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Examining the 'hard-boiled bunch': work culture and  
industrial relations at the Linwood car plant,  
c. 1963 -1981

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctorate of  
Philosophy

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‘Peugeot’s biggest challenge at Chrysler will undoubtedly come from the 9000 workers at the Linwood, Scotland, plant. A hard-boiled bunch even by British labor standards.’

Source: Mitchell Library [hereafter ML], Linwood Box 10, N. White and A. Collings, ‘The Battle of Britain’, *Newsweek*, 23 (1978).

## Abstract

This thesis investigates the nature of work culture and industrial relations at the Linwood car plant during the period 1963-1981. In Part One, Chapter One provides an overview of the historical debate over the use of oral testimony as well as introducing the methodology employed within the oral history project encompassed within the thesis. Chapter Two provides an analysis of the nature of work at the Linwood car plant and the ways in which this impacted on behaviour and attitudes in the workplace. This is further developed in Chapter Three where the focus is on organisational mischief, and consideration is given to the nature, consequences and explanations for this behaviour. The analysis developed in Part One, focuses on the dominant explanations for problematic industrial relations based on the notion of a 'clash of work cultures' due to an absence of intrinsic rewards in automated assembly-line work. Within the thesis such dominant narratives are not entirely supported by the Linwood sample, as a wide variety of attitudes towards work are exhibited, leading the thesis to question the validity of the categories of intrinsic and extrinsic reward.

In Part Two of the thesis there is a shift in focus as the analysis concentrates on structures of authority at Linwood and the impact on industrial relations. Chapter Four gives consideration to the influence of historical contingency on management decision-making. Part of the 1976 government rescue package was a Planning Agreement incorporating employee participation in management decision-making that articulated with the Labour government's manifesto commitment to industrial democracy. Yet throughout the different phases of ownership, interactions between management and workers at the Linwood plant explored in this thesis reveal a dichotomy between the rhetoric and reality of industrial democracy and worker participation. The final chapter of the thesis offers an exploration of shop floor industrial politics, and causes of strikes, to highlight the narratives of tension underpinning interactions at Linwood. The thesis provides a nuanced approach, highlighting variety of experience and importantly a complex interplay of interests shaping work culture and the nature of industrial relations in the car plant.

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I would also like to thank staff at the Mitchell Library, National Library of Scotland, The National Archives, Modern Records Centre, Glasgow Transport Museum and the Rootes Archive Centre. I am greatly indebted to Cliff Lockyer at the Fraser of Allander Institute for allowing unfettered access to his collection of materials from the Linwood plant as well as his research notes from a project undertaken in the early 1980s.

I would not have been fortunate enough to undertake my MPhil and subsequent PhD without the financial support of the Economic and Social Research Council, the Economic History Society and the Centre for Business History in Scotland at the University of Glasgow. Furthermore, the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow provided an encouraging atmosphere in which to undertake the PhD. I owe thanks to all staff and fellow postgraduates for academic and personal support provided over the last four years and during my undergraduate studies.

I was lucky enough to benefit from the expertise of three supervisors over the course of the PhD: Dr Jim Phillips, Professor Arthur McIvor and Dr Duncan Ross, and I am grateful for their guidance. Special mention must go to Jim Phillips, who was primary supervisor throughout my MPhil and PhD degrees, as well as playing a significant role in my undergraduate university experience. The thesis would not have been finished without his delicate balance of encouragement and pragmatic criticism.

I want to thank all family and friends who have supported me, especially for the considerable hospitality offered by friends when I was researching in the East Midlands and in London, significantly Lauren Ellison and Jane Hamilton. Gillian Nelson merits particular thanks: we met during Freshers' Week in 2000 and now share an office thus experiencing the vicissitudes of PhD life together. Also Mr. Melvyn Haggarty, former Principal Teacher of History at Paisley Grammar School, for whom I have the greatest of

respect as a teacher and friend, and owe thanks for nourishing in me an appreciation of the importance in what we can learn from history.

Simon Bennison has provided support in many ways and has only ever known me to be a PhD student, thus the best way to thank him was to finish the thesis.

I could not have completed the thesis without the support of my immediate family. Gordon, David and Erin have endured an increasingly absent-minded big sister but their humour and youth have been a welcome distraction.

At the centre of our family is my mum providing unrelenting support. Her immense strength and can-do attitude mean she is a constant source of inspiration in my life and for these reasons the PhD is dedicated to her.

## Author's Declaration

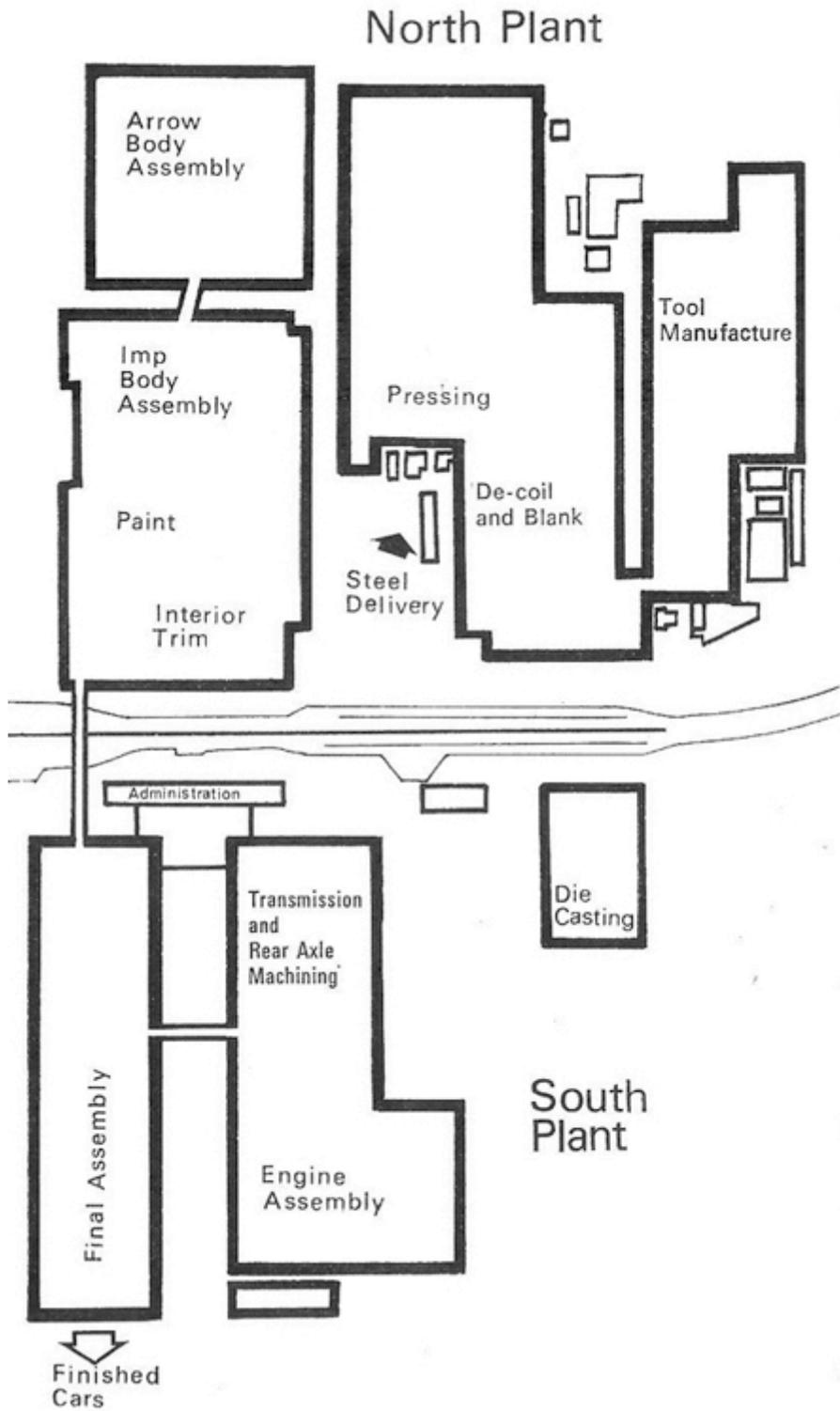
I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree\* at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Alison Gilmour

\*Chapter 5 includes primary data deployed in a different context in an MPhil dissertation submitted at the University of Glasgow in 2005 “‘A hard boiled bunch even by British labor standards’: A study of workplace unionism at the Linwood car plant, circa 1963-1981”, and publication ‘The Trouble with Linwood: Compliance and Coercion in the Car Plant, 1963-1981’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 27 (2007), 75-93.

# Linwood Plant



Source: FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Linwood [pamphlet]. 'Linwood', Company Pamphlet produced by Rootes Motors Scotland Limited. Not dated but estimate this was produced around 1969.

## Abbreviations

ATMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
CAB	Car Assembly Building
CP	Communist Party
CRPS	Central Policy Review Staff
EEC	European Economic Committee
EEF	Engineering Employers' Federation
EPP	Employee Participation Programme
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
IRO	Industrial Relations Officer
JRC	Joint Representative Council
MDW	Measured Day Work
MNC	Multinational Corporations
NUVB	National Union of Vehicle Builders
PAWP	Planning Agreement Working Party
PBR	Payment By Results
SEEA	Scottish Engineering Employers' Association
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TAC	Talbot Action Committee
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCS	Upper Clyde Shipbuilders
UMB	Unit Machine Block

## Introduction



Source: <http://www.scran.ac.uk>  
Accessed 1 September 2009.

The Duke of Edinburgh and Lord Rootes at the official opening of the Rootes factory in Linwood, May 1963.

## Introduction

### A new era

When Prince Phillip officially opened the new Rootes Group car plant at Linwood on 2 May 1963, it was perceived as a remedy for unemployment levels associated with Clydeside. Providing jobs for over 5000 workers *The Scotsman* celebrated the announcement of the location of the new Rootes factory with the headline: ‘Linwood opens a new era’.<sup>1</sup> Indeed in the late 1960s the plant was described in the Robertson Inquiry ‘as an important symbol of industrial regeneration’<sup>2</sup>, a statement which was supported in the press as an, ‘opinion widely held throughout Scotland’.<sup>3</sup> The Linwood plant offered a significant source of employment in the local labour market and in the late 1970s was the largest single employer in the Paisley ‘Travel to Work Area’.<sup>4</sup> When the car plant closed in May 1981, the resulting 4800 redundancies ‘represented the biggest single mass redundancy ever experienced in Scotland’.<sup>5</sup>

The popular public discourse is dominated by the image of poor industrial relations between management and workforce offered as the primary explanation for the closure of the plant. Contemporary media reports on industrial relations at Linwood described the workforce as ‘strike-prone’,<sup>6</sup> ‘nation-wrecking mercenaries’,<sup>7</sup> and ‘a hard-boiled bunch even by British labour standards’.<sup>8</sup> Although it is twenty-eight years since the plant closed and there is little physical evidence of its existence, these perceptions prevail in public consciousness. In 2006 a tabloid newspaper offered the following commentary on the history of the plant:

the Rootes car plant in Linwood was driven into the ground by a cavalier workforce, bad management and trade union control.<sup>9</sup>

With a few notable exceptions the existing partial secondary literature on the car plant provides limited detail on industrial relations.<sup>10</sup> This has been impeded by the tendency to

<sup>1</sup> *The Scotsman*, 1 October 1960.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 23 May 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 31 October 1975.

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Mail* in Jim Higgins, *The Lessons of Linwood*, (February 1976), originally published in the *Spectator*. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/higgins/1976/02/linwood.htm>  
Accessed 14 September 2009.

<sup>8</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, N. J. White and A. Collings, ‘The Battle of Britain’, *Newsweek*, 23 (1978).

<sup>9</sup> *Evening Times*, 29 April 2006.

focus on reasons for the failure of the plant.<sup>11</sup> Although existing literature cites poor industrial relations as a contributory factor to the closure of Linwood, little is known about the experiences and attitudes of those who worked at the plant. The focus in this thesis is to shift away from an examination of the reasons for the closure of the Linwood plant and, given the positioning of plant workers within the dominant explanations of ‘failure’, provide a more nuanced approach to understanding their workplace experiences and industrial relations. Oral history interviews will be used to re-examine this dominant discourse on industrial relations at Linwood. A thematic approach is employed in the thesis, which presents a qualitative case study of work culture and industrial relations in the car plant through subsequent phases of ownership from Pressed Steel to Rootes, then Chrysler Corporation, and finally Peugeot SA.

## Thesis Outline

The thesis is comprised of two parts, Part One: Reconstructing the Factory and Part Two: Structures of Authority. William Knox links industrial relations problems in the car plant to the workers’ failure to adapt to automated-assembly production.<sup>12</sup> This view is shared by Hood and Young who attribute industrial conflict within the car plant to a ‘clash of cultures’ between craft-based bespoke production, an embedded feature of Scottish traditional industrial work experience, and the stark contrast of automated assembly.<sup>13</sup> It is a classic or common-sense assumption made about the Linwood car plant: rooting explanations for ‘poor’ industrial relations in experiences of work. However, such arguments are based on assumptions about the west of Scotland labour market. To date there is an absence of empirical evidence to substantiate such claims with limited information available on the labour policies of the various owners of the car plant, and

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<sup>10</sup> On the role of regional policy in the history of Linwood see: D. Sims and M. Wood, *Car Manufacturing at Linwood: The Regional Policy Issues*, (Paisley College: Department of Politics and Sociology, 1984). Also N. Young and S. Hood have written ‘The Linwood Experience: Chrysler and Peugeot Citroen in Scotland’ in *Scotland, the Multinationals and the Third World* ed. by S. Maxwell (Edinburgh: Scottish Education and Action for Development, 1982), 123-36, S. Hood and N. Young, ‘Chrysler & Peugeot in Linwood’, in *Multinationals in Retreat: The Scottish Experience*, ed. by N. Hood and S. Young (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 61-80, and N. Young and S. Hood *Chrysler UK: A Corporation in Transition* (New York: Praeger, 1977). More recently Jim Phillips included an analysis of the industrial politics during the Rootes Group ownership at Linwood in *The Industrial Politics of Devolution: Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Jim Phillips, *The Industrial Politics of Devolution: Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s* (Manchester: MUP, 2008), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> W. Knox, ‘Class, Work and Trade Unionism in Scotland’, in *People and Society in Scotland, Vol. III, 1914-1990*, ed. by A. Dickson, and J. H. Treble, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992 [1998 edn]), 108-37 (p. 128).

<sup>13</sup> Hood and Young, ‘Linwood Experience’, p. 125.

virtually nothing on the employment or geographical background of the workforce. One of the central aims of this thesis is to further explore this assumption and in going beyond organisational perceptions and management rhetoric to offer an analysis of why workers do what they do.

The three chapters in Part One aim to identify the experience of work, in the main for those working on the shop floor. The ‘bottom-up’ analysis will be achieved through an exploration of the individual experiences of Linwood workers through oral history interviews, within the context of theoretical considerations, which will be used to inform a re-examination of industrial relations at Linwood as well as seeking to understand the motivations of the workers, to describe their experiences of work, and to identify how they made sense of their work.

Chapter One will explore the development of the method of oral history and discuss the research methodology adopted within this thesis. Oral history material is used primarily from a reconstructive perspective, something which has come under criticism within certain circles in academia. Its value in this thesis is it can provide the opportunity to explore the ‘*perceptions* and the realities’ of the experiences of working at Linwood.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter Two will turn to an investigation of the variety of ways in which both individuals and the collective seek to satisfy their interests within the workplace. There will be a re-assessment of the ‘clash of cultures’ discourse using evidence from the oral testimonies. Furthermore, the thesis will unpick the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic reward as utilised by the Goldthorpe et al., *Affluent Worker* research.<sup>15</sup> By doing so, questions the validity of two distinct categories of reward. Primary source material will be utilised to support the supposition in this thesis that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards do not exist as distinct entities.

The predominant production mode of assembly and sub-assembly track work, as well as the introduction of the system of Measured Day Work, articulate with the classic Marxist analysis of alienation.<sup>16</sup> The thesis will challenge Marxist interpretations of alienation and offer a more nuanced analysis of workplace relations, and crucial to the

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<sup>14</sup> Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, ‘Oral History, Subjectivity, and Environmental Reality: Occupational Health Histories in Twentieth-Century Scotland’, in *Landscapes of Exposure: Knowledge and Illness in Modern Environments*, *Osris* 19 (2004), 234-49 (p. 247).

<sup>15</sup> John Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 71. Robert Blauner, *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964 [1967 edn]).

worker, the role of autonomy. Focusing on the locus of control, the contention is that worker autonomy may be prioritised in the realm of production or in the wider realm of the factory environment.

In Chapter Three the focus will be on understanding the underpinning motivations of workers engagement in organisational mischief. Utilising oral testimonies and documentary evidence produced on the shop floor, the multi-faceted reasons for this type of behaviour is explored and in doing so further challenges Goldthorpe's identification of intrinsic and extrinsic reward. The contention promoted is 'workers' are not an homogenous group, and concepts devised to categorise behaviour undermine the variety of experiences and interests at play in the car factory and that these are dynamic.

Part Two: Structures of Authority provides a shift in focus to structures of authority and power relationships in the Linwood car plant. Chapter Four examines the character of management at Linwood. Utilising Ramsey's 'cycles of participation' theory in the analysis of the primary source material, the chapter concentrates on the structures and strategies of management in labour relations with consideration given to the political economy.<sup>17</sup> Pay negotiations and employee participation receive particular attention and are considered within particular historical contingencies, because these were conceived by management as a compromise between unitary values, expressed at times during the car plant's history, and policies shaped by organisational pluralism aimed to give employees a 'voice' within the branch plants.

The analysis will be located within historically contingent factors that shaped the cycles of participation, revealed as coercive attempts at industrial democracy when political and economic expediency was necessary. The thesis explores a crucial problem prevalent in industrial relations between management and workforce during the various phases of ownership at Linwood namely, the dichotomy between management rhetoric and reality. A dichotomy that appeared to sustained information asymmetries between involvement and influence in consultation initiatives at the plant and undermined the functioning of trade unionism.

The final chapter provides a bottom-up analysis of industrial relations within the car plant, drawing upon trade-union documentary evidence supplemented with the oral

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<sup>17</sup> H. Ramsay, 'Cycles of Control: Worker Participation in Sociological and Historical Perspective', *Sociology*, 11 (1977), 481-506.

testimony of members of the Linwood workforce. The discussion will consider the contested nature of trade unionism in the plant; the role of shop stewards and analysis of their functioning in the plant by management and shop floor. Crucial differences in understanding between the stewards and management will be identified as well as between stewards and the workers they represented, as well as exploring the power of the shop steward system. This chapter highlights that the interplay of diverse interests at Linwood fed into an undercurrent of tension which manifested itself in different ways.

The thesis challenges the common-sense perception, depicted in contemporary press reports and by politicians, that strikes and industrial unrest were attributed to political militancy agitated by an autocratic shop steward system.<sup>18</sup> The contradictions of shop floor ‘militancy’ are examined within the context of historical solidaristic contingency, managerial intransigence and inflexibility, divergent interests of the workers, as well as the functioning of shop stewards. The thesis contends that during its eighteen-year history, through different phases of ownership, the Linwood car plant was the site of a coalition of interests that at times was insensitive to the inherent tensions that sustained the prevalent undercurrent of potential for disputes.

The focus of the thesis is the years between 1963 and 1981 as these were the years from the official opening until the closure of the plant. At times throughout the thesis reference is made to earlier periods, in particular when discussing Pressed Steel, so as to provide additional context to support the analysis. The following synopsis of the Linwood car plant is provided to enable access to the chronology of its history.

### From Imp to Sunbeam – A brief history of the Linwood car plant

The dawn of the new era of industrial development was marked by the launch of the Hillman Imp, the first car to be made in Scotland since 1928.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the optimism surrounding the production of this vehicle was short lived. Three weeks after opening, the first unofficial strike occurred, and by the end of 1964 Linwood was operating at only a third capacity, subsequently a four-day week was introduced. The unofficial stoppages at the plant continued throughout the plant’s history.

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<sup>18</sup> Will Hutton, *The State We’re In* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> H. Turner, G. Clack, and G. Roberts, *Labour Relations in the Motor Industry: A Study of Industrial Unrest and an International Comparison* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1967), p. 28.

