attempting to influence the stewards on issues they perceived were a sense of injustice. At some stages of the meeting, Gamson's (1992) 'hot cognition' could be identified whereby he illustrates how injustice can refer to something laden with emotion. There was also undoubtedly evidence of the collective adoption of issues perceived as 'wrong' that were shared in a public way. Together with this, in terms of *attribution,* there was evidence of external stable attributions in blaming other agencies on matters they considered unjust. As in previous case studies, evidence of a culture of 'us and them' could be discerned that is related to *social identification.* Moreover, effective *leadership* can be identified in the shop stewards' control, administration

and organisation of the meeting. Clearly, the relationship between the leadership and shop floor membership can be difficult at times, particularly in the evidence describing reactions to Billy. Then again, the shop stewards are elected by the membership, and if their leadership qualities are not considered creditable, they are voted out of their position. Therefore, the fact that they remain in their positions would suggest that their leadership is effective. Furthermore, in the previous chapter, it was suggested that the fact that the workforce are not passive agents is important to a commitment to democratic participation. The attendance was of very high numbers which provided evidence of B. and P.G. Klandermans' (1984a;1984b) *willingness to participate* in terms of the membership taking collective forms of activity to defend their immediate interests. However, one variable that could not be measured from this experience was expectancy-value theory. This was measured using evidence provided from interviews conducted with shop stewards, management and FTOs.

6.3.3 An Analysis of Expectancy-Value Theory

Despite the personnel manager's comment that,

> We've lost very little time in 6 years through industrial action

implying that there had been a minimal amount of collective industrial action over this period, he also added,

> Well, as far as my manager knows anyway. But they {the workforce} have had the odd half day.

It emerged during fieldwork that, not only in this company, but also in the TMCI in general, the 'culture' of unofficial half-day walkouts appears to be a customary occurrence. However, the majority of respondents claimed that such instances are never documented as industrial action. The personnel manager revealed that he did not know the number of half-days that had cost the company time in the past two years and suggested that the convenor would be more familiar with such knowledge. However, when asked, the convenor himself admitted that he had even been oblivious of an unofficial walkout only the previous week on the nightshift, until he had returned to work the following morning. One of the shop stewards, Keith, described that occasion,

> I was the first one in the office at quarter to seven and I checked the book from nightshift, and the nightshift had gone home so I wanted to see what was reported and left in the book. Billy was next in and then the nightshift representative come in with Beef and Ben and we had a discussion of what had gone on on nightshift... it was mainly a protest towards the company with regard to the way they handled the {recent} redundancies. Bearing in mind the two senior shop stewards were off the yard and they {management} refused to consult with the two shop stewards who were in the yard and went ahead with the redundancy regardless of talking to us. The lads decided that they didn't like the attitude the company had taken and that they hadn't consulted the shop stewards at all, so they took a half a day protest and refused to work the weekend.

As illustrated on several occasions throughout this thesis, redundancies are regular in this industry due to the fluctuating nature of the business.

Clearly in this instance, because management had not followed the correct procedures or 'rules', the nightshift workforce clearly decided that this was 'wrong' or 'unjust', attributed the blame to management and took immediate collective action in the form of an unofficial walk out and overtime ban. In terms of expectancy-value theory, these workers were clearly familiar with the means of action, capable of participating and prepared to do so. It could be suggested that such familiarity and apparent ease with which these workers all participated in this 'form of protest', could be due to the implication that such 'protests' appear to be an established practice in the yards, and accepted unequivocally as such by the majority of the respondents interviewed. As illustrated by one FTO,

> There are periods when the steam builds up to an extent that it needs to blow and our members have a half a day, you've probably heard about that. We have to say the only reason why they have a half a day is mainly due to the excessive overtime that's being worked...you know people are expected to work 70-80 hours a week, so it wouldn't surprise that the odd Monday afternoon people are looking for that little bit rest and it doesn't take a great deal to get people upset on a Monday afternoon...they wouldn't get upset on a Sunday cos it's double time...

Clearly in this instance, in terms of expectancy-value theory it would appear that the workforce do calculate the costs and benefits of taking industrial action through what both B. and P.G. Klandermans refer to as *reward motives* (1984a:584;1984b:107). Other evidence implied that there were also expectations relating to Klandermans' theory such as the number of participants and the probability of success if many people

participate. As highlighted earlier in the Ship Repair Ltd case study, it was explained by an FTO that this was determined by the amount of work in the yards as he simply stated,

No work, no problems, lots of work, lots of problems.

Such a suggestion was also confirmed by the yard manager, although with a focus more towards the length of the contracts,

I don't want to sound damning or sinister but my opinion is that peoples' reaction and their direction into what happens at work is in ratio to how long they think they're going to be working for the company. That's what happens, the people think they're going to be here for a short time, if they want some thermals issued and they're late, they're up in arms cos they've only got work here for 6 weeks and they don't have a thermal jacket the first week

All of this evidence provides some contribution towards understanding the different processes through which workers acquire a collective definition of interest. This has certainly been assisted through the use of both mobilisation and social movement theories, although there are other sources of evidence that also provided confirmation of a strong identification of collective interests and solidarity in this yard, without the application of these theories.

6.4   The Benevolent Fund and 'collectivism of everyday life'

The first source of evidence to consider is the benevolent fund that is collected in Shipbuilders.Co and Ship Repair Ltd and administered by the respective shop stewards committees. Dave at Ship Repair explained

that the workers paid £1.50 per week into this fund and if anyone was on sick leave for four weeks they received £200.00. The convenor at Shipbuilders explained that the fund was not exclusive to union members but open to all employees who sought to become a member, including management. Together with this, the funds were not solely for the assistance of the members of that particular company but also to assist local community voluntary initiatives such as charities. The community initiatives chosen to assist were decided upon through a collective vote of all the members of the benevolent fund. As described by Billy,

> It's nothing to do with the union...nothing to do with the social or anything like that, it's between us. And then if anybody is a member of like any charities, we've got {charity 1} over in South Shields, the special needs group, we've got {charity 2} here. Just after Christmas we wrote out cheques for £1000 for each of those...it's for charity as well...we got a meningitis thing that came through, we read it, we put the poster up for the meningitis thing...and I went to see Beef and said 'what do you think?' and he said 'right okay' so we wrote out a cheque for £100 and gave it to them. If anybody is doing any sponsor thing like throwing themselves off bridges, we give them money. Big Jamie's a welder who's starting here at some point, Jamie is always chasing money, doing sponsored things, swims, throwing himself off bridges...and he's connected with his family for this special needs charity for this special school and Jamie is always hassling us for money. And at the end of the year we look at what we've got in the pot and how many people we've got on the sick and how the workforce is either increasing or decreasing and we make a decision on that.

The confirmation of how many initiatives had been assisted through this fund was very apparent in the many 'thank you' cards and regional newspaper cut outs displayed in the trade union offices. Arguably, this demonstrates a strong identification of collective interests within the community and fits well with Stephenson & Stewart's (2001) 'collectivism of everyday life' in demonstrating the care employees offer to each other and their community outside the workplace. A further way in which this could be identified was from a conversation in the shop stewards cabin at Ship Repair Ltd when Barry mentioned that, as an electrician, he was going to help one of his colleagues install an electric shower at home at the weekend. The convenor, Dave described a different way in which they supported one another,

> At times, when there aren't any problems...you know the problems blokes come in here with? 'Wor lass works in such and such a place and they're doing this and that to them that's not right....' Or my sister or my daughter or...y'knaa...but one I'm going to take up very very shortly, there's a lad came in to see me and his daughter works for {pubchain}...she doesn't finish until about one o' clock in the morning and they don't provide transport...and without looking into it too deeply, my opinion of that, after 12 o clock at night under the Working Time Directive between 12 and 6 is classed as nightshift but you've also got to think about what I've already quoted there in the health and safety at work act, your employer has a duty of health and care towards his employees...do you think that is right that an 18 year old lass should be leaving work at 1 o clock in the morning, and if she hasn't got the money for a taxi, walk home?... what he's doing at the moment, he's going

down and picking her up. What I intend to do is for us to challenge {pubchain}...I intend to challenge them cos I think they're wrong under the health and safety at work act I think they're sending her into an unsafe environment at that time in the morning.

Once more, this would provide evidence to support Stephenson & Stewart's (Ibid) third category of collectivism, together with their second category, 'work place collectivism' in the willingness on the part of employees to provide support to one another. This evidence also corresponds with data provided earlier in this chapter, of the way in which the shop stewards at Refit PLC will also represent those workers in the community *not* currently working in the yards but may be re-employed in the future. Indeed, a further source of evidence illustrated how such an act of support could be reciprocated. Billy, the Shipbuilders.Co convenor, described a situation when he and another shop steward were made redundant from Oilers.com for initiating strike action and how *"the lads were putting into a fund to pay our wages"*, whilst they were fighting their case externally. This was not the benevolent fund but a separate fund established solely to pay the two shop stewards' salaries. Such support would certainly indicate a strong sense of solidarity. A final example of solidarity, and how the collective definition of interest once more extended beyond the boundaries of the organisation, was in a walk out by workers in all three companies in support of sacked subcontracted employees.

6.5 The Collective Identity Expressed in a Mass Walkout in the TMCI

As highlighted on numerous occasions in this study, the companies on the River Tyne frequently employ subcontractors when more employees are required to complete a client contract within a desired time-scale. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the shop stewards from both the company and the subcontractor frequently worked together to address issues raised by the workers, the main issues usually centred upon differential pay rates. However, the companies and trade unions involved on the Tyne have attempted to alleviate historical problems with differential pay rates through the Tyneside Collective Labour Agreement (TCLA). This three year collective agreement signed by Shipbuilders.Co, Refit PLC, Oilers.com, Amicus and the GMB aims to ensure pay equity across the companies on the Tyne to reduce the likelihood of pay disputes. However, subcontractors are not covered by the agreement and this led to a perceived injustice by subcontracted workers employed by S&V Services Ltd in three of the yards on the Tyne.

The 98 subcontracted employees working at ShipbuildersCo, Refit PLC and Oilers.com realised that they were receiving an hourly rate of £9.35, compared to the rest of the manual workforce covered by the TCLA on a rate of £11.30 per hour. After four months of negotiations between their trade union Amicus and S&V Services Ltd, the 98 workers continued to be dissatisfied due to no improved, or matched, pay offer and then unofficially walked out of the three yards simultaneously. They pledged

to continue their unofficial strike until S&V Services Ltd guaranteed the same pay and conditions as the rest of their colleagues working on the River Tyne.

After eight days of unofficial action, the striking workers received letters from their employer informing them of their breach of contract and impending 'self-dismissal'. A Regional Officer of Amicus requested that they return to work while negotiations continued, but they refused to do so and were dismissed the following day by their employer. The sacked workers decided to picket the gates of the three companies to inform the shipyard workers of the current situation. On the first day of picketing, 3000 workers in all three companies on the Tyne, from which the subcontractors had been sacked, walked out in support of their colleagues. One of the Amicus shop stewards of the sacked workers told a regional newspaper,

> *We did not ask for employees to go out on strike today but we are delighted at this much appreciated show of solidarity. We have backing from every sector working in the yards.* (The Evening Chronicle, September 15 2003)

This undoubtedly demonstrates the strength of the identity of collective interest and solidarity in the TMCI and had successful outcomes in that the 98 workers returned to work three weeks after the beginning of the strike, with an agreement for the same rate of pay as the rest of the workforce as from January 2004, including a compensation payment from

their employers. This event certainly provides evidence to illustrate how worker collectivism and solidarity persists in the TMCI, and components can again be identified that would support social movement injustice frames and Tilly's mobilisation theory. Some consideration of the conditions of all of these processes will be examined in the following discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided new empirical material to contribute support for other studies undertaken that provide significant evidence of the relative health of workplace collectivism in some workplaces (for e.g. Danford *et al.* 2000, 2003; Darlington 1994, 2001, 2002; Fairbrother 1996; Gall 2000; Gallie *et al.* 1996) despite claims that Britain has moved from a collectivist to individualist system. The analysis was conducted using both social movement and mobilisation theories, as it has been suggested (Kelly 1998; Metochi 2002) that these approaches may help to gain a clearer understanding of the ways in which the 'collective identity' can be defined. Some consideration of the key themes that emerged in this chapter will be examined in this section.

Firstly, in terms of social movement theory, it was examined how and why situations or actions by one group can be perceived as *unjust* by another group. Different examples were provided from each yard to illustrate how a sense of *injustice* by workers could be identified on several occasions. Together with this, it was demonstrated how this sense of injustice was

shared, formally and informally, through the contribution of individual interests in different ways; section meetings, JSSC meetings, mass and grouse meetings and informal tea breaks. Social movement theorists describe such situations as *micromobilisation* contexts and suggest that in the process of collectively adopting an injustice frame, an individual interpretation of *injustice* must be shared in a public way and everyone must be aware that it is being shared. In this way, from a social movement perspective, issues collectively defined as unjust can then be transformed into demands. The evidence from the mass and grouse meetings also lend support to Tilly's mobilisation theory in the ways in which workers come to define their *interests,* and in terms of *mobilisation,* they can be viewed as a good example of a setting for a group to go from being a passive collection of individuals to an active collective participant. Together with this, all of these processes express the way in which the *organisation* of the group's structure affects its ability to act on its interests. They also provide some support for Tilly's fourth element in the *opportunities* available to the subordinate group to go in pursuit of their claims.

In terms of this component, it was demonstrated that changes in the numbers of workers employed in the yards could affect the *opportunity* of the workforce to go in pursuit of their claims. However, in relation to social movement theory, opportunity will also depend upon a "willingness to participate", (B. Klandermans 1984; P.G. Klandermans 1984) and a good example of this was in the unofficial walk out by all of the nightshift

237

workers at Shipbuilders.Co over a perceived injustice by management breaking procedural rules. Indeed, in terms of the perceived costs and benefits of participation, evidence from all companies illustrates how the workers appear to be familiar with the means of action and capable of participating in the knowledge that others will also participate. It would appear from the worker questionnaires and random unofficial walkouts that the majority of the workers were prepared to do so. Possibly the best example of such willingness to participate is in the unofficial walk out by workers in three companies, in solidarity with their dismissed colleagues. What is also indicated from this evidence is that the collective action taken by the workers appears to be through *attributions* in terms of causes by another group, in this case, the subcontracting agency employer. In terms of workers' *attributions* of blame, the evidence illustrates how this could be directed to several key actors in the employment relationship, although appears to be predominantly the employer. What also emerged as a dominant theme from the case studies was an embedded culture of 'us and them'.

In all of the interviews conducted with all of the actors involved in the employment relationship in TMCI, there were very strong indications of a culture of 'us and them', which appears to be a fixed constraint within which they have always, and continue to, operate. From a social movement perspective, such 'us and them' attitudes are associated with *social identification* and perceived as essential to mobilising frames as it is suggested that the collective identity must be oppositional (Fantasia

1988; Gamson 1992a). It is also suggested that *leadership* is important in terms of motivating a group into collective action and the importance of leadership in promoting group cohesion is discussed at length in the previous chapter. It would appear then, that all of the major components associated with both the social movement and mobilisation approaches are evident in these case studies, which would suggest evidence of strong collective identity. However, one question that ought to be raised is whether *all* components necessarily need to be evident to confirm that a collective identity exists. Furthermore, as outlined in chapter 3, these theories tend to imply a constant endeavour to ultimately taking industrial action, yet arguably, as evident from these case studies, a strong workplace collective identity can still exist without the need to take industrial action. There were other significant issues that were drawn out of this analysis. Firstly, a key theme that emerged from this evidence is that, in the reality of organisational life, day-to-day behaviour can be full of conflicts and tensions and solidarity and collectivism can still exist. Secondly, it would appear that, in this industry, there are different stages and elements to the 'collective identity' that can be combined together in various ways. These are significant issues that might have been overlooked without the use of mobilisation and social movement theories and will be revisited in the final concluding chapter.

Chapter Seven

The Dynamics of Power in the Employment Relationship in TMCI

Introduction

It was discussed in chapter 3 how the concept of 'power' is a pervasive term in the field of industrial relations, yet despite the crucial significance of power to this area of study, it would appear that little empirical research has been conducted on the subject. Indeed, in embarking on such a project, it became clear as to why this might be the situation. In the first instance, attempting to identify and explain 'power' proved to be a daunting task, particularly when trying to distinguish it within an extremely complex set of relationships in the TMCI. The following Figures, 7.1 and 7.2, are an attempt to place these relationships in an illustration in order to help in the understanding of the dynamics of this employment relationship. These figures, in combination with the text that follows in this chapter, also attempt to highlight how power can be continuous and shifting within a multifaceted set of workplace relationships. It is suggested that it might be useful to refer back to the figures in this section when considering the issues that are raised in this chapter. A major part of the complexity is not only the dynamics through which power shifts from one key group to another, but also the shifts in power 'within' each group. Hence, there are both interorganisational and intraorganisational power relationships evident. Figure 7.2 is an attempt to clarify these intricacies in this employment relationship to support discussion within this chapter.

Figure 7.1   The relationships between the predominant groups involved in the TMCI
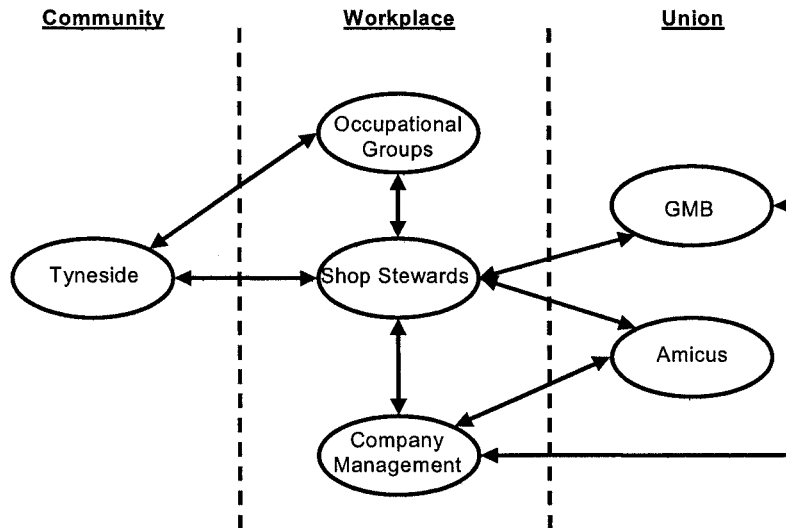
Figure 7.2   The interorganisational and intraorganisational power relationships within the groups in the TMCI
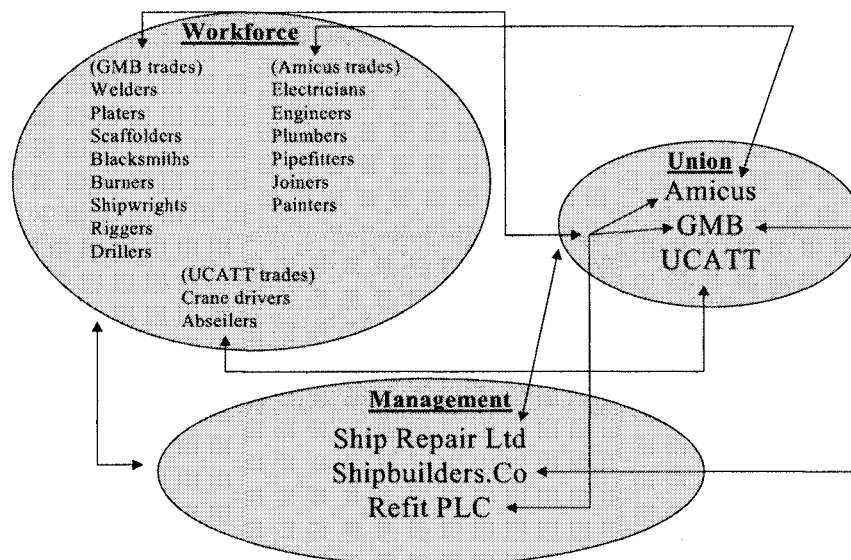
At the time of fieldwork, the evidence all appeared to suggest that the balance of power was in favour of the workforce over the rest of the groups in the relationship, although there were a number of preconditions that appeared to influence this power advantage. These were; a skills shortage in the industry, the uncertain and unstable economic market of this industry and a continuity of cultures and traditions by all of the social actors involved in the employment relationship. It was recognised that their power advantage derived from three sources; power deriving from relationships, power deriving from the labour market and the labour process and finally, power deriving from the workers themselves. However, this all raises another question that needs to be addressed in terms of *power for what?* The answer to this question appeared to be that the power advantage of the workforce influenced numerous 'outcomes' in their favour, or rather, the power advantage placed the 'frontier of control' (Edwards 1979) in their favour over several issues in the employment relationship. It is these 'outcomes' that provide the framework for this chapter, and unlike the previous empirical chapters that focused on one case study company at a time, this chapter draws together data from all three companies under each of the different outcomes examined.