The Rootes Group plant at Linwood was built opposite a Pressed Steel Company Limited site which produced car body shells for manufacturing at Linwood. The Pressed Steel Company Limited purchased the plant on the North Side of the Linwood site from the Ministry of Defence in 1947 and in the early 1960s not only produced car body shells for Rootes but also Volvo, British Motor Company and Ford. After Rootes opened manufacturing buildings on the South Side of the site it then purchased the Pressed Steel Factory in January 1966. At this point it was renamed Rootes Pressings until it became incorporated under the single management of both the North and South side of the Linwood plant and on 1 January 1968 renamed Rootes Motors (Scotland) Limited.<sup>20</sup> The North Side of the Linwood Plant became responsible for producing car body shells for Rootes manufacturing sites throughout the UK. Other sites owned by Rootes in the late 1960s included car plants at Crowley and Ryton (Coventry), a Commercial Vehicle plant at Luton, parts division at Stoke (Birmingham), and offices and a design centre at Whitely (Coventry).<sup>21</sup>

The Hillman Imp did not sell as well as expected. Production costs were high, in part because parts had to be transported between Linwood and other Rootes factories. Most significantly, the car engine was manufactured using component parts from Linwood, assembled into engine parts at Stoke before returning to Linwood to become fitted into Hillman Imps.<sup>22</sup> Production of the Imp stopped in 1976.

In 1964 the Chrysler Corporation gained a strategic holding in the Rootes Group. Chrysler was experiencing problems in its American market and wanted to expand into Europe. Chrysler took over full control of Rootes in 1967 and in 1973 established its subsidiary Chrysler United Kingdom (hereafter Chrysler UK).<sup>23</sup> Initially the Chrysler take-over saw investment with new cars launched including the Hillman Hunter and The Avenger, the use of three-shift working, and an increase in the workforce to 8000 by 1974.<sup>24</sup> However, the company's UK market share declined to 6.6 per cent by 1975 from

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<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Fraser of Allander Institute [hereafter FAI], Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, 'Linwood', Company Pamphlet produced by Rootes Motors Scotland Limited. Not dated but estimate this was produced around 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Robert J. Allan *Geoffrey Rootes' dream for Linwood: Pictorial look at a landmark in British car manufacture* (Oxfordshire: Bookmarque Publishing, 1991), pp. 22-5.

<sup>23</sup> Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> Talbot Action Committee, *Linwood, The case for full employment and NO CLOSURE: The Workers* [sic] *Answer*, March 1981, p. 14 and Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (England, 1984), p. 9.

Rootes' previous share of 12.6 per cent in 1964.<sup>25</sup> This has been attributed to 'unpopular products'<sup>26</sup>, poor cost-efficiency due to productivity and industrial relations issues as well as external factors such as the recession of the mid-1970s, rising inflation, international competition in the car market, and events such as the oil crisis in 1973 which were all problematic for the owners of the Linwood plant.

Towards the end of 1975, whilst the Linwood work-force was on a three-day week, Chrysler entered into discussions with the UK government and by January 1976 a rescue-package was agreed however, this resulted in over 1300 redundancies.<sup>27</sup> The company gained a contract with Iran to provide CKD (Completely Knocked Down) car kits and the Chrysler Sunbeam was launched in 1977, but changed to Talbot Sunbeam when the Chrysler European divisions were sold to Peugeot SA in 1978. Peugeot decided to rename the UK operations as Talbot and part of the takeover included 1300 redundancies in September 1979. However, there were further redundancies and short-time working after 1979:

the Iranian contract was suspended and in May 1980 a further 1300 were made redundant. To prevent a further 2700 redundancies, as a result of falling sales, the company had been operating a three day week under the Temporary Short Time Working Compensation Scheme since August 1980.<sup>28</sup>

Initially, upon announcement of the closure on 11 February 1981, the workforce voted to begin a campaign against the closure of the factory.<sup>29</sup> Yet when the company made a final redundancy offer, the rank and file at a mass meeting in 1981, against the opinion of the shop stewards' Talbot Action Group, voted to accept the closure of the plant. In November 1981 Talbot organised a public auction of machinery and equipment amidst two protests against the company's 'asset-stripping' organised by the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party which included trade unionists, politicians and former employees.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Charles K. Hyde, *Riding the roller coaster: a history of the Chrysler Corporation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), p. 200.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Higgins, *The Lessons of Linwood*, (February 1976), originally published in the Spectator.

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/higgins/1976/02/linwood.htm>

Accessed 14 September 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (England: Manpower Services Commission, 1984), p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Sims and Wood, p. 64 and National Library of Scotland [hereafter NLS], P.1a.6511 PER, *Talbot Voice*, Issue 1, 1981.

<sup>30</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1981 and NLS, P.1a.6511 PER, Talbot 10 day auction sale Catalogue.

## Source Material

A range of documentary material has been utilised in the research within the thesis. This has included sources in The National Archives, Modern Records Centre, National Library of Scotland, Rootes Archive Centre and Paisley Central Library. Two particular collections significant for the thesis are held at the Mitchell Library and the Fraser of Allander Institute in Glasgow. Both collections are of personal papers with the former existing as a collection of material donated to the Mitchell Library by Linwood Transport and General Workers (hereafter TGWU) shop steward convenor Jimmy Livingstone.<sup>31</sup> This collection is extremely valuable, not only due to the apparent lack of consultation, but also the variety of documents within the records. In particular, shop stewards' diaries and notebooks, minutes of shop stewards' meetings, leaflets, various company agreements and trade union documents have been illuminating.

Copies of some of the papers within this collection also exist within the later source, the Papers of Cliff Lockyer. Cliff Lockyer conducted research on the Linwood car plant following the closure of the factory and he was able to obtain documentation from the closing factory. This source therefore comprises primary documentation from the site as well as the notes of the team undertaking research into Linwood at the then Department of Industrial Relations, University of Strathclyde.

Both of these collections have not been catalogued, and lack an index. Furthermore, whilst some items have been numbered and filed, this has not been a uniform process. Material appears to have been moved between boxes as there is limited continuity in terms of the content of the boxes.<sup>32</sup> A significant number of the documents are not dated and in some there is an absence of information on job titles of individuals mentioned in diaries and company documents. It must be noted that the diaries and minutes are hand written, furthermore, much was written in short hand and note form.<sup>33</sup> Despite such issues these two sources comprise a wealth of material that has been extremely useful for this thesis.

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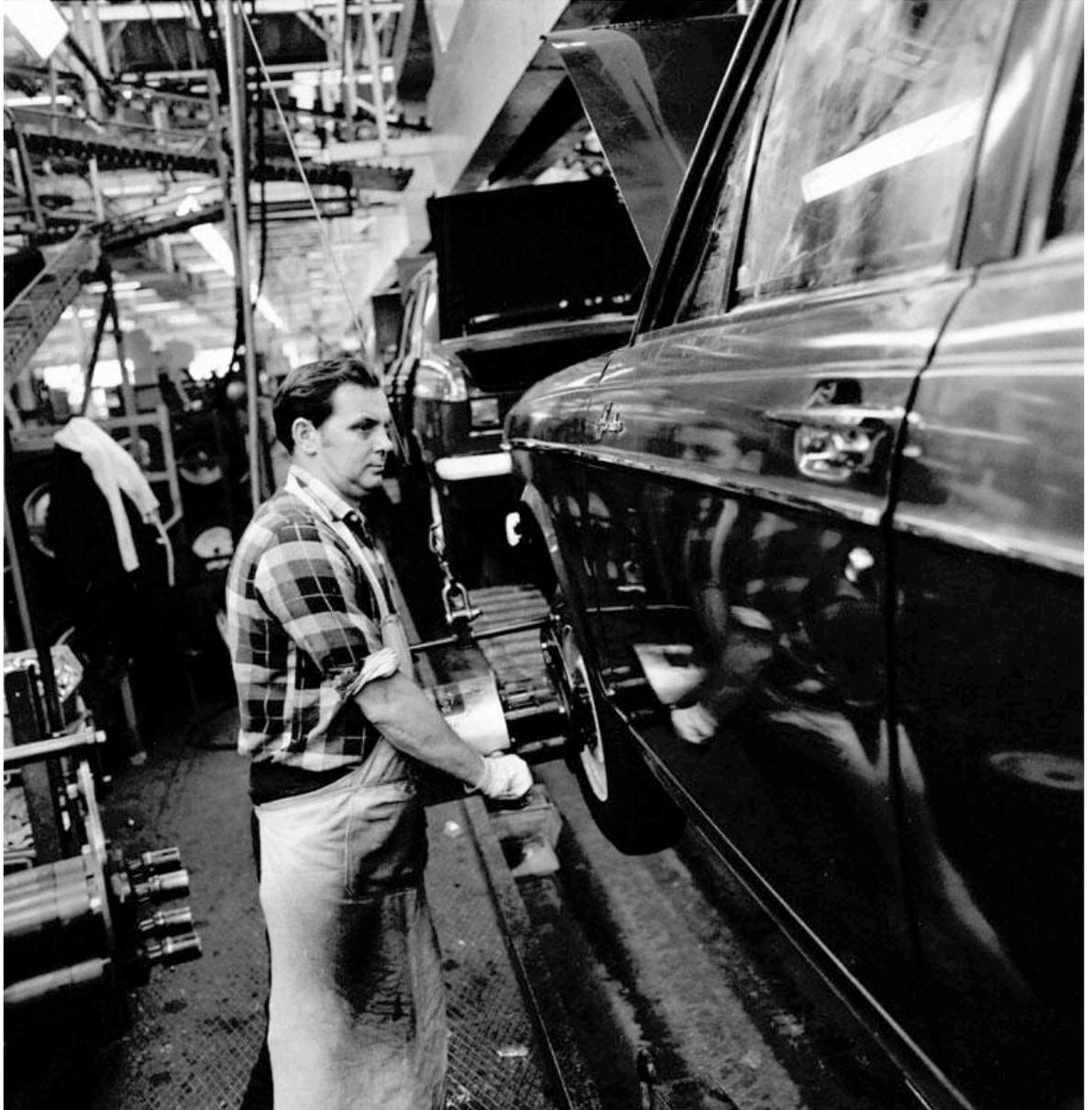
<sup>31</sup> All material from the collection has been referenced ML (Mitchell Library), name of document, number of item or file if given, box number, page number.

<sup>32</sup> Within this thesis when the consulted material has a clear item number or file name this has been identified in the footnote references yet many documents do not have this identification mark. Thus, the inconsistencies in the footnotes reflect the sources rather than the author.

<sup>33</sup> The quotes taken from diaries have been referenced as they appeared in the original document. Incorrect spelling in the sources has been noted by the use of [sic] however, changes have not been made to punctuation and abbreviations used such as 'Thurs' for Thursday, 'sect' for section and 'opp' for operator. As the source material is not over fifty years old, the quotes have been anonymised to protect any individuals mentioned.

As well as these documentary sources the thesis included a small oral history project. The rationale for inclusion was that interviewing former workers would enable a 'bottom-up' approach to experiences of work and industrial relations within the car plant. Whilst the oral history sample is to some extent limited, it has been useful in illuminating a range of perspectives and experiences, and has also proven to be largely consistent with the documentary material.

## Chapter One



Source: <http://www.scran.ac.uk>  
Accessed 1 September 2009.

Worker on the assembly line at the Rootes factory.

## Chapter One

### Oral History: reconstructing and interpreting the world of work

#### 1.1 Linwood Lives: George Wilson

*So if you could just tell me about your experiences of Linwood, generally.*

It was one o the best jobs ah've had in ma life. Ah came out, ah was a slater and plasterer, went in there, ah was in Chrysler for [pause] how many year? Eh, just must have been five years; just under five years ah wis in Chrysler tae the day it shut down. An it wis just the patter o the people in it. They could, the job ah wis doin you were only, it was night shift an you were only workin five hours oot the ten hours. An out that five hours you, you were only workin two, that sort o thing. Ye know, it was, was a great job that way. Then the, the pay at that time, coming off the roofs an that an goin on ae the lines was phenomenal. An ah wis doin ma, wit ye call, the overtime sheet; ah had the overtime sheet so ah wis gettin all the overtime that wis goin as well. An ye didn't, ye didnae have tae work it, if ye know wit a mean. As long as you had the sheet you didn't have to work it, so you're getting all the overtime. But it's just in the place, ah imagine, apart fae the strikes, some o the strikes were, they was, when we were oot fur ten weeks because somebody, a boy was peeing out the back door. Ye know it's that stupid, an we were out for ten weeks. Now there is toilets an so, but as soon as K Building shut down that's the rest of the line aw shut down so ye have to go oot on strike wi them. An if ye didnae go oot on strike they were after you. Don't get me wrong, there's a lot o hard men in there, lot o, lot o, hard men fae Glasgow in there. But no, it was one o, ah enjoyed it, ah enjoyed everyday, ah enjoyed goin tae ma work doon there, ye wouldnae believe it an aw, aw ah wis doin was workin on a line drillin holes. But ah enjoyed, naw ah enjoyed goin doon there everyday ae ma work. Compared tae what ah wis doin in the roofs, in that, goin oot in the cold weather lying on top o roofs an that. Ye were goin in there and yer nice and warm. Even the summer, ye're goin, ye know ye're coming oot, ye know yer breaks that wis goin, so aye no, it wis one of the best jobs ah've ever had. Less o a world o people, met a lot of good people in it.<sup>34</sup>

George Wilson worked as a semi-skilled operator in L Building, which was on the North Side, otherwise known as the Pressed Steel side, of the Linwood car plant. The above excerpt comprises the entire free narrative section of Wilson's interview.<sup>35</sup> In comparison to the other twenty-two interviewees within the sample Wilson provided the shortest free narrative lasting one minute, forty-four seconds. Whilst his narrative is relatively short it provides a succinct overview of what he felt about work at Linwood: in which he

<sup>34</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>35</sup> '[F]ree narration' is a term used by Luisa Passerini where she developed the method of collecting life histories in two phases. In the first stage she allowed participants to speak without interruption about whatever they felt was important, and this was followed by an interview in which Passerini asked questions. 'Work, Ideology and Consensus Under Italian Fascism', *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998 [2002 edn]), 53-62 (p. 58).

juxtaposes his work at Linwood with his previous experiences as a slater and plasterer, to establish that he enjoyed the increased wages and continuity of employment that had not been guaranteed in his previous job. There is some suggestion as to the themes that emerge as dominant discourses later in Wilson's interview: first of all his assertion of personal autonomy when he mentions the overtime rota, and secondly the negative memory within his testimony in the reference to strikes, with a hint to the power he assigns to the shop floor trade union figures and the manifestation of this power in exertion of pressure on workers to stop work and strike.

Such testimony provides the historian access to a personal experience of working at the Linwood car plant. Yet this raises fundamental questions about the usefulness of testimony as an historical source. It is interesting that the single negative aspect Wilson chooses to mention is strikes; especially given the dominant public discourse is that the Linwood plant was beset by problematic industrial relations. This suggests dialogue between the public discourse and Wilson's individual memory. It also indicates Wilson's awareness of potential subjects that the interviewer would be interested in and so constructed his narrative accordingly. Alternatively, Wilson's mention of strikes in the free narrative section of his interview could be evidence that these were a dominant feature of working life at Linwood, and comprised an important negative element of individual experiences. The use of oral testimony in writing history has been the subject of much debate and the purpose of this chapter is to provide an historiographical overview of the key elements of the debate, and to identify the methodological implications that influence the use of oral testimony in this thesis.

Existing literature on the history of the Linwood car plant draws mainly upon documentary source material: for example, parliamentary papers, strike statistics, and newspapers.<sup>36</sup> In this thesis the detailed examination of work culture and industrial relations at Linwood is enriched by an oral history project involving the collection and analysis of oral testimonies of former workers of the plant. In general, the use of oral testimony in historical studies of work has been in conjunction with documentary sources and essentially features as an additional source of information with which to reconstruct the past. While this can be illuminating it is also subject to the criticism that individuals may not be representative, or that oral history accounts can be subject to faulty memory or

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<sup>36</sup> Literature such as Young and Hood, *Chrysler*; Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing* and Phillips, *Industrial Politics*.

bias.<sup>37</sup> This has resulted in much debate on the use of oral history and more recently it has been argued that the primary use of oral histories should not be so much about reconstructing the past, but instead the process should concern the evaluation and interpretation of memory, subjectivity and narrative structures.

To begin with, the main developments of the debates surrounding oral history will be identified, before a review of the existing historiography of studies using oral history to examine work. Following this is a discussion of the methodological issues, including the format of the oral history project, the interview schedule, sample and reflection on the interview process. This will highlight that conceptual awareness and reflective analysis are essential in any project involving oral history, yet the use of oral testimony to reconstruct the past may have been over-criticised due to the polarisation of debate on the use of oral history into reconstructive versus interpretive. An analysis of oral testimony can incorporate elements of both aspects of the debate and will be of value to current historiography not only on Scottish work culture and industrial relations, but also on the development of the practice of oral history.

## 1.2 Oral history in the reconstructive mode

Early practitioners of oral history supported the use of testimony in conjunction with existing documentary sources; considered a method best utilised to ‘throw oblique shafts of light upon conventional sources, rather than used in isolation’.<sup>38</sup> The methodology was somewhat politicised: it was viewed as a tool by which the historian could access groups hitherto omitted from official historical record. As Tosh highlighted, the practice of oral history is underpinned by two assumptions: that the testimony of ‘those from below’ poses a threat to professional written history; and that the practice of oral history presents a democratising of knowledge thus undermining the ‘monopoly of an academic elite’.<sup>39</sup> Within research areas such as industrial relations, it has generally been accepted that so-called ‘official sources’ such as parliamentary papers and trade union records will present the view of the dominant groups such as the government, management, and trade union

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<sup>37</sup> Paul Thompson has been particularly critical of the assumed priority of documentary source material as not only are many documentary sources originally derived from, or utilise, oral sources, for instance Royal Commissions, but also evidence such as statistics is affected by ‘the social attitudes of their period’ in terms of the definition and recording of information. *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978 [2000 edn]), pp. 118-124.

<sup>38</sup> T. C. Smout, ‘Scotland: The State of Oral History’, *Oral History*, 2 (1974), 11-14 (p. 14).

<sup>39</sup> John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (London: Longman, 1984 [2000 edn]), p. 198.

leadership.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, labour historians, seeking to uncover the history of ‘rank and file’ trade unionists, formed part of wider movement towards re-writing the history of groups within society that arguably had been marginalised or misrepresented in historical record. Oral history has been identified as a method by which voice could be given to the voiceless, as a means of investigating historical processes or experiences currently ‘hidden from history’.<sup>41</sup>

Academics using oral testimony to reconstruct the past were influenced by the priority ascribed to positivism within social science research methods and sought to defend oral history as objective social science research. Reflecting upon the development of oral history research in America, Yow claims that academics were driven by a desire to:

show that our method was rigorous, disinterested pursuit of truth and therefore respectable. As interviewers, we were simply observers of verbal behaviour.<sup>42</sup>

However, there were staunch critics of the use of oral history within academic research. It was labelled ‘a slippery source’ and was not widely regarded as epitomising academic rigour.<sup>43</sup> As Grele comments:

The dominant tendency has been to be overly enthusiastic in public print, and deeply suspicious in private conversation.<sup>44</sup>

As scholars who used oral history attempted to proclaim the positivist aspects of the method, so concepts from within the positivist social science tradition would be used to criticise the method.<sup>45</sup> The reconstructive use of oral history has been criticised on two counts: validity, specifically the extent to which an individual testimony is representative of more generally experienced developments; and reliability of memory. While there is scepticism of long-term memory, theories related to this type of memory are relatively underdeveloped, which has resulted in much criticism of the use of oral history testimonies. However, the critique of positivist approaches to historical research - that there

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<sup>40</sup> Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The authenticity of oral evidence* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Green and Troup, *Houses of History*, p. 231 and Arthur McLvor and Ronald Johnston, *Miner's Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining (Studies in Labour History)* (England: Ashgate, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Valerie Yow, ‘“Do I like them too much?”: effects of the oral history interview on the interviewer and vice-versa’, *Oral History Review*, 24 (1997), 55-79.

<sup>43</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Abacus, 1969 [2007 edn]), xi.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald J. Grele, ‘Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History’, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (New York: Praeger, 1985 [1991 edn]), pp. 126-54, p. 127.