The outcomes that are suggested to be influenced by the workers' power advantage are; control over the labour process and terms and conditions, control over recruitment, and control over representation, which are the titles of the first three sections of this chapter. The chapter then

continues with the theme of representation and focuses on the power relationship between the shop stewards and workforce, and examines how the frontier of control is able to shift in favour of the shop stewards. The fourth section focuses upon the power relationship between capital and labour and suggests that, in the TMCI, it is interdependent, which is argued to be a further advantage to the workforce. The following section then provides examples of power dynamics between these different groupings in the employment relationship, in an examination of the shifting frontiers of control. The final section concerns the very recent establishment of a group that is considered extremely relevant to this chapter, as it is noted that there is potential that the influence and initiatives intended by this group, may affect the power relations within the TMCI. This group is referred to as the Tyneside Maritime Cluster Group (TMCG) and that section explains why it was established, its purpose and the power struggles between the groups in the employment relationship in reaction to its introduction.

7.1 Control over the Labour Process and Terms and Conditions of Employment

Possibly the clearest example of a contested power struggle in the employment relationship in the TMCI, is in the persistent attempts by management at Ship Repair Ltd to make alterations to the yard agreement. The processes involved in this were discussed at length in chapter 5 where it was observed that, at the time of fieldwork,

negotiations on proposed changes by management had continued for 20 months. As the managing director described,

> I've spent nearly two years trying to talk to them {workforce} about a new form of agreement and to be honest I've failed, unfortunately. I tried to revolutionise it but I've given up. No matter how we tried to give and take and balance it, the change is so dramatic that they...well...with the committee {shop stewards}, I must be honest, having sat for so many months, there was light and we had almost reached agreement, in fact we had reached agreement, but the men! It had took 20 months, meeting twice a week on average, with the negotiating committee, to get to a point where they recommended it. FTOs on the river and the national officers all recommended acceptance...we then had 200 men out there who rejected it, despite their own officers recommendation...

The convenor explained that, despite the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee (JSSC) offering a proposal to accept the renegotiated changes at another mass meeting, the workforce again rejected these and, as he stipulated, "they've got the final say". This evidence would appear to suggest that, on this issue, the balance of power lay in favour of the workforce as they retained control over their conditions of employment through the non-acceptance of conditions they perceived unfavourable. It is also interesting to observe that the position of power of the workforce is not only comparable to that of management but also to other social actors in the employment relationship such as the shop stewards, FTOs and the external union's national officers. This is particularly clear in the way that the workforce continually rejects the recommendations put forward by the union and in the convenor's

statement that the workforce decision is the final one. The main issues of disagreement were the attempts to establish annualised hours and introduce flexibility and interchangeability into the labour process.

The problematical issue of interchangeability and flexibility are not only confined to Ship Repair Ltd, but to other companies on the Tyne, and can also be detected in comparable industries on other rivers. For instance, in chapter 2, it is demonstrated how Roberts (1993) found few indications of a radical restructuring of the division of labour in shipbuilding on the River Wear in Sunderland. He stressed that this was due to the importance of the identity of sectional groups of skilled workers and the craft control of the division of labour. In a study of the attempted introduction of 'new' forms of work and employment in the Tyneside shipbuilding industry, Cumbers (1995) also stresses the importance of the identity of the 'skilled worker' and draws attention to the resistance to the introduction of forms of flexibility that undermines core craft groups. Such resistance continues to be identified in the TMCI, as a manager in Refit PLC explained when asked as to whether he believed demarcation still existed in that particular company,

> Of course it still exists, of course (laughs) oh goodness me yes. You have real trouble if you start to talk about interchangeability, where someone else is doing someone else's job. So if we were to say 'we want platers to do all the rigging, there will be no riggers any more' or if we were to say 'we're going to train the riggers to do plating work' we would have a real problem. One, because the riggers in here are AEEU and the platers are GMB, and that's one problem, but also because it's

an interchangeability thing. You see if it's flexibility within the GMB or flexibility within the AEEU group then you're all right, but if you try to make it cross over, from AEEU group to GMB group, then you've got a problem.

However, Barry, a senior shop steward, maintained that flexibility was *not* necessarily accepted within a single union group,

An electrician will always do an electrician's work, a plumber will always do a plumber's work but sometimes they {management} try to get people to do other people's work and we say, "Na, we will not do it"

John, another shop steward, described how management had on occasion attempted to evade, rather than eliminate, demarcation lines,

It generally happens on weekends by the way, not during the week, we're sitting in the house and our job's being done by, for instance, the fitters, and the management has told them to do it and said, "Don't worry we'll take the responsibility when they come in tomorrow morning"

The yard manager at Shipbuilders.Co also acknowledged that they had demarcation problems and described, with a hint of cynicism how he perceived this issue,

Demarcation is not like they feel guilty that they're doing something other than their own trade discipline cos of their primeval grouping, it's like they're thinking they're doing more work than they get paid for.

All of this evidence would suggest that, attempting to implement flexibility and interchangeability has certainly produced some resistance from the workforce in the TMCI, and as acknowledged by a MSF FTO,

In the main, it's realised that the idea of total interchangeability just cannot operate.

It was suggested by some respondents that this might be due to the "traditional culture" in the industry on the Tyne, as the employee relations manager in Refit PLC explained,

> Part of this is a Tyneside problem, you've got so much baggage...history, tradition, some of which is a good thing cos some of it provides you with pride in work and our guys do work hard and well, but it is a Tyneside problem.

This would certainly support Cumbers (1995:545) assertion that *"...there remains considerable resistance (especially on Tyneside where the shipbuilding legacy is the strongest) to the introduction of certain forms of flexibility"*. One of the managers at Shipbuilders.Co, who had moved from a Teesside yard, also gave a very interesting personal view of this 'legacy',

> Industrial relations in this industry here has got it's own culture. When we first took over this company, I had a meeting with {FTO's name} from the GMB and when we put the contract together, the yard agreement, he said 'There's a culture on the Tyne. It is different'. I said '{FTO's name}, I'm from 40 miles down the road, I've been a boilermaker, I served my apprenticeship at {A Company} on Teesside, I'm a plater by trade, I've worked offshore, I've been a shop steward, I've been a supervisor for years and years and you cannot tell me anything about boilermakers'. I was totally wrong. There's a culture here on this river which is different from...well...which is singular.

It would appear that this continuity of culture and tradition in the TMCI is potentially another reason why the balance of power appears to be in favour of the workforce over the issues of flexibility and interchangeability.

Undoubtedly this is an historical issue, as evidence provided in chapter 2 illustrates how the first procedure established on the river with regard to demarcation was signed in 1891 (Roberts 1967:17). G. Roberts' occasional paper, written in the 1960s when demarcation disputes were at their highest levels, also illustrates how *"...employers have never considered the effects of demarcation to be serious enough to warrant mounting an all-out attack to break the...control over labour utilisation..."* (Ibid:34) Indeed, current management interviews gave the impression that they had not attempted to exert an all out attack on those boundaries, and as I. Roberts (1993:139) also discovered on Wearside, this could possibly be "because the work gets done" as also suggested by a GMB FTO,

> I can tell you that in terms of the river, there hasn't been one contract that hasn't been out on time, spot on, to the day, the very hour and within budget.

It was also discussed in chapter 5 how demarcation was not necessarily an obstacle to workplace organisation in the TMCI. Rather, it was illustrated in that chapter how workers simply persisted in maintaining the protection of their trade and hence employment. Arguably, such protectionism can be beneficial to the workers for other reasons, for as noted in chapter 3, the possession of scarce skills can help to level the imbalance of power between capital and labour, and for labour, it is best if it is restricted in availability and not compelled into becoming interchangeable (Hyman 1975:23). Certainly, this will depend upon the social profile of the workforce in question and the nature of the segregation, however, in this case study, it would appear that the

possession of scarce skills is positive to this workforce in terms of levelling the imbalance of power between capital and labour and retaining the frontier of control over certain issues. Indeed, thus far, the evidence has demonstrated how the balance of power is frequently in favour of the workforce in terms of over their terms and conditions of employment and work organisation. It would appear that the condition for this advantage lies in a combination of factors, including the continuity of culture and tradition and the preservation and importance of the occupational identity. Indeed, the protection of the occupational identity of the worker in the TMCI was not only identified through the resistance of the introduction of flexibility and interchangeability, but also through the veiled existence of the closed shop.

7.2 Control over Recruitment

Perhaps due to the illegality of the closed shop, and possibly the fact that I was external to the industry as a researcher, it was not surprising to discover that not one single respondent outwardly admitted to the existence of a formal closed shop in their company. However, there was certainly evidence to imply the continuation of practices of a closed shop, as one of the managers at Refit PLC indicated about their company,

> Officially, no such thing as a closed shop, unofficially, I think that if they don't show their union cards and they don't join, life can be made very difficult.

As illustrated in chapter 5, in Shipbuilders.Co, conditions at work can be made very different to the rest of the shop floor by the convenor for

249

anyone who refused to become a union member. Such workers were never given the opportunity to work overtime, for the shop stewards controlled the overtime rota. Nor were these workers allowed to attend the grouse meeting, thereby being excluded from a vital democratic and informative part of work. Kevin, a shop steward at Refit PLC, certainly considered Shipbuilders.Co to be a closed shop,

> They all used to be closed shops, {Shipbuilders} still is, they won't say it is, but it is, and if you go there and you haven't got a union card, he {convenor} gives you a form straight away, 'fill that in straight away and I'll put it in for you and then you can start'.

Conversely, Ben, a shop steward at Shipbuilders.Co, described his experiences when he was briefly employed at Refit PLC only three years previous to the interview,

> When I was down there, no offence to the lads down there...the shop steward at the time was a lad called {name} and he would send you home if you didn't have your card with you. In the induction at 7.30 you used to have your boots, overalls and if you didn't have your GMB card he wouldn't start you...and he sent them home and I thought he...I actually thought the lads were going to banjo[15] him, but they just went home.

It could be suggested once more that this was a form of protecting the occupational identity, as the union card demonstrates that the worker is time served, and therefore a craftsman in his trade. Yet, this also arguably indicates a form of control over recruitment, for if not in possession of a union card, the men are refused entry into the yard to

---

[15] This is a Geordie colloquialism for a violent act against another person.

start work, or their working day is 'made very difficult'. However, as mentioned above, there was no hard evidence to confirm that there was a formal closed shop at any of the yards. Nonetheless, each of the yards held a regular show and check of union membership cards and, as outlined in chapter 5, as well as indicated in the quote above, management appeared to turn a blind eye to this practice. Management also appeared to overlook another form of controlling recruitment by the shop stewards and workforce. This was in terms of the recruitment of labour from outside of the Tyneside area.

During the first cluster of interviews, it became clear that some questions listed on the shop stewards coded questionnaires were non-operational. One was on the issue of the use of email as a form of communication at work, and the other was in terms of equal opportunities issues at the workplace. One shop steward asked about this latter issue exclaimed,

> For what? Mackems you mean?

It became clear during the course of the interviews that, if any company in the TMCI employed labour from Wearside or Teesside, which both have comparable industries on their respective rivers, this could cause industrial relations problems as highlighted by the yard manager at Shipbuilders.Co,

> At the point when we tell the shop stewards that we've exhausted local labour, we can bring people in from out of the area. Until then, they won't allow us to bring people in from out of the Tyne. They won't work with people who are, there'd just be massive, massive labour relations problems.

251

This was also demonstrated in Refit PLC, as stated by one of the managers,

> Do you know about the one, 'we can't recruit people from Sunderland'? It goes back to 1920 something, there was some strike breaking activity in the 1920s and there's always been this resistance. But if they were saying, 'you can't employ people from Spain' it would be illegal, but nobody actually contemplates that about people from Sunderland. But they could argue that it's against their human rights but that would point the finger at us {the company} I guess.

Indeed, none of the respondents appeared to judge this recruitment scheme as an issue of discrimination, and an FTO justified it from his own perspective,

> You imagine the situation where the lads are down in a pub in Wallsend, some employed members there, they drink with other mates some are employed, some unemployed, and you have on the doorstep people brought in from other areas who are working in a job which they believe are...well belong to the community...and so you can imagine the environment there, the atmosphere down there, you know there's tension...

What is clear from these quotes is how power is used as a form of control over the recruitment of labour by the workforce and their shop stewards. In particular, this is evident through management use of words such as "they won't allow us" and "we can't". This was certainly not the first instance that interviews with management had produced such language.

7.3 Control over Representation

One of the managers at Refit PLC described the situation when the most recent mass of redundancies had occurred,

> They said {the workforce} on their departing shot, while there was no workforce in the yard, they do not expect management to come to an agreement with the GMB delegate...our workforce have quite clearly said "we don't want you to agree anything with the GMB" That included the AEEU on site...they {the workforce} don't want management to agree anything with the GMB, not while there's no workforce here...

In this instance, the balance of power was undoubtedly in favour of the workforce, for they were in the knowledge that Refit PLC would need to re-employ the majority of them on the achievement of their next contract. Amid a skills shortage in the industry and the probability that a competitor on the river may achieve a contract ahead of them, obviously Refit PLC would want to avoid displeasing these workers. Clearly then, in notifying management not to get involved in any negotiation with the trade unions over their terms and conditions of employment without their involvement in the decision making process, the workforce were, once more, displaying power in their favour in the employment relationship. Interestingly, this also indicates some exercise of control over the external union, and when questioned as to what would happen if the management did negotiate new terms and conditions with the external union representatives, I was informed,

> If we did do an agreement with the union they {the workforce} would just throw it out or whatever, cos this is part of the problem, because the

union is different things, the union is not simply one entity, it is the guys on our shop floor. I'm telling you we've always got this problem that what you're agreeing with the delegate is not what you're agreeing with the shop floor, and the shop floor likes to tell the delegate to, well, "go away", which they did a few weeks ago, "we don't want to talk to you, bye". I know that it's been done several times, it's the guys on the shop floor who will decide whether they're going to do something or not...

This implies a form of control over the external trade union, in the workforce exercising their power to send a union official off the yard and refusing to listen to him. Certainly, it also provides a very interesting observation of the 'union' in the industry, raising questions as to 'who is the union?', for it divides the 'union' into separate entities illustrating yet another dynamic in the power relationship within the TMCI. Indeed, a taped interview with a group of shop stewards highlighted precisely how complex the power relationship can be within the 'union grouping' in the TMCI. In order to illustrate a complete depiction of the processes involved, the following is a full descriptive account of the relevant part of the discussion. There were 5 shop stewards at the meeting, although the conversation was predominantly between stewards 'M' and 'D' at this stage of the interview.

M   {The FTO} and them {the management}, they took us to an external conference in Doncaster to try to brainwash us, so we had a nice meal in Doncaster with a few pints and what they were trying to do was just change our minds

D   They were trying to get us to accept an offer that was 3½ %

Jo   And what were you asking for?

M   10%. We knew we weren't going to get that by the way, but we achieved 8½ % over two years by sticking to our guns. What we done was, we had got to such a point that we had used our 5 days {of strike action} up, but you've either got to increase the action or accept the offer, so we put it in writing the week before that we were going to increase our action to 2 days a week and we weren't going to tell them what days we were having off, we were just going to tell the blokes "you're not in tomorrow". Officially we had to put it in writing, but eventually we just had to do it ourselves cos to follow the proper channels you just cannot...well...and then when we put it into 2 days they got all the shop stewards and the delegates over at Derwent House and they tried to brainwash us again with another deal

Jo   Who, the union?

M   Aye the union, and the management, and {FTOs surname}...and to be honest they had us there for 8 hours and they wore us down I've got to say. Looking back, as soon as we left the meeting we knew we'd made the wrong decision, believe it or not, but we are only working class blokes and these are educated from university, God knows what, and con people of their livelihoods, so we agreed to no strike action and got a 5½ % pay rise

D   Which is okay, the men would've probably gone along with that wouldn't they?

M   Well, they went with the pay rise but they wouldn't accept no strike unofficial action, they fucking knacked[16] us

D   Totally crucified us

M   We'd gone against what they'd recommended

D   So by rights we had to resign, but the men wouldn't let us resign

---

[16] Geordie colloquialism for a severe berating.

M   They knew what had happened, they let us off the hook, but we got

     slaughtered like, we got fucking slaughtered.... Well he {FTO's name}

     took it out of our hands when we were having a meeting in Derwent

     House, a big conference table with delegates and 6 or 7 management for

     hours. What they done was they got up and went into a different room,

     the managers and our delegate {FTOs name}, they came up with a deal

     instead of discussing it round the table...

D   We don't know what was said in that room though

M   Na, I took it back to the men and it was rejected 99.9% it was only us

     daft shites who recommended it, but we'd done as much as we could

     and we were being honest.

Not only does this conversation indicate what would appear to be a

curious informal wage bargaining technique, but also an intense

complexity in the power relationships between the actors involved in this

employment relationship.   It demonstrates the pivotal role of the shop

stewards in the relationship, yet also the instability of their position as

representatives of the workforce.   This example is significant for it

recognises the different *intraorganisational* rival power groups who may

oppose one another's requirements from the bargaining process.   It is

also important for it demonstrates the processes of power *within* the

micro industrial relations system through a brief analysis of the *interaction*

and the *behavioural* pattern of opposing factions.   This is all considered

significant, for as outlined in great depth in chapter 3, these are all factors

that are criticised as being neglected by certain industrial relations

theories.   Nonetheless, a further example to add to the complex dynamics

of this employment relationship was provided by one of the GMB FTOs.

This is extremely significant for it reflects opposition and conflict within the 'union grouping' from both an intraorganisational and interorganisational position.

> I'd negotiated what I thought was a really good agreement but this section of the workforce weren't happy and they were very hostile to me, the scaffolders, were extremely hostile and the upshot of that was that they all dropped out and joined another union, and the other union tried to do something which was not in the true traditions of trade union history, because they decided to support them and I protested most strongly...and the lads said, "oh you useless little bastard you" and stuff like that, you know...but even despite differences between officials and the membership in the past they {the workforce} still have 100% loyalty to the trade unions, it's not the union they'd have a problem with, it'll be me {FTO's surname}

This not only adds further complexities in understanding the dynamics of the employment relationship in the TMCI, but is also important as further issues of significance are evident. Firstly, what is inferred from this dialogue is what would appear to be a form of control by the membership over the external union. Secondly, in the recognition that trade unions are attempting to increase their membership figures in order to survive, losing members to another union could be harmful. Particularly in this industry where the GMB have gained single union recognition in the majority of companies, giving them a power advantage over other unions involved in the industry. It emerged that there was indeed some interorganisational tension in the relationship between the trade unions involved on the river at the time of research. In particular, there was a

257

strain in the relationship between the two major unions in the industry, the GMB and the AEEU. A GMB official explained that their relationship was,

Not too brilliant at the minute, I think it's got more to do with a lack of trade unionism more than anything else.

An AEEU official also stated, in terms of the relative health of their relationship,

Well there's two answers to that, there's the political answer and that is 'not very well' because we're fighting each other for recognition and membership because we've lost a lot. On the other hand, between individuals it varies, individual to individual...

Indeed on the subject of competition for recognition, a GMB FTO commented, *"Well the AEEU have got a PhD in that!"* Nonetheless, it became clear that the tension was indeed due to competition for recognition rights, although this was more associated with industries external to the TMCI as explained by the GMB Regional Secretary,

The relationship is very bad. I'll tell you why it's bad. It's not because of what's happening on the river, it's because of what's happening regionally. The approach the AEEU have taken to recognition, it seems to me, and I'll say this very clearly, that they prefer to sign an agreement with the employer who will sign it with them because they're a soft touch and it keeps the GMB, or an effective organisation, out. I've said to them, 'until you can demonstrate to me that you are a trade union organisation'...and it's a shame because they have some good officers, some genuine trade unionists...but if that's the way they want to plan their activity then...well I don't recognise that as collectivism, I don't base that on any trade union principles at all...

However these union relationship tensions did not appear to have filtered down to the shop floor or the shop steward organisation as outlined by another GMB FTO,

> It has to be said, most of the shop stewards don't look at it in that sense, they're quite happy with their situation no matter whether there's one union or half a dozen, they don't get involved in it, it's just the officers and senior members of the union.

Also, despite the unusual bargaining occasion as outlined above, the shop stewards and FTOs all claimed that they had a fairly good relationship. This could also be due to the fact that at some point, all of the FTOs who represented the companies on the river, had been a member of the TMCI workforce and were fairly well known by the majority, as described by the MSF FTO,

> We tend to be very comradely because most of us know each other as we've grown up in the same environment. We might be critical of each other at times, but it wouldn't stop us having a pint of beer.

Interestingly, what equally emerged from this information was the fact that, in terms of 'official' representation by the external union, the membership insisted on only having representatives with comparable occupational identities. It emerged that this was not only characteristic of the Tyneside industry as explained by an FTO who had recently returned from the Teesside industry,

> They're a strange breed, they'll not accept somebody unless they are a time served person, so it was either a case of putting me as a Geordie down in Teesside, which you know is quite difficult, or it was a case of putting somebody in who wasn't time served, and obviously they thought

it was better to throw a Geordie to the wolves as opposed to, well somebody who hadn't served their apprenticeship. But they're {Teesside workforce} not as militant as they are on the Tyne about who represents them.

As mentioned previously, all of the FTOs interviewed in the course of this research were time served craftsmen who had worked in the Tyneside yards both as a tradesman and shop steward. It could therefore be suggested from this evidence that the membership are also able to exercise power as a form of control in the recruitment of their external trade union representatives. Certainly, as mentioned above, they also control recruitment of representation internally, in terms of electing shop stewards into their role and ejecting them if they are not satisfied with their performance. However, the power relationship between the shop stewards and the membership is in a constant state of flux and the 'frontier of control' (Edwards, 1979) shifts depending on certain situations.

7.4 Striking back – The Control of the Shop Stewards

In the first instance, it is clear from evidence presented thus far that the shop stewards' ability to pursue an issue is, on occasion, limited due to their dependence on the shopfloor workers for agreement. This would imply that the frontier of control is in favour of the shopfloor workers as opposed to shop stewards. However, as illustrated in Beynon's (1973) study of the interplay of the relationship between shop stewards and their membership, the shop stewards in the TMCI also appear to have frontiers of control in their favour that appear to be situated in two locations.

260

Firstly, and most obviously, is in the strength of their organisation, as outlined in depth in chapter 5. However, a second way in which this is evident, is in the way they are able to manipulate certain customs and practices on the shop floor to their advantage. This was well illustrated by Terry, a shop steward in Refit PLC, who described a situation on a 'hot sunny day' when he was aware that the workers 'knocking at the shop stewards cabin' demanding a collective meeting, basically sought to embark on their customary 'half-day protest' rather than raise issues of significance to the shop stewards. However, in order to embark on a half-day protest, they were required, by informal custom and practice, to have a collective mass meeting through which the majority consensus would be to 'walk up the bank'. As Terry explained,

> I said, 'Well you're not having a meeting.' 'What do you mean we're not having a meeting?' I said, 'We're not having a meeting, I don't think a meeting is required'...Because I mean you were shooting yourself in the foot because I mean if we {shop stewards} then held a meeting we risked the lads walking out, but if we didn't orchestrate that meeting, if we didn't organise the meeting, then there isn't a forum for them to walk out. So we used to say 'now hold on a second, na, na, I'm not going to give you one'. I mean sometimes they've even tried snowballing a dispute which had happened at {Oilers.Com} and somebody's got wind of it because their mate works there, and they've come knocking on the shop stewards door to try to get it started here in support. If it was something that was any kind of importance I would give them a meeting but if it was somebody just wanting half a day off then I wouldn't give them a meeting.

Hence, in contrast to studies that outline the role of shop stewards' leadership in persuading membership to mobilise to take collective action as outlined in chapter 3 (for e.g. Fosh 1993; Darlington 2002), these stewards were attempting to prevent collective industrial action. It became apparent that, in this particular instance, and once more as highlighted in Beynon's study (Op.cit:140), the shop stewards were attempting to protect the membership from threatening their own employment. In this instance, it was in terms of securing essential future orders, as Terry explained,

> It was all going to have an adverse affect on whether we got work or not.

Clearly this was also an issue that could be a perceived threat to management, for they would obviously want to avoid potentially losing a much-needed contract. Indeed, it was indicated in the interviews with management that they depended upon the control maintained by the shop stewards over the shop floor workers. The personnel manager at Shipbuilders.Co implied that he depended upon the convenor over matters such as controlling disputes,

> Well you've met Billy {convenor} and we do have a good relationship between ourselves and the workforce. And as Billy is the convenor, the disputes are minimal, they're nothing. Nothing major.

When asked about the number of disputes in that company over the last 18 months, he once more indicated some form of dependence on the convenor as he stated,

> Billy will be able to tell you better than I can, I couldn't really say.

What is remarkable about this comment is how the management in this company do not appear to have knowledge about how many disputes

have actually taken place on the shop floor. The above quote certainly appears to imply that this is left to the shop stewards to regulate. This provides an implication of yet another instance of management turning a blind eye to certain practices on the shop floor. Nonetheless, when asked as to how disputes are usually resolved in Shipbuilders.Co, the manager stated,

> Generally resolved by negotiations between the union and management. The union being Billy and Keith and the management, {yard manager's name} and myself.

Once more, it is interesting to note how this manager views the 'union' as the 'shop stewards' and also how such negotiations continue to be conducted at plant level without the attendance of FTOs. This would emphasise joint regulation and hence, arguably, suggest a pluralist framework of industrial relations. Indeed, this was not only evident at Shipbuilders.Co but also at Ship Repair Ltd, as explained by the managing director,

> I only really tend to meet the full time union officials when I fail to sort things out with my own team. I mean as a concept, we like to do it inhouse again. I don't want to use {GMB FTO} or {MSF FTO} or {AEEU FTO} to sort our problems out cos they don't know enough about us. With all due respect, I know they've all worked in the yards and both {FTO's surname} and {FTO's surname} used to work in this yard. The people who know the business are the 200 men who work for me. I'd rather we sort it all out amongst ourselves than bring in some full time official with his rule book. Not necessarily appropriate. The day to day stuff I just do with Dave { convenor} and his colleagues {shop stewards}.

263

These examples demonstrate some support for the existence of a pluralist system of industrial relations, in the clear indication of informal bargaining processes and plant level joint regulation that is preferred by management. This was apparent in all of the companies involved in this study. In Refit PLC, if there was an absolute requirement to meet with FTOs, the employee relations manager mentioned how she preferred this to be on an informal basis, and chose to hold such meetings externally to the union office and company premises. When asked as to why this was her preference she explained,

> Whenever there's a need, I'm very comfortable to meet them offsite. When you get a full time official on site, it can quite often send the wrong message out, particularly if there's a problem, because the workforce would expect the full time official to have the answer and one way or another, solve it or have industrial action of some form or other, not necessarily walk out the door. So by seeing the full time official on site, leads to an expectation of a result, when quite often neither of you have got the answer but perhaps just meeting with them and talking. For instance at the gatehouse, someone says 'Oh I saw so and so was on site' and everybody like within 60 seconds of a full time official coming on site, everybody on this yard would know about it, whereas when you meet them offsite it takes away that expectation that there's going to be a result.

Hence, it would appear that the management in the three companies involved in this study had a preference to conduct negotiations with their shop stewards at plant level, albeit for different reasons. The previous quote also indicates some influence for management in terms of

maintaining a 'frontier of control', by meeting the FTO offsite, they are avoiding the workforce knowing there are negotiations and expecting immediate results. Another matter that emerges from evidence discussed above is an implication of dependence in the employment relationship.

7.5 The Interdependent Relationship

As documented by Hyman (1975:25), the relationship between capital and labour is interdependent. This appears to be a key theme of this employment relationship, which is emerging from the evidence thus far. The managing director at Ship Repair Ltd illustrated such dependence very clearly, particularly in terms of the economic fluctuations in this industry,

> My problem with this cyclical workload is that I've got a permanent workforce and a variable volume, if the volume drops below the workforce I've got a major issue. It's the hardest industry to predict your labour requirements but we've retained a core workforce whereas the man next door {Shipbuilders.Co}, I've seen him employ a couple of thousand at the peak of new builds but drops back to zero when he's got no work and his whole workforce is effectively fired. Or short term. Strategically, I need to be able to market capability, and competence, and without a permanent workforce I couldn't convince the customers that we are competent to repair their ships so...I need the men, I need to commit to them

This evidence demonstrates some issues surrounding the subject of dependency. Firstly, it is clear that this company has a reliance on their workforce in order to maintain the numbers required for production, a fairly obvious dependence of capital on labour. The above quote also confirms an earlier point, that there is a skills shortage in the industry, which perhaps enhances this manager's 'commitment' to maintaining his 'competent', skilled workforce. Once more, the issue of scarce skills emerges as a key factor as to why the balance of power at the time of fieldwork appeared to be in favour of the workforce. However, remaining with the subject of interdependence in the employment relationship, in the above quote there is also evidence of the uncertainty in terms of the fluctuations in markets. Obviously, the employers on the Tyne need orders for the company to survive and the workers will also need the securing of orders to preserve their employment, hence the interdependent relationship. Undoubtedly then, management will also need to ensure that they avoid any industrial unrest as this may affect both current and future orders. This is an extremely relevant point, as it could be perceived as a source of 'symbolic strength' for the workers' interests, for they will be aware that this is a potential threat to management at certain stages of orders, hence they will be able to clearly identify periods of opportunity, when they will be able to bargain favourable outcomes for themselves. Therefore, it would appear that the power balance in the employment relationship between management and workforce can shift through the different stages of orders, and is also dependent upon the condition of the local labour market. As with the

relationship between shop stewards and their membership discussed earlier, as this power balance shifts, so does the frontier of control. It was discussed in chapter 3 how the frontier of control is never static or stable and is, as Hyman states,

> "...defined and redefined in a 'continuous' process of pressure and counterpressure, conflict and accommodation, overt and tacit struggle" (Hyman 1975:26)

Such tactics were certainly evident in the TMCI, demonstrating how the frontier of control can be changed through the manipulation of practices considered to be the 'norm', as was also demonstrated in Batstone *et al.'s* (1977:240-241) study.

7.6 The Shifting Frontiers of Control

Perhaps the best example to illustrate the methods by which this manipulation of practices can be exercised, was illustrated by a manager at Ship Repair Ltd,

> I mean I talk to them about overtime, and I don't know what they'll say to you, but what they'll say to me is, 'my weekend is my own, you cannot tell me whether I work or not'. They want the weekend work but they want the right to say no. It's in their blood, they will not be told, it's their weekend but by God, if they're not working it {overtime} often enough they'll all be moaning about the reduction in their earnings. Now two or three weekends ago one particular trade, the electricians, said they weren't available for the weekend and hampered the business. Again the problem of the weekend being voluntary, they have a very powerful

weapon cos contractually, the contract says that due to the nature of the business they work a reasonable amount of overtime. If it happens that I've worked the electricians three weekends in a row, I know that I generally get a 70% turnout if I ask for weekend volunteers. If the 4th weekend I happen to get 0% of the electricians, I know that manoeuvre is deliberate. So they've got a powerful weapon and they know it.

It was explained that weekend 'voluntary' overtime was customarily always worked by the electricians when it was available, and the manager claimed that the fact that no-one turned up for overtime was not simply a coincidence, as it was not an isolated incident. Therefore, to claim that they would not be available to work one weekend, the electricians were clearly using temporary restrictive practices as a strategic move to emphasise to management that they are able to exercise their power to pursue their requests, in this instance, a higher overtime rate. This example adds further complexity to the shifting balance of power, for it adds yet another dimension to the relationship framework. The challenging groups on this occasion are not merely management and the shop floor workforce, but rather management versus a single occupational grouping. To, yet again, further add to the complexity in the framework, it also began to emerge that within the 'workforce grouping', each occupational group possesses a different level of power at different stages of production.

As explained in chapter 5, when a new contract begins, the initial skills required are predominantly those of the GMB trades, half way through a contract it is likely to be 50/50 GMB and AEEU trades, then at the final

outfitting stage, predominantly AEEU trades are required. It was highlighted in chapter 6 how the willingness to take industrial action would, in part, depend upon the numerical size of the workforce. Clearly, this could also be linked to their shifting power advantage deriving from strength in numbers. However, the managing director at Ship Repair offered a further reason as to the willingness to take action,

> The other thing I suppose that's changed in their attitude and instinct is, redundancy, job loss. They've become hardened to the situation, they've seen an industry which probably, in the early 70s there were probably 4000 men working in Ship Repair Ltd, and they've seen closure after closure and even in the yards that remained open, every time there was a problem they would cut the permanent workforce, tighten the belt another notch in. So we're now down to 200 and 9 out of 10 men out there have been made redundant. So, that 5% who are left just shrug their shoulders...you cannot threaten them. Let's get that clear. I can't go out there and say "if you don't do this I'll close". They'll just say "well close, we've seen it all before man, give us a cheque and we'll go". So it's pointless trying to use it as a...a threat...Problem is when it's reality, they see it and they tend to use a threat. When I go to say to them 'look we're losing money, we need to do something and find a solution or it's going to be the dole for all of us' they'll say, 'oh yeah, here he comes again with the axe over our heads' So you've got to be very careful how you use things...trying to get a positive spin out of it rather than a negative threat you know?

This is extremely significant, for here, clearly, the managing director is illustrating how the workforce may have power in their favour at times, because of their acceptance of the economic uncertainties in the industry

due to years of experience of threats and rejection. Management are not so easily able to accept this uncertainty as they are required to manage it, and this quote clearly emphasises that this can be a difficult task. It was demonstrated earlier how management in this company depend upon the workers as they 'need to commit' to them to ensure that they have required labour in a tight labour market. They also need to ensure that the terms and conditions they offer, particularly for short-term contracts, are comparable to other companies on the river, for due to a skills shortage and because they can only recruit from Tyneside, the competition between the TMCI companies can be intense. This is a further way in which the TMCI workforce are able to use strategies to gain the power balance in their favour, as illustrated in the following example.

During fieldwork, whilst conducting management interviews at Shipbuilders.Co, I witnessed a spontaneous meeting in the personnel department relating to recruitment that led to the following of further incidents. A new order had been achieved by the company, which meant that they required a larger workforce. One of the personnel administrators was concerned, for after telephoning almost all of their ex-workers to offer an employment contract, he discovered that the majority were either employed at, or going to work at Refit PLC. When asked how the company expected to achieve their required numbers, it was explained that, as there was a skills shortage on Tyneside, they would need to 'poach' the workers from other companies on the river. Management had also met with the shop stewards and asked for their

recommendation on flexibility due to the shortage of workers, but were told by the shop stewards that the workforce would very likely decline this request. The yard manager then requested support from the shop stewards and the shop floor so that unskilled workers could be retrained to assist with the shortage of labour. The shop stewards expressed their dissatisfaction with this proposal and were "told to go away and think about it" by the yard manager. I was later informed by the convenor, Billy, that the shop stewards had a meeting about this but were concerned that training unskilled workers would insult the skilled trades, and all shop stewards agreed that they would 'be lynched' if they recommended such a proposal. The management then decided to provide in-house training, with or without the shop stewards cooperation, then called in Billy and suggested that they might need to recruit from outside of the Tyneside area, and he warned them that this would potentially prove to be problematic for management. Indeed it did cause problems, as the shopfloor held a series of unofficial mass meetings and walked out in protest. The training scheme did not go ahead and Shipbuilders.Co were fortunate on this occasion that one of the companies on the Tyne had a mass redundancy, which meant there was an immediate pool of labour from which to recruit.

In this one example, many of the issues surrounding the dynamics of power in the employment relationship discussed thus far can be identified. Control over conditions by the workforce can be detected in the refusal to introduce flexibility; the protection of the occupational

271

identity is apparent in the decline of the request to retrain unskilled workers to undertake skilled jobs; the brief shift of power to management in ignoring this rejection; and the control over recruitment by the workforce and shop stewards in the refusal to allow labour to enter the yard from areas other than Tyneside. The workforce then expressed dissatisfaction to all of the other groups in the relationship framework through taking unofficial action, without approval of shop stewards or external union, and the management finally realised that they would not be successful in their demands on this occasion. Clearly, the balance of power lay predominantly in favour of the workforce in this example, and the reason for this appears to be that the labour market in this instance, clearly did not have a healthy reserve industrial army. This also meant that those workers in the external pool of potential recruits would be able to sell their labour at a higher price to Refit PLC or Shipbuilders.Co[17].

In this sector of the economy, there is strong competition in close proximity, which may offer opportunities for labour to have the power advantage. Indeed, Shipbuilders.Co and Refit PLC have often increased their hourly rates in order to attract a particular skill they require to fulfil a contract. Although it could be argued that this is power by default, the competition between the companies does indeed appear to be an advantage to the TMCI workforce. It also adds yet another, and final complexity to the employment relationship framework, as it introduces an example of a struggle for power 'within' another group. In this instance,

---

[17] 'Tyne yards pay the best' The Journal, May 2002. www.icnewcastle.co.uk

the focus of struggle is on the different companies within the 'company grouping' in the TMCI employment relationship. However, such competition between companies on the Tyne is being challenged by a recent development, originally aimed at addressing the skills shortage in the industry. This is the establishment of a group referred to as the Tyneside Maritime Cluster Group (TMCG).

7.7 The Tyneside Maritime Cluster Group

Despite the fact this group was in early stages of completion during fieldwork, it arguably deserves some recognition in this study, for it is suggested that there is the potential that the influence and initiatives intended by this group may affect the power relations within the TMCI. Indeed, in following the stages of its development, there were demonstrations of persistent power struggles between the different groups involved in its proposals and implementation. This section explains why the group was established and describes the dynamics in the power struggles between the major actors in reaction to its introduction.

The TMCG was initiated and driven by the then Regional Secretary (RS) of the GMB Northern, who explained why he decided to establish this group.

> When I first took up position the river was in decline, we had no shipbuilding, we were witnessing the end of the offshore contracts, ship

repair was going through a horrendous time, there was a lot of unemployment and prior to that there had been a lot of labour unrest over fairly minor issues...and I called a meeting of the employers...and that was two and a half years ago...most of them turned up...and I said to them, 'look if we're going to start getting things right on the river, we've got to start with the workforce and at the moment the workforce are...a convenience that's being turned on and off... you're expecting the workforce to come into work for a couple of months, be on the dole for a period of time, or go abroad, you expect this workforce to be on tap, this workforce don't have any pensions, this workforce have got no stake in the river at all, and then you turn around and say what..."why are they so disruptive"!? They were all constantly in competition for the workforce as well...when they got a job in they would pinch some welders from the company across the river, vice versa, the relationship with employers with each individual employer was horrendous...