<sup>45</sup> There is continuing debate as to whether concepts specific to more quantitative methods should be used to critique qualitative research. Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching* (London: Sage, 1996 [2002 edn]), pp. 38-39.

is a real truth that can be uncovered by objective study, and by implication there are real facts to be uncovered using methods such as oral history - contributed to a new methodological awareness within the discipline of oral history.<sup>46</sup>

### 1.3 Assimilating subjectivity

This new awareness made virtue of extant criticisms of oral history. Important was the recognition that an oral history interview is not a 'value-free' situation.<sup>47</sup> The influence of the intellectual development of post-structuralism and postmodernism is evident as there was a shift towards endorsing human subjectivity into the analysis of oral history material. No longer was it fundamental to proclaim objectivity: but instead a key strength of oral history is in providing access to the subjective aspects of historical events through individual narratives.<sup>48</sup>

The assimilation of subjectivity resulted in the evolution of interpretive models of oral history, influencing the development of oral history as a *theory* focused on 'memory and subjectivity, and the narrative structures which provide the framework for oral stories about the past'.<sup>49</sup> This new conceptual awareness stemmed from the realisation that the construction of individual narratives within an oral history interview is a 'dynamic' process as well as retrospective. Thus influenced by both past and present as opposed to being a recollection of 'things as they were'.<sup>50</sup> Academics using oral history must be aware that the process of interpretation and re-interpretation of memory is constant and that individual memories will be:

filtered through subsequent experience. They may be contaminated by what has been absorbed from other sources ... they may be overlaid by nostalgia ... or distorted by a sense of grievance.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, the testimony produced is influenced by the interaction between interviewer and interviewee thus directing attention to the inter-subjectivity element of this dynamic process. Hence, it is important to identify the varying influences on memory when analysing oral history transcripts.

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<sup>46</sup> Passerini, 'Work, Ideology and Consensus', 53-62 (p. 55).

<sup>47</sup> Lummis, *Listening to History*, p. 51.

<sup>48</sup> Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview techniques and analyses', in *Oral History Reader*, ed. by Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998 [2002 edn]), 157-71 (pp. 157-171, p. 169).

<sup>49</sup> Green and Troup, *Houses of History*, p. 230.

<sup>50</sup> Lummis, *Listening to History*, p. 19, p. 123.

<sup>51</sup> Tosh, *Pursuit of History*, p. 199.

Passerini advocates the use of a conceptual approach to explore the cultural and psychological pressures that influence individuals' narratives of the past.<sup>52</sup> All of the individual narratives are in a sense true. The function of oral history analysis is to deconstruct testimony, identifying influences on the narratives and the nature of this truth: 'in which sense, where, for which purpose...'.<sup>53</sup> Whilst analysing narratives on the anti-fascism movement in Italy Passerini became aware of the importance of 'silences' in the oral transcripts. She argues that the silences of interviewees, for example through omitting information, can be understood as evidence of 'a scar, a violent annihilation of many years in human lives, a profound wound in daily experience'.<sup>54</sup> She also considers the impact of the past on memory as well as the narrative structures that are produced in individual testimonies. It is evident that the focus of such studies is not to seek factual information in oral testimonies, rather to consider the influences on individual narratives. As Alessandro Portelli highlights there are no 'false' oral testimonies – that is testimony that contain incorrect factual information when compared to other sources – on the contrary:

the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that “wrong” statements are still psychologically “true”, and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, the benefit of oral sources for the historian is in seeking to understand the motivations of individuals in the past as well as how they make sense of their actions both at the time and in the present. Analysis of narratives allows some insight into how historical events or eras impact on individuals. For example, oral testimonies on strikes may not provide any more detail on actual events than existing documentary sources, but oral testimonies can uncover the psychological dimensions of the strike. So the shift from the reconstructive to interpretive uses of oral history has resulted in a new theoretical awareness succinctly described by Portelli, 'what is really important is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings'.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Passerini, 'Work, Ideology and Consensus', 53-62 (p. 53).

<sup>53</sup> Green and Troup, *Houses of History*, p. 232, p. 236.

<sup>54</sup> Passerini, 'Work, Ideology and Consensus', 53-62 (pp. 59-60).

<sup>55</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: form and meaning in oral history* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 51.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

## 1.4. Interactions between public and private memory

In seeking to understand wider historical processes through interviews, it is necessary to consider the contextual influences on the production of narratives. Within interpretive theories of oral history attention has been directed to the influence of dominant cultural discourses on the construction of testimony with a focus on concepts such as the ‘cultural circuit’ and ‘composure’.<sup>57</sup>

Penny Summerfield’s work has been central to the cultural analysis of oral testimonies. In her post-structural analysis of women’s memories of the Second World War, she points to the impact of dominant collective discourses on the construction of personal narratives.<sup>58</sup> She goes further than suggesting historians must take into account societal discourses, as she considers the construction of individual narratives as a ‘cultural practice’ and there will always be a process of interaction and negotiation between individuals and the dominant discourse.<sup>59</sup> For example, within her oral history research investigating women’s memories of the Second World War, she found that some interviewees, when recollecting their experiences of motherhood and entering the labour market, constructed their narrative with reference to relevant dominant discourses such as the ‘1950s discourse of motherhood’, which at times led to discontinuity between the personal narrative and the public discourse due to ‘contradictory elements’ of discourses that women had to negotiate.<sup>60</sup>

Anna Green is critical of Summerfield’s approach and argues that such analyses seek to link the narratives of individuals with discourses to the extent that they cannot exist independently of ‘dominant cultural scripts or unconscious psychic templates’.<sup>61</sup> As a result such approaches fail to acknowledge the agency of the interviewee in being able to identify the dominant narratives and investigate ‘how and why ideas, values and beliefs are critiqued, reassembled, juxtaposed or rejected’.<sup>62</sup> Yet Polly Russell argues that Green’s critique of Summerfield’s work sets up the individual influence and the collective cultural

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<sup>57</sup> Penny Summerfield, ‘Dis/composing the subject: Inter-subjectivities in oral history’, in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* ed. by Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield (London: Routledge, 2000), 91-106 (p. 95, p. 99). Alistair Thomson similarly found that his oral history participants constructed narratives of their experiences in the Australian army through negotiating dominant cultural portrayals associated with Anzac Day. Alistair Thomson, ‘Anzac Memories: Putting popular memory theory into practice in Australia’, *Oral History*, 18 (1990), 25-31.

<sup>58</sup> Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Summerfield, ‘Dis/composing the subject’, 91-106 (p. 99).

<sup>61</sup> Anna Green, ‘Individual Remembering and “Collective memory”’: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates’, *Oral History*, 24 (2004), 35-44 (p. 40).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-44 (p. 39).

scripts as two polarised entities, therefore disregarding the reciprocal interaction between them reflected in oral testimony.<sup>63</sup> Individuals have to negotiate powerful dominant collective cultural scripts, but the agency of individuals can be equally powerful, and this is evident in the role of the individual in shaping and changing these collective discourses. Furthermore, Russell advocates Graham Smith's theory of 'transactive memories' in which he not only recognises both of the above elements in shaping testimony but also the importance of experience.<sup>64</sup> This debate over the cultural circuit and individual testimony serves to highlight the variety of influences on the construction of narratives.

Summerfield's reference to composure draws in a psychological perspective to the cultural interpretive theory. Influenced by Grele who devised the idea of composure to describe the processes by which individuals create a 'usable past', she identifies two types of composure: the first being that individuals are able to compose a narrative about themselves, and secondly a narrative or life story with which they feel at ease.<sup>65</sup> Summerfield has described her experiences of oral history interviews where participants have struggled to negotiate discourses, which has resulted in 'discomposure'.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Alistair Thomson's work on the Anzacs examines the effect of discourses on the construction of individual narratives and the composure sought by his interviewees. With his focus on both individual memory and collective memory he argues that media accounts and fictional representations of Australian soldiers of the First World War form part of the 'national myth' that has affected the individual life stories of Anzac veterans. For Thomson interviewees will not achieve composure when their individual narratives do not 'conform with public norms or versions of the past'.<sup>67</sup> Thus the desire to achieve composure is linked with the continual revision of narrative and life story by individuals.<sup>68</sup>

The concept of composure highlights that in an oral history interview the interviewee may present the version of events they think the interviewer wants to hear. Portelli notes the common experience within interviews of participants seeking confirmation that they are giving the interviewer the information they want.<sup>69</sup> In addition, it must be recognised that the discourses of the period in which the interview occurs may

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<sup>63</sup> Polly Russell, 'Manufacturing Memories: Commercial, Team and Individual Narratives in Poultry Production', *Oral History*, 36 (2008), 81-94 (p. 92).

<sup>64</sup> Graeme Smith, cited in Russell, 'Manufacturing Memories', 81-94 (p. 92).

<sup>65</sup> Green and Troup, *Houses of History*, p. 234.

<sup>66</sup> Summerfield, 'Dis/composing the subject', 91-106 (p. 99).

<sup>67</sup> Thomson, 'Anzac Memories', 25-31 (p. 25).

<sup>68</sup> Summerfield, 'Dis/composing the subject', 91-106 (p. 92).

<sup>69</sup> Alessandro Portelli, 'Oral History As Genre', *Narrative and Genre* ed. by Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (London: Routledge, 1998), 23-45, (p. 28).

be different from the time being recalled and the interviewer must be sensitive to this and consider the way this affects oral testimony.<sup>70</sup> On the one hand, Lummis suggests that a change in the dominant discourse may prevent interviewees from disclosing certain opinions such as racist views, if they were once held.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the influence of contemporary discourses and subsequent events may not always be concealed. Portelli argues that individuals are capable of composing narratives that contain attitudes different from their contemporary held attitudes, for instance Terni factory workers who acknowledged that:

Violent reprisals against the executives responsible for mass layoffs in 1953 may have been counterproductive, but yet reconstruct with great lucidity why they seemed useful and sensible at the time.<sup>72</sup>

The role of the historian in the interview process is to try to unpick how the individuals represent themselves. Sometimes this may lead the researcher to ask what Anderson and Jack term ‘unsafe’ questions about how people feel. Such questions can produce a state of discomposure in the interviewee.<sup>73</sup> Summerfield claims discomposure can also occur when the historian changes the research frame so that questions are asked about issues out with the interviewee’s prepared memory frame. She argues:

Discomposure results from a variety of inter-subjective processes, one of them involves the relationship between the research frame and the memory frame, which may well not fit.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, Summerfield assigns great significance to the inter-subjectivity between the historian and the interviewee. The inter-subjectivity process in oral history can be affected by seemingly minor details such as clothing, accent and posture of the historian undertaking the interview.<sup>75</sup>

Since the 1970s the method of oral history has been developed through its use in more interpretive studies. The entire process of interviewing human subjects must be seen as reflexive and dynamic, although this does not mean that there can be no reconciliation

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<sup>70</sup> For example Callum Brown highlights that while undertaking research on evangelical behaviour in Scotland he had to be aware that the ‘change in moral climate’ since the 1960s, such as liberalisation and secularisation, would have affected the oral testimony. Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: understanding secularisation 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 115-6.

<sup>71</sup> Lummis, *Listening to History*, p. 122.

<sup>72</sup> Portelli, *Luigi Trastulli*, p. 53.

<sup>73</sup> Summerfield, ‘Dis/composing the subject’, 91-106 (p. 100).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-106 (p. 104).

<sup>75</sup> Thompson, *Voice of the Past*, pp. 139-40.

between both the reconstructive and interpretive uses of oral testimony. The debate over discourse highlights the benefits to oral history of giving consideration to the cultural sphere and particularly the importance of discourses in the construction of testimony. Yet, that is not to render insignificant human agency and the process of interplay and negotiation between individuals, collective discourses and personal experience, and inter-subjectivity within interviews. An important strength in oral history analysis is to deconstruct the process of the creation of narratives, allowing exploration of the subjective realm of narratives and individual historical consciousness. However, equally, oral testimony can continue to be used in reconstructive historical research if, similar to using any form of historical data, the source is used carefully and with respect to the variety of influences on narratives. Much historical research that employs oral testimony in a reconstructive sense does this alongside the use of additional documentary material and / or adopts a process of triangulation through which the testimony is compared to documentary material, which then, in turn, influences further questioning.<sup>76</sup> The reconstructive use of oral testimony allows the examination of the individual experience of historical processes and the analysis of the motivations behind decisions and actions ‘that in the aggregate influenced history but are nowhere written down’.<sup>77</sup> When interpreting the testimony it is possible to use oral testimony in a reconstructive sense, whilst being sensitive to these reflexive and interpretive issues.

The following historiographical review examines the use of oral testimony to examine work, and in particular Scottish work cultures. The brief overview focuses on academic research that uses oral history, be it as a reconstructive tool or in an interpretive manner, contributing to knowledge and debates on a variety of historical themes relating to work. However, there are publications such as “‘Hard work, ye ken’: Midlothian Farmworkers’ and ‘Bondagers: Eight Scots Women Farm Workers’ where Ian MacDougall recorded the testimony of women farm workers to then publish the details of the everyday lives of the women in their own words.<sup>78</sup> There is no analysis provided to accompany these edited testimonies as the texts have been published to make public the words of these

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<sup>76</sup> Halpern, Rick, ‘Oral History and Labor History: A Historiographic Assessment after Twenty-Five Years’, *Journal of American History*, 85 (1998), 596-610.

<sup>77</sup> Yow, “‘Do I like them too much?’”, 55-79.

<sup>78</sup> Ian MacDougall, *“Hard work, ye ken” Midlothian Farmworkers* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993), Ian MacDougall, *Bondagers, Personal recollections by eight Scots women farm workers* (Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2000). Ian MacDougall has undertaken several important oral history research projects on different types of work in Scotland: *Oh! Ye Had to be Careful. Personal Recollections by Roslin Gunpowder Mill and Bomb Factory Workers* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), *Hoggie’s Angels: Tattie Howkers Remember* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), and on mining, *Mungo Mackay and the Green Table. Newtongrange Miners Remember* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995).

women who completed jobs that are no longer being done.<sup>79</sup> These types of publication are very different from academic oral history research projects that provide analysis of the testimony. The following discussion of oral history will focus on some examples from recent oral history projects on work. Whilst some of these studies have made significant scholarly contributions in using oral testimony in a reconstructive sense, there are also studies that have combined reconstructive and interpretive approaches in the analysis of testimony. A brief examination of the use of oral testimony in exploring the world of work demonstrates the value of combining different elements of the method.

### 1.5. Using oral testimony to explore work

The early post-war period has been described as a ‘watershed’<sup>80</sup> or ‘golden age’<sup>81</sup> in British sociological research; in particular, industrial sociology. Academics undertaking sociological studies of work at this time sought to access the personal experience of the working class to explore experiences of work, the impact of technological change, the concept of orientation to work, and the inter-relationship between work, family life and community, and social class developments through participant observation, interviewing and surveying.<sup>82</sup> The democratising purpose is evident with publications such as *Coal is Our Life* and *Working for Ford*, where the authors aimed to present working-class experiences using testimony. Yet, these studies tended to reveal very little about the research methodology applied<sup>83</sup> and simply incorporated testimony into the analysis with

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<sup>79</sup> Similarities can be drawn between MacDougall’s work and the collection of essays on Work that were originally published in the New Left Review before being published in two volumes. These essays were not based on recorded interviews rather, individuals from a variety of occupations were asked to write an essay describing their experiences of and thoughts about work. Ronald Fraser (ed.), *Work: Twenty Personal Accounts*, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1968) and *Work 2*, (London: Penguin, 1969) which is comparable to the more extensive work by Studs Terkel first published in 1972 on America *Working: People talk about what they do all day and how they feel about what they do* (New York: The New Press, 1974 [2004 edn]).

<sup>80</sup> Richard K. Brown, *Understanding industrial organisations: Theoretical perspectives in industrial sociology* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Savage identifies the years 1955 to 1975 as a ‘golden age’. Mike Savage, ‘Sociology, Class and Male Manual Workers’ in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, Volume Two, The High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964-1979*, edited by John McIlroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 23-42 (p. 25)

<sup>82</sup> For example: Ferdynand Zweig, *The British Worker* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), Ferdynand Zweig, *The Worker in an Affluent Society, Family Life and Industry* (London: Heinemann, 1961), Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques and Clifford Slaughter, *Coal is our Life: An analysis of a Yorkshire mining community* (London, 1956), Goldthorpe, John et al, *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), Huw Beynon, *Working for Ford* (England: EP Publishing, 1973[1975 edn]) and Polly Toynbee, *A Working Life* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971 [1973 edn]).

<sup>83</sup> For example, Roy Hay and John McLauchlan, ‘The Oral History of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders – A Preliminary Report’, *Oral History*, 2 (1974), 45-58.

limited methodological reflection,<sup>84</sup> or adopted survey and structured interview methods to interview representative samples of workers, in order to compile data relating to the attitudes and opinions of workers that could be aggregated and from which trends could be discerned.<sup>85</sup> There is an evident link between the format of these later studies, incorporating structured interview / survey material, and the influence of positivism within social science research. Whilst these would not necessarily be referred to as oral history, they are examples of early social science research that utilised testimony, and / or investigated attitudes and opinions towards social processes at work, to write history.

Despite the aforementioned debates, testimony can be used in a reconstructive sense to examine the history of groups that are marginalised from historical record. An area in which testimony has been used in conjunction with existing sources is industrial relations: in particular, significant contributions have been made through the reconstructive use of testimony in examinations of the nature of industrial militancy, and in particular, industrial organisation. One example is the work of Fred Lindop, who utilised oral testimony as a method of accessing the history of the unofficial action of dockers and the influences on the nature of the unofficial organisation during the post-war period. Within his research he has highlighted not only the importance of unofficial organisation in the docks but also, that despite a collective solidarity amongst dockers, there were also divisions within this workforce.<sup>86</sup>

Kenneth Brown's study of the firm Meccano between 1964 and 1979 sought to explore the relationship between the economic performance of the firm, management, and trade unionism. This study used existing documentary archives alongside questionnaires that were completed by twenty-two former employees and interviews with 'some senior managers'.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, this study draws attention to the power of the organised workforce to resist managerial changes, relating to the introduction of new technology and work practices, so much so that at times the 'workers successfully defended existing labour

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<sup>84</sup> Theo Nichols and Huw Beynon, *Living with Capitalism: Class Relations and the Modern Factory* (London: Routledge, 1977).

<sup>85</sup> For example, H. Beynon and R. M. Blackburn, *Perceptions of Work: Variations within a factory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972) and The University of Liverpool, Department of Social Science, *The Dock Worker: An Analysis of Conditions of Employment in the Port of Manchester* (Liverpool: The University Press of Liverpool, 1954).

<sup>86</sup> Fred Lindop, 'Unofficial Militancy in the Royal Group of Docks 1945-67', *Oral History*, 11 (1983), 21-33 and 'The Dockers and the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, Part 1: Shop Stewards and Containerization', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 5 (1998), 33-72 and 'The Dockers and the 1971 Industrial Relations Act, Part 2: The Arrest and Release of the 'Pentonville Five'', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 6 (1998), 65-100.

<sup>87</sup> This source can be criticised as rather narrow sample and that it is hardly representative however, Brown points to the 'interesting consistency' in the responses. Kenneth D. Brown, 'Unions and Management in Engineering: A Case Study, 1964-1979', *Business History*, 47 (2005), 86-101 (p. 88).

intensive practices', utilising stoppages as a tool to instigate industrial bargaining.<sup>88</sup>

However, Brown argues that the high costs and low productivity at Meccano were largely due to the failure of management to take responsibility for implementing these changes.<sup>89</sup>

In this research, the use of testimony supplemented the existing documentary material by providing greater detail of industrial relations in practice.

Within labour history there has been significant attention directed to the study of the impact of changing technology and the resulting debate over deskilling. This has brought about academics utilising testimony to explore these processes that can be related in a wider sense to labour process theories and the nature of control and individual autonomy within the workplace. Cynthia Cockburn instigated an oral history project with employees of the British printing industry. She paid particular attention to men who had worked as hot metal compositors, as this skilled group had a high degree of craft control, and had therefore been able to resist the introduction of new technologies until the mid 1970s. She used their testimonies to explore the reaction of long-term print workers to technological change: "“You [now] learn to tap key for letter, key for letter, like a robot. They try to turn you into an optical character recognition machine”".<sup>90</sup> The usefulness in this testimony is that it draws attention to the personal experiences of this transition. The testimony can be used to highlight that there were workers who displayed resentment towards the new technology and the level of deskilling but there were equally workers that displayed instrumental attitudes towards their employment.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, while over time productivity improved with the introduction of new electronic print composition, mechanisation and the introduction of new technology did not necessarily mean that workers were subjugated to the machine and simply adopted the new working methods. Cockburn's research indicated that workers adapted these new working methods and devised their own methods of working and personal strategies to work the new machinery.<sup>92</sup> These findings are similar to the research of Nichols and Beynon who found that in a chemical plant, attempts by management to change the organisation of work and systems of pay by implementing a New Working Arrangement, the inclusion of oral testimony analysis details that the response of workers was to ignore the new arrangements through complete resistance, or by adapting the work methods and organisation as

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<sup>88</sup> Brown, 'Unions and Management', (p. 93).