The RS explained that the GMB started a campaign and began to lobby senior cabinet members, and they were able to do this effectively as *"we had everyone with us...".* This included representatives from the three local authorities along the river, Northern Offshore Federation, One North East, Government Office North East, National Training Organisation for Engineering Manufacture (EMTA), the Port of Tyne Authority and the majority of employers on the Tyne involved in TMCI. In effect, employers on the Tyne had reason for joint action in that the unions had access to Labour government policy makers, which would help to promote new orders. However, it was explained by the RS how the establishment of the cluster group was no easy accomplishment,

At our first meeting with the employers, they were swearing at each other, accusing each other of cutting them up...it was a real bun fight...So the first meeting was actually a bloody disaster....the employers were reluctant and thought it was too ambitious, they decided it wouldn't work... and I said 'look, this is it, make or break, if you don't get your act together and if you don't come on board with this, I'm going to pull out of this and leave you on your own, I've put in two years hard work, now I said, 'if you're serious, we'll go along with it, if you're not serious, I will leave this...If you've got a problem about getting welders cos you've not been training them, if you've got a problem about a wage dispute somewhere, don't bother ringing me cos I'll just put the phone down on you, cos I've spent two years with you, saying this'

This appeared to be persuasive enough to get the group to initially meet on a regular basis, later dividing into sub-groups, each with it's own responsibility such as training, pensions or health and safety. The aim was to establish common rates and systems along the river, for instance if a worker attends a health and safety induction at one yard and then moves to another, he has a smart card to inform the employer that he has already completed this induction. A further aim of the group was to introduce more apprentices into the industry, with each employing a similar number in order to be equitable. However, a major point of dispute was the content of the 'agreement of common terms and conditions'. This appeared to be a particularly problematic issue for the management at Refit PLC, and during the course of fieldwork, the employee relations manager illustrated contentious points she had highlighted on the draft agreement, which she refused to sign,

Right, this is a real dilemma to me and it's like the biggest nightmare I'm trying to sort my way out of at the moment. I have a joint recognition agreement but the GMB don't want the AEEU at the table, but I've got joint recognition so I can't agree anything without the AEEU so I'm in a meeting yesterday talking to the Tyne Maritime Group, but I can't have a signed agreement unless the AEEU agree to it, but the GMB aren't very happy about it. And then the AEEU aren't very pleased that they're not at the table, at least on my side of it, it's nothing to do with the other two companies, because they've only got single union agreements.

What can be observed thus far is the constant power struggle between each of the groups attempting to maintain some control within this situation, and an implied reluctance to change by the companies. The conflictual tension between the companies is fairly obvious, as is the inter-union conflict. The GMB appear to have aspirations to gain control in the industry, as this quote implies that they desired sole recognition on the common agreement. When the AEEU Regional Officer was asked about their recognition on the Tyne he explained,

Shipbuilders.Co management won't even answer my letters. They've got a deal with the GMB and they're not prepared to meet anybody else, it's absolutely ridiculous. I mean, well...my lads walked out last week but I'm not supposed to know, cos they didn't tell me you see, otherwise I would have had to repudiate...but I found out 2 days after...but they'll come to the table eventually, Shipbuilders.Co, because they'll have to. Once the outfitting work builds up. My lads proved this in Oilers.Com, they just refused to have anything to do with the GMB and the management were forced to recognise us.

This is highly significant for it also provides more evidence of another way in which power was exercised by a section of the workforce who wanted recognition of their trade union. In Oilers.com, a contract was at the outfitting stage near completion, therefore, the company urgently required AEEU trades to finish the contract and were literally forced to recognise this union. On this occasion, it was not 'the homogeneous workforce', nor a 'single occupational grouping' as identified earlier, but rather a 'group of trades within one union', adding yet another dimension to the power relationship framework. However, despite the exclusion of the AEEU in the majority of companies, and an indication of inter-union conflict that might have damaged the development of the TMCG, this AEEU FTO viewed the TMCG as a big advantage to the industry,

> I've got to give the GMB credit, they are the ones that in a sense started it all off...and the principle behind it was because we were in such a bad state on the Tyne.

He also explained how the negotiations would take place regarding the content of the agreement and the different recognition agreements at each company,

> Now if I can give you an example, Shipbuilders.Co for example. They'll negotiate this with the GMB...Oilers.com will be negotiating with both of us...as will Refit PLC, so although they're all separate agreements, the core, the nub of them is basically the same and they'll go into one.

Clearly then, this was an extremely complex set of different relationships within which certain issues needed to be resolved prior to the successful formation of the TMCG and a commonality agreement. Despite the illustration thus far appearing to depict suspicion and negative

perspectives by the groups involved, there were many positive views of the TMCG.

The managing director of Ship Repair Ltd was certainly in favour of the idea of the TMCG stating,

> We have a group now that includes {Regional Secretary} of the GMB, I don't know whether you have met him but he's excellent, he's got a lot of vision and well a little bit sense if you know what I mean. He's working very well for the Region, he's pulled it all together and it's got all the river, industries, support agencies involved.

However despite this, he remained a little cynical, implying that there was still an element of mistrust between employers and unions,

> But it's starting to verge on a GMB recruitment exercise, almost to a point that...well we've just got to be careful.

Nonetheless, the other companies involved in the agreement viewed it as a benefit to the industry as a whole, for instance one of the industrial relations managers claimed,

> I think the main advantage is that for the first time in a long, long, time, the companies are talking to each other, sharing information, recognising common problems and trying to solve them. Also, I've already found an advantage in that as our work runs down, we will submit to the other yards saying, "these people are available, are you interested?" so for the men themselves, that gives them an opportunity to maintain continuity of some kind of employment and that has worked quite well

This is clearly important as the initiative has the potential to preserve and increase employment on the river, however, there are also other issues

surrounding the sharing of employees between companies that need to be addressed. On the one hand, there is the clear necessity for the survival of the industry, as it was estimated that, in 2002, the labour available in the North East region was 30,000 of whom 40% would have retired by 2015[18]. A major aim for the group, therefore, is to ensure the recruitment of apprentices with the aim being to train up to 500 skilled craft workers per year. However, on the other hand, as has been discussed in this chapter, the scarce skills and competition between employers, which allows the opportunity to raise wages, has been a power advantage for labour. Nonetheless, the possibility that this situation may change can only be determined through the potential future success of the TMCG and obviously, future research conducted to evaluate the situation.

What is important to note in this chapter is the historical uniqueness of the initiative to the River Tyne, and perhaps the most significant is the commonality agreement. The negotiated terms of this agreement are that all of the rates of pay are common in both the shipbuilding and oil construction industries, with the rates being split into 4 grades from skilled to labourer. Hours of work, redundancy, holiday entitlement, disciplinary procedures and health and safety are also all universal. Apart from what was mentioned previously, there did not appear to be any significant objections to the commonality agreement by any of the actors involved in the industry. The shop stewards' committees in the yards involved in this

---

[18] Information from 'A business case supporting the North East of England's bid for the Future Aircraft Carrier Programme'. Price Waterhouse Coopers and One North East

study were all well informed and kept up to date with the events leading up to the signing of the agreement, and the workforce were also positive about it to the surprise of some of the FTOs,

> Well, it's groundbreaking stuff and it's a tremendous idea. I thought it would be a bit harder to get it through. We finalised it and put it in front of the workforce and there was lots of debates at these meetings cos the lads knew that this was going to be something for the future and we'd have to get it right and I said to them 'if you've got any problems you're going to have to say it now' and we had lots of debate, but thankfully the vast majority of the lads in the bigger yards saw the bigger picture and what it was about, to bring work to the river

I asked this FTO his view as to what would have happened if the workforce had not agreed with the idea of common terms and conditions, or indeed the TMCG itself, and he simply replied, *"Well it would have been a non-starter".* Once more this demonstrates the extent of the power advantage of the TMCI workforce. Nonetheless, out of all of the case study yards, the most negative responses regarding the TMCG were from Refit PLC, by both management and shop stewards. The employee relations manager was clearly having problems trying to get joint recognition for the common agreement but she also stated that,

> I'm concerned that there's a possibility that if one yard has a {industrial relations} problem, the problem ricochets across here, it could be that a plater is being asked to do a pipefitters work in another part of the river. It will ricochet down because they're all saying "we're all going to stick together"

What is evident from this quote is that this manager is clearly concerned that a 'common workforce' on the river will in turn imply a 'bigger workforce', hence having the potential to increase their power. However, Doug, one of the Refit PLC shop stewards, was also faltering about the success of the TMCG as he stated, *"I think it will fall flat on its face"*. When questioned why he viewed it in this way he explained,

> It's really complicated with all these subcontractors in. It would be different if they worked for the yard but this is where you'll hit problems when you hire people in. It's a complicated issue.

Indeed, both these latter interviewees predicted a major problem with the Tyneside Collective Labour Agreement (TCLA) in that it does not take subcontracted employees into consideration. The problem with differences in rates of pay between subcontracted employees and those employed by the companies, later led to an all out strike by the three yards involved in the agreement which is outlined in great depth in chapter 6. As this was the largest dispute the Tyne had witnessed for some time, it certainly raises questions as to the earlier assumption that the TMCG initiative might have a negative affect on labour's power and influence. Nonetheless, as mentioned previously, such assumptions will remain as such until future research is conducted in the industry to examine the effects of the TMCG on industrial relations once it has been fully established. It should also be noted that, despite the strike, the commonality agreement remains unchanged, and the programme has been successful in securing two extremely significant orders for the Tyne.

Conclusion

On examination of all of these findings, it is clear that the TMCI involves a complex set of power relationships. However, it is implied throughout this chapter that, at the time of fieldwork, the power advantage appeared to lie in favour of the workforce, who seemed to have control over certain issues and certain groups in the employment relationship. It was suggested that such outcomes were influenced by a number of preconditions. These were identified as a skills shortage, the uncertain and unstable economic market of this industry, and a continuity of certain cultures and traditions by all the social actors involved in this employment relationship. It is the intention of this section to break all of this down into specific elements beginning with a consideration of precisely *what* the workforce appear to have control over. The second theme then considers the question of control over *who*, as it was demonstrated on several occasions that the workforce appear to have the power advantage in the employment relationship. After considering these 'frontiers of control' in the workforce favour, this final section then focuses on the preconditions that are argued to influence these outcomes.

Control over what?

Terms and conditions

This is particularly clear in the case of Ship Repair Ltd and the frustrated attempts to amend the yard agreement with regards to conditions of employment. Over 20 months, at every juncture, including

recommendations to accept the negotiated changes by their JSSC, the shopfloor rejected the proposals. At the end of this power struggle, the managing director admitted that he had 'failed' and that he had 'given up', illustrating clearly how the bargaining power was in favour of the workforce. A further piece of evidence to support worker control over terms and conditions, is in the case where the workforce were being made redundant from Refit PLC at the end of a contract. They stated clearly, 'warning' management not to negotiate or come to any agreement with the external union without their involvement. What is remarkable about this piece of evidence is that these workers would *not* be employed at Refit PLC during the period the management would be potentially negotiating a new agreement for the new contract with the trade unions. Yet this manager admitted that, if Refit PLC did decide to go ahead and change the yard agreement with union officers, the workers would 'just throw it out' on their return. These two illustrations demonstrate that the workforce had effective bargaining power, enabling the safeguarding of their terms and conditions. One further point to note regarding this subject, is in the evidence provided in the last chapter of the walkout of the three yards in support of agency workers who were not receiving the same rate of pay as the rest of the employees. Arguably, this could also be construed as controlling employment terms, as the power exercised by a large number of TMCI workers halting production in the industry, led to the agency workers eventually achieving the same rates of pay. Here, it can clearly be identified how power is derived from the relationship between the workers themselves and how they are able to use this as a

form of control. A further way in which control can be identified is in the way the workforce do not allow management to have direct control of labour in the production process.

The labour process

This is most apparent in the resistance over interchangeability and flexibility. Again, this was an issue in the failed attempts to change the Ship Repair Ltd agreement, although it was also indicated to be a matter of significance, not only for all the companies in this study, but also on other river industries. The reason why it is claimed to be such a major issue is due to the importance of retaining the occupational identity and the protection of craft skills. One of the ways in which the workforce maintain control over their craft identity is through the practice of demarcation, a continuity of a traditional practice in the industry that does not appear to have been severely challenged. This chapter has argued that the continuity of culture and tradition is one of the preconditions that allows the workforce to achieve control over how work is conducted at the point of production, and also how they maintain control over their craft identity.

The protection of the occupational identity can also be identified in the veiled existence of a closed shop, through the union members only grouse meetings, regular show of union cards and the evidence which suggested that some shop stewards will not cooperate with workers who are not union members. In particular, this was noted when discussing the

allocation of overtime, a process that has traditionally been organised by shop stewards rather than line management, and continues to remain their responsibility, together with holiday rotas, also usually a remit of supervisory employees.

With reference to the issue of overtime, there is also an example from Ship Repair Ltd to provide further evidence of worker control over the production process. This instance was when a section of the workforce 'chose' not to work 'voluntary overtime' one weekend, in what the managing director viewed as a 'very powerful weapon'. Although not particularly obvious 'bargaining power', this evidence reflected findings of Batstone *et al.'s* study (1977:240-241) whereby the workers were flexible for management only when 'they chose' to be, and were able to strategically manipulate control in this way. Nonetheless, a third outcome identified as a power advantage to the workforce is in their control over recruitment.

Recruitment and representation

It was clearly demonstrated in the findings that the recruitment of labour external to the boundaries of Tyneside was made very difficult for the companies, as two managers in different companies in the industry declared, 'they won't allow us' and 'we can't'. Control over recruitment can also be distinguished in the implicit existence of the closed shop, although there was no hard evidence to confirm that there was a formal closed shop in any of the yards on the Tyne. Together with this, it was

also suggested in this chapter that shopfloor union members have some control over their union representation, not only in the election of shop stewards, but also the fact that they will only accept a time served craftsman from Tyneside to represent them as a FTO. Indeed, as outlined in the introduction to this section, it would appear that there is not only a question of the workforce having 'control over what' but the question should also be addressed as to 'control over who'?

Control over who?

It is apparent from the evidence above that, in many situations, the workforce tend to have the power advantage in the employment relationship in the TMCI. In terms of the power relationship with management, the frontier of control can be identified in the rejection of changes to a new agreement, refusal of flexibility and interchangeability and threatening management not to negotiate with the union without their consent. Another piece of evidence to demonstrate that labour have a power advantage is in the quote by the managing director of Ship Repair Ltd when he claimed, 'you can't threaten them, let's make that clear'. It was discussed in that particular section how the workforce are clearly not threatened by job loss and this may also be reflected in the many unrecorded unofficial walkouts. Indeed, it is suggested that this also demonstrates how the external unions and the FTOs are also unable to exert their control over the membership. This is clearly identified in the case of Refit PLC, where the membership 'sent the FTO off the yard' as they were not satisfied with his recommendations. There is also some

indication that the shopfloor also have some control over their shop stewards. Firstly, and obviously, in the way in which shop stewards can be removed from their position and replaced if the membership are not satisfied with their performance. Secondly, in that their ability to pursue an issue is, on occasion, limited due to their dependence on the shopfloor workers for agreement. However, it was argued that the sophistication of the shop stewards organisation, and the way in which they were able to manipulate some of the informal custom and practice, facilitated their maintenance of a frontier of control.

Indeed, the frontier of control and the levels of power continuously shift *between* the groups in the employment relationship. It also shifts *within* the groups, which is demonstrated in the way the frontier of control can alter with the different stages of production between occupational and union groups. A particular occupational group will have more influence at the workplace depending on the stage of production. For instance, in Shipbuilders.Co, the workforce consisted of predominantly welders and platers and was referred to as a 'GMB yard'. Yet later, at the outfitting stages, the trades will be predominantly AEEU and will have more influence at the workplace. This was highlighted by an AEEU FTO who claimed to have been able to use this power advantage to gain recognition at Oilers.Com, and intended to repeat this success at Shipbuilders.Co. Indeed, evidence of inter-union conflict also highlighted power struggles between the trade union grouping of the employment relationship. This was most evident between the AEEU and the GMB

with the GMB maintaining their single union recognition in the majority of companies in the TMCI, much to the derision of the AEEU.

Interorganisational and intraorganisational struggles for power can also be discerned in the company grouping, in particular in the competition for employees, and the tactics used to 'poach' workers from one company when an order is pending. This is clearly a process also used by the workforce, to once more gain the power advantage, this time depending upon the stage of the order, rather than production, to gain outcomes in their favour. It was for all of these reasons that it was suggested throughout this chapter that the balance of power was in favour of the workforce. It was implied that this was due to a number of preconditions that appeared to affect this power advantage, and these are discussed in the following and final section of this chapter.

Preconditions

In the first instance, the issue of uncertainty due to fluctuations in the market is undoubtedly a factor, as the companies need orders to survive and also need to ensure there is no industrial unrest, as this may affect current and future orders. As mentioned above, market uncertainty does not appear to affect the workers in the industry, as they are accustomed to redundancy and, as highlighted by the management at Ship Repair Ltd, if threatened with closure the workforce do not show evidence of concern. Management also require that an order is delivered on time, and the evidence demonstrates that the workforce are also aware of this,

using strategies such as not turning up for voluntary overtime to inconvenience management and demonstrate that the balance of power can be in their favour in certain situations. The uncertainty of the market can also be used as a strategy by the workforce to their advantage, as demonstrated in the case of Refit PLC and Shipbuilders.Co. Here, the workers were able to play one company off against another when they were in competition and offering a higher hourly rate to attract the workers they desperately needed to complete an order. The workers are able to use this effectively due to the second identified precondition, the skills shortage in the local labour market.

The TMCI workforce are aware of the skills shortages, yet as the evidence demonstrates, will not allow management to recruit from outside the area, hence maintaining control on the Tyne. Indeed, as suggested by Hyman (1975), the possession of scarce skills can help to level the imbalance of power between capital and labour. However, the workforce *need* the employers to win orders in order to maintain employment and the employers clearly *need* the workforce to achieve and complete orders. Both of these groups *need* the trade unions to protect and advise on issues such as health and safety and employment legislation. They also both *need* the shop stewards to represent and negotiate on the workforce behalf, and to act as a form of control over the workforce and a link to the external union for the employers. The shop stewards *need* the workers to maintain their position and strength, they *need* the external union for advice and protection and they also *need* the employer for their

employment. Hence the pattern that emerges is a circle of interdependence within the employment relationship in the TMCI. However, it was suggested that the establishment of the TMCG might affect this relationship.

It was described how the major objectives of the TMCG were to address the skills shortage situation and introduce common terms and conditions on the river. Clearly this has the potential to affect the two preconditions that allow the workforce advantage of the frontier of control. On the other hand, there is the potential that this will be beneficial to the workforce and to the community in terms of the survival of the industry. However, at this stage, these must remain assumptions, as further research will be required in order to follow the progress of the group. The issue of future research in this industry is discussed in the following and final chapter to this thesis.

Chapter 8

Discussions and Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis has conducted an in-depth examination of union workplace organisation and industrial relations in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry (TMCI). It was concerned with exploring this analysis in a context where trade union organisation could be expected to be severely challenged, but has proved to be remarkably resilient. The analysis was constructed from the literature and empirically grounded in the data. The main intellectual approach adopted were models based upon mobilisation and social movement theories. Using these approaches at a micro level analysis of industrial relations, helped to break down the employment relationship and draw out some significant issues. The key issues drawn out from this analysis suggest three significant features of the TMCI employment relationship. Firstly, that the workplace union organisation is *resilient,* secondly, that its influence in the employment relationship is *powerful,* and thirdly, that it is the *collective identity* that exists in the industry that gives them that power. However, closer examination using mobilisation theories suggests that the collective identity in the TMCI is not as straightforward as it would initially appear. The notion of 'collective identity' or collectivism, often assumes uniformity and homogeneity, however, the evidence presented here demonstrates that this is not necessarily a valid assumption. The

purpose of this chapter is to address this matter and draw out the key themes and issues that have emerged from this examination and why they are considered a significant contribution to knowledge.

8.1 The efficacy of using mobilisation and social movement theories to examine the collective identity in the TMCI

The major theoretical approaches adopted in this thesis were models associated with mobilisation and social movement theories. Using propositions raised by Kelly (1998), it was suggested that they helped to construct useful conceptual frames, to help us think rigorously and analytically about the transformation of a set of individuals into a collective actor, based around the notion of 'injustice'. He argues that this intellectual approach treats as problematic what previous industrial relations research takes as a simple assumption, that is, the perception by workers that they have a set of common interests that are in opposition with those of their employer. Indeed, this was drawn out as a common theme that emerged throughout the empirical chapters in the identification of an 'us and them' culture. However, using these theoretical models at a micro level in the TMCI, demonstrated a much more dynamic complexity surrounding interests, injustices and attributions of blame in the employment relationship, rather than a simple 'us and them' model.

This evidence was provided in detail in chapter 6, and demonstrated how using the theories was effective in identifying the various forms of

injustices that were sensed by the workers, with examples presented from each yard. They were also useful in unveiling how these senses of injustice were developed and shared with the collective workforce in various ways, from the informal, semi-collective tea breaks to the more formal, collective meetings. In one instance, the evidence revealed how a sense of injustice over one workplace issue extended to the regional collective workforce, in the example of the unofficial walk out by three yards. This is significant, for it demonstrates how the 'collective identity' over one particular workplace grievance can extend beyond the boundaries of the organisation, and how a 'collective identity' can be further developed and shared by more than one workforce. It is also interesting in that it demonstrates a different way in which blame is attributed to the employer, for in this instance, the 'employer' was the subcontractor rather than the direct employer. The evidence presented in chapter 6 also helped to make sense of the different opportunities that were available for the workers to go in pursuit of their claims, the perceived costs and benefits of participating in collective action and the various forms of collective action that were taken to achieve their demands. A crucial point of significance from the evidence presented in chapter 6, discovered by using mobilisation theories, is that, in this industry, there are different stages and elements to the 'collective identity' that can be combined together in various ways.

These results would certainly call into question some criticisms directed at mobilisation theory, such as, that it assumes that workers act in a

rational, predictable and determinate manner (Gall 2000:338). The evidence from this study rather demonstrates a dynamic, unpredictable and complex set of relations among the workforce, yet despite these complexities, continues to combine into a collective. However, this complexity of the relationship also signifies evidence of inter-group and intra-group fissures within the workforce. This is a crucial point, for issues of sectionalism are a significant part of analysis in this study, yet do not appear to be drawn out as an important part of analysis in mobilisation theories. This is the first key issue drawn out of this study that requires some consideration.

8.2 The question of sectionalism

Commentators have offered conflicting views with reference to the issue of sectionalism. Some caution that sectionalism may weaken the resistance of workplace organisation (Fairbrother 1989; see also Hyman 1975:177), whereas others (Gall 1998) suggest that it can play a positive role in helping to create solidarity. A possible reason for such differing perspectives could be due to a suggestion proposed by Kelly that the character of sectionalism is misunderstood and that,

> *It is not always clear exactly what the term sectionalism is meant to refer to.* (1988:131)

This is indeed valid in relation to the TMCI, for it would initially appear that preservation of the skills required to conduct a job to protect employment is the most prevalent form of sectionalism in the industry. Furthermore, there appears to be a fairly obvious reason for this in the nature of the

294

industry itself, for the frequent redundancies clearly indicate why the protection of the skills to do a particular job is so important. However, on closer examination there are a lot more inferences and occurrences of fractions and divisions, which appear to be reinforced by an association with different collective identities. Clearly, this raises issues when implying a strong workplace collectivism exists in this industry and hence requires further consideration.

8.2.1 The association with different collective identities

Implications of sectionalism are manifested in many different ways in the TMCI and re-emphasise the importance of the historical development of the industry and its unique character. The first is clearly in the occupational identity that allows for a clear definition of group membership with one's own trade, which is a potential source of sectionalism in the 'favouring of one's own group over others'. Indeed, this was exemplified by a shop steward in chapter 6 where he stated, *"...if its going to be the riggers or another boilermaker trade, for me its always going to be the riggers"*. What is also interesting from this quote is the individual association with two collective identities, the 'boilermakers' *trade union group* and the 'riggers' as a *trade group*. A further example of identification with the *trade union group* is evident in chapter 5, where the shop stewards in Shipbuilders.Co mentioned, "this is a GMB yard". However, despite implications of inter-union sectionalism, the reason for such a statement was due to the nature of the production process, for at

the time of the interviews, the ship being built was at the stage of production when predominantly trades associated with the GMB were required. What is also interesting from this example is that it emphasises a further source of individual identification with a third group, in the introduction of a *semi collective production group* identity. Here, "semi collective" is being used to describe a 'part of the whole collective' in the different fractional solidarities that can emerge and change in this industry, in this instance, due to the nature of production. This is evident in the different combinations of *trades* and *trade union* groups at specific stages of the production process, with the GMB trades being predominant at the beginning of a contract, a mix of all trades and unions in the middle of a contract and then predominantly AEEU trades at the outfitting stage. Another example of a 'semi collective identity grouping' can be observed in the 24 hour '3 shift' system that operates in the industry. In this instance, it is three distinct semi collective groups working at different times of the day, or what could be referred to as a *semi collective shift group*. It was explained in chapter 6 how this was a potential obstacle in the achievement of a *whole collective identity* in Shipbuilders.Co, when the backshift group raised a grievance that they were not being involved in the 'whole collective' mass meetings due to the timing their working hours and the time of the meetings. However, this was promptly responded to, and resolved by, the shop stewards committee to enable the *semi collective shift groups* to meet as a *whole collective group*.

It was discovered that it was not only these *semi collective groups* where there was the possibility of the development of sectionalism *between* groups, but there was also evidence of this *within* the *trade group* itself. A clear example of this is in chapter 6 at Refit PLC, where the welders 'royals' were identified as a source of potential friction, as they are the group who are the first to be employed on new contracts and the last to be made redundant. However, it was suggested that this particular occasion could be perceived more in terms of an attempt at 'counter mobilisation' by the employee relations manager, rather than divisions within the trade group. Fissures were also evident within the *trade union group* in the incident of differential bonus rates between GMB welders and platers in Shipbuilders.Co. Rates of pay were also a source of friction between another group that workers might individually identify with at some point, which is those employed by subcontractors or a *semi collective agency group*. In two instances, the cause of hostility was actually due to the fact that the *agency group* were receiving a *lesser* rate than workers employed directly with the company doing the same job. On both occasions, the workers embarked on collective action to ensure equity in rates of pay and achieved this successfully. Indeed, divisions were evident from many different sources in the industry that had the potential to cause opposition among the workforce. What is significant is that different solidarities emerge and change depending on the association with a group and what issues were relevant to that particular group or groups. Despite this evidence implying that sectionalism is able to exist in many forms in the TMCI, there were no indications to suggest

that this weakened the whole workplace collective identity or indeed the regional industry collective identity. Rather, it is suggested that the sectionalism that existed in the industry in fact offered some benefits to the workers and the promotion of workplace collectivism.

8.2.2 Sectionalism as beneficial to the promotion of workplace collectivism?

In terms of potential sectionalism between the *trade groups*, it was demonstrated in chapter 5 how these groups' meetings, in particular in Ship Repair Ltd, were beneficial to the maintenance of the whole collective group identity. These smaller groups have the ability and opportunity to share any grievances informally and frequently. Any injustices identified in this trade group context that are perceived as potentially detrimental to the whole collective, will be swiftly, and more efficiently addressed at either a shop stewards committee meeting or a mass meeting. The significance of this process is the effectiveness of the promotion of workplace organisation and communication through sectional trade group meetings. Although this well organised system would appear to assume that these workers act in a rational, predictable and determinate manner, which, as mentioned previously, Gall criticises as being a bias of mobilisation theory (2000:338), this is not necessarily valid in relation to TMCI workers as other evidence demonstrates.

Firstly, it was outlined in the previous chapter how the electricians in Ship Repair Ltd, as a sectional *trade group*, informed management they were 'not available' for the following weekend overtime. Management

298

interpreted this as a form of collective industrial action, as they viewed it as a reaction to their refusal to grant a higher weekend overtime rate. This was clearly an issue that the electricians, as a *trade group*, had interpreted as an injustice, attributed the blame to management and embarked on a form of collective action that would clearly affect management, as it would have an effect on production. However, a crucial point for the purpose of this discussion is that it would not adversely affect any other of the working groups. A similar example was highlighted in chapter 6 where, at Shipbuilders.Co, the *nightshift group* walked out in a half-day 'protest' and refused to work weekend overtime due to the claim that management had breached agreement procedures. Once more, this action did not have a negative effect on the other groups of workers and both of these forms of 'sectional action' were successful in that these groups achieved their objectives. A significant point here is that these *trade groups* and *semi collective shift groups* had the self-confidence, belief in themselves and an incentive to act collectively and successfully without the 'need' to rely upon the whole collective, yet would continue to identify themselves with that collective. In applying the mobilisation model, these different groups within the *whole collective* encompassed all of Tilly's components in interests, organisation, mobilisation, opportunity and embarked on collective action themselves. These procedures were all applied effectively and successfully without relying upon or causing the whole collective group to lose out financially. Hence, what this evidence demonstrates is the numerous ways in which solidarities emerge and change depending upon various issues, yet still

exist, and identify with, the whole collective. This does not suggest rational, predictable behaviour, rather illustrates the existence of inter and intra group dynamics, how there can be upswings and downswings in the nature of these dynamics, and how this is a continual process rather than static.

A second issue that can be perceived as being a form of sectionalism that could be viewed as beneficial to the workers in the TMCI, is in the protection of the skills required to conduct a job. In striving to preserve the necessary 'skills' for a certain trade in each yard, the expertise required to conduct this job in any one of the yards is consistent. Hence this is a form of protection, not only directly for the workers in a particular yard, but also for the 'regional collective workforce'. For if there is the potential of a redundancy in one yard, the workers will possess the relevant skills to simply move to another yard, hence protecting the employment of the 'regional collective group' rather than one trade or one yard. A final example of a way in which the protection of the identity of the 'skilled worker' is beneficial to the workforce is that the worker is able to retain the exercise of control over their own work (see also Roberts 1993). Overall then, the sectionalism that is evident in the TMCI does not appear to be a 'problem' in terms of having a negative effect on workplace collectivism. Indeed, there was more evidence to suggest a strong collective workplace identity in this industry that can be identified from different sources.

8.3 Other sources of worker collectivism

Stephenson & Stewart's (2001) "work place collectivism" can be identified in the sectional trades assisting one another in non-work situations. One example is in an illustration from Ship Repair Ltd where an electrician was fitting a workmate's shower at home, and another in the convenor assisting workers' family members with their personal employment dilemmas. Also a "collectivism of everyday life" (Ibid.) can be viewed in Shipbuilders.Co and Ship Repair Ltd's benevolent fund for workers on sick leave, for essential technology for local hospitals and for funding of local charities. These two types of collectivism can also be identified in the example of Refit PLC's shop stewards negotiating, not only for terms and conditions of the immediate workforce, but also for those who may be employed in the future, once more suggesting an extension to a *regional workforce collectivism*, rather than simply one trade or workplace. It could also be suggested that solidarity with workers in the industry extends to the national workforce as the CSEU combine committee meetings imply. As was clear from the data in chapter 6, the shop stewards explained how one of the purposes of the CSEU national forums was to share information between shop stewards to discover whether *"we can do anything to help them"* and vice versa. Finally, possibly the most obvious form of a strong *regional workplace collectivism* can be identified in the three yard sympathy walkout in support of the sacked subcontracted workers as discussed in chapter 6. This is also a very significant issue for it demonstrates the development

of a sense of injustice from a semi collective group of workers, the *agency group,* to the whole collective, not simply in one company, but to the regional collective.

Indeed, all of the evidence would suggest that a strong workplace collective identity exists in the industry. Of more significance from this evidence is how the notions of 'collectivism' and 'sectionalism' cannot be simply perceived as polar homogeneous entities, for the evidence draws out some important issues. Firstly, that 'collective identity' can take many different forms that combine together in different ways within the 'collective'. It is also suggested that the 'collective identity' can divide as well as unite, which implies that there is 'solidarity within sectionalism'. What is significant here, is that there is evidence of collectivism and also of sectionalism, but they appear to nurture each other in this industry, and more crucially, they do this successfully.

Hence the 'us and them' model is shown to be more complex in this case study, as the 'us' has the potential of becoming fractured in that there may be conflicting interests, senses of injustice and attributions of blame within the 'us' framework. However, what is also demonstrated in the evidence is that sectionalism is overcome by a collective attribution of 'the problem' to the employer. Furthermore, the workers appear to be willing to resolve workplace issues by collective means and have self-confidence and belief in themselves as an 'us'. As argued in chapter 6 these factors are extremely important to achieving a strong and effective collective

identity. However, the point that is significant here is that 'us and them' is not a simple model but can be complex and dynamic. Yet, it is extremely difficult to distinguish all of these complexities without it being broken down into manageable parts, which mobilisation and social movement theories do effectively and why they are considered extremely useful in this type of investigation. The illustration of the complexities in the employment relationship using the theories also helped in drawing out another significant issue from this thesis, that is, the dynamics in the exercise of power in the employment relationship in the TMCI.

8.4 The exercise of power in the TMCI employment relationship

Chapter 7 provided evidence to reveal the very active exchange of conflicting interests, particularly between the employers and their workforces in the industry. It was suggested in this chapter that the power advantage appeared to be in favour of the workforce who had control over several issues in the employment relationship. These were in their terms and conditions, the labour process and recruitment and representation. It was implied that this power advantage was due to numerous factors, such as the uncertainty of the market and the skills shortage in the industry but also the resilience of union organisation. For these reasons, it was indicated that the employers are somewhat dependent upon their existing workforces. However, it was also discussed at length in this chapter how the TMCI employment relationship was one of a continuous circle of interdependence between

all of the actors in the relationship. Even so, as mentioned above, it was the workforce who appeared to have the exercise of power in their favour at the time of research. It was suggested that it is the strength of the collective identity and the effective workplace organisation that provides the workforce with the power advantage in this particular employment relationship.

The collective organisation that exists does not appear to have come under attack by the employers. Although there was evidence of an attempt at counter-mobilisation by the employee relations manager at Refit PLC as outlined earlier, this did not appear to achieve much success. Another attempt at counter-mobilisation could be implied in the complaints raised by management at both Ship Repair Ltd and Refit PLC in chapter 5, of their concerns relating to the number of shop stewards in their yards, and the implications that they wanted to keep the numbers low. By the end of the fieldwork however, there was no evidence to suggest that they had achieved this and there was in fact a small increase in the number of shop stewards rather than a decrease. Furthermore, although there has been a considerable decrease in the number of shop stewards in the industry over recent decades, this has been due to the circumstances surrounding the decline of the industry rather than an employer offensive.

The effectiveness of shop steward organisation in the industry is presented in chapter 5, where the case studies illustrate how shop

steward organisation remains relatively powerful in this sector of the economy. However, their role as 'leaders', in terms of assuming some power and authority over the membership, and their function as 'key activists' in the mobilisation of the workforce, raises some interesting questions. Firstly, the notion of a permanent position as a shop steward is uncertain due to the nature of democratic representation. As outlined in evidence provided in the empirical chapters, it is the workforce who decides who will be their representatives through an organised collective election. Even when an official election is not scheduled, shop stewards can be either, berated for any perceived inferior representation of the membership as explained in chapter 7, or ejected from their position. Therefore, a question that needs to be raised is, who are the 'leaders' in this employment relationship? It would appear that, in the TMCI, there exists a 'collective leadership' that is able to resolve workplace grievances by collective means without the 'need' to be led. For instance, if the role of shop stewards as 'activists' in mobilising is considered as an essential part of 'leadership', the membership appear to be able to mobilise effectively without the requirement of being imbued with a sense of grievance, or urged into taking collective action by the shop stewards. Indeed, the willingness to participate to resolve workplace problems by collective means is clearly conducted with confidence by the workforce. They do not appear to need to have a leadership to make decisions on their behalf, and there are several instances that illustrate the strength of the confidence of the workforce. One instance was in Refit PLC where it was explained by a manager how the recently redundant workforce had

'warned' the management not to come to any agreements over their future terms and conditions with FTOs without their participation. In Ship Repair Ltd this confidence was demonstrated in the repeated rejections of recommendations proposed by their shop stewards and FTOs. There is also evidence provided to show that the workers have conducted unofficial meetings without presence of shop stewards where they mobilised themselves to taking unofficial action.

Indeed, all of this also raises questions in relation to the FTOs as leaders, for evidence was provided on several occasions of how they received hostile criticism to the extent that the workforce 'sent an FTO off the yard'. It was also suggested in chapter 7 that the workforce in the TMCI were able to exercise power as a form of control in the recruitment of the external trade union representatives. Indeed, this was clearly successful for it was noted in this section how all of the FTOs from each of the unions were time served craftsmen who had been shop stewards in the TMCI themselves, as demanded by the union membership in the TMCI. However, the FTOs did not appear to need to spend a lot of their time in the TMCI, for the shop stewards are the major representative group of the union membership.

As discussed in chapter 5, the FTOs tended to be confident with the efficacy of shop steward organisation and representation. They claimed that they preferred to intervene as little as possible, leaving the workplace union organisation on the shop floor to the responsibility of the stewards.

This is possibly where the major power advantage lies for the shop stewards. In particular, as they continue to negotiate with management over certain issues that large-scale surveys such as WERS (Cully et al. 1999) suggest are a declining feature of the role of workplace representatives. In contrast to such surveys, the role of the shop stewards in the TMCI remains to be substantial, as they are the chief negotiators in collective bargaining at plant level. They are also involved in project management in the negotiations concerning future work orders and the running of current client contracts, particularly in Ship Repair Ltd. It was highlighted in chapter 7 that management suggested that they relied heavily on their shop stewards and also that they were dependent upon the control of the shop stewards to resolve disputes. Here, examples were given to demonstrate how the shop stewards were able to manipulate custom and practice to avert, what they perceived as, unnecessary unofficial industrial action that would be harmful to their membership. Evidence was also presented to illustrate how shop stewards negotiate with management directly over workplace disputes, mostly without the intervention of the FTOs. Indeed, management in all three companies indicated that they preferred to bargain and negotiate with their shop stewards at plant level, rather than have any external involvement from the union.

What is evident from this discussion is the interdependent relationship mentioned earlier and examined at length in chapter 7. Clearly the shop stewards are dependent on the membership to maintain their position and

307

achieve agreement on proposals and recommendations, the workforce are dependent on the shop stewards to represent and negotiate their needs and wants. The workforce are also dependent on management to achieve orders and the management on the workers to produce the work on time and to budget. The management and external union are also dependent upon the shop stewards to communicate their issues with the workforce and negotiate favourably. Within these complex dynamics, the power relationship can shift over time depending on certain issues. However, the workforce may have had the power advantage at the time of research but it is clear that the shop stewards role is pivotal in this relationship. In particular, their role is crucial in maintaining the strong union workplace organisation that exists in the industry.

8.5 Union renewal or resilience? The persistence of workplace union organisation in the TMCI

The effectiveness of shop steward organisation was one of the key themes surrounding the debates concerning union renewal or resilience. This was discussed at length in chapter 3 with regard to the literature concerning strategies to overcome trade union decline. Many commentators offer prescriptions of top down organising models driven by national trade union initiatives as the means for trade union survival. However, one of the central arguments of this thesis is that, while developments at national level may be important, the impetus of trade union renewal depends crucially on organisation and activity at the workplace, and by solely using top down strategies for renewal and

survival, this may be neglecting their existing, traditional sources of power. It was revealed in chapter 3 how some empirical studies have provided evidence to show that workplace union organisation has persisted in some areas without the need for an organising strategy for renewal. It was suggested that 'resilience' rather than renewal might be a more appropriate term to apply to such workplaces. However, as demonstrated in chapter 3, the nature and extent of resilience remains only partially examined within the literature, and the renewal arguments have been made principally, although not exclusively, in relation to the public sector. Therefore, one of the major aims of this study was to contribute to these debates by providing empirical data from an old traditional industry with a history of strong trade unionism within the private sector. However, on analysis of the empirical data, a further significant issue was drawn out, in that the evidence pushes the resilience arguments further than most and introduces another development to the debate.