<sup>89</sup> Brown, 'Unions and Management', (p. 94).

<sup>90</sup> Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change*, (London: Pluto Press, 1991 edn), p. 97.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

prescribed by management.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, oral testimony has been utilised to contribute to debates over the effects of technological change and deskilling by exploring how these changes were experienced, resisted, or accommodated on the shop floor.

One of the most interesting uses of oral history has been to question assumptions that are not always supported with research. The supposition of the solidarity of the working class can be challenged by the testimonies of workers. McKinlay's research on John Brown's shipyard on Clydeside reveals the potential for divisions within the workforce. The workers within the yard did not exist as one equal group: in fact there were overt divisions between workers because of the various groups of men involved and also very clear notions of hierarchy. Awareness of this hierarchical distinction in the yard becomes apparent within the testimonies for example, tradesmen spoke of looking down on the riveters. Similarly to the riveters, the plating gang was paid by piece but its individuals were considered above riveters in the workplace hierarchy.<sup>94</sup> Demarcation of the labour force indicates that there was not an entirely homogeneous working-class experience but instead that there were divisions: this has implications for debates about working-class collective identity and solidarity.

To an extent it was the nature and organisation of work itself that manifested itself in a divided workforce. In their study of music in wartime munitions factories, Korczynski et al. note that there was a lack of 'wider corporate' feeling among the workforces in factories.<sup>95</sup> Workers recalled singing in small immediate work groups, which 'reflected and expressed the fragmentary nature of the work itself.'<sup>96</sup> Similarly, gangs within the shipyards had the responsibility of hiring their own labourers, a process that reified divisions within the workforce: a significant division was based on religious discrimination. Oral testimony provides the historian access to such behaviour that is hidden in other source material on the shipyards.<sup>97</sup> These divisions within the factory or industry workforces are extremely significant as they can be used to challenge the perception of a polarised 'them and us' model of industrial relations and furthermore, highlighting divisions within the labour movement, which potentially contain the seeds of failure of some working-class struggles. An early oral history study of the Upper Clyde

<sup>93</sup> Nichols and Beynon, *Living with Capitalism*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>94</sup> Alan McKinlay, *Making Ships Making Men: Working for John Brown's- Between the Wars* (Clydebank: Clydebank District Libraries, 1991), p. 24 and Alan McKinlay, 'Making Ships, Making men: Working for John Brown's between the Wars', *Oral History*, 19 (1991), 21-28 (pp. 25-26).

<sup>95</sup> Marek Korczynski et al., "'We sang ourselves through that war': Women, music and factory work in world war two", *Labour History Review*, 70 (2005), 185-214 (p. 188).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>97</sup> McKinlay, *Making Ships*, p. 25.

Shipbuilders (hereafter UCS) is extremely important in this respect. In this reconstructive use of testimony of workers involved in the UCS work-in of 1971-1972 little is revealed about the methodology however, the historical themes that are uncovered suggest useful lines of enquiry. In particular, there were key divisions within the workers in the yard, linked with the apparent trade union authority that was described as ‘dictatorial’ as well as the perception that union leaders had been ‘bought off’. These workers were so significant as to pose a threat to the success of the work-in:

within the struggle in the yards there were apparently profound contradictions between the views of various groups towards each other and towards the work-in, which had serious implications for the conduct and success of the work-in as a tactic in industrial conflict.<sup>98</sup>

Using oral testimony in conjunction with existing documentary evidence can provide alternative and at times competing perspectives on historical processes. Arthur McIvor and Ronald Johnston have made use of oral testimony to explore the history of occupational health focusing on heavy industries such as mining, shipbuilding and construction. As they highlight, the history of mining is based on ‘written evidence’ such as the Annual Reports of the Inspectorate of Mines and employers’ minutes. Such sources have produced what can be called an ‘official history’ and provide top-down perspectives on events in history as the sources have been informed and produced by management and government bodies rather than workers themselves. Johnston and McIvor argue, they were motivated to organise an oral history project due to:

Dissatisfaction with the existing literature, which tended to [either] ignore the sufferers’ perspective, to depict workers as relatively passive victims...<sup>99</sup>

Hence, the use of oral testimonies of mine workers allows their opinions and interpretations to form part of the evidence in the analysis of occupational health and work culture. McIvor and Johnston have shown that the evidence from official sources seems to contradict the evidence produced in oral testimonies.<sup>100</sup> One example they use refers to

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<sup>98</sup> Hay and McLauchlan, ‘The Oral History of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders’, 45-58 (p. 45)

<sup>99</sup> Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, ‘Oral History, Subjectivity, and Environmental Reality: Occupational Health Histories in Twentieth-Century Scotland’, in *Landscapes of Exposure: Knowledge and Illness in Modern Environments*, *Osris* 19 (2004), 234-49 (p. 238).

<sup>100</sup> Arthur McIvor and Ronald Johnston, *Miner’s Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining (Studies in Labour History)* (England: Ashgate, 2007) and Arthur McIvor and Ronnie Johnston, ‘Voices

dust suppression methods that were implemented as the National Coal Board became aware of the health risk of inhaling dust coming off the coalface. The Mines' Inspectorate reports noted that while dust suppression methods were available, workers did not use them and did not wear masks that were provided. However, from oral testimonies a picture emerges in which masks were not always provided for the workforce, masks and dust suppression methods were ineffective, and inspections were not always adequate with inspectors obscuring harmful results.<sup>101</sup>

At the same time, oral testimony also provides a deeper insight into how workers viewed themselves and the context within which such safety procedures were implemented. McIvor and Johnston draw attention to the evidence from oral testimonies that suggests the drive towards productivity influenced the response of workers to their work environment. Miners tended to be aware of the risks involved down the pit but such risks were perceived as an inherent aspect of work and, in order to maximise wage packets and work faster, health and safety regulations were ignored.<sup>102</sup> On the one hand such evidence appears to support the prevalent discourse in the inspectors' reports in which accidents were blamed on the 'negligence' of workers as opposed to that of management.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, the testimonies of miners also indicate that management was not devoid of responsibility in its push for productivity. Miners recalled management which 'condoned certain practices' and would clear up accident scenes before mines inspectors arrived.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, the oral history of workers has produced evidence that challenges the content of official sources, and as such provides the opportunity for an analysis of different interpretations of the history of working conditions and occupational health.

Oral testimonies of Clydeside workers suggest workers put themselves at risk to long-term health problems, encouraged by what McIvor and Johnston call 'machismo' attitudes.<sup>105</sup> Yet this competitiveness was not simply fuelled by peer pressure: in fact McIvor and Johnston have identified the display of a 'production orientated masculinity' by management in asbestos industries on Clydeside. They argue that while there was awareness of the risks of working with asbestos, there exists evidence of firms that told

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from the Pits: Health and Safety in Scottish Coal Mining Since 1945', *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 22 (2002), 111-33 (p. 122).

<sup>101</sup> Johnston and McIvor, 'Oral History', 234-49 (p. 240) and McIvor and Johnston, 'Voices from the Pits', 111-33 (p. 123).

<sup>102</sup> Johnston and McIvor, 'Oral History', 234-49 (p. 240).

<sup>103</sup> McIvor and Johnston, 'Voices from the Pits', 111-33 (p. 119).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>105</sup> Ronnie Johnston and Arthur McIvor, 'Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside Heavy Industries c1930-1970s', *Labour History Review*, 69 (2004), 135-51 (p.144).

their workers it was harmless and failed to offer them protection. Management exploited the machismo masculinity dominant on Clydeside until the 1970s in order to prevent workers from openly questioning conditions.<sup>106</sup> The ‘machismo’ work culture sustained the image of dangerous and hard working conditions as natural, where any questioning or rejection of such conditions could have resulted in ridicule and a questioning of one’s masculinity.<sup>107</sup> The impact of this macho masculinity is evident in narratives where workers construct a ‘heroic discourse’, displaying pride in the harshness of the working environment.<sup>108</sup> The composure of such narratives reveals that there were twin pressures on the workers of Clydeside, namely ‘the intertwining of capitalist exploitation and masculine values’.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, the oral history evidence has implicated the management in debates about occupational health, whilst also suggesting a cultural explanation for the culpability of workers.

McIvor and Johnston are also aware that the situation of respondents at the time of interviewing will affect the oral testimonies they provide. Of the miners they interviewed many had long-term health problems and illnesses because of working in the pits. Furthermore, as some of the interviewees were actively seeking compensation this could affect the testimony provided, as the individual may be keen to shift blame onto management and the government rather than on themselves. McIvor and Johnston argue that when interviewing individuals with disabilities or illnesses it is crucial to be aware that individuals are:

Not only reflecting on their past, but were trying to make sense of how the past has impacted on their present circumstances. Their testimonies then, are a constant and complex interplay of the past upon the present and the present upon the past...<sup>110</sup>

A narrative or discourse of working-class masculinity characterises the studies of McIvor and Johnston. Other oral history analyses of work identify other discourses or narratives. Murphy’s analysis of work in post-war Australia highlights that the composition of the narratives is influenced by subsequent experience, the memories of parents’ experiences of work, and comparison with the Depression. Therefore, as individuals were

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<sup>106</sup> Ronald Johnston and Arthur McIvor, ‘“Dust to Dust”: Oral Testimonies of Asbestos-Related Disease on Clydeside, c1930 To The Present’, *Oral History*, 29 (2001), 48-61 (pp. 53-6).

<sup>107</sup> Ronald Johnston and Arthur McIvor, *Lethal Work: A History of the Asbestos Tragedy in Scotland* (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 221.

<sup>108</sup> Johnston and McIvor, ‘Dangerous Work’, 135-51 (p. 141).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>110</sup> McIvor and Johnston, ‘Voices from the Pits’, 111-33 (p. 128).

recalling their experiences of work during the 1950s - a period Murphy describes as ‘the high tide of a breadwinner model of work, family and masculinity’ - this affected the narratives. One of the most dominant discourses to emerge amongst working-class participants was that of security, which Murphy attributes to the influence of memories of the Depression that were contrasted with the post-war prosperity.<sup>111</sup> Therefore he shows awareness when using testimony that participants’ views on work were therefore not simply reconstructions of the past, but narratives shaped by retrospective reflection and subsequent experience.<sup>112</sup>

The theoretical debate over the use of oral history has affected the analysis of testimony relating to work. The shift towards more interpretive theories of oral history has directed the attention of the historian to memory, subjectivity and narrative. However, that is not to suggest that there is no longer any use of oral history evidence as a reconstructive tool. As Thompson has noted, few historical sources lack bias, and much documentary evidence is based on the spoken word and has been open to the subjective influence of the individual or group compiling or indeed composing the source.<sup>113</sup> McIvor and Johnston argue that one of the main uses of oral history is ‘the way hidden aspects of human experience that are little documented can be illuminated’.<sup>114</sup> Therefore such evidence has the dual function of giving the historian access to both the ‘*perceptions* and the realities’ of the experiences of work.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the importance of using oral testimony in examining the history of work is not only in terms of providing detail on experiences of working but, as Hutchison and O’Neill note:

A job is not only the key to a person’s standard of living, but in important ways is the basis of personal identity and self respect.<sup>116</sup>

Thus to study individuals’ experiences and perceptions of work provides clues to their motivations and identity.

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<sup>111</sup> John Murphy, ‘Work in a time of plenty: narratives of men’s work in post-war Australia’, *Labour History*, 88 (2005), 215-231 (p. 228).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Thompson, *Voice of The Past*, pp. 122-133, p. 30.

<sup>114</sup> McIvor and Johnston, ‘Voices from the Pits’, 111-33 (p. 130).

<sup>115</sup> Johnston and McIvor, ‘Oral History’, 234-49 (p. 247).

<sup>116</sup> Gerard Hutchison and Mark O’Neill, *The Springburn Experience: An Oral History of Work in a Railway Community from 1840 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), p. viii.

## 1.6 The use of testimony in studies of work in car manufacturing: key themes

Before going on to discuss the format of the oral history project on Linwood, it is worth identifying significant themes in historical studies of work. The previous section provided a brief overview of some of the more recent studies using oral testimony, in order to highlight the influences of the theoretical debates on the development and application of the method. This section will make reference to studies that have used oral testimony to explore work specifically in the car industry, in order to identify some of the main themes that have received the attention of academics.

From the 1950s academics used interviews and survey methods to examine the experience of mass-production processes, division of labour, and the organisation of work, as well as the wider social class implications resulting from changes in the nature of work.<sup>117</sup> One of the earliest studies of the automobile industry in America was Charles Walker and Robert Guest's *The Man on the Assembly Line*.<sup>118</sup> This study included interviews with a sample of 180 automobile workers and they provided aggregated data in order to explore the 'adjustment' of workers to the 'new surroundings' of mass automobile production.<sup>119</sup> They were motivated to undertake this research due to the development of industrial technologies and the widespread implementation of mass-production methods in America and the resultant changes in the experience of work due to the extreme division of labour associated with predominantly semi-skilled or unskilled process work otherwise known as 'specialised'.<sup>120</sup>

This study is important in that it directed attention to issues that became key features of later sociological studies in America and in Britain such as job satisfaction, skill and control, in particular, over pace of work. These are enduring themes, recurring in the testimonies of the ex-Linwood workers interviewed for this thesis. Much of the impetus for such studies of the car industry in American was the shift to flow line work organisation and the beginnings of assembly-line technology, which controlled the pace of work. This

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<sup>117</sup> For example in America: Ely Chinoy, *Automobile Workers and the American Dream* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955) and in the UK, the *The Affluent Worker* research by Goldthorpe and his colleagues incorporates an examination of automobile assembly-workers into their analysis. John Goldthorpe et al, *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). It should be noted that more literature exists relating to the American car industry than British. Within this thesis the focus is on the existing British historiography with some reference to significant American work.

<sup>118</sup> Charles R. Walker and Robert H. Guest, *The Man on the Assembly Line* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1952).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Stephen Meyer, *The Five Dollar Day: Labour Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company 1908-1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 5.

change within the workplace was facilitated by the Taylorisation of work involving the deconstruction of jobs into smaller, repetitive tasks. The Walker and Guest study looks at this development by interviewing workers who had no experience of this type of work. This early study provided information on the experiences of those involved in this development and also identified that job satisfaction was not necessarily contained within the job itself but could be external to the job.<sup>121</sup>

This idea of rewards existing as external to the job process was developed in post-war sociological studies in Britain which utilised the concept of orientation to work. One of the most succinct explorations of the idea of orientation to work is outlined by Goldthorpe et al. in *The Affluent Worker* study on workers at Luton.<sup>122</sup> Their study, which included car workers, found that the workers who enjoyed their job the least were those who worked on the assembly line, due to the lack of ‘intrinsic rewards’.<sup>123</sup> This was an orientation to work that was in evidence through pride or degree of satisfaction in work that was typical of craft attitudes. The research was motivated by a desire to examine the ‘embourgeoisement thesis’, that is, as workers began to earn ‘to provide enough income to support a relatively affluent life-style’ they would adopt middle-class identities and values. Goldthorpe et al. established that individuals had a particular ‘orientation’ to work, trade unionism and leisure.<sup>124</sup> Goldthorpe and his co-authors rejected the thesis of working-class ‘embourgeoisement’ and continued to argue that an instrumental approach to work was evident among the ‘new working class’ at Luton, in that workers were not concerned that the work they undertook was not intrinsically satisfying. This attitude was subsequently reflected in their relationship with trade unions. Their study revealed that only a very small minority of workers were union members, which they attributed to a ‘moral conviction’. They contended most workers joined unions due to an obligation to do so within certain plants, or because of the attitude that ‘union membership pays’. This instrumental experience of membership was reflected in the low participation of trade unionists in branch activity and elections and the greater involvement in shop steward elections, which resulted in the growth of ‘unionism of the workplace’.<sup>125</sup> This can be compared to Beynon who argues that instead of a thriving working-class trade union consciousness, what is

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<sup>121</sup> Walker and Guest, *Assembly Line*, p. 58.

<sup>122</sup> Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes*, p. 38.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>124</sup> R. Bocock, *Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 26.

<sup>125</sup> Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes*, pp. 98 – 102.

more evident in the car plants during the post-war period is a factory or plant consciousness.<sup>126</sup>

Huw Beynon's research on industrial relations and work culture at the British Ford Halewood plant took the form of an overt participant observation study in which he used discussions with individual workers to explore experiences and perceptions of working at Halewood. Whilst he did not undertake oral histories as the basis of his project, by using the testimony of workers his study illuminates different facets of Halewood life, in particular investigating industrial conflict relative to the 'the frontier of control'.<sup>127</sup> One such area is the experience of work on the assembly line and how individuals perceived this. Discussions with workers reveal resentment towards this type of work as the pace was determined by management rather than workers. He notes that in this characteristically unstable industry, while management was keen to maximise production by controlling the speed at which workers worked, the perception of some workers was that they had to slow down in their work in an attempt to control the supply of labour. One worker argued: 'If we all worked flat out it would be dead simple what would happen. Half of us would be outside on the stones with our cards in our hands...'.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, oral testimony can allow the historian access to the perceptions of the workers in such situations, that management productivity drives would not be supported by a workforce that was aware that working quickly one week could mean a lack of work, layoffs and short-time working the next.

While Beynon looked at shop floor experiences at Ford, Ken Starkey and Alan McKinlay conducted a study of management experience in the company, with a comprehensive oral history project involving interviews with 'over one hundred Ford managers' in Europe and North America seeking to explore the experience of managers who worked for Ford and their understandings and negotiation of the collective corporate management culture within the firm.<sup>129</sup> The interviews allowed examination of the shift from the traditional Fordist corporate culture to the new managerial approach that was labelled 'Participative Management'. Their research investigates how individuals experienced and negotiated these developments in managerial strategy and human resource management. It highlights that despite the apparent success in implementing this new corporate culture - which consisted of changes in employee involvement and interaction

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<sup>126</sup> D. Marsden et al., *The Car Industry: Labour Relations and Industrial Adjustment* (London: Tavistock, 1985), p. 144.

<sup>127</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 129.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>129</sup> Ken Starkey and Alan McKinlay, 'Managing for Ford', *Sociology*, 28 (1994), 975-990 (p. 977).

compared to the traditional management strategy - the individual subjective experience which was in fact more unbalanced due to the radical change in the way in which individuals understood the organisation.<sup>130</sup> So both studies of Ford are useful in highlighting the advantages of exploring the testimonies of employees – both workers and managers - who experienced change at work. Official documentary sources of the organisation or trade unions do not provide access to the subjective experience of these processes.

Oral testimony has been used to explore particular subject areas, processes or firms when there has been a lack of existing documentary material or when access to official sources, for instance company archives, has been refused. Len Holden found himself in this situation when he decided to complete oral history interviews as part of a study of industrial relations at Vauxhall in Luton between 1920 and 1950.<sup>131</sup> He was motivated by the assumption that industrial relations at Vauxhall were relatively problem-free and used oral testimony to explore the context, implementation and reception of management schemes introduced during this era. In doing so, he noted that while initially the firm adhered to an overt anti-union policy, this developed in the later inter-war period and into the 1940s in a ‘more paternalistic and subtle manner’, owing to the influence of particular management figures at that time.<sup>132</sup> The oral testimony evidence suggests that at Vauxhall it was primarily the skilled unions that were organised within the factory, therefore unskilled and semi-skilled process workers were not unionised. This related to twin forces of the skilled workers resisting non-trade union membership and employer resistance to further union organisation.<sup>133</sup>

Another study which utilises oral history to explore a group marginalised in history is Steve Tolliday’s study of the organisation of women car workers. This article is based upon the reconstructive use of testimony to explore the process of unionisation of women car workers. In doing so Tolliday examines the various influences on recruitment and in particular emphasises the importance of historically contingent factors in contributing to periods of union recruitment. Importantly, he concludes by acknowledging that despite the ability of women ‘to generate militant collective action in response to managerial offensives’ this was something of a reactionary, transient, militancy from which women

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. and Ken Starkey and Alan McKinlay, *Strategy and the human resource: Ford and the search for competitive advantage* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).

<sup>131</sup> Lee Holden, ‘Think of me simply as the skipper: industrial relations at Vauxhalls, 1920-1950’, *Oral History*, 9 (1981), 19-32 (p. 19).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

were not able to firmly establish themselves as important and permanent actors within the trade union owing to a lack of support from trade union movement as a whole.<sup>134</sup>

## 1.7 Linwood car plant oral history project

### 1.7.1 Purpose

In this thesis oral testimony is used to supplement existing documentary material on Linwood, as well as a method by which to explore the attitudes and motivations of a sample of former Linwood employees, in particular their individual accounts of working at the plant, detail on work culture, and wider historical processes. The oral history evidence is used in reconstructive and interpretive ways and new evidence about the nature of autonomy and industrial politics is uncovered. This is interpreted through reflection on issues associated with inter-subjectivity, composure and validity.

Of key importance is the inclusion of primary evidence related to the balance of control within the factory: in discussing their work at Linwood interviewees expressed the ways in which they sought personal autonomy in the workplace which can be compared to a more politicised struggle for control associated with shop stewards and convenors. Furthermore, the dynamic of control on the shop floor does not manifest itself as a simple dichotomy of managerial control met with worker resistance existing as distinct entities. Discourses emergent within the testimonies highlight the complexities of power relations within the factory and that while there were divisions and different methods of achieving control within the workforce, similarly there were occasions when divisions within management were evident. One example related to the contingent factor of high demand and resultant higher production targets, meaning local management or foremen were forced to concede over issues in order to ensure continuity of production. Another emergent discourse identifies the collusion of senior shop floor convenors and management in engineering strikes during periods of short-time working. These issues were linked with historically contingent factors such as the level of employment and cycles of production within the car industry. This sensitive equilibrium nurtured a volatile workforce owing to the inconsistency in accepted behaviour or working habits: management, unions and workers could each use this to their advantage if the contingent factors were in their favour.

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<sup>134</sup> Steven Tolliday, 'Militancy and Organization: Women Workers and Trade Unions in the Motor Trades in the Nineteen-thirties,' *Oral History*, 11 (1983), 42-55.

Central to the research was to analyse how people viewed their working lives, their experience of the impact of technology and industrial restructuring, as well as their perceptions of management, supervision and ultimately industrial relations issues. As Cockburn states: ‘What people experience, the way they deal with events and the meaning they make of their lives is the bedrock of history.’<sup>135</sup> Therefore, arguably qualitative interviewing is likely to produce data that will be more valuable to the above research questions than existing documentary material on the car plant. The qualitative data produced in the interviews is one form of historical evidence that will give an added dimension to the existing documentary sources.

### 1.7.2 Research Aims and Interview Schedule

Based upon the Master of Philosophy Dissertation completed in 2005 and a subsequent review of literature on work and industrial relations, some pre-existing themes and debates were recognised as significant for this thesis.<sup>136</sup> From an initial review of secondary literature on work and industrial relations four broad research questions were identified:

1. To examine attitudes to work at Linwood and workplace behaviour.
2. To identify the main causes of strikes and industrial unrest in the Linwood car plant.
3. To explore the changing relationships between workers and management in the specific historical contingencies of the 1960s and 1970s.
4. To evaluate what Linwood, as a case study, can contribute to existing literature on Scottish post-war economic and social development during a period of industrial restructuring.

These research questions were deliberately general so as not to limit the topics to be covered in the oral history interviews. From these questions a semi-structured interview schedule was devised, which was split into the categories of occupational background, daily experience of work, management, trade unionism, and termination of employment.<sup>137</sup> As the oral history research was inductive it was decided that rather than a specific format and particular wording of questions the schedule was devised merely as a guide and

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<sup>135</sup> Cockburn, *Brothers*, p. 10.

<sup>136</sup> Alison Gilmour, “‘A hard boiled bunch even by British labor standards’: A study of workplace unionism at the Linwood car plant, circa 1963-1981”, unpublished MPhil dissertation (University of Glasgow, 2005).

<sup>137</sup> See Appendix One: Interview Schedule.

memory aid for the researcher. The interviews were reflexive in that the topics that the interviewee wished to discuss were prioritised before the topics on the schedule so as not to impose a framework of discussion upon the interviewee. However, the interviewer did still attempt to cover all of the topic areas on the schedule so that comparisons could be made between interviewees.

### 1.7.3 Sample

It was initially decided that a non-probability convenience sample of twenty-five to thirty interviewees would comprise a manageable and meaningful oral history project which, used in conjunction with the existing documentary and secondary evidence, would enable exploration of the issues raised by the above research questions. A criticism of convenience sampling is that little is known about the population as a whole from which the sample is drawn.<sup>138</sup> However, the chosen method of sampling was mainly dictated by the lack of information on Linwood employees.<sup>139</sup> For an oral history project on a specific factory, a random sample would usually be identified and drawn from the population, or workforce as a whole. In the case of Linwood, little is known in terms of details about the workforce, owing to a lack of documentary records on employees. Since it was impossible to undertake a random sample, it was decided to recruit a convenience sample.

The recruitment of interview volunteers was achieved through information posters, press campaigns, and word of mouth. Posters were put up in Linwood community library and all local libraries in the Renfrewshire Council area, local bowling clubs and the Linwood Welfare, Recreation and Social Club. On two occasions a small advert for volunteers was placed in the Sunday Post as well as a short article in a local newspaper, the Paisley Daily Express. In her study of women coal surface workers, Angela John highlights that individuals who volunteer to be interviewed were those who enjoyed their work the most.<sup>140</sup> Arguably, wanting to tell his or her story motivates anyone that volunteers to be interviewed. Therefore, an interviewee may be interested in telling their life story as they enjoyed their work, equally someone who hated their work could be

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<sup>138</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 97.

<sup>139</sup> There was some information on employee numbers in Cliff Lockyer's Papers, Fraser of Allander Institute and the Mitchell Library Source Material. However, there were not consistent figures for the entire period of operation of the plant, including names and contact details. The Chrysler Corporation was contacted and maintained that the archives held no records for the Linwood plant.

<sup>140</sup> Angela V. John, 'Scratching the surface. Women, work and coalmining history in England and Wales', *Oral History*, 10 (1982), 13-26 (p. 15, p. 21).

motivated to tell their story so as to set the record straight in their eyes. John attempted to counteract this by using a snowballing sampling technique.<sup>141</sup>

Following the initial interviews with individuals who responded to the poster and press campaigns, the method of sampling developed into a 'snowballing' sampling technique in two ways: first, where personal contacts of the researcher were utilised in order to identify and recruit interviewees; and second, where those that had been interviewed recommended former workers and provided contact details or introduced the researcher to potential interviewees. All participants that volunteered to be interviewed were selected and the researcher accepted that they had worked at Linwood.<sup>142</sup>

Lummis pointed out: 'A balanced view of industrial relations and working conditions could emerge only through interviewing all sections [of the workforce]'.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, it was a further aim to obtain a somewhat representative sample that reflected the composition of the workforce as a whole. It was envisaged that the research subjects would represent both sexes, be representative of different types of work, as well as experience of work in different sections of the car plant. In particular, managers and staff from personnel and the Industrial Relations Department were sought, so that the thesis could also explore the experiences not just of shop floor workers. This was particularly difficult to achieve, in part related to the lack of knowledge about the living Linwood car plant population, as well as relating to the convenience and snowballing sampling technique.

At an early stage there developed problems with recruiting interviewees: there was evidence of reluctance to take part in recorded interviews by residents from within Linwood. A visit to the local Linwood Welfare, Recreation and Social Club within the village of Linwood, led to just one participant agreeing to be interviewed, furthermore, another volunteer that lived in the Linwood area, agreed to be interviewed, following a word of mouth recommendation, until discussing their involvement in the project with former managers and deciding to withdraw from the research. Due to delayed response in recruiting interviewees and thesis time constraints the decision was made to complete the

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> The recruitment breakdown of the sample is indicated in Appendix Two: Sample Details and from this it can be seen that word of mouth was the most successful method of recruiting the sample. There was no method of checking whether the volunteers had in fact worked at Linwood. One interviewee raised the suspicion of the researcher however, over the course of three interviews the volunteer discussed much detailed information, in particular about industrial relations, that arguably reflected experiential knowledge rather than knowledge obtained from the press or other sources.

<sup>143</sup> Lummis, *Listening to History*, p. 36.

oral history interviews by the autumn of 2007. The result was a sample of twenty-two interviewees the majority of whom were interviewed on two or more occasions.

There are two main types of bias in the sample: gender and job classification. The sample is gender biased as only one woman agreed to be interviewed. In one interview the wife of the male interviewee was present and contributed to the interview; coincidentally she had experienced temporary contract work in the car plant wages office.<sup>144</sup> This gender bias is problematic; in particular as there is no opportunity to explore the experiences of women who worked on the shop floor. This nevertheless partly reflects the likely gender composition of the workforce: there were fewer women working on the factory shop floor, and women tended to be concentrated into secretarial jobs and catering and cleaning.<sup>145</sup> A second important weakness of the sample is the lack of representation of management. While the sample includes foremen, who were perceived by shop floor workers as management, as well as staff employees, one top-level manager was interviewed. This makes it difficult to evaluate the managers' experiences of work and interpretations of industrial relations, forming a gap in the historical literature. There was little that could be done to resolve this issue, in the main relating to the lack of documentary information on company employees who could potentially be traced. Furthermore, it is highly likely that Rootes and Pressed Steel managers are elderly or deceased, Chrysler introduced many of their own American managers who potentially returned to American after working at Linwood, and indeed top plant managers who worked at Linwood before it closed may well have sought employment opportunities in the car industry in the Midlands or internationally rather than staying in the west of Scotland.<sup>146</sup> All of these factors combined to make it difficult to recruit and represent managers within the sample.

The discussion at the beginning of the chapter highlighted that one source of criticism of the oral history methodology was to question the extent to which it is representative. With the shift to interpretive analyses of oral testimony this criticism is not seen as important as the nature of these studies is to examine historical processes in a specific context and the way the events are experienced, remembered, and reconstructed in

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<sup>144</sup> Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1. For ethical and copyright reasons she is not quoted within the thesis.

<sup>145</sup> 95 per cent of the 4800 redundancies at the time of the closure were male. Talbot Action Committee, *Linwood, The case for full employment and NO CLOSURE: The Workers Answer* [sic], March 1981, p. 45.

<sup>146</sup> This was the case for interviewee Adam Fleming who left Linwood before it closed to pursue a career in Solihull with Land Rover. Within his testimony he referred to another Linwood manager who moved down to the Midlands car industry. Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1. Also, Craig Wallace revealed that when the car plant closed, apprentices had the option of completing their apprenticeship at a plant down south. Oral Testimony, Craig Wallace, Interview 1.

an interview environment by particular individuals: therefore the data is highly specific and is not necessarily to be transferred into other social situations. Equally, within the literature on social science research methods there has been debate over the applicability and the usefulness of the concept of validity, part of which is generalisability, as a method of assessing the value of qualitative research. Whereas some academics argue that elements of the life sciences; reliability, validity and generalisability, should be applied to all social science research.<sup>147</sup> Others, such as Bryman highlight that first of all this criteria need not necessarily be useful in assessing the quality of qualitative research. Secondly, that qualitative methods lack external validity that is, that there are limitations to the extent to which the findings of a specific research project can be ‘generalized beyond the specific research context’, does not mean that the research is not useful.<sup>148</sup> Qualitative research is not always about identifying experiences that can be applied to the wider population; research findings do not have to be generalisable. One of the aims of the thesis was to explore the way in which former Linwood workers experienced, remembered and constructed their social world of work in the factory; the interviews were useful in exploring meanings associated with working at the car plant. However, another key aim of the thesis was to reconstruct the history of work culture and industrial relations at Linwood to seek to explore historical processes that are not necessarily documented elsewhere, or to provide a different interpretation of historical processes than is available elsewhere. The sample of interviewees is useful, if not representative, due to the range of oral histories that are encompassed within the study. First of all the interviews provide a source comprising rich and vivid testimony allowing the analysis of experiences of work at Linwood from the perspective or life view of the interviewees. As Bryman states, the purpose of qualitative research is establishing ‘an understanding of behaviour, values, beliefs, and so on in terms of the context in which the research is conducted’.<sup>149</sup> Secondly, the range of oral histories is sufficiently close to standard themes to offer testimonies that are credible and convincing however, these require qualification, which is why the analysis of the testimonies is combined with the analysis of documentary, and published sources.

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<sup>147</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>148</sup> Bryman, *Research Methods*, pp. 270- 276 and p. 30. Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, pp. 186-204.

<sup>149</sup> Bryman, *Research Methods*, pp. 282-5.

#### 1.7.4 Format

The oral history interviews took the form of a single-issue interview therefore, the interviewee was recruited on the basis that they had worked at the Linwood car plant and that purpose of the interview was to explore their personal experiences. The aim was to carry out a two-part interview with each interviewee. Passerini adopted this technique where she conducted her life stories in two stages; first of all she allowed a free narration according to the interviewees' desire, before going on to ask specific question concerning daily activities.<sup>150</sup> The form of the oral history interviews started with the participant being granted the opportunity for free narrative. Prior to the interview, for example when arranging the details of the interview, it was attempted to minimise discussion of the interviewees' experience and the project research aims. In practise this was difficult to achieve as some of the interviewees wanted to know more about the dominant themes within the research and specifically what topics were of interest.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, due to the necessity to ask the interviewee to complete the necessary informed consent and copyright clearance forms prior to commencing the interview there were three occasions where the interviewees spoke about their experiences prior to the start of recording, one of which was due to having lunch prior to beginning the interview.<sup>152</sup>

Due to the decision to encourage a reflexive interview the researcher simply told the interviewee that they were interested in their experiences of work at Linwood in an attempt to minimise the impact of a research agenda on the interview. The free narrative section was entirely unstructured and the participant was simply be asked to speak about work at Linwood. Whilst the wording of this question was not entirely consistent between interviews, this tended to be either, 'Tell me about work at Linwood, generally' or 'Tell me about your work at Linwood on a day-to-day basis'. A few of the interviewees appeared uneasy with simply being asked one general question and if they expressed a need for further prompting or confirmation about what I wanted them to discuss, they were prompted with statements such as: 'How did you come to work at Linwood?' The majority of the interviewees adopted a life story approach to this narrative where they started by discussing their occupational background and how they started at the plant through to when they left the plant. Yet, some of the interviewees started by discussing the job itself

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<sup>150</sup> Passerini, 'Work, Ideology and Consensus', 53-62 (p. 58).

<sup>151</sup> When this situation arose the researcher reiterated the information on the informed consent sheet and highlighted the interest in the personal experiences of work at Linwood.

<sup>152</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1; Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1; and Oral Testimony, David Bright, Interview 1. Furthermore, in the first interview of the project there was no free narrative section as the decision to include this dimension was taken after the pilot interview. Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

and then moved on to wider factory life including anecdotes relating to their relationship with other workers, information related to what could be called the wider work culture, and industrial relations. This free narrative technique enabled the identification of dominant narratives relating to the overall topic. For example, at the start of this chapter there is a brief discussion of George Wilson's free narrative in which he drew attention to enjoying his job. His narrative suggests personal autonomy as well as his negative response to strikes and shop steward strength: all of which are themes developed further throughout his testimony. The free narrative also served to provide the researcher with information that informed the wording of questions later on in the interview.

The free narrative section was followed by a semi-structured interview with pre-determined themes and events being discussed, through questions asked by the researcher. As mentioned above, the interview was highly reflexive as the initial priority was to discuss the dominant topics raised by the interviewee before pursuing topics on the schedule. To assist as a memory aid the interviewees were also shown photographs of various processes on the shop floor and were also asked to identify their place of work on an aerial map of the Linwood plant.

The key ethical considerations involved in the research related to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.<sup>153</sup> Prior to the oral history interview participants were provided with an information sheet and asked to sign a consent sheet. This is not a binding signature and if individuals changed their mind they were informed that they could retract their consent. Before commencing the recorded interview the researcher's priority was ensuring the informed consent of the interviewees and in particular that the interviewees were aware of the interviewer's identity including the institution at which the PhD was being undertaken and an indication of the focus of the interview. Part of the informed nature of this consent is that participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any stage or refuse to answer questions during the interview.

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<sup>153</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, p. 80.

### 1.7.5 Interpretation

Halpern highlights that personally undertaking an oral history project rather than utilising existing oral sources gives added value to the analysis as involvement in the oral history project allows the researcher to consider the ‘critical dialogue’ of the interview process and can allow for a completely different interpretation, than reading existing interview transcripts.<sup>154</sup> It is important to identify the discourses that emerge in oral testimonies, what has informed them or have been omitted, and whether narratives have changed over time. The prevailing discourse cultivated within the contemporary press was that the Linwood plant was plagued by workplace militancy that contributed to the inefficiency of the plant and eventual closure. The discourse of industrial militancy was prominent in the free narrative section of the interview however, did not dominate all free narratives.

This discourse reflecting the dominance of industrial militancy feeds into a wider narrative that was constructed mostly by shop floor production workers, of all skill levels, that can be labelled a narrative of chaos. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this thesis but the construction of this narrative portrays a work culture in which: work was not completed efficiently; workers would sleep at work or walk away from their job; consequently there was a lack of respect for doing work properly; there was a culture of alcohol; the trade unions were militant and powerful, the management was weak and ineffective; and the plant was associated with under productivity and poor quality products. Therefore, the discourse of industrial militancy feeds into a wider narrative of chaos where the power dynamics related to volatile industrial relations meant that little could be done to resolve labour and production issues.

To some extent the construction of this narrative is influenced by the interviewees’ perceptions of the interviewer and presumed topics of interest to the interviewer. For instance, four of the interviewees had written down notes prior to the interview and used these notes as a memory aid to shape their free narrative.<sup>155</sup> The focus of these notes tended to be on details relating specifically to work including the date they started, which company, which area and any promotion or movement to a different job or part of the plant. The compilation of these notes is useful as it prompted the memories of these interviewees and in referring to their notes it made the researcher aware of the areas they thought were important. However, in two interviews the existence of pre-conceived notes actually served to stifle the flow of the interview. In both of these interviews this was

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<sup>154</sup> Halpern, ‘Oral History and Labor History’, 596-610 (p. 604, p. 608).

<sup>155</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1; Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1; Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming Interview 1; and Oral Testimony, Peter Gordon, Interview 1.

caused by the interviewee beginning to talk about their experiences of Linwood prior to the researcher being able to talk through the ethical and informed consent sheets and turn on the digital recorder. Thus when the researcher asked the first question of the interview, to stimulate the free narrative, this was something of a *false free narrative* due to the repetition and this resulted in the two interviewees seeming to behave in a rather unnatural manner: Dan Nelson's body language suggested he was exasperated with repeating information he had already told the researcher and he lifted his notes and read from the paper, not entirely verbatim, but this was not the free flow narrative envisaged by the researcher; and Andrew McIntyre referred to his written notes and spoke to the digital recorder rather than to the researcher.<sup>156</sup> The free narrative section of his interview started almost as a pre-prepared speech that he was to perform and in doing so he made no eye contact with the researcher. Whilst, these two free narratives affected the natural flow of the interview, the researcher felt it was important to ask the interviewees to re-state information they had already given so that the recording would contain some of the initial narratives that the interviewees had mentioned to the researcher.

Furthermore, prior to the first interview Andrew McIntyre had provided the interviewer with information related to his work through three emails sent prior to arranging the interview. From these emails it is evident that McIntyre had preconceived notions of what would be interesting to a student of Glasgow University looking for Linwood workers who would be willing to share their experiences. The first email opened with:

Hi there, I saw your poster in the Johnstone library, requesting tales about the car factory. I worked there for 11 years ,so here goes. All the tales are allegedly as I remember them ,so please don't get this old age pensioner sued for libel!<sup>157</sup>

The email went on to describe the start of his employment at the Pressed Steel side of the car plant and his movement into other areas. The language he used to describe the work environment is almost poetic, as is the rhythm of the email that also contributes to the feeling of much activity:

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<sup>156</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1 and Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>157</sup> Email correspondence, Andrew McIntyre, received 27 October 2006. This text is displayed as it appeared in the original email.