In the first instance, the empirical data provides evidence of union organisational resilience in the industry, although not simply as reactive resilience as suggested in much of the academic debate, but a proactive and on going form of unionism. In addition to this, it introduces a further development to the debate in that there is a constant process of rebuilding a dynamic workplace unionism, as union organisation needs to be regenerated with each new client contract. Given the vitality of this workplace organisation and the way in which the continuity of activism is

maintained, it was suggested that this could be considered to support a thesis of resilience. On the other hand, as the membership needs to be rebuilt with each new contract, it was suggested that this could also be considered as a support to a thesis of renewal. However, as the empirical data in this study illustrates an on-going process of rebuilding an undoubtedly well organised and vigorous unionism, it is proposed that this evidence demonstrates the third significant feature drawn out from this study, that is, a thesis of 'resilient renewal'. It is argued that this is significant, for within the literature, commentators refer to either 'union renewal' or 'union resilience', and no one as yet, has identified evidence of a connection of the two together. A consideration of this constant process of rebuilding is examined in great detail in chapter 5. It is suggested that the conditions for this activism lies in a combination of accountable and responsive organisation of shop stewards, as well as an on-going and practical commitment to forms of democratic participation. Indeed, all of this evidence reveals a proactive workplace union organisation that is able to change and adapt to external circumstances to maintain a well established and well organised workplace unionism.

8.6   What for the future?

Clearly, due to the vibrant, continuous dynamism in this employment relationship, it would be very difficult indeed to generalise these findings to a wider population. However, as argued in chapter 4, this was not the intention of this study.   Rather, it was to rely upon 'analytical

generalisation' (Yin 1994) whereby the study's purpose was to develop patterns of theoretical importance from data that is grounded in the reality of organisational life. Furthermore, as Scott (1994) suggests, it is important that case studies aim to help one to understand how situations come to be the way they are, rather than indicating how common a particular phenomenon is. In addition to this, in agreement with an argument raised by Stake (2000), it was suggested in chapter 4 that if research is to be of any value to people, then it needs to be portrayed in the same way that people experience the world. The main intention of this study was to ensure that explanations were grounded in the everyday perspectives of everyday people and their working lives. This is also considered important due to the claims raised in chapter 3 that, in contemporary industrial relations literature, there is a paucity of workplace based studies. It is also argued in that chapter that there is a need to (re)focus attention on the social processes of the role of the shop steward on the shop floor (Terry 1995), for as Cully *et al* (1999) argue there has been little detailed research undertaken into the activities of union representatives over recent decades, although it is noted that there have been some recent noteworthy studies (Greene *et al.* 2000; Upchurch *et al.* 2002; Darlington 2002). A further issue that was raised as a problem in industrial relations research is that the concept of 'power' forms part of the 'taken for granted' language in the industrial relations arena, yet, despite the crucial significance of power to this area of study, it is argued in chapter 3 that few attempts to conceptually analyse power have been conducted and little empirical research undertaken.

One of the main intentions of this study was to provide some new empirical data to contribute to these areas. In doing so, other issues of significance were also drawn out of the study, which are discussed in great detail above and require no repetition here. There is clearly the possibility for future research in this area, or indeed in other comparable industries to examine differences and/or similarities in workplace union organisation and industrial relations in those workplaces. There is also the potential for further research in the Tyneside industry, particularly with the introduction of the Tyneside Maritime Cluster Group (TMCG) and Tyneside Collective Labour Agreement. It would certainly be interesting to discover what impact, if any, these developments generate in an industry where history and tradition has been as important as development and change. It would be particularly interesting to discover whether this would influence the exercise of power in the employment relationship, for it was suggested the workforce derive some of their power from the skills shortage in the industry and the competition between the employers. A major intention of the TMCG is to form a partnership between the employers to work together to achieve orders and expand their apprenticeship system to combat a growing skills shortage. Clearly, although extremely important for the survival of the industry, this has the potential to alter the power relationship that exists at the present time. However, whether it does have the potential to affect this or the strength of workplace collective union organisation is questionable, for as this thesis demonstrates, historically, even in the

worst conditions, collectivism and union organisation has survived and remained resilient in the TMCI.

Bibliography

ACAS (1977) **Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd. Discussion Paper.** ACAS.

Ackers, P. & Payne, J. (1998) *British trade unions and social partnership: rhetoric, reality and strategy.* **The International Journal of Human Resource Management,** 9:3, pp 529-550.

Ackers, P., Smith, C & Smith, P. (1996) **The New Workplace and Trade Unionism: Critical Perspectives on Work and Organisations.** Routledge.

Ackroyd, S. & Thompson, P. (1999) **Organizational *Mis*behaviour** Sage Publications Ltd.

Allen, M. (2000) *Modernising Unions* **Unions 21 - Creating unions for the 21st century.**

Anon., (1983) *Negotiations and Agreements.* Annual Review, **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol xxi, p 410.

Anon., (1984) *Negotiations and Agreements.* Annual Review, **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol xxii, pp 277 – 278.

Anon., (1987) *Negotiations and Agreements.* Annual Review, **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol 25, pp 153 – 154.

Armstrong, K.J., Bowers, D. & Burkitt. (1977) *The Measurement of Trade Union Bargaining Power* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 15,1, pp 91-100.

Bacharach, S.B. & Lawler, E.J. (1981) **Bargaining: Power, Tactics and Outcomes.** Jossey Bass Publishers.

Bacon, N. & Storey, J. (1993) *Individualization of the Employment Relationship and the Implications for Trade Unions.* **Employee Relations,** 15:1, pp 5-17.

Bacon, N. & Storey, J. (1996) *Individualism and Collectivism and the Changing Role of Trade Unions* in Ackers, P., Smith, C & Smith, P. (1996) **The New Workplace and Trade Unionism: Critical Perspectives on Work and Organisations.** Routledge.

Barnes, J. (2000) *Shipbuilding – The Problem* **Trade Union Review,** 20, June, p 9.

Bassett, P. & Cave, A. (1993) **All for one: the future of the unions.** Fabian Society. London. Fabian Pamphlet 559.

Batstone, E., Boraston, I. & Frenkel, S. (1977) **Shop Stewards in Action**. Oxford: Blackwell.

Batstone, E., Boraston, I. & Frenkel, S. (1978) **The Social Organization of Strikes**. Oxford:Blackwell.

Beale, D. (1999) *Workplace Union Renewal, Resilience and Redefining the Debate - the Case of Royal Mail* A paper presented to **Union Renewal? Workplace Industrial Relations in the Public Sector** - a seminar organised by the Universities of Northumbria and Hertfordshire.

Beardwell, I. (1996) **Contemporary Industrial Relations: A Critical Analysis**. Oxford.

Beckett, F. (1999) *Rogue uncles spoiling the party* **New Statesman**, 6/9/99.

Beynon, H. (1973) **Working for Ford**. Penguin.

Braverman, H. (1974) **Labour and Monopoly Capital:The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century.** Monthly Review Press, New York.

British Shipbuilding 1972 A report to the Department of Trade and Industry by Booz-Allen & Hamilton International BV. HMSO, 1973.

Broad, G. (1983) *Shop steward leadership and the dynamics of workplace industrial relations* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 14:3, pp 59-68.

Brown Johnson, N. & Jarley, P. (2004) *Justice and Union Participation: An Extension and Test of Mobilization Theory.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 42:3, September, pp 543-562

Brown, R. & Brannen, P. (1970) *Social Relations and Social Perspectives Amongst Shipbuilding Workers - A Preliminary Statement. Part One.* **Sociology**, Vol 4, pp 71-84.

Brown, R.K., Brannen, P., Cousins, J.M. & Samphier, M.L. (1972) *The Contours of Solidarity: Social Stratification and Industrial Relations in Shipbuilding* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol X No 1, pp12-41.

Bryman, A. (1988) **Quantity and Quality in Social Research.** Unwin Hyman Ltd.

Bryman, A. (1988) **Doing Research in Organizations.** Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bryman, A. (1989) **Research Methods and Organization Studies.** London:Unwin Hyman.

Burawoy, M. (1979) **Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism.** Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Burawoy, M. (1985) **The Politics of Production.** Verso.

Cameron, G.C. (1964) *Post-War Strikes in the North-East Shipbuilding and Ship-Repairing Industry 1946-1961* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol ii, no. i, pp1-22.

Carter, B. (1997) *Adversity and Opportunity: Towards Union Renewal in Manufacturing, Science and Finance?* **Capital & Class,** 61, pp 8-18.

Carter, B. (2000) *Adoption Of the Organising Model in British Trade Unions: Some Evidence From Manufacturing, Science and Finance (MSF).* **Work, Employment & Society,** 14:1, pp 117-136.

Clarke, J.F. (1966) **Labour Relations in Engineering and Shipbuilding on the North East Coast in the Second Half of the 19th Century.** M.A. Thesis. University of Newcastle.

Clarke, J.F. (1977a) *Engineering Workers on Tyneside* in McCord, N. (Ed) (1977) **Essays in Tyneside Labour History.** Department of Humanities, Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.

Clarke, J.F. (1977b) *Workers in the Tyneside Shipyards* in McCord, N. (Ed) (1977) **Essays in Tyneside Labour History.** Department of Humanities, Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.

Clarke, J.F. (1997a) **Building Ships on the North East Coast (Part 1. C1640-1914) A Labour of Love, Risk and Pain.** The Bewick Press.

Clarke, J.F. (1997b) **Building Ships on the North East Coast (Part 2. C1914-1980) A Labour of Love, Risk and Pain.** The Bewick Press.

Clegg, H.A. (1975) *Pluralism in Industrial Relations.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 13 (3), pp 309-316.

Clegg, H.A. (1979) **The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain.** Oxford:Blackwell.

Clegg, H.A. (1985) **A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889. Volume II 1911-1933.** Oxford University Press.

Clegg, H.A., Fox, A. & Thompson, A.F. (1964) **A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889 Volume 1, 1889-1910.** Oxford University Press.

Colling, T. (1995) *Renewal or rigor mortis? Union responses to contracting in local government.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 26:2, pp 134-145.

Crouch, C. (1982) **Trade Unions: The Logic of Collective Action.** Fontana Paperbacks.

Cully, M., Woodland, S., O'Reilly, A. & Dix, G. (1999) **Britain at Work: As depicted by the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey.** Routledge.

Cumbers, A. (1994) *New Forms of Work and Employment in an 'Old Industrial Region'? The Offshore Construction Industry in the North East of England.* **Work, Employment & Society,** Vol 8, No. 4, pp 531-552.

Cumbers, A. (1995) *Continuity or Change in Employment Relations? Evidence from the UK's Old Industrial Regions* **Capital & Class,** 58, pp 33-55

Danford, A. (1997) *The 'New Industrial Relations' and Class Struggle in the 1990s* **Capital & Class,** 61, pp 107-141.

Danford, A., Richardson, M. & Upchurch, M. (2000) *'New Unionism' organising and partnership: a comparative analysis of union renewal strategies in the public sector.* 18th Annual International Labour Process Conference, Strathclyde.

Danford, A., Richardson, M. & Upchurch, M. (2003) **New Unions, New Workplaces: A Study of union resilience in the restructured workplace.** Routledge.

Darlington, R. (1993) *The challenge to workplace unionism in the Royal Mail.* **Employee Relations,** 15:5 pp 3-25.

Darlington, R. (1994) **The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism: Shop Stewards' Organization in Three Merseyside Plants.** Mansell.

Darlington, R. (2001) *Union Militancy and left-wing leadership on London Underground.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 32:1, pp 2-21.

Darlington, R. (2002) *Shop Stewards' leadership, left wing activism and collective workplace union organisation.* **Capital & Class,** 76, pp 95-126.

Dougan, D. (1968) **The History of North East Shipbuilding.** George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Dundon, T. (1997) *Post-privatised shop steward organisation and union renewal at Girobank.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 29:2, pp 126-136.

Dunlop, J.T. (1958) **Industrial Relations Systems.** New York, Holt.

317

Edwards, P. (1995) **Industrial Relations Theory and Practice in Britain.** Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Edwards, P., Hall, M., Hyman, R., Marginson, P., Sisson, K., Waddington, J. & Winchester, D. (1998) *Great Britain:From Partial Collectivism to Neo-liberalism to Where?* In Ferner, A. & Hyman, R. (1998) **Changing Industrial Relations in Europe.** 2nd Edition. Blackwell Publishers.

Edwards, R. (1979) **Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century.** Heinemann.

Eldridge, J.E.T. (1968) **Industrial Disputes: Essays in the Sociology of Industrial Relations.** Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited.

Elmbaum, B. & Lazonick, W. (1968) **The Decline of the British Economy.** Oxford University Press.

Fairbrother, P. (1989) **Workplace Unionism in the 1980's: A Process of Renewal?** Workers' Educational Association, Studies for Trade Unionists, Volume15, Number 57.

Fairbrother, P. (1996) *Workplace Trade Unionism in the State Sector* in Ackers, P., Smith, C & Smith, P. (Eds) (1996) **The New Workplace and Trade Unionism: Critical Perspectives on Work and Organisations.** Routledge.

Fairbrother, P. (2000) *British Trade Unions Facing the Future* **Capital & Class,** 71, pp 47-78.

Fairbrother, P. & Waddington, J. (1990) *The politics of trade unionism: Evidence, policy and theory* **Capital & Class,** 41, pp 15-56.

Fantasia, R. (1988) **Cultures of Solidarity:Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers.** Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ferner, A. & Hyman, R. (1998) **Changing Industrial Relations in Europe.** 2nd Edition. Blackwell Publishers.

Fitzgerald, I., Rainnie, A. & Stirling, J. (1996) *Coming to Terms with Quality:UNISON and the Restructuring of Local Government.* **Capital & Class,** 59, pp 103-134.

Flanders, A. (1970) **Management and Unions: The Theory and Reform of Industrial Relations.** Faber and Faber.

Fosh, P. (1993) *Membership Participation in Workplace Unionism: The Possibility of Union Renewal.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 31:4, pp 577-592.

Fox, A. (1966) *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations* Research Paper No. 3, **Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations,** HMSO, London.

Fox, A. (1971) **A Sociology of Work in Industry.** Collier-Macmillan Ltd.

Fox, A. (1974) **Beyond Contract: Work, Power and Trust Relations.** Faber and Faber.

Fox, A. (1975) *Collective Bargaining, Flanders and the Webbs.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 13 (2), pp 151-174.

Fox, A. (1979) *A Note on Industrial Relations Pluralism.* **Sociology,** 13, pp 105-109.

Gall, G. (1993) *What happened to single union deals? - a research note.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 24:1, pp 71-75.

Gall, G. (1995) *Return to sender: A commentary on Darlington's analysis of workplace unionism in the Royal Mail in Britain.* **Employee Relations,** 17,2, pp 54-63.

Gall, G. (1998) *The Prospects for Workplace Trade Unionism: Evaluating Fairbrother's Union Renewal Thesis.* **Capital & Class,** 66, pp 149-157.

Gall, G. (1999) *A Review of Strike Activity in Western Europe at the end of the Second Millennium,* **Employee Relations,** 1999, Vol. 21, No. 4/5, pp 357-377.

Gall, G. (2000) *What is to be Done with Organised Labour,* **Historical Materialism,** 5, pp 327-343.

Gall, G. (2001) *The Organization of Organized Discontent: The Case of the Postal Workers in Britain* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 39:3, September, pp 393-409.

Gall, G & McKay, S. (1994) *Trade Union Derecognition in Britain.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 32:3, pp 433-448.

Gallie, D., Penn, R. & Rose, M. (1996) **Trade Unionism in Recession.** Oxford University Press.

Gallie, D., Rose, M. & Penn, R. (1996) *The British Debate on Trade Unionism: Crisis and Continuity* in Gallie, D., Penn, R. & Rose, M. (1996) **Trade Unionism in Recession** Oxford University Press.

Gamson, W.A. (1992a) **Talking Politics.** Cambridge University Press.

Gamson, W.A. (1992b) *The Social Psychology of Collective Action.* in Morris, A.D. & Mueller, C.M. (1992) **Frontiers in Social Movement Theory.** Yale University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973) **The Interpretation of Culture.** New York: Basic Books.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967) **The Discovery of Grounded Theory** Chicago:Aldine.

Glaze, J. (2002) *Ph.D. Study and the Use of a Reflective Diary: a dialogue with self.* **Reflective Practice**, Vol 3, No. 2, pp 153-166.

Godfrey, G. & Marchington, M. (1996) *Shop stewards in the 1990s; a research note.* Industrial Relations Journal, 27:4, pp 339-344.

Goldthorpe, J. H., Lockwood, D., Bechhofer, F. & Platt, J. (1968) **The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour.** Cambridge University Press.

Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. & Foster, P. (2000) **Case Study Method.** Sage Publications.

Goodman, J. (1989) *Industrial relations and restructuring in manufacturing: Three case studies in the United Kingdom.* **International Labour Review,** Vol. 128, No. 5, pp 601-620.

Goodman, J.F.B & Whittingham, T.G. (1969) **Shop Stewards in British Industry.** McGraw-Hill Publishing Co Ltd.

Great Britain. Commission on Industrial Relations. (1971) **Report No, 22. Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing.** HMSO. (Cm. 4756).

Greene, A-M. (2001) **Voices from the Shopfloor – Dramas of the Employment Relationship.** Ashgate.

Greene, A-M., Black, J. & Ackers, P. (2000) *The Union Makes Us Strong? A Study of the Dynamics of Workplace Union Leadership at Two UK Manufacturing Plants* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 38:1, March, pp 75-93.

Hassard, J. (1993) *Postmodernism and Organizational Analysis: an Overview* in Hassard, J. & Parker, M. (Eds) (1993) **Postmodernism and Organizations.** Sage Publications.

Hassard, J. & Parker, M. (Eds) (1993) **Postmodernism and Organizations.** Sage Publications.

Heery, E. (1996) *The New New Unionism* in Beardwell, I. (1996) **Contemporary Industrial Relations: A Critical Analysis.** Oxford.

Heery, E. (1998) *The Relaunch of the Trades Union Congress* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 36:3, pp 339-360.

Heery, E. (1999) *The challenge for the next era of unionism – organise or fossilise.* **New Statesman,** 6/9/99.

Heery, E. & Kelly, J. (1994) *Professional, Participative and Managerial Unionism:An Interpretation of Change in Trade Unions.* **Work, Employment & Society,** Vol8, No1, pp 1-22.

Heery, E., Simms, M., Simpson. D., Delbridge, R. & Salmon, J. (2000) *Organizing unionism comes to the UK.* **Employee Relations,** 22,1, pp 38-47.

Heery, E., Simms, M., Simpson. D., Delbridge, R. & Salmon, J. (2000) *The TUC's Organising Academy:an assessment.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 31:5, pp 400-415.

Heyes, J. F. (1999) **The Politics of Production and Labour Utilization: A Case Study of a Chemicals Factory.** PhD Thesis, Leeds University Business School, September.

Hogwood, B.W. (1979) **Government and Shipbuilding: The Politics of Industrial Change.** Saxon House.

Hyman, R. (1971) **Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism.** Pluto Press Ltd.

Hyman, R. (1975) **Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction.** Macmillan.

Hyman, R. (1978) *Pluralism, Procedural Consensus and Collective Bargaining.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 16, pp16-40.

Hyman, R. (1979) *The politics of workplace trade unionism: recent tendencies and some problems for theory.* **Capital & Class,** No. 8, pp 54-67.

Hyman, R. (1987) *Strategy or Structure? Capital, Labour and Control.* **Work, Employment & Society,** Vol. 1, No.1, pp 25-55.

Hyman, R. (1989) **The Political Economy of Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice in a Cold Climate.** London:Macmillan.

Hyman, R. (1994) *Theory and Industrial Relations.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 32:2, pp 165-180.

Johnston, H. & Klandermans, B. (1995) **Social Movements and Culture.** London UCL Press.

Jones, I (1993) **Decline of Shipbuilding on Tyneside.** Tyneside TEC.

Kelly, J. (1996) *Union Militancy and Social Partnership* in Ackers, P., Smith, C & Smith, P. (1996) **The New Workplace and Trade Unionism: Critical Perspectives on Work and Organisations.** Routledge.

Kelly, J. (1997) *The future of trade unionism: injustice, identity and attribution.* **Employee Relations,** 19, 5, pp 400-414.

Kelly, J. (1998) **Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilisation, Collectivism and Long Waves.** Routledge.

Kessler, I. & Heron, P. (2001) *Steward Organization in a Professional Union: The Case of the Royal College of Nursing* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 39:3, September, pp 367-391.

Kirkbride, P. (1985) *Power in industrial relations research* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 16, pp 44-56.

Klandermans, B. (1984) *Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory* **American Sociological Review** 49:5, pp 583-600.