When I first started I was ushered through the Press Shop where big rolls of steel like giant metal toilet rolls were fed into huge presses which stamped out car body parts in a cavernous dark stinking noisy building. Over the yard from here was a building where the car bits were welded into recognisable car shapes. Lots of little , and some big, tracks zig sagging around the place. Lots of noise and sparks and people and robots working away. The cars then moved next door on an overhead track into the Paint Plant, where I spent the best part of 11 years, man and boy, just trying to survive. It was horrendous. I was used to working out doors and the Paint Plant was like one of Dante's circles of hell . No out side light was allowed to dispel the gloom, in case it affected the paint colours. The air was full of fumes from the chemicals used to clean the bare metal of the cars, and from under body dip, primer and final coat paint tanks and sprays. The cars were sent on a journey through street length ovens , to dry the paint , and the heat and fumes from the many fuel oil burners used to heat the ovens was bad. The noise was appalling . A mixture of screams from multiple high pressure air hoses, thunder of air conditioning plants moving the fumes about and the grind crash bang of the machinery which transported, tilted, lowered and raised the cars. ... Across the road in Rootes or Talbot or B.M.C. or Chrysler, or what ever it was named that week, the engine and gearbox was fitted and the car was driven out to storage. Tales? Many. People in fires ,politicians visits, Yankee goof ups , people arrested, people injured, strikes, lockouts, power cuts, people drunk, women working , men not working. Even a ghost story ! Well it is almost Halloween! to be continued when I have time. Hope this helps, let me know and I will send more.<sup>158</sup>

The inclusion of the hell or Dante's Inferno metaphor was not repeated by other interviewees in the Linwood project, but in their experience of oral history interviewing McIvor and Johnston found this was a common reference made by interviewees who had experienced work in heavy industries involving working with asbestos.<sup>159</sup> In the subsequent emails McIntyre went on to provide anecdotes related to the topics mentioned above. He had preconceived notions about what a university student would be interested in and this has influenced the content and structure of these emails as well as the free narrative. Yet these emails are useful as they do provide some indication as to McIntyre's opinions and the meanings attributed to certain events or actions for example the expression 'Yankee goof ups' gives some suggestion as to his impression of the effectiveness of Chrysler managers.

This is similar to the notes that Dan Nelson provided the researcher. Whilst the majority of the two-page word processed document focus on his employment history, and some description of the area in which he worked and the products manufactured at Linwood, his notes are split into three sections: 'Some of the products manufactured under

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<sup>158</sup> Email correspondence, Andrew McIntyre, received 27 October 2006.

<sup>159</sup> Johnston and McIvor, *Lethal Work*, p. 71.

Pressed Steel', 'Rootes Motors' and 'CHRYSLER!'<sup>160</sup> Not only is there a distinction in the syntax, the last section focuses on criticising the Chrysler management:

I can only say there was a feeling in the factory that the yanks wanted to destroy it. It was believed that they acquired Rootes to give them a foot hold [sic] in Europe. It was also believed that they only wanted the Birmingham plant but not the Scottish. On a few occasions one of the new owners could come into my department and tell me I was sacked for no apparent reason. I got so fed up with it that I eventually ignored the empty threat.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, similarly to McIntyre's emails, these two pages of notes that Nelson had composed prior to the interview are indicative as to his initial impressions as to what the researcher would be interested in, as well as acting as a memory aid. What was interesting about these notes is the distinction in the type of detail offered and the change in tone between discussing Pressed Steel and Rootes management and when discussing Chrysler.

During the interviews the researcher was aware of how age, gender and class differences would affect the dynamic of the interview: how did the participants view this young, female, university student and how did this impact the details revealed as well as the structure of the testimony? Within this thesis the testimony from the interviews is used predominantly in a reconstructive sense but with consideration given to the interpretive aspects of oral history during the process of interpretation. To highlight both the richness and complexities of the testimony and to allow for interpretive reflection, each chapter in the thesis opens with an exploration of the testimony of one Linwood interviewee. In this section of each chapter consideration is given to interpretive elements such as the inter-subjectivity of the interview testimony. It is worth noting briefly that in many of the interviews the relationship between interviewer and interviewee mirrored a parent - child or grandparent - grandchild relationship. As highlighted by Geiger, this influenced not only the narratives produced by the interviewee but also the role of the interviewer.<sup>162</sup> This meant that at times when interviewees continued to repeat general anecdotes or positions that the researcher felt were exaggerated, these became difficult to deconstruct and difficult to explore the deeper understanding of such events. For example, Colin Jackson worked as a wages clerk and whenever the researcher attempted to explore different facets of work or explanations for certain attitudes the interviewee continually reverted back to jokingly emphasising the amount of time the wages clerks spent in the pub and the dominance of a culture of drinking in the factory. Jackson's testimony may reflect the dominance of drink

<sup>160</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interviewee notes.

<sup>161</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interviewee notes.

<sup>162</sup> S. Geiger, 'What's So Feminist about doing Women's Oral History', *Journal of Women's History*, 2 (1990), 169-182 and Yow, "Do I like them too much?" 55-79.

in west of Scotland work culture or particularly masculine work identity however, equally it was felt that at times his testimony could be likened to a grandfather reiterating the cheeky or humorous anecdotal evidence reflecting the ability of workers to ‘get one over on management’ that are oft repeated and never fully penetrated.<sup>163</sup> A further significant inter-subjective issue was in the only interview that was conducted in a public setting, the Glasgow Transport Museum, in which the researcher developed an awareness that interviewee was attempting to shock in terms of the nature of the detail he was revealing and the way in which he spoke about his experiences at Linwood. Further reflection on this interviewee is offered in Chapter Three however, it seemed at the time that the setting in which the interview was occurring and the relationship between the interviewer and the researcher affected the way the testimony was constructed.<sup>164</sup>

It was equally important to be aware of the influence of subsequent experience or dominant discourses on the testimonies produced. In the interviews with Bill Reid, who had worked for just six months at the plant as an apprentice, he reiterated a dominant narrative within academic literature: that a process of de-industrialisation saw workers from the heavy industries seek employment at Linwood, and the resulting failure to adjust to the different nature of work accompanied the transference of workplace militancy from the traditional sector to new industries therefore, contributing to poor industrial relations:

Ah know that a huge amount of the personnel that came to Linwood to work in the plant were shipyards, an ah’ve read on Linwood the books and so on and it confirms a lot. It really just puts into place what I saw as a boy that, all the shipyard practices came and because of that you had the union attitudes, the one man, one job, you had the management were not to be trusted, the management are a bunch o bastards, the management are this and the management are that.<sup>165</sup>

Bill highlighted that he had read secondary literature on Linwood and so this interaction between the process of constructing his narrative and engagement with the cultural circuit was taken into consideration when evaluating Reid’s testimony. The limited time spent in the plant is just one factor that suggests one should not attribute too much significance to the extent to which Reid was really aware of the nature of the relationship between management and the unions, and to what extent this was mediated through or informed by the dominant narrative of ‘them and us’ and of the transference of industrial militancy as noted in the literature. Yet, within his testimony there is evidence of the layering of

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<sup>163</sup> Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1.

<sup>164</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interviews 1 and 2.

<sup>165</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

memories as he also had direct experience of working in the personnel department at Linwood that informed his opinions on industrial relations:

Ah think one was as bad as the other. Ah say my experience in the, the personnel side, if they saw a way to mess somebody around they did it, and eh ah was amazed. Ah'm not sayin it happened all the time, but I caught, caught on a couple of occasions, "Oh him, aye right we'll do that", and ah thought no wonder there's problems.<sup>166</sup>

This depiction of industrial relations in general is at odds with his direct interactions with his instructor as an apprentice in the training school. Whilst an instructor is a different position from foreman, this position could be viewed as a layer of authority closely associated with the company. In his description of his instructor at the training centre he speaks with pride and admiration for his instructor: 'what a welder, he could weld battleship plate onto silver paper'.<sup>167</sup> Arguably, as the apprentices were taught in a separate training centre and were not able to join a trade union, they were, to some extent immune from the industrial politics of the shop floor. Yet, it is interesting the distinct narratives constructed on his experience in the training centre compared to his experience on the shop floor and furthermore, his testimony is important in highlighting the need to be aware of different sources informing the construction of testimonies.

To conclude this introductory chapter, the above discussion of the developments of oral history from the 1960s onwards indicates that the oral history project is of use on a number of levels. The oral history interviews generated data that can be analysed from 'literal, interpretive and reflexive' perspectives.<sup>168</sup> While much of the testimony is analysed in a reconstructive sense and used to understand experiences of work and industrial relations at Linwood, the thesis also gives consideration to the interpretive dimensions of the testimony. In viewing the interview as an environment where knowledge is constructed rather than where knowledge is excavated topics explored include factors which may have influenced the narratives constructed in the oral history interviews, the physical dynamics of the interview context and what implications this may have for the analysis. Whilst the dominant use of testimony is in a reconstructive sense, the further dimensions of the interviews have been incorporated into the examination, selection and analysis of the testimony, as arguably the two types of uses of oral history, reconstructive and interpretive, are inextricably linked and should not be viewed as a dichotomy within

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<sup>166</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

<sup>167</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

<sup>168</sup> Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, p. 78.

the practise of oral history interviewing nor can or should these be distinct entities in the analysis of testimony.

## Chapter Two



Source: <http://www.scran.ac.uk>  
Accessed 1 September 2009.

Workers building one of the last Volvo bodies at the factory in Linwood.

## Chapter Two

### Experiences of Work I: A Clash of Cultures?

#### 2.1 Linwood Lives – Andrew McIntyre

The paint plant ah worked in eh [pause] ye couldn't see the sky. Ye weren't allowed daylight in case it affected the paint so ye were in a claustrophobic environment, away from daylight. ... There was tracks on the ground where cars were moving along eh, dragged round on chains and bogies. The cars were sprayed, cleaned, and painted in various chemicals and paints. They were eh a lot of men scrubbing and sandpapering the various finishes on the paints. A lot of air hoses, compressors, fans, big ovens, spray-paint booths, various colours of paint, the, the place was humid, an hot and noisy and tasted and smelt horrible. Ah, I was an electrician so, the electricians were in a cage for their base in the middle of this paint plant built, built on top of a tank of under-body dip chemicals.<sup>169</sup>

Andrew McIntyre worked as a skilled electrician in the paint plant on the North Side of the Linwood factory between 1964 and 1975. Over three oral history interviews his detailed recollections of working on the North Side of the plant - originally owned by Pressed Steel Fisher<sup>170</sup> - provide a personal narrative that gives both a descriptive insight into the plant environment and the significance of autonomy. The value he placed on his skill at times meant defending decisions he made in the course of his work that resulted in a clash of opinion between himself and other workers or management. In the excerpts below McIntyre details the incident that resulted in his decision to leave his job at Linwood that includes a defence of his skilled background:

This particular time on the night shift ah got sent for, an one o' the blokes, "ah'm no workin' the machine. Ah'm gettin shocks of ae this." ... So it wasn't known whether this man was gettin' a shock off of static electricity or off of the actual machine. ... The night shift gaffer ... came along, this was a large brutal man who, his word was law ... he had a very brutal manner and eh, eh, told me briskly tae get this machine back, ah'd switched the machine off while ah was goin' for test instruments, tae test it. An he told me briskly, "get the machine back on". Eh an ah explained, "No, somebody's gettin a shock. Ah'm gonna test it, it will probably test alright. Once ah've tested it ah'll put it back." "Put it on now. Ah'm tellin you put it on." An by this time some o the other workers had gathered round about, there'd been a crowd because it'd be big entertainment. Instead of the usual boring, doing things every minute, ye do this every minute, ye do this every minute, ye do this.

<sup>169</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>170</sup> The Pressed Steel Company Limited purchased the plant on the North Side of the Linwood site from the Ministry of Defence in 1947. After Rootes opened manufacturing buildings on the South Side of the site it then purchased the Pressed Steel Factory in January 1966 at which point it was renamed Rootes Pressings until it became incorporated under the single management of both the north and south side of the Linwood plant under the name of Rootes Motors (Scotland) Limited on 1 January 1968. *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 4.

Anything at all was entertainment. ... By this time there was a crowd had gathered and the gaffer's authority was at risk. He'd told me ae do somethin in front a eye witnesses; ah'd refused to do it. An ah explained again, as best ah could eh, "Ah was goin for the test instruments. That ah would put it on, if ah was happy that it was safe to do so." Eh, "Put it on, ah'm tellin you, ah'm the gaffer. If you don't put it on, you'll get your books." ... Ah said, "Well you put it on if you think it's safe to do so." Ah said, "Ah'm not puttin it on, if you think it's safe to do so, put it on. If anybody's hurt ah'll tell the court it was you that put it on an ah've got x amount of witnesses here." But he wouldnae put it on. He finally agreed, eh, "Do what ye like."<sup>171</sup>

The above excerpt from the free narrative section of McIntyre's testimony introduces a discourse that arose at different stages in his interviews, which can be labelled as 'pressure of production', and also exists in the testimonies of other interviewees.

The pressure on foremen to maintain production meant that they in turn put pressure on shop floor employees whenever there was a halt in production.<sup>172</sup> For some, including McIntyre, at times this pressure resulted in a disregard for the opinion of the skilled workers and their adherence to proper work procedures in favour of compromised workmanship that would ensure the continuity of production, but involved a risk to the safety of other workers<sup>173</sup>, or led to the production of poorer quality cars.<sup>174</sup> Following this experience McIntyre recounted being told to report at nine in the morning – after the night shift – to meet with two day-shift foremen:

... they'd said, "Ye should a done what yer told he was tellin, ye're here to do as yer told" and ah emphasised that ah was nowhere ae do as a was told. Ah wis, ma skills were being bought, ah wis there tae sell ma skills eh doin what a thought was safe for maself and other people an get the job done. Ah wasn't there to do as a wis told. Ah wis never anywhere to do as ah wis told. "Yes ye are." "No ah'm, not. It's the Nuremberg trials ye're told yer not there to do as yer told." Eh bla bla bla, ah remember quoting Nuremberg at them. It's a shame, what they were tryin' to do was to find a way oot cause they'd been stuck wi this problem by the night shift gaffer. It was more at risk fur them if, his authority was undermined because awe these guys on night shift woulda been more wild than they were, eh he had tae keep this position o bein a threat, so that they wouldn't just go an sleep all night. So it meant that ah was the one that was gonnae have to carry the can. So ah got dragged ontae the day shift, which meant a cut in the wages. Ah, lasted the day shift about a fortnight, every dirty job they could think up, they couldn't sack me because ah hadn't done anything wrong an if ah, they tried to, ah would a fought it with awe the things. ... Eh, so anyway, after about a fortnight, every dirty job ye were, goin

<sup>171</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>172</sup> This discourse forms part of the narratives of Barry King, David Crawford, Peter Gordon and Dan Nelson. Furthermore, most of the line workers commented on the apparent pressure that foremen were under due to attempting to meet production targets prescribed by senior management and effectively managing labour to ensure continuity of production.

<sup>173</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>174</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

home even filthier an dirtier than usual an all the odds an ends. Eh, they'd given me a fortnight, ah'd looked about an got myself another job so at that point ah, handed in ma notice an left.<sup>175</sup>

Whilst this oral evidence may not be a direct reconstruction of the exchange between McIntyre and the foremen in that his verbal insubordination may be reconstructed as overt, and he may be overstating the degree of his autonomy at work, the constructed narrative reveals what McIntyre *would liked* to have said, thereby providing clues as to the meanings he associated with his work at Linwood. Such exchanges between workers and supervisors occur in 'power-laden situations' where it may not be possible for the worker to reveal their *true* opinions on a situation.<sup>176</sup> Consequently, as suggested by James Scott, while in the 'public transcript' it may not be possible to out-rightly disobey the orders of a foreman, the 'private transcript' – a form of infrapolitics wherein 'resistant subcultures of dignity and vengeful dreams are created and nurtured'<sup>177</sup> – allows the worker the opportunity to express dissenting opinions and challenge the authority of the foreman. It is plausible then, that the oral history interviews can provide the opportunity for disclosure of the 'private transcript', and as stated in Chapter One, used to explore the '*perceptions* and the realities' of the experiences of working at Linwood.<sup>178</sup>

## 2.2 Clash of Cultures

Jim Tomlinson has argued that 'Poor industrial relations remain at the heart of many popular views about the difficulties of the [car] industry'.<sup>179</sup> In the Introduction to the thesis it was highlighted that a disproportionate number of unofficial strikes occurred at Linwood and contributed to poor industrial relations. Such strikes tended to be directly related to events on the shop floor; seemingly an instantaneous response by the workforce. The prevailing dominant narrative tends to attribute the 'failure'<sup>180</sup> of Linwood to difficult industrial relations arising from a clash between work cultures: craft-based bespoke production, an embedded feature of Scottish industrial work experience, and automated assembly. Such an explanation is put forward by Lee:

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<sup>175</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>176</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. x.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>178</sup> Johnston and McIvor, 'Oral History', p. 247.

<sup>179</sup> Jim Tomlinson, 'The government and the car industry, 1945-70', *Journal of Transport History*, 20 (1999), 17-29 (p. 17).

<sup>180</sup> Phillips, *Industrial Politics*, p.14.

Industrial relations were very poor. Established forms of work in central Scotland...had been hard but varied. Their replacement with easier but boring and repetitious work did not provide an easy or attractive exchange for the workers. The level of the performance of the workforce turned out to be poorer than expected by the employers and led to redundancies and short-time working, which further eroded morale, within a decade.<sup>181</sup>

This is a classic or common-sense assumption made about the Linwood car plant: rooting explanations for ‘poor’ industrial relations in experiences of work. Yet, recent critical discussions within histories of work have highlighted the heterogeneity and diversity of experience.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, in order to understand why such strikes occurred it is necessary to examine the nature of work in the car plant and through the narratives constructed in oral history interviews analyse how people viewed their working lives and subsequently reconstructed their employment situation in the car plant. The narratives constructed by the interviewees will be used to engage with the concept of a clash of cultures and the argument that deskilling occurred. Consideration will be given to the usefulness of the Goldthorpe et al., ‘affluent worker’ model, and the conclusion that assembly-line workers in particular seem to have been driven by extrinsic rewards such as ‘better pay’.<sup>183</sup> The Goldthorpe study noted that there were diverse ‘patterns of satisfaction and deprivation’ related to the relationship that workers had with their job and also the meanings that were attributed to work.<sup>184</sup> While the focus of the Linwood oral history interviews was work and not an exploration of sociability or family life, this chapter provides some comparison between the oral evidence of Linwood workers and the Goldthorpe model.

Additional sources used in this chapter include material from the Papers of Cliff Lockyer at the Fraser of Allander Institute including a collection of notes from research undertaken at the University of Strathclyde in the 1980s. The collection contains a card index created by one of the researchers, Lesley Baddon, with one card allocated to each year. Drawing upon material from documentary sources such as newspapers, company

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<sup>181</sup> C. H. Lee, *Scotland and the United Kingdom: the economy and the union in the twentieth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 183.

<sup>182</sup> Arthur McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950* (Palgrave: Hampshire, 2001), p. 44.

<sup>183</sup> Goldthorpe et al, *Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes*, p. 14.

<sup>184</sup> The study identified three orientations to work: instrumental, bureaucratic and solidaristic, which were linked with a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

handbooks, personnel records, and oral history interviews, each card includes notes on personnel, employment figures, and strike activity.<sup>185</sup> Due to the lack of company documentation in archives this was a useful source but caution was exercised, as there were inconsistencies in the card index.

The chapter is structured to initially give consideration to the existing historiography relating to work and industrial development in Scotland, including a brief description of the regional policy initiatives that underpinned the decision to locate the Rootes factory at Linwood. Secondly, an examination of work will be placed within the context of the deskilling thesis before finally offering an analysis of everyday experiences and attitudes towards work. This reflection on the nature and perceptions of work at the plant provides for an exploration of whether the Linwood car factory ‘embodied dehumanised and deskilled processes of industrial assembly’, which conflicted with the craft-based culture of the west of Scotland and in turn contributed to troubled industrial relations.<sup>186</sup>

### 2.3 Perceptions or Misconceptions?

In public discourses the Linwood car plant is synonymous with industrial conflict, with contemporary commentators using terms such as ‘a hard boiled bunch’ to describe the Linwood employees.<sup>187</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s there were high levels of industrial conflict with Scotland being ‘one of the most strike-prone parts of Britain’.<sup>188</sup> Indeed within the Scottish car industry alone there were over three hundred strikes between 1963 and 1969.<sup>189</sup> The supposition of a more militant workforce in the West of Scotland – in comparison to the rest of Britain – is a legacy of the inter-war period referred to as the ‘Red Clydeside’ era.<sup>190</sup> Consequently, in the late 1950s, amidst media speculation over the potential development of the motor industry in Scotland there were references in the *Daily*

<sup>185</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Card Index.