Klandermans, P.G. (1984) *Mobilization and participation in trade union action: An expectancy-value approach* **Journal of Occupational Psychology** 57, pp 107-120.

Lane, T. & Roberts, K. (1971) **Strike at Pilkingtons.** Fontana, London.

Lash, S. & Urry, J. (1987) **The End of Organized Capitalism.** Polity Press.

Lash, S. & Urry, J. (1994) **Economies of Signs and Space.** Sage Publications Ltd.

Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (2000) *The Only Generalization is: There is No Generalization.* in Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. & Foster, P. (2000) **Case Study Method.** Sage Publications.

Lindesmith, A. (1968) **Addiction and Opiates.** Chicago:Aldine.

Lipset, S.M., Trow, M.A. & Coleman, J.S. *Democracy and Oligarchy in Trade Unions* in McCarthy, W.E.J. (Ed) **Trade Unions.** Penguin Books.

Lorenz, E.H. (1991) **Economic Decline in Britain: The Shipbuilding Industry 1890-1970.** OUP.

Lorenz, E. & Wilkinson, F. (1968) *The Shipbuilding Industry 1880-1965* in Elmbaum, B. & Lazonick, W. (1968) **The Decline of the British Economy.** Oxford University Press.

Lukes, S. (1974) **Power: A Radical View.** Macmillan.

MacDermott, T.P. (no date) **Centuries of Conflict: The Story of Trade Unionism on Tyneside.** Newcastle and District Trades Council.

McAdam, D. (1988) *Micromobilization Contexts and Recruitment to Activism* **International Social Movement Research** Vol 1, pp 125-154.

McBride, J. & Stirling, J. (2002) *Partnership and process in the maritime construction industry.* **Employee Relations: The International Journal,** Vol 24, No.3, pp 290-304.

McBride, J. (2004) *Renewal or Resilience? The Persistence of Shop Steward Organisation in the Tyneside Maritime Construction Industry.* **Capital & Class,** 82, pp 115-142.

McCarthy, W.E.J. (1966) *The Role of Shop Stewards in British Industrial Relations.* **Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations,** Research Paper 1.

McCord, N. (Ed) (1977) **Essays in Tyneside Labour History.** Department of Humanities, Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic.

McGoldrick, J. (1983) *Industrial Relations and the Division of Labour in the Shipbuilding Industry Since the War.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol 21, No. 2, pp 197-220.

McIlroy, J. (2000) *New Labour, New Unions, New Left.* **Capital & Class,** 71, pp 11- 45.

McKinlay, A. & Taylor, P. (1994) *Privatisation and industrial relations in British shipbuilding.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 25:4, pp 293-304.

Machin, S. (2000) *Union Decline in Britain.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 38:4 pp 631-645.

Marchington, M. & Armstrong, R. (1983) *Typologies of shop stewards: a reconsideration* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 14:3, pp 34-48.

Martin, R. (1992) **Bargaining Power.** Clarendon Press Oxford.

Martinez Lucio, M. & Stewart, P. (1997) *The paradox of contemporary labour process theory: the rediscovery of labour and the disappearance of collectivism,* **Capital & Class,** 62, pp 49-78.

Mason, B & Bain, P. (1991) *Trade union recruitment strategies: facing the 1990s.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 22, pp 36-45.

Mason, J. (1996) **Qualitative Researching.** London:Sage.

Mess, H. (1928) **Industrial Tyneside: a Social Survey** London: Ernest Bevin.

Metochi, M. (2002) *The Influence of Leadership and Member Attitudes in Understanding the Nature of Union Participation.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 40:1, pp 87-111.

Morris, A.D. & Mueller, C.M. (1992) **Frontiers in Social Movement Theory.** Yale University Press.

Mortimer, J.E. (1973) **History of the Boilermakers' Society. Volume I 1834-1906.** George Allen and Unwin.

National Union of Seamen and AUEW-TASS (1984) **Shipping and Shipbuilding. Partners in Crisis – A blueprint for survival.** National Union of Seamen and AUEW-TASS

New Unionism Research Project (1998a) **Research Bulletin 1** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

New Unionism Research Project (1998b) **Research Bulletin 3** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

New Unionism Research Project (1999c) **Research Bulletin 4** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

New Unionism Research Project (1999d) **Research Bulletin 5** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

New Unionism Research Project (1999e) **Research Bulletin 6** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

New Unionism Research Project (2000a) **Research Bulletin 7** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

New Unionism Research Project (2000b) **Research Bulletin 8** Trade Union Research Unit, Cardiff Business School.

Nichols, T. & Armstrong, P. (1976) **Workers Divided:A Study in Shop Floor Politics.** Glasgow:Fontana.

Nicholson, N. (1976) *The role of the shop steward: an empirical case study* **Industrial Relations Journal,** Spring, Vol.7 No.1, pp 15-26.

North East Trade Union Studies Information Unit (1976) **British Shipbuilding - a trade union initiative: A Report Commissioned By The Tyne Shipbuilding and General Branch of APEX.** TUSIU.

North Tyneside Trades Council (1979) **Shipbuilding - The Cost of Redundancy.**

One North East (2000) **Economic Assessment – Offshore Engineering and Fabrication in the North East of England,** March.

Phelps Brown, H. (1990) *The Counter-Revolution of Our Time* **Industrial Relations** Vol 29, No. 1, pp 1-14.

Poole, M. (1981) **Theories of Trade Unionism: A Sociology of Industrial Relations** Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Roberts, G. (1967) **Demarcation Rules in Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing.** University of Cambridge Department of Applied Economics, Occasional Papers 14.

Roberts, I. (1993) **Craft, Class and Control: The Sociology of a Shipbuilding Community.** Edinburgh University Press.

Rose, E. (1994) *The "Disorganized Paradigm" British Industrial Relations in the 1990s* **Employee Relations,** Vol. 16, No.1.

Schienstock, G. (1981) *Towards a Theory of Industrial Relations.* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** Vol 19, No. 2, pp 170-189.

Scott, A. (1994) **Willing Slaves? British Workers Under Human Resource Management.** Cambridge Studies in Management.

Shipbuilding Inquiry Committee 1965 - 1966, Report. Cmnd. 2937. HMSO, 1966.

Silverman, D. (1993) **Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction.** Sage Publications.

Snape, E. (1994) *Union Organizing in Britain: The Views of Local Full-time Officials.* **Employee Relations,** 16,8, pp 48-62.

Snow, D.A., Burke Rochford, Jr, E., Worden, S.K. & Benford, R.D. (1986) *Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation* **American Sociological Review,** 51:4 pp 464-481.

Snow, D.A. & Benford, R. B. (1992) *Master Frames and Cycles of Protest* in Morris, A.D. & Mueller, C.M. (1992) **Frontiers in Social Movement Theory.** Yale University Press.

Socialist Worker (2000) *How to rebuild the trade unions*
www.socialistworker.co.uk.

Spencer, B. (1985) *Shop Steward Resistance in the Recession* **Employee Relations**, 7, pp 22-28.

Spencer, B. (1989) **Remaking the Working Class? An Examination of Shop Stewards' Experiences** Spokesman.

Stake, R. (2000) *The Case Study Method in Social Inquiry* in Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. & Foster, P. (2000) **Case Study Method.** Sage Publications.

Stephenson, C & Stewart, P. (2001) *The Whispering Shadow: Collectivism and Individualism at Ikeda-Hoover and Nissan UK* **Sociological Research Online,** Vol 6, No. 3, pp 1-15.

Stirling, J. (2001) *Britain at Work: Letting the Facts Speak for Themselves?* **Capital & Class, 73** pp 173-179.

Stirling, J. & Bridgford, J. (1985) *British and French Shipbuilding: The Industrial Relations of Decline.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 16:4, pp 7-16.

Stone, I & Lincoln, I. (1991) **Cammell Laird Shipyard: Economic Assessment of Prospects.** Newcastle Economic Research Unit, Newcastle Polytechnic.

Storey, J. (1983) **Managerial Prerogative and the Question of Control.** Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Terry, M. (1986) *How Do We Know If Shop Stewards Are Getting Weaker?* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 24:2, July, pp 169-179.

Terry, M. (1995) *Trade Unions: Shop Stewards and the Workplace* in Edwards, P. (1995) **Industrial Relations Theory and Practice in Britain.** Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Terry, M. & Edwards, P.K. (Eds.) (1988) **Shopfloor Politics and Job Controls: The Post-War Engineering Industry.** Basil Blackwell.

The Journal (May 2002) *Tyne yards pay the best* www.icnewcastle.co.uk.

Thompson, P. & Ackroyd, S. (1995) *All Quiet on the Workplace Front? A Critique of Recent Trends in British Industrial Sociology.* **Sociology,** 29, 4 pp 615-633.

Thompson, P & Warhurst, C. (Eds) (1998) **Workplaces of the Future.** Basingstoke:Macmillan.

Tilly, C. (1978) **From Mobilization to Revolution.** New York. McGraw Hill.

TUC (1997) **Partners for Progress: Next Steps for the New Unionism.**
London: Trades Union Congress.

Upchurch, M., Danford, A. & Richardson, M. (2002) *Research note: profiles of union workplace representatives: evidence from three unions in south-west England* **Industrial Relations Journal,** 33:2, pp 127-140.

Waddington, J. (1995) **The politics of bargaining: the merger process and British trade union structural development, 1892-1987.**
London:Mansell.

Waddington, J. & Whitson, C. (1997) *Why do People Join Unions in a Period of Membership Decline?* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 35:4, pp 515-546.

Walton, R.E. & McKersie, R.B. (1965) **A Behaviorial Theory of Labor Negotiations.** McGraw-Hill Inc.

Warhurst, C. & Thompson, P. (1998) *Hands, Hearts and Minds: Changing Work and Workers at the End of the Century* in Thompson, P & Warhurst, C. (eds) (1998) **Workplaces of the Future.** Basingstoke:Macmillan.

Warn, J. (2000) *North East Yards have their backs against the wall* **Trade Union Review,** 20, June, pp 9-10.

Webb, S & B. (1920a) **The History of Trade Unionism.** 3rd Edition. A.M. Kelley Publishers.

Webb, S. & B. (1920b) **Industrial Democracy.** Fourteenth Thousand. Longmans, Green & Co.

WERS98 Data Dissemination Service. The 1998 Cross Section Survey of Employees. Volume 3C: Survey of Employees Questionnaire (SEQ). www.niesr.ac.uk/niesr/wers98/SEQ/Employee.pdf.

Weston, C. (1999) *The challenge for the next era of unionism – organise or fossilise.* **New Statesman,** 6/9/99.

Whitfield, K. & Strauss, G. (1998) **Researching the World of Work: Strategies and Methods in Studying Industrial Relations.** ILR Press, Ithaca, NY.

Wilkinson, E. (1939) **The Town that was Murdered: The Life Story of Jarrow.** Victor Collancz Ltd.

Williams, S. (1997) *The Nature of Some Recent Trade Union Modernization Policies in the UK* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 35:4, pp 495-514.

Willman, P. (1980) *Leadership and trade union principles: some problems of management sponsorship and independence.* **Industrial Relations Journal,** Vol 11, No. 4, pp 39-49.

Willman, P. & Cave, A. (1994) *The Union of the Future: Super-Unions or Joint Ventures?* **British Journal of Industrial Relations,** 32:3, pp 395-412.

Wills, J. (2000) *Unions and Community: Geographies of Trade Union Renewal.* Working Paper One, **Geographies of Organised Labour: The reinvention of trade unionism in millenial Britain.** ESRC fellowship award number R/000/27/1020.

Yin, R. (1994) **Case Study Research: Design and Methods.** 2nd Edition. Sage Publications.

Appendix One

Agreement of 28 January 1898 between Federated Unions and Employers Federation - some of the main features.

General Principle of freedom to Employers in the Management of their Works.
The Federated Employers, while disavowing any intentions of interfering with the proper functions of Trade Unions, will admit no interference with the management of their business, and reserve to themselves the right to introduce into any federated workshop...any condition of labour under which any members of the Trade Unions here represented were working at the commencement of the dispute in any of the workshops of the Federated Employers...

1. Freedom of Employment.
Every workman shall be free to belong to a trade union or not as he may think fit. Every employer shall be free to employ any man, whether he belong or not to a trade union. [A note - the Federation...advise the members not to object to Union workmen]
2. Piecework.
The right to work piecework at present exercised by any members of the Federated Employers shall be extended to all members of the Federation and to all their Union workmen.
3. Overtime.
When overtime is necessary, the Federated Employers recommend the following as a basic guide; - no man shall be required to work more than 40 hours overtime in any 4 weeks after full shop hours have been worked, allowance being made for time lost through sickness or absence with leave. In certain cases, such as breakdowns *urgency and emergency,* no restrictions applied. All other existing restrictions as regards overtime are to be removed. Unless mutually satisfactory to the Local Employers and the workmen concerned.
4. Rating of Workmen.
Employers shall be free to employ workmen at rates of wages mutually satisfactory. They do not object to the unions or any other body of workmen in their collective capacity arranging amongst themselves rates of wages at which they will accept work, but while admitting the position they decline to enforce a rule of any Society... The Unions will not interfere...with the wages of workmen outside their own unions. General alterations in the rates of wages in any district...will be negotiated between the Employers' Local Association ant the local representatives of the Trade unions or other bodies of workmen concerned.
5. Apprentices.
There shall be no limitation of the number of apprentices.
6. Selection, Training and Employment of Operatives.
Employers are responsible for the work turned out by their machine tools and shall have full discretion to appoint the men they consider suitable to work them, and to determine the conditions under which such machine tools shall be worked.

Provisions for Avoiding Disputes
With a view to avoid disputes in future, deputations of workmen will be received by their employers, by appointment, for mutual discussion of questions, in the settlement of which both parties are directly concerned. In case of disagreement local associations of employers will negotiate with trade union officials. Failing settlement by the Local Association...the matter shall be forthwith referred to the Executive Board of the Federation and the central authority of the Trade union...there shall be no stoppage of work either partial or of general character, but work shall proceed under the current conditions.

329

Appendix Two

Agreement of 1909 between the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation and the Confederated Unions. This consisted of nine principal headings including;-

---

General Fluctuations in Wages, were *Changes due to the general conditions of the Shipbuilding Industry* - there was to be no change for six calendar months after previous change and the movements limited to 5% on piecework and 1s/week or ¼d per hour.

Questions Other Than General Fluctuation in Wages. These were similar to the arrangements of 1898 agreement provisions for avoiding disputes, proceeding through a local conference to a central conference. Final a grand conference, *attended by Federation and all Unions parties to this agreement, this may be called if the central Conference has not resolved matters prior to any stoppage of work.*

Piecework Questions - Settlement of - Local arrangements may continue or be established with the following further provisions...until any dispute resolved...two or three employers not connected with the yard will set a price at which the job will be worked, without prejudice to ultimate settlement.

Demarcation, existing local arrangements to continue.

General Provisions At all meetings...the representatives of both sides shall have full powers to settle, but it shall be in their discretion whether or not they conclude a settlement...Until the whole procedure of this agreement...has been carried through there shall be no stoppage or interruption of work either of a partial or of a general character. The agreement was to last three years and then subject to three months notice.

(Source: Clarke:1997a:333)

The unions involved in this agreement were as follows:-
Boilermakers; Shipwrights; Co-operative Smiths; Assoc. Blacksmiths' Society; Combined Smiths of GB and Ireland; Sheet Iron Workers; Gen Union of Braziers & Sheet Metal Workers; Driller and Hole Cutters; Amal. Soc. Of Carpenters & Joiners; Ass of Carpenters & Joiners Soc.; Gen Union of Carpenters & Joiners; Amal. Union of Cabinetmakers; Nat. Amal. Furnishing Trade Assoc.; Amal. Soc. of Wood Cutting Machinists; Nat. Amal. Soc. Of Operative House & Ship Painters - these last two had separate Scottish unions. (Ibid.)

Appendix Three

1962 Proposals to reconstruct the division of labour as well as to establish a formal disputes procedure.

In terms of the organisation of the division of labour, three groups of workers will be established: a metal trades group, a finishing trades group and an ancillary workers group, graded as skilled and semi-skilled.

To each group there would be a clear-cut wage rate only negotiable nationally.

Piecework would be minimised - the new rate would be a 'piecework speed time rate'.

A new formal demarcation procedure was to be introduced as well as new procedures for overtime, holiday and night shift.

'Apprenticeship' was to be abolished and replaced by a training system through which a 'Certificate of Competence' could be attained allowing such workers to do craft-work at the going rate.

Existing craft workers would be expected to be more flexible within their trade group whilst ancillary workers would be more interchangeable.

(Source McGoldrick,1983:211)

Appendix Four

Shipbuilding Advisory Committee Recommendations 1962

a	the government should give the industry's need for credits the most sympathetic and urgent consideration
b	management and trade union leaders should make the most strenuous effort to improve their labour relations
c	trade union leaders should continue to take the necessary steps to advise their members of the serious prospects facing the industry and the need for the maximum possible co-operation between management and workpeople to achieve the most efficient methods of production
d	employers and trade unions should together review their arrangements for avoiding and settling disputes
e	joint yard consultative committees should be set up for free consultation about ways and means of improving efficiency as well as welfare matters
f	employers and trade unions should constitute themselves as a national joint consultative committee to deal with matters of national interest relating to ways and means of improving efficiency. This committee should meet as and when required and should be responsible for keeping alive at all levels the spirit of co-operation
g	managements should bear in mind the possible advantages of amalgamations and should, wherever, possible, cooperate to share effort and the use of expensive equipment
h	the government should consider in the course of their examination of the Survey Report of the General Council of British Shipping the possibilities of subsidising the scrapping of ships or a scrap and build scheme
i	the government should review its planned requirements for Government-owned ships with a view to placing as many orders as possible in the two or three years.

Source: Hogwood:1979:pp51-52

Appendix Five

Questions for Full Time Officers of the Trade Unions

Background

Could you explain your role – for how long?

How many years have you been involved in the shipbuilding sector?
(Background in shipbuilding?)

How did you become a FTO?

Do you think your role as a FTO has changed since you took on the job?
If yes, in what way has it changed?

Background of Industry and Structure of Representation

In which companies on the Tyne does (trade union) have recognition?
If any derecognition, ask why.
If derecognition, do (trade union) have membership in these yards – how are these members represented?

Which other unions are involved in the industry?
Do these unions have recognition agreements in the same yards?
Ask about 'second rate recognition'.

How many shop stewards do you have in the companies on the Tyne?

How often do you have contact with these shop stewards?
What about generally?
Are there any yards that you have more contact with shop stewards than others? If so, why?

Has the number of shop stewards/convenors in the yard changed in recent years?
If yes, for what reason?

What percentage do you think you have in terms of membership of the union in this industry?

Is it the shop stewards' responsibility to recruit potential new members to the union?
Do you have any responsibility for recruiting new members?

Industrial Relations/ Disputes/Procedures

How would you describe industrial relations in the industry at the present time?

Do you think that industrial relations has changed in the industry over recent years?
If so, in what way?
If yes, has this changed your role as FTO in any way?

Have there been any collective disputes in this industry in the last 2 years?

If yes, what form of industrial action took place?
If yes, how much were you involved and in what way?

In the past 12 months, have management in any of the yards been *threatened* with industrial action?

In the past 12 months, have there been any ballots of union members to establish the level of support for industrial action?

If there is a collective dispute, are shop stewards required to contact a paid official?
If yes, do they contact you on every occasion?

During the last 12 months, how many times have you met with shop stewards and/or convenors to discuss matters affecting the workforce?

For what reasons were you contacted?

Relationships

How would you describe your relationship with the shop stewards/convenors in the industry?

How would you describe the relationship between shop stewards in this industry?

How would you rate the relationship between shop stewards and management in this industry?

What about management and trade unions in general?

What about your personal relationship with management in the industry?

During the last 2 years have you met with management in the industry?
If yes, how often and over what sort of issues?

Are there any yards in which you meet with management more than others?
If yes, which ones and why?