<sup>186</sup> Phillips, *Industrial Politics*, p. 15.

<sup>187</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, N. J. White and A. Collings, ‘The Battle of Britain’, *Newsweek*, 23 (1978), p. 52.

<sup>188</sup> John Foster, ‘The Twentieth Century, 1914-1979’, in R. A. Houston and W.W. J. Knox (eds), *The New Penguin History of Scotland* (London: Penguin, 1993), 417-93 (p. 465).

<sup>189</sup> W. Knox, ‘Class, Work and Trade Unionism in Scotland’, in *People and Society in Scotland, Vol. III, 1914-1990*, ed. by A. Dickson and J. H. Treble, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1992 [1998 edn]), 108-37 (p. 128).

<sup>190</sup> Debate over the militancy of the Scottish workforce in comparison to other parts of the UK is the focus of Gregor Gall’s study, *The Political Economy of Scotland: Red Scotland? Radical Scotland?* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005).

*Record* and the *Scottish Daily Express* to the 'strike happy' nature of Clydeside workers.<sup>191</sup>

In existing academic literature these perceptions of the workforce underpin prevalent explanations of industrial conflict in Linwood and more general industrial histories of Scotland. For example Payne suggests that the car plant was 'plagued by industrial disputes, vitiated by the inexperience of the management and the labour force'.<sup>192</sup>

Moreover, although Young and Hood observe the existence of various reasons as contributory to the problems at Linwood, they point to the corollary between industrial conflict at the plant and problems associated with the transition from traditional to modern and subsequent implications for jobs, skill, working environments, and labour organisation:

the background of the labour force, many of whom came from the traditionally militant ship-building and coal-mining industries; the very different production techniques in the motor industry as compared with those in more traditional sectors; and failure to make adequate provision for the necessary retraining and re-orientation of workers' attitudes.<sup>193</sup>

Young and Hood's assessment endeavours to provide reasons for such militancy but is weakened by an absence of occupational histories. In addition, the dearth of literature on the nature of work within the Linwood car plant has impeded an understanding of the behaviour of the Linwood workforce.

Goldthorpe noted that a particular trend in post-war industrial sociological research was the study of the car-assembly worker with the assembly line perceived to be 'the classic symbol of the subjection of man to the machine in our industrial age'.<sup>194</sup> In light of more recent industrial history such research appears to be confined to 1950s and 1960s theorising as there is limited development of the theoretical debates or indeed situation of these debates that could advance an understanding of the workers' response, particularly with regard to changes in the nature of work and the working environment in the post-war era.<sup>195</sup> Given that over the course of the late twentieth century demands on the labour force

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<sup>191</sup> David Sims and Michael Wood, *Car Manufacturing at Linwood: The Regional Policy Issues*, (Paisley College, Department of Politics and Sociology, 1984), p. 23.

<sup>192</sup> Peter L. Payne, 'Growth & Contraction, Scottish Industry c. 1860-1990', *Studies in Scottish Economic & Social History No. 2* (Dundee: The Economic and Social History of Scotland, 1992), p. 45.

<sup>193</sup> Hood and Young also mention the inexperience of management which will be discussed in Chapter Four. Stephen Young and Neil Hood, 'The Linwood Experience: Chrysler and Peugeot Citroen in Scotland' in *Scotland, the Multinationals and the Third World* ed. by S. Maxwell (Edinburgh: Scottish Education and Action for Development, 1982), 123-40 (p. 125).

<sup>194</sup> John H. Goldthorpe, 'Attitudes and behaviour of car assembly workers: a deviant case and a theoretical critique' *British Journal of Sociology*, 17(1966), 227-44.

<sup>195</sup> Noteworthy exceptions exist in American historiography in particular the work of Stephen Meyer and Steven High who have written on American industry. Both academics have made extensive use of oral

and transformation in the working environment are likely to have influenced experiences of work, apart from some Anglo-centric literature,<sup>196</sup> in the main, British historiography of work has omitted reflection on developments since the 1960s.<sup>197</sup> In particular within the Scottish historiography there is a dearth of research on the nature of work and the focus in existing publications has tended to be on either a specific industry in an attempt to explain industrial politics.<sup>198</sup> This is somewhat surprising given the experience of work, and indeed what constitutes work, has fundamentally changed as industry has responded to macro-economic developments in the global economy, changing technology, and new forms of work organisation and working environments. Indeed Newlands summarised the effect of such changes in the Scottish economy as ‘transformed’ from one led by Clydeside heavy industry to a financial services Edinburgh-centred economy.<sup>199</sup> A development also known as the shift ‘from ships to chips’.<sup>200</sup>

An exception to this trend in the literature is Knox’s *Industrial Nation*, with its focus on the de-industrialisation of the heavy industries presents an overview of Scotland’s working history and associated social and political developments.<sup>201</sup> Even so, Knox offers limited discussion of the experiences of workers following the contraction of the staple industries; failing to adequately consider what replaced the steel, coal and shipbuilding industries, and the subsequent impact on the displaced working-class labour force, nor importantly how they understood changes in their working lives. Since the 1960s the combination of regional development policies and multinational companies seeking access to foreign markets led to a growth in the establishment of branch plants in Scotland. Hood

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testimony; Meyer in providing an analysis of the impact on behaviour of the distinction between skilled and unskilled male workers on the shop floor of an automobile factory, and the relationship between masculinity and behaviour and High in his analysis of the deindustrialisation of North America between 1969 and 1984 and the way workers made sense of, experienced and responded to plant closures. Stephen Meyer, ‘Work, Play and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960’, in *Boys and their Toys?*, ed. by R. Horowitz, (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 13-32 and Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

<sup>196</sup> The Goldthorpe et al., study being a classic example as well as wider studies such as Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures, England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998 [2000 edn]), Beynon, *Working for Ford*, and Nichols and Beynon, *Living with Capitalism*. A general history of work that engages with the deskilling thesis and reflects upon Scottish developments is McIvor, *History of Work*.

<sup>197</sup> W. Knox, ‘Class, Work and Trade Unionism’, 108-37 (p. 108).

<sup>198</sup> These issues will be discussed in more detail in the Chapter Five. Gall, *Political Economy of Scotland*, Charles Woolfson & John Foster, *Track Record: The Story of the Caterpillar Occupation* (London: Verso, 1988), John Foster & Charles Woolfson, *The politics of the UCS work-in: class alliances and the right to work*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986).

<sup>199</sup> David Newlands, ‘The Regional Economies of Scotland’ in *The Transformation of Scotland: The Economy Since 1700* ed. by T. M. Devine, C. H. Lee and G. C. Peden, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 159-83 (p. 183).

<sup>200</sup> W. W. Knox, *Industrial Nation: Work, Culture and Society in Scotland, 1800-Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 254.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

and Young's account of foreign direct investment in Scotland and the implications of multinational ownership, highlights the implications for work organisation, skill and labour management.<sup>202</sup> Traditional industries based upon predominantly craft-based bespoke production have been replaced by factory-centred, automated assembly line as well as call-centre customer service and financial services employment. The key point here is, in order to understand attitudes towards work, and indeed orientation to work in post-war Scotland, the notion of 'transplanted identities'<sup>203</sup> has to be analysed within the context of industrial restructuring. This chapter begins to address these gaps in Scotland's working history, in particular commenting on the 1960s and the 1970s as the transformation in work was beginning to take effect and accelerate. The following discussion will first of all provide an overview of the process of industrial restructuring before using oral source material to explore the implications of this process for the worker.

## 2.4. Linwood and Industrial Restructuring

Following the Second World War Scotland experienced consistently higher rates of unemployment compared to the UK as a whole; perceived as being the consequence of lower rates of growth and contracting dominance of the traditional industries such as shipbuilding and engineering. The focus on regional policy was a political response to address this situation and encourage diversification in the Scottish economy by attracting new industries to Scotland. Although the 1934 Special Areas (Development and Improvement) Act identified Clydeside and North Lanarkshire as one of four designated special areas in the UK with high levels of unemployment, it was not until the Distribution of Industry Act in 1945 that Glasgow and Dundee were incorporated into the pre-war special area – re-named a development area.<sup>204</sup> Harold Macmillan's Conservative government 'encouraged' industrial development by directing investment to such areas; primarily by refusing Industrial Development Certificates to firms that planned to build in 'prosperous areas'.<sup>205</sup> Such interventionist governance occurred in the midst of what John Foster terms a 'political battle', wherein support for policy initiatives became polarised

<sup>202</sup> Neil Hood and Stephen Young, *Multinationals in Retreat: the Scottish Experience* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982).

<sup>203</sup> Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 41- 73.

<sup>204</sup> G. C. Peden, 'The Managed Economy: Scotland, 1919-2000' in *The Transformation of Scotland: The Economy Since 1700* ed. by T. M. Devine, C. H. Lee and G. C. Peden, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 233-65 (p. 245).

<sup>205</sup> In the 1945 Distribution of Industry Act the geographical area in which the Linwood lant was situated, near Glasgow, was identified as a Development Area. Peden, 'Managed Economy', p. 245 and Lee, *Scotland and the United Kingdom*, 177-8.

into two power groups namely, the ‘traditionalists’ and the ‘modernisers’.<sup>206</sup> The background to these developments has been well-documented elsewhere but highlighted here to locate the origin of the decision to establish car manufacturing at Linwood.<sup>207</sup>

Although there was a lack of demand for strip steel within Scotland and the Colville family – a dominant influence within the ‘traditionalists’ interest group – was against the funding of the mill at Ravenscraig, along with the car factory at Linwood it was envisaged as a key element of the post-war managed economy. Conceived as a joint venture whereby Linwood would provide a market for strip steel from Ravenscraig, both seemingly offered diversification and dispersal of industry that would contribute to longer-term industrial growth. In spite of this, both ventures epitomised all that was problematic with regional policy. The focus on employment was driven by immediate financial expediency rather than a coherent strategy of long-term economic growth. For the government, on balance, an annual loss of up to five million pounds was less than expenditure on unemployment benefit and associated financial assistance.<sup>208</sup> Following the threat to finance a rival company the Colville family conceded to government pressure.<sup>209</sup> For the Rootes Group, refused an Industrial Development Certificate for the proposed expansion at its existing operations in Coventry, England, establishing the plant at Linwood was beset by the ‘handicaps of geography’ and the ‘increased distribution costs’ related to opening a plant north of the border.<sup>210</sup> Thus Rootes was directed to Linwood not through commercial viability, but as part of a major regional policy strategy to tackle unemployment associated with the decline in heavy industries and as a crucial tool in the restructuring of industry in the west of Scotland that would contribute to industrial growth.<sup>211</sup> Rootes announced its intention to open a new factory at Linwood on 30 September 1960.<sup>212</sup> It was the only car-manufacturing site in Scotland in the 1960s - a smaller British Motor Corporation factory produced commercial vehicles at Bathgate.

Establishing the car industry in Scotland and providing a market for Ravenscraig countered the demand on government expenditure rooted in the perception of Scotland as a

<sup>206</sup> Foster, ‘Twentieth Century’, 417- 93 (pp. 468-9).

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. and Phillips, *Industrial Politics*.

<sup>208</sup> Lee, *Scotland and the United Kingdom*, p. 96.

<sup>209</sup> Foster, ‘The Twentieth Century’, 417- 93 (p. 469) and Lee, *Scotland and the United Kingdom*, p. 96.

<sup>210</sup> RAC, Miscellaneous Linwood Papers, Speeches made on the occasion of the Luncheon at the Official Opening of the Linwood Factory of Rootes (Scotland) Limited by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., K.T., on Thursday, 2 May 1963.

<sup>211</sup> The background to these developments has been well documented elsewhere. Foster, ‘Twentieth Century’, (pp. 468-9) and Phillips, *Industrial Politics*.

<sup>212</sup> Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing*, p. 29.

‘liability’ that needed attention for ‘political or social reasons’.<sup>213</sup> While acknowledging the high employment rate in Scotland in 1960s, particularly in Glasgow and surrounding areas, the Toothill Report in 1961 was critical of the government’s approach. Despite the obvious bias in the chairing of the committee, Toothill, a director of Ferranti electronics firm, was a proponent of the modernisers’ case and recommended the modernisation of Scottish industry through diversification in science-based industry and greater inward investment in the form of branch plants. The report was critical of the financial ‘prop up’ of inefficient traditional industry and instead supported modern new industries offering employment outside traditional industrial centres.<sup>214</sup> By the time Toothill provided his report legislation was already in force that enabled the expansion of such initiatives bringing together both industrial developments with social housing. Linwood and the surrounding areas were affected by such policies, which meant the provision of both new housing and a job for the new Linwood workforce.

## 2.5 The Linwood Workforce

For many of the workers employed at the plant from the early 1960s, the majority of work is believed to have constituted a sharp contrast with previous employment. Clydeside workers not only had a militant reputation but were also used to traditional working methods that allowed for a degree of independent working and individual craftsmanship. This was in contrast to the routinised demands of assembly-line production in the car plant. Knox suggests that it was the failure of car workers to adapt to assembly-line production that formed the basis of many of the industrial relations problems in the late twentieth century.<sup>215</sup> As noted above, this view was shared by Hood and Young who argue that one of the key reasons for industrial conflict within the car plant was that production techniques in the car industry were different from those in traditional industry.<sup>216</sup> The ‘clash of cultures’ narrative assumes that a large section of the Linwood workforce came to the plant having worked in the traditional industries. Yet such arguments are based on assumptions about the West of Scotland labour market. To date there is an absence of empirical evidence to substantiate such claims with limited information available on the

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<sup>213</sup> Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) under the Chairmanship of J. N. Toothill, *Report on the Scottish Economy* (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 16.

<sup>214</sup> Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) under the Chairmanship of J. N. Toothill, *Report on the Scottish Economy* (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 195.

<sup>215</sup> W. Knox, ‘Class, Work and Trade Unionism in Scotland’, (p. 128).

<sup>216</sup> Hood and Young, ‘Linwood Experience’, (p. 125).

labour policies of the various owners of the car plant, and virtually nothing on the employment or geographical background of the workforce.

Although there are no official employment figures for the Linwood car plant, Sims and Wood cite the workforce as growing to as many as 7000,<sup>217</sup> while Hood and Young claim employment levels at the plant ‘fluctuated widely’ going from 7500 in 1979 to 5000 in 1981.<sup>218</sup> Such figures are at variance with those suggested in documentary material collected from the plant on its closure, as well as Department of Employment figures and press reports used to compile the afore-mentioned card index of company details by researchers at the University of Strathclyde. While the figures are incomplete, in particular those from the 1970s, the researchers note that after the opening of the factory in 1963 the workforce fluctuated between a minimum to 1723 and 2376 on the Rootes’ South Side. Pressed Steel Fisher owned the North Side operation and employed between 4162 and 4809 workers.<sup>219</sup> The peak periods of employment at the plant appear to be 1973 when the workforce totalled 9000 and 1978 when it appears as if 9500 were employed.<sup>220</sup> Comparing these to figures produced by a Manpower Services Commission survey after the plant closed, this detailed the Linwood workforce comprising 8000 in 1974, a drop in the workforce to less than 6000 in 1976 and then a rise to over 8000 by 1978.<sup>221</sup> The closure of the plant led to around 4800 redundancies.<sup>222</sup> Whilst there are disparities in these figures, the pattern of employment levels is fairly consistent. That conclusive figures are difficult to ascertain is not only due to an absence of systematic records of employment but also reflects the existence of periods of short-term working and cyclical employment patterns resulting in lay-offs and then re-hiring. Indeed, following the Peugeot SA takeover at Linwood there were 1300 redundancies and from August 1980 the company operated on a three-day week.<sup>223</sup> What has become apparent is the plant was a significant source of employment in an area that was experiencing contraction of the labour market due to the decline of traditional industries. Thus, Sims and Wood note the importance to the employment market of a factory this size: ‘proportionately the Linwood workforce of 7,000 was to Scotland what a 77,000 workforce was in England’.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing*, p. 60.

<sup>218</sup> Hood and Young, ‘The Linwood Experience’, (p. 123).

<sup>219</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Card Index.

<sup>220</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Card Index.

<sup>221</sup> Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (England: Manpower Services Commission, 1984), p. 9.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>224</sup> Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing*, p. 60.

Underpinning the clash of cultures narrative is the assumption that with the decline in the traditional industries in the West of Scotland, Linwood was the destination for those leaving shipbuilding and engineering where craft skill and bespoke production predominated. There is a correlation between the contraction of coal mining and shipbuilding and the opening of the factory at Linwood. Figures published in 1973, based on National Coal Board data, indicate that with the exception of one year, the numbers employed in Scottish coal mining consistently fell between 1963/4 and 1971/2. Notably, the largest annual decreases in employment figures were between 1963/4 and 1964/5 of 3800 and between 1966/7 and 1967/8 of 5900, dates that coincide with the opening of the Rootes factory and the Chrysler takeover.<sup>225</sup> With reference to industry more generally Murray stated:

it is clear that most of the decline in traditional sectors (mining and quarrying, metals, agriculture) took place during the earlier periods (early to mid-sixties).<sup>226</sup>

This pattern was explored in the oral testimonies and points to the existence of mixed skill profiles and a range of occupational backgrounds at the car plant.<sup>227</sup> Only two individuals from the sample group had shipyard experience prior to working in the car plant, although one of these, Peter Gordon, a pattern maker in a Govan shipyard who became an inspector at Linwood, claimed that many had left shipbuilding to work at the plant. He recalled his foreman's response to his decision to seek work at Linwood as: 'not another one ... off to join the bonanza'.<sup>228</sup> After completing his national service then working for an optical firm, Archie Watson worked in the Unit Machine Block and he partly concurs: '... there was one fella that actually came from Singers in Clydebank and there was a lot of people ... that came from Clydebank and some o them came from shipyards, some came fae Singers or whatever'.<sup>229</sup> Similarly, Anna Anderson's husband had previously worked in the Singer factory in Clydebank before working at Linwood and she also referred to her uncle: 'John got a job in Chrysler and he was a sheet-metal worker from Yarrows'.<sup>230</sup> Thus there is evidence to suggest that Linwood did provide a source of employment for those in the traditional industries on Clydeside. Consequently, the

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<sup>225</sup> George T. Murray, *Scotland: the new future*, (Glasgow: Scottish Televisions Limited, 1973), p. 59.

<sup>226</sup> Murray, *Scotland*, p. 52.

<sup>227</sup> See Appendix Two.

<sup>228</sup> Oral Testimony, Peter Gordon, Interview 1.

<sup>229</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 2.

<sup>230</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

Linwood factory employed people from environments, and indeed specific factories, associated with industrial militancy.<sup>231</sup>

What is also apparent is that the majority of interviewees had varying occupational backgrounds including non-industrial roles such as a hairdresser, shop workers and butchers.<sup>232</sup> Indeed within interviews themselves this array of backgrounds is commented on:

Out with inspection ye had eh, candlestick makers, brick eh brick, bakers and candlestick makers you name them. Came from all airts and pairts ... ah know a guy who was a tailor an he ended up in the soft trim on the North Side. And he was a tailor to trade.<sup>233</sup>

This was similar to Dan Nelson's explanation of the background of the Linwood workforce:

some came from engineering backgrounds but an awful lot of people came from, from the working in different, different industries, ye know they could be anything, they could a been, butchers, bakers candlestick makers, anything.<sup>234</sup>

He then considered the background of engineers:

some of them came from the shipyards, I know that ... engineering on the shipyards, some of them came from that, and various other places. Probably some from small factories like myself.<sup>235</sup>

Others from the sample group emphasised that the Linwood workforce comprised people from every occupational background and trade.<sup>236</sup> The evidence throughout the collection of oral testimonies points to a diverse workforce from a range of occupational backgrounds including individuals from the contracting traditional industries as well as people with trades from non-industrial environments. For employees who had previously worked in the

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<sup>231</sup> The Communist Party's largest workplace branch was Rolls Royce on the Hillington Industrial Estate. John McIlroy, 'Notes on the Communist Party and Industrial Politics', in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, Volume Two, The High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964-1979*, edited by John McIlroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 216-258 (p.237) and Glasgow Labour History Workshop, 'A Clash of Work Regimes: 'Americanisation' and the strikes at the Singer Sewing Machine Company, 1911', in W. Kenefick and A. McIvor (eds) *The Roots of Red Clydeside 1910-1914? Labour Unrest and Industrial Relations in West Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1996), 193-213.