Social Partnership and Cluster Groups

Have you ever heard of the term 'social partnership'?
If yes,
- how would you define social partnership ?
- do any of the yards have a social partnership agreement?
- have you been on any training programme involving social partnership?
- do you think it will affect what you do in your role as an FTO?
- do you think shop stewards and convenors have an understanding about social partnership?
- have shop stewards been on training programme involving social partnership?
- what about the workforce?
If no,
- do you know whether the employers on the Tyne and trade unions work in co-operation to win shipbuilding orders?
- do you think your trade union and the employers on the Tyne have a relationship built on trust?

- do you know whether *pendulum arbitration* is used by any of the employers and trade unions to resolve problems?
- do you know whether there are any no-strike agreements in the industry?
- do you think that your trade union prefers consultation rather than confrontation when resolving industrial relations difficulties?
- do you know whether your trade union would prefer to avoid industrial disputes?

- Have you heard of the Tyne Maritime Cluster Group?

If yes,

- do you know what this involves?
- how much involvement have you had with the establishing of the cluster group?
- are you involved with it at the present time?
- do you think it will affect your role as a FTO for this industry?
- are the workforce on the Tyne aware of it?
- do you think it will bring changes to the way the industry operates?

If no,

- have you ever heard of harmonisation of terms and conditions? *If yes, do you think this would be appropriate to the entire industry on the Tyne?*
- Do you know whether your trade union supports the principle of flexibility and mobility of jobs on the Tyne?

Appendix Six

Questions for management of companies

Background of company

I would like to begin by asking some general questions about this establishment.

Main activity of the establishment?

Is it part of a larger organisation?
- If so, how many establishments, including this one, are there?
- How many employees are there across the organisation?
- How many employees are there at this site?
- Have there been any changes in this number in the last 18 months? If yes, for what reasons?

Does a single individual or family have controlling interest (50% ownership) over this company?
- If so, are any of the controlling owners actively involved in day-to-day management of this workplace on a full time basis?

How long has this site been operating on the Tyne?

Has the controlling ownership of this workplace changed over recent years?

How many competitors do you have for you main product or service?

How would you rate the relationship between yourselves and other industries (yards) on the Tyne?

Background of manager

What is the title of your job?

How long have you been doing this job at this workplace?

What are your job responsibilities?

Are you involved in industrial relations as part of your role?
- If so, do you have any assistance by colleagues in managing industrial relations?
- If yes, how many?

How many years experience do you have in personnel or industrial relations management, either in this establishment or elsewhere?

Is there a manager or director at a higher level who spends a major part of his/her time on personnel or industrial relations matters?

Does this company recognise trade unions?
> *If no*, for what reason?
> Are you aware of any employees being members of a trade union?

> *If yes*, which trade unions?
> Do you have a formal agreement to recognise (union name/s)?
> Do these unions cover all sections of the workforce?
> Does management negotiate jointly with the recognised unions, or are there separate negotiations?
> What about those employees who are members of (non-recognised trade union if single union deal)?
> Are there any employees here who have to be members of unions in order to get or keep their jobs?

Do you know how many recognised unions there were 5-10 years ago?

How did this increase/decrease come about?

So far as you know, during the last 5 years, has there been any request for recognition from any union or group of workers at this workplace?

Union Representatives

Are there any union representatives (shop stewards) at this establishment – apart from any exclusively involved in health and safety?

Are there any stewards here who in practice spend all, or nearly all, of their working time on union affairs concerning this establishment?

How would you rate the relationship between management and shop stewards at this workplace?

During the last 2 years have you met with a trade union official?
If yes, over what sort of issues?

How would you rate the relationship between management and trade unions at this establishment?

Pay determination

Are the employees at this workplace covered by collective bargaining?
> If yes, is this either: - industry wide, organisational level, workplace level, set by management, with individual employees?

Collective Disputes and Procedures

If a dispute over pay or conditions arises here, how is it generally resolved?

In collective disputes over pay, if there is a failure to agree at the establishment, is there a provision for the issue to be referred to a body or person outside the establishment?
> If yes, to whom?

In the last 2 years, has this workplace suffered significant disruption as a result of industrial action in another organisation?

Would you say that during your time at this workplace you have seen any changes in levels of industrial unrest/anxiety at this workplace?
If yes, in what way?

Would you say that during your time at this workplace you have seen any changes in industrial relations at this workplace?
If yes, in what way?

External Environment

Is this company involved in the Tyne Maritime Group?

If yes,
What was the main purpose for the establishment of this Group?
Could you give me a brief history of how it was established?
How much involvement have you had with the establishment of the Group?
Are you involved with it at the present time?

What would you see as the advantages and/or disadvantages of being a part of this group?

Do you think it will bring changes to this industry?
Do you think there'll need to be a change in the culture of the industry?
Are the workforce aware of it?

How do you foresee it developing?

Would you consider the Tyne Maritime Group to be a 'partnership'?

Copy of the agreement?

Social Partnership

Have you heard of the term 'social partnership'?
➤ **If yes**, how would you define social partnership?

Does this company have a social partnership agreement with a trade union?
➤ **If yes**, who initiated the agreement?
➤ Why did the company enter into a partnership agreement with trade union/s?
➤ Has the introduction of a social partnership agreement in any way changed the relationship between the company and trade union/s?
➤ How far do you think the workforce is aware of the agreement?

Appendix Seven

Management Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of 3 sections relating to consultation and communication, disputes procedures and relationships. Please attempt to answer all questions by ticking boxes or circling numbers where appropriate.

Consultation and Communication

1.   In which way/s do management usually communicate or consult with employees at this workplace?

Whole Workforce meetings	{ }[1]
Section briefings	{ }[2]
Personal contacts with employees	{ }[3]
Through workforce representatives	{ }[4]
Newsletters/Mailings	{ }[5]
E-mail	{ }[6]
Noticeboards	{ }[7]
Other types of meetings	{ }[8] *Please state* ....
No other way	{ }[9]

2.   Do management normally negotiate, consult, inform or not involve union representatives at all over these matters?

	Negotiate	Consult	Inform	None
Pay or conditions of employment	1	2	3	0
Recruitment or selection of employees	1	2	3	0
Training of employees	1	2	3	0
Systems of payment	1	2	3	0
Handling grievances	1	2	3	0
Staffing or manpower planning	1	2	3	0
Equal opportunities	1	2	3	0
Job Security	1	2	3	0
Performance Appraisals	1	2	3	0
Discipline	1	2	3	0

3.   Is there a formal procedure for dealing with collective disputes at this establishment?

Yes   { }¹
No   { }²

4.   In the last 2 years have there been any of the following forms of collective industrial action at this workplace?

	Yes	No	Number of Occasions	
			Official	Unofficial
Strikes of less than 1 day	1	2		
Strikes of a day but less than a week	1	2		
Strikes of a week or more	1	2		
Overtime ban	1	2		
Work to rule	1	2		
Lock out	1	2		
Go slow	1	2		
Blacking of work	1	2		
Work in/sit in	1	2		
Other industrial action	1	2		
None of these	1	2		

5.   In the past 12 months, has management been *threatened* with any of these forms of industrial action?

1.	Strike	[ ]
2.	Overtime ban	[ ]
3.	Work to rule	[ ]
4.	Go slow	[ ]
5.	Blacking of work	[ ]
6.	Work in/sit in	[ ]
7.	Other industrial action	[ ]

6. How would you describe management's general attitude towards trade union membership among employees at this workplace?

    1.   In favour of trade union membership   { }
    2.   Not in favour of it   { }
    3.   Neutral about it   { }
    4.   Don't know   { }

7. Looking at this scale, how would you rate the relationship between management and trade unions at this workplace?

    Very Good   { }^{1}
    Good   { }^{2}
    Neither good or bad   { }^{3}
    Poor   { }^{4}
    Very Poor   { }^{5}

8. How would you rate the relationship between management and employees generally at this workplace?

    Very Good   { }^{1}
    Good   { }^{2}
    Neither good or bad   { }^{3}
    Poor   { }^{4}
    Very Poor   { }^{5}

9. Do you have regular contact with worker representatives at this establishment?

    Yes   { }1   *If yes, go to 9a*
    No   { }2

9a. How often do you have contact with worker representatives?

    Every day   ( )$_1$ *If yes, please state how many times on average per day* ....
    Weekly   ( )$_2$ *If yes, on average how many times per week*.........................
    Fortnightly   ( )$_3$ *If yes, on average how many times*.....................................
    Monthly   ( )$_4$ *If yes, on average how many times* ....
    Not very often   ( )$_5$ *If yes, on average how many times* ....

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Appendix Eight

<u>**Questions for Shop Stewards**</u>

Shop steward/convenor?
Trade union?

Has this union got a recognition agreement at this yard?
(Copy of agreement?)
(If single union recognition, ask about 'second rate recognition')

How many years have you worked in this yard?

Have you worked in any other yards – if so, which ones – were you a shop steward/convenor in these yards?

Do you represent a particular trade? (i.e. electricians, welders etc)
Do you represent workers in this trade who are not members of a union?

What sort of issues do you spend time on in your job as shop steward/convenor? –
C1

During the last year, have you or other shop stewards/convenors called a meeting with the workers you represent in this yard? If yes, how often and for what reason/s?

Were any of these meetings held during work time?

Besides meetings, how else do you communicate with the workers you represent? –
C2

Are you directly involved in negotiations with management for the workers you represent at this yard? – **C3**

Is there a formal procedure for dealing with collective disputes at this yard?

Have there been any disputes here in the last 18 months over pay or conditions?
If yes, what form of industrial action took place?
Any documentation?

How many ballots have been held at this workplace in the last few years?

Structure of representation at the workplace

How many shop stewards/convenors from your union are there in this yard?

How many shop stewards/convenors belonging to other unions are there?

Do you meet with each other to discuss issues concerned with this yard? (where management are not present, only shop stewards/convenors)

Has the number of shop stewards/convenors in the yard changed in recent years?

What percentage do you think you have in terms of membership of the union in this yard?

Has this percentage gone up, down or stayed the same over the last 5 years?– **C4**

Finally, for this section I want to ask you about any contact you have had with your trade union.

During the last 12 months, how many times have you met with a paid official of the union to discuss matters affecting the workforce?

For what reasons did you contact the official?

Relationships

How would you describe your relationship with your full time official? – **C5**

How would you describe the relationship between shop stewards at this workplace? – **C6**

How would you rate the relationship between workplace representatives and management at this workplace? – **C7**

How often do you have contact with management here above supervisor level to discuss matters affecting the workers you represent?

What is the highest level of management you could directly approach to discuss a matter that affects the workers you represent?

How do management usually communicate with employees at this workplace?

Do you have any team briefings or improvement groups at this yard?
(Goal Enterprise Teams (GETS meetings) – shop stewards go to these meetings at A&P – discuss potential improvements for the yards – awards for ideas put forward on how to improve the day to day running of the department)

Social Partnership and Cluster Groups

Have you ever heard of the term 'social partnership'?
If yes,
- does this yard have a social partnership agreement?
- have you been on any training programme involving social partnership?
- how would you define social partnership ?
- do you think it will affect what you do in your role as shop steward/convenor?
- do you think everyone has the same understanding about social partnership?
- what about the workforce?

Have you heard of the Tyne Maritime Cluster Group?
If yes,
- do you know what this involves?
- how much involvement have you had with the establishing of the cluster group?
- are you involved with it at the present time?
- do you think it will affect your role as a shop steward/convenor?
- are the workforce aware of it?
- do you think it will bring changes to the way the yard operates?

Appendix Nine

<u>Coding Cards for Shop Stewards Questions</u>

C1 - What sort of issues do you spend time on in your job as shop steward/convenor?

	Spent time on	Most important issue
Maintaining the wages and benefits of employees	1	1
Security of employment	2	2
Treatment of employees by management	3	3
Health and safety of employees	4	4
Resolving conflicts between employees and managers	5	5
Find ways to improve workplace performance	6	6
None of these issues are important	7	7

Source WERS98:WRQ:p16

C2 - Besides meetings, how else do you communicate with the workers you represent?

0. No other way

1. Newsletters/mailings

2. Noticeboards

3. E-mail

4. Personal contacts with employees

5. Other types of meetings

(Source – WERS98:WRQ:p17 – not all categories used)

C3 – Does management normally negotiate, consult, inform, or not involve shop stewards at all over these matters?

	Negotiate	Consult	Inform	None
Pay or conditions of employment	1	2	3	0
Recruitment or selection of employees	1	2	3	0
Training of employees	1	2	3	0
Systems of payment	1	2	3	0
Handling grievances	1	2	3	0
Staffing or manpower planning	1	2	3	0
Equal opportunities	1	2	3	0
Health and Safety	1	2	3	0
Performance Appraisals	1	2	3	0

(Source WERS98:WRQ:p28)

C4 – If gone down, how did the decrease in trade union members come about?

1. Union membership left workplace
2. New/existing workers have not joined union
3. Derecognition
4. Change in trade unions
5. Other reason

If gone up, how did the increase in trade union members come about?

1. New employees became union members
2. Employees joined union for protection
3. Active union presence
4. Encouraged by the employer
5. Other reason

(Source WERS98:WRQ:p10 – not all categories included)

346

C5 - How would you describe your relationship with your full time official?

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. Neither good nor poor
4. Poor
5. Very Poor

C6 - How would you describe the relationship between shop stewards at this workplace?

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. Neither good nor poor
4. Poor
5. Very Poor

C7 - How would you rate the relationship between workplace representatives and management at this workplace?

1. Very Good
2. Good
3. Neither good nor poor
4. Poor
5. Very Poor

Appendix Ten

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section I would like to ask for some general details about yourself and your job.
Please tick boxes where applicable. Also note that **no names are required as this questionnaire is confidential.**

1. What is your trade/occupation...

2. How would you describe your job grade?

Skilled	[$]^1$
Semi-skilled	[$]^2$
Unskilled	[$]^3$
Apprentice	[$]^4$
Other	[$]^5$ *Please state*...

3. How long have you been working for **this company**?

Less than 1 year	[$]^1$
2-10 years	[$]^2$
11-20 years	[$]^3$
21-30 years	[$]^4$
31-40 years	[$]^5$
40+ years	[$]^6$

4. Are you working for an agency?   Yes [$]^1$ No [$]^2$

5. How many years in total have you been working in **this industry**?

Less than 1 year	[$]^1$
2-10 years	[$]^2$
11-20 years	[$]^3$
21-30 years	[$]^4$
31-40 years	[$]^5$
40+ years	[$]^6$

6. Approximately how many companies have you worked for in this industry?..........

7. Which of these age groups do you belong to?

   0-19   [$]^1$ 20-29 [$]^2$ 30-39 [$]^3$ 40-49 [$]^4$ 50-59 [$]^5$
   60+   [$]^6$

8. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job? *Tick one box in each row.*

	Very Satisfied	Satis-fied	Neither	Dis satisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Your working conditions	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
The amount of pay you receive	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Security of Employment	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
The amount of control you have over your job.	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
The sense of achievement you get from your work	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Co-operation from Workmates	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Co-operation from Management	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5

9. How far do you agree with each of the following statements about working here? *Tick one box in each row.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I share many of the values of this company	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
I feel loyal to this company	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
I feel loyal to my workmates	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
I am proud to tell people who I work for	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5

349

Section Two
This section asks some questions about your trade union. **Please tick boxes where applicable.**

10. Are you a member of a trade union? *Tick one box only.*

Yes   [ ]^1 Which union?..........................
                                                 If yes, please go to question 11

No, but have been in the past   [ ]^2 *If so, please go to question 10a*
No, have never been a member   [ ]^3 *If so, please go to question 10b*

10a Please indicate the reason why you are no longer in a trade union. *Tick one box only then go to Section 4*

I stopped paying when my last job finished	[ ]^1
I didn't feel the union was doing anything for me	[ ]^2
The subscriptions were too expensive	[ ]^3
My workmates left the union so I did too	[ ]^4
I feel I can best represent myself	[ ]^5
Another reason	[ ]^6 *Please specify below*

....
....
....

10b Please indicate the reason why you have never been a member of a trade union. *Tick one box only then go to Section 4*

No-one has approached me to join	[ ]^1
None of my workmates are in a trade union	[ ]^2
I feel I can best represent myself	[ ]^3
I don't believe in trade unions	[ ]^4
Another reason	[ ]^5 *Please specify below*

....
....

11. What were your reasons for joining a trade union? *You may tick more than one box.*

Support if I had a problem at work	[ ]^1
Improved pay and conditions	[ ]^2
Because I believe in trade unions	[ ]^3
Most people at work are members	[ ]^4
Free legal advice	[ ]^5
Industrial injury benefits	[ ]^6
Training and education	[ ]^7
Financial services	[ ]^8
Professional Services	[ ]^9
Other reason	[ ]^{10}

12. Looking at the list below, please indicate how often you take part in these activities. ***Tick one box in each row.***

I have been involved in this activity in the last...

	Week	Fortnight	Month	3 months	6 months	Year	Never
Shop/trade group meeting	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5	[ ]^6	[ ]^7
Meeting called by steward	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5	[ ]^6	[ ]^7
Branch meeting	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5	[ ]^6	[ ]^7
Grouse meeting	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5	[ ]^6	[ ]^7
Mass meetings	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5	[ ]^6	[ ]^7
Reading union magazine	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5	[ ]^6	[ ]^7

13. How far do you agree with each the following statements about trade unions? ***Tick one box in each row.***

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Trade unions for this workplace...					
...take notice of members' problems and complaints	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
...are taken seriously by management	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
...make a difference to what it is like to work here	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The job of trade unions should be to...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Protect/defend members	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Improve wages and conditions	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Limit management behaviour	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Follow traditional trade union beliefs	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Provide financial/ insurance services to members	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Work in co-operation with management	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5

Section Three
This section asks questions about shop stewards at your workplace.

14.   Do you have a shop steward? **Tick one box only**

Yes, a steward for my trade group only   [ ]^1
Yes, one steward who covers my union   [ ]^2
Yes, one steward for all unions   [ ]^3
No, I don't have a shop steward (**go to Section Four**)   [ ]^4

15.   How often do you contact your shop steward? **Tick one box only.**

Every day   [ ]^1 *On average, how many times?*.................................
Weekly   [ ]^2 *On average, how many times?*.................................
Fortnightly   [ ]^3 *On average, how many times?*.................................
Monthly   [ ]^4 *On average, how many times?*.................................
Not very often [ ]^5
Not at all   [ ]^6 *If so, go to Section Four*

16.	What sort of issues do you usually contact your shop steward about?
	You may tick more than one box.

Wages   [ ]^1
Overtime   [ ]^2
Shift Rotas   [ ]^3
Health and safety   [ ]^4
Security of employment   [ ]^5
Unfair treatment by management   [ ]^6
Demarcation   [ ]^7
Individual grievance   [ ]^8
Collective grievance   [ ]^9
Other   [ ]^{10} *Please state*

.	....

.	....

..	....

17.	How would you rate the relationship between your shop steward and his/her members?

Very Good   [ ]^1
Good   [ ]^2
Neither good or bad [ ]^3
Poor   [ ]^4
Very poor   [ ]^5

18.	In terms of the role of your shop steward, please indicate below the level of importance of each of these statements.

My shop steward should...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Lead members	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Maintain unity	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Be committed to his/her members	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Carry out members wishes	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5

Continued over page...

353

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

My shop steward should...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Be a good negotiator	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Keep members informed	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Keep local official informed	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Have good relations with local official	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5
Have good relations with management	[ ]^1	[ ]^2	[ ]^3	[ ]^4	[ ]^5

Section Four

This final section lists some general statements and asks for your level of agreement on each one. Again it is simply a case of ticking one box in each row.

19. What is your level of agreement on each of these following statements? *Tick one box in each row.*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

I feel a real member of this workforce.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

It is important for me to get on with my workmates

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

I am only committed to workers in my trade section.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

If there is industrial action, it is important for me to support my workmates

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

If there is industrial action on an issue I don't agree with, it is important that I still support my workmates.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

I am committed to being a trade union member.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

I believe it is important that workplace union affairs are dealt with only by the shop stewards.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

I believe it is important that as a trade union member, I also take a part in workplace union affairs.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

It is important to me to do my job well.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

My employer treats the workforce well.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

The workforce and employer all work together as a team.

[ ]^1 [ ]^2 [ ]^3 [ ]^4 [ ]^5

Thank you for taking part in this research.