<sup>232</sup> See Appendix Two.

<sup>233</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>234</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>235</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>236</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

traditional heavy industries work at Linwood posed a distinct change. However, work culture at Linwood posed a complete change to many of the employees due to the scale of the enterprise. Also, significant numbers had not worked in an industrial environment. Therefore, the experience of a clash of cultures is far broader than simply a clash between craft and automated assembly.

## 2.6 Attraction to Linwood

A motivation to seek work at the plant is revealed in the following testimonies:

the money. Everybody at that time, the money was the attraction to Linwood. Mair money. There was people workin in Linwood wi trades like mechanics, painters, joiners, ye had every, every trade worked in Linwood on the assembly line because of the money.<sup>237</sup>

This observation was also revealed in Mike Berry's comment:

you had bakers, hairdressers, butchers all the, most, quite a bit, a few shop workers where they were looking for, most of us were looking for extra money to tell you the truth.<sup>238</sup>

Similarly Douglas McKendrick's statement at the start of his free narrative, draws attention to the importance of the proportionately high wages compared to other industrial workers in the west of Scotland:

Well ah jist, got a start, a wis lucky tae get a start in Linwood. Eh, because they were payin good money at that time.<sup>239</sup>

The sample is limited but the evidence suggests that workers moved from craft backgrounds into various jobs at the car plant:

It was the money that drew everybody. You know in ma section of the line ... which was maybe what, maybe two hundred and fifty, three hundred yards long in ma, ma section o the line. I could have built a house startin right from draining, from the drainage to the concrete foundations to the plumbing to the brick layin to the joining to the slatin, you could, they were all there, all tradesmen.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

<sup>238</sup> Oral Testimony, Mike Berry, Interview 1.

<sup>239</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>240</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

This apparently applied to time-served workers who pursued semi-skilled or unskilled work at the plant, for whom money was recurrently emphasised as the key extrinsic reward attracting workers to Linwood, ‘Ye know, it was, was a great job that way ... the pay at that time, coming off the roofs an that an goin on ae the lines was phenomenal’.<sup>241</sup>

Some participants gave more detailed information about the difference in their wages. For example, Archie Watson, who was employed as a sub-assembly operator in the Unit Machine Block from 1963:

*What was the attraction of Linwood?*

It was more money! Ah was only getting six pound a week...at that time, an that was me, ah was, ah was, twenty-wan-year-old an only getting six poun a week...so, aw it was diabolical, but anyway, got that, so ah eventually went out tae Linwood an they offered me...what was it eight and a half pound a week, ah think it was, to start off wi.<sup>242</sup>

The interview material highlights the extrinsic reward of high wage rates comparative to alternative employment in the region as a determining motivation for seeking work at Linwood.<sup>243</sup> It reflects similar findings in *The Affluent Worker* research, which indicates the prominence of pay as an important factor in attachment to work and in attracting people from different trade backgrounds. The excerpts above are mainly from a part of the interview in which the attraction to seek employment at Linwood was explored, rather than attachment the job, but are indicative of attachment that interviewees had with their jobs.

Most of the interviewees identified wages as the attraction to Linwood but layers of explanatory factors emerged within the personal narratives. As Douglas McKendrick recalled:

bricklayers, electricians, glaziers, slaters, joiners they were all there because they were all in and their money was guaranteed. They weren’t getting rained off ye know. See that’s a bad thing about the building trade ye know, ye could get rained off.<sup>244</sup>

This indicates that whilst pay was an important attraction, for some tradesmen this could have merged with the belief that the car plant offered job security and consistency of employment. Mike Berry, who earlier mentioned that most workers were looking for extra money provides an additional layer of meaning when he states:

<sup>241</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>242</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>243</sup> This despite the absence of pay parity with rates in the Midlands, an issue which became a central feature of industrial relations at Linwood and is explored further in Part Two.

<sup>244</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

Eh the car plant eh, tae tell you the truth well ah didn't know much about it an the attraction was, ah was gettin finished at a reasonable time at night instead of workin late in hairdressin and the biggest attraction of all was lookin for eh more money to look after the family and ma, ma wife, yeah.<sup>245</sup>

This resonates with Rodger McGuinness' testimony. McGuinness was a line operator who worked fitting headlining on cars, and in his free narrative stated that it was the high wages that made him perceive the job as a 'great job':

You know so that was a great job. It was the best paid job I've ever had in ma life as well, because I don't think there were any jobs nearer, near that kind of money ye got in there.<sup>246</sup>

Further on in the interview he then states:

when ah went in there, ah really thought it was a job for life ... Thing is, you were getting, money was excellent, and as ah say, as a guarantee for life. So ah wouldnae get anywhere near that money as a butcher as ah would in Linwood. So, for security wise Linwood, ah thought was the best move.<sup>247</sup>

However, later in the interview, when asked directly about the attraction to Linwood he stated that in comparison to another job opportunity at the Post Office he chose Linwood as the hours were more favourable.<sup>248</sup> Such testimonies reveal the multifarious complexity of the Linwood workforce in that it was a combination of factors that attracted McGuinness including the higher wages, long-term job security and the hours of work.

Similarly, Iain MacDonald's narrative highlights the layers of reasons attracting people to Linwood. He joined Rootes in 1963 as a material handler: 'oh Linwood, oh was 'bout just the money. That wis all.' He spoke of hearing about the wages being paid at Linwood prior to working there, 'They were payin big wages, well double what ah was gettin ... an no bein a tradesman, well that was the place tae go'.<sup>249</sup> Having married in 1958 he sought better wages - the move from a pump engineering firm in Paisley saw his wages increase from nine pounds a week to about seventeen pounds. He also made statements stating that in the previous job he, 'couldn't get on with the man that was the

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<sup>245</sup> Oral Testimony, Mike Berry, Interview 1.

<sup>246</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>247</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>248</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>249</sup> Oral Testimony, Iain Macdonald, Interview 1.

manager' and that he had, 'had enough' of the job suggesting there were additional push factors influencing his decision to work at Linwood.<sup>250</sup>

Higher wages was not a single unifying reason for seeking employment at the plant. Also, having previously worked in a highly skilled position in a small company, skilled coach trimmer Barry King's move to the rectification section of Rootes in 1962 meant a fall in his wage:

The money was probably a wee bit better than the, the, money offered in the rest of the area and, eh, Linwood brought the, what would you say, brought the sort of level of wages up in the Renfrewshire area, it was quite low at that time, an ah'm not sayin that we were well paid, as ah said, ah pay, ah got paid ten pounds, ten shillings and believe it or not I, when ah moved from Ke, eh Kelvin Coach Trimming, an then eh, up in Cowcaddens, a worked for SMT and ah was earning fifteen, sixteen pounds a week. An ah was on bonus when a worked in the body shop along with panel beaters and eh, ah would eh do write-offs, Vauxhall Crestas maybe written-off, ah would change all the trim from one car into a new body shell, right eh ah wis, earnin about fifteen quid a week but a was on bonus. So ah dropped down to ten pound ten ... to go to rectification to do ma own job again hoping that there would be a future, hoping that would be me for life.<sup>251</sup>

He further develops this theme of longevity and the notion of security for the future later in his interview. When asked directly about the attraction to Linwood he stated:

Future. Hoping, hoping that ah would eh [pause] probably, point being eh, wee bit more comfort, better working conditions, cos ah worked in SMT an it was a body shop an ah wis up the stair and the front door was always open through the winter. An the wind howled through an you were frozen to the marrow. ... so ah thought well tae hang, aw tae hang, this is gonnae drive me nuts, this is murder, ye know? So that was the reason ah said "ah'm gonnae go fur a new factory" because brand new, clean, heatin ... ye know?<sup>252</sup>

He associated the opening of the factory with future security of employment as well as seeking an improvement in his working conditions. The Linwood factory was portrayed in promotional material and the media as the advent of a modern, new era representational of the development of new industries as outlined in the Toothill Report. There is a sense of this feeling in Dan Nelson's testimony. When asked about the attraction to Linwood he explained that Linwood was a larger factory associated with new opportunities:

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<sup>250</sup> Oral Testimony, Iain Macdonald, Interview 1.

<sup>251</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>252</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

Well, ah felt there was more opportunity there for me ... because it was a big big concern ye know, and it was, medium to sometimes even heavy, ye know, there was a whole range of, there was light engineering, medium engineering, heavy engineering and ah wanted that broader experience in engineering. That's what ah wanted to do.<sup>253</sup>

An added incentive accompanying employment at Linwood, in particular in the earlier years of the factory, was the provision of social housing. Encouraged to move from Glasgow the 'overspill' from Drumchapel, Clydebank and Easterhouse, re-location to areas surrounding the factory presented the prospect of both a new house and a relatively highly paid job.<sup>254</sup> Interviewees Anna Anderson and Craig Wallace explicitly labelled themselves as 'overspill', in that their families had moved out of the city as part of the overspill policy.<sup>255</sup> Similarly, Andrew McIntyre, after marrying, decided to seek work at Pressed Steel, which involved moving from Castlemilk to new social housing in Johnstone.<sup>256</sup>

In the post-war period housing policy recommendations were influenced by central planning initiatives such as the Clydeside Advisory Plan of 1946. Instigated by the Scottish Office in 1943, the plan recommended a linkage between industrial developments and relocation of the urban population outside the traditional urban centres. Within the city of Glasgow there were significant levels of overcrowding and this was made more severe by bomb damage during the war.<sup>257</sup> Irene Maver argues that it was in 1952 that Glasgow city councillors 'reluctantly accepted the need for overspill to alleviate the chronic housing shortage'.<sup>258</sup> The relocation out of the city was further advanced by the Housing and Town Development (Scotland) Act, 1957, wherein local authorities were given government support to establish overspill policies with financial assistance from Glasgow, 'to accommodate families who agree to move out of the city as homes and jobs become available for them'.<sup>259</sup> Hence, as the factory was being built so were houses in the nearby area for the new workforce.<sup>260</sup> There was significant investment in social housing with over 2000 houses built in Linwood alone as well as improvements in transport links and infrastructure such as shops and facilities.<sup>261</sup> The provision of new houses, with indoor toilets and electricity and employment prospects presented the car plant as security for the

<sup>253</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>254</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>255</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1 and Craig Wallace, Interview 1.

<sup>256</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>257</sup> Irene Maver, *Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 261 and p. 263.

<sup>258</sup> Maver, *Glasgow*, p. 263.

<sup>259</sup> Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) under the Chairmanship of J. N. Toothill, *Report on the Scottish Economy* (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 139.

<sup>260</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, *Rootes Group Review*, New Series, 1 (1963).

<sup>261</sup> Hood and Young, 'The Linwood Experience', p. 124.

future. When reflecting upon the impact of strikes on the community of Linwood in the mid-1970s, the *Scottish Daily Express* summed up the perceptions of this new beginning: ‘They were the nouveau riche. New town, big money, and hope for the future’. Speaking to a group of ‘Linwood wives’ the article noted:

Mary, like the Linwood wives who are left in all-electric houses that were once the envy of their Glasgow friends, thought her future was rosy. “We went up in the world when we came here”, she smiled reflectively. “We never had so much money, the house was more expensive and nice, and we thought we were going to be set for life.”<sup>262</sup>

Workers sought additional extrinsic incentives related to housing and from this one can assume a more affluent lifestyle. In their study Goldthorpe et al., argued that, ‘affluence had been achieved only at a price’ and that the price was related to the intrinsic rewards and satisfaction of work itself.<sup>263</sup> Further consideration will be given to the affluent worker model later in this chapter but it must be acknowledged that the labour market in the West of Scotland and Luton are notably different and the motivations for seeking employment are more complex.

Three of the interviewees who started working at Linwood as apprentices did not frame their motives for seeking employment in terms of extrinsic needs, but instead the desire to obtain a good apprenticeship:

Ah applied for a technician apprenticeship at Linwood ah’d, ah’d originally applied to join the RAF and failed the medical. An ma father was a, a, a department manager at India Tyres and he’d said tae me at the time “don’t just apply for one job, apply for some” so didn’t get the RAF job however ah got the, the technician apprentice job to Linwood. ... So ah thought, well this is gonnae be as good as the RAF and ah’m gonnae get a chance to work with cars. Went for ma interview, passed the interview and subsequently got, got a start and it was a six month contract initially.<sup>264</sup>

Bill Stewart initially constructs a narrative corresponding to the above then eventually points to the importance of pay in influencing his decision to apply for Linwood:

<sup>262</sup> PCL, OS, REN 27, 629.2222, Vol. 1, Linwood Car Plant, *Scottish Daily Express*, Thursday 5 February 1976.

<sup>263</sup> Goldthorpe et al, *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) p. 58.

<sup>264</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

Well, I was at ...at school I was good, my best subject was technical drawing. I always wanted to be a draughtsman, I enjoyed that. ... in ma, mathematics, geometry especially and the drawing office, and working in the, in the woodwork and metal work stuff. So obviously I was wanting to become an engineer but, but felt I had the flair for the drawing office side of things. An I went for a couple of, these were the days when you could get great apprenticeships, and I got interviewed with a couple of other companies and ehm, certainly Linwood was handy ... And I picked Linwood because it was handy, that was, that was one reason. And I knew it was [pause] one of the best paid jobs, cos it would be one of the best paid jobs.<sup>265</sup>

This is similar to Craig Wallace's narrative whose motives for accepting the offer of an apprenticeship at Linwood was related to the intrinsic rewards associated with the nature of work as well as the desire to improve his future opportunities in comparison to those of this family:

Ah think like ma grandad's side of the family, were just aw blue collar workers so they'd never knew anythin else ... and eh, wi him bein an old bugger ah think the likes of ma dad growing up "naw, don't wanna be like him". ... Just the way you were brought up. ... gettin an apprenticeship was a huge big thing ... if you could get an apprenticeship it gave you a good standin ... and ah know apprentices that've worked for me that have moved on tae, to brilliant fantastic jobs cos it gives you a good standin and if the opportunities are there if you've bright enough you can better yourself and better yourself.<sup>266</sup>

The motivations for seeking an apprenticeship are not entirely dissimilar from those moving from other types of employment. It could be suggested that the narratives composed by people who undertook an apprenticeship then worked in skilled positions at Linwood and beyond may construct a narrative that prioritises intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards. Yet, this could be challenged as the oral testimonies suggest that there were workers who left their trades to seek unskilled or semi-skilled jobs due to the attraction of higher pay and apparent job security accompanying employment at the Linwood car plant.

The oral testimonies partly support dominant assumptions about the composition of the workforce and to an extent reinforce standard perspectives for industrial sociology about the labour process and its tensions. In the *Affluent Worker* study Goldthorpe et al., noted that: '... it was the immediate relationship between men and their jobs which was the aspect of their work most capable of producing either some feeling of personal fulfilment

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<sup>265</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>266</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Wallace, Interview 1.

or, on the other hand, some clear sense of deprivation',<sup>267</sup> thereby linking the 'nature' of work to intrinsic rewards. Yet the following statements also lend credence to the notion that people were attracted by money regardless of the nature of the job and their occupational background:

Chrysler put the, the wage barrier ... on the map for people. Before that people were quite happy where they're working. But people went ae Chrysler for the money. That's basically it, no for the job, just for the money.<sup>268</sup>

While the above discussion has focused on the initial attraction of work at Linwood, experiences of work differ and are determined by meanings that individuals assign to work. As the nature of jobs is linked to satisfaction that workers' experience, the chapter will now turn to an examination of perceptions of work held by Linwood employees. Initial perceptions of Linwood will include description of the physical workplace environment as well as the types of jobs. This will be preceded by an exploration of the concept of skill in order to address its usefulness in understanding re-adjustment to work at the Linwood car plant.

## 2.7 Skill in the Context of Industrial Restructuring

Within the historiography of twentieth century Scotland, Knox provides the most holistic discussion on the changing nature of skill. He perceives industrial restructuring to have had negative implication for skill and consequently sets the agenda of the debate within the deskilling thesis.<sup>269</sup> The weaknesses in his argument primarily lay in his focus on heavy industry and, with the exception of a dominant craft culture, the suggestion of a somewhat homogeneous working-class experience. Furthermore, he does not question what constituted the skill that these craftsmen sought to defend. His explanation of industrial tension at Linwood implies that the recruitment of men who were previously craft workers effected a process of deskilling, all within a wider context of the degradation of skill in the Scottish economy. The following discussion on skill will be used to shed light on how workers within heavy industry perceived their craft character.

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<sup>267</sup> Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes*, p. 16.

<sup>268</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

<sup>269</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*.

### 2.7.1 Defining Skill

Providing a precise definition of skill is problematic. In countries such as Italy and Germany skill has not been a fundamental attribute defended by the labour movement. Instead workers were defined and paid in terms of grades and as determined by individual companies.<sup>270</sup> This is a significant difference with Britain where the defence of skill has been a crucial element in the power balance between capital and labour, as well as remaining important in terms of social class identity. Definition is difficult as skills tend to be specific to systems of production. As Thompson noted, if definitions were based on income or ‘occupational status’, despite their highly specialised knowledge and ability, agricultural workers would be considered of lower skill than office workers.<sup>271</sup> Bradley argues that the notion of craft as an ‘objective view of skill’ impedes the assessment of changes in skill.<sup>272</sup> For example, coal hewers regarded themselves as skilled workers as they utilised their ability to use a variety of tools to bring coal off the face as well as understanding the character of the pit they were working in. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exploiting the best quality and quantity of coal to meet demands necessitated geological knowledge of the seam and friability of the coal; a knowledge equally important when blasting down coal and associated application of appropriate amounts of explosives, purchasing of sulphur and fuses replaced undercutting.<sup>273</sup> Each method of extracting coal required both manual skill and specific knowledge, highlighting the complexity of definitions and draws attention to the process by which jobs are labelled as skilled when new technology and mechanisation are introduced.

More suggests that a distinction be made between ‘genuine skill’ and ‘socially constructed skill’; the former a learned combination of skill and knowledge whereas the latter the agency of the workforce in denoting groups as skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled.<sup>274</sup> Thereby the process by which a specific job comes to be labelled as skilled can be indicative of collective worker resistance as justification in the negotiation of higher wages. Maintaining the distinction was an imperative and for groups such as the craft workers in the shipyards, entry to their ‘trade’ was protected by, for instance, an

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<sup>270</sup> Paul Thompson, ‘Playing at being skilled men: factory culture and pride in work skills among Coventry car workers’, *Social History*, 13 (1988), 45-69 (p. 48).

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>272</sup> Harriet Bradley et al., *Myths at Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 118.

<sup>273</sup> Alan Campbell, *The Scottish Miners, 1874-1939, Volume One Industry, Work and Community* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 77.

<sup>274</sup> Charles More, *Skill and the English Working Class* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 16.

apprenticeship system. For Woods, rather than a strategy of providing necessary specialist training, the system existed to ‘reinforce exclusive unionism’.<sup>275</sup>

### 2.7.2 Construction of Skill

Defence of skill has been a central tenet of the British trade union movement, with craftsmen among the first to form collective organisations in the form of guilds to protect the interests of their workers. In addition skill differentials were gender biased, which meant that women’s work tended to be characterised as unskilled as craft unions sought to restrict the employment of women.<sup>276</sup> Increasing mechanisation and the implementation of new technology within the traditional industries impinged on the organisation of work and the skilled craftsman’s identity with the concept of job control. Until the post-war period industry was labour intensive; men worked in skilled squads giving them autonomy over the pace of work. Within the coal industry, the change from ‘pillar and stoop’ to mechanised coal-getting meant physical strength replaced skill – affecting the division of labour, discipline and pay as men worked in larger teams performing a more ‘specialised role’; a process whereby the skilled miner was ‘reduced to the status of a living tool.’<sup>277</sup> It was a similar experience in the shipyards. For example, the reliance on the gang system in plating was obviated with the introduction of the multiple or ‘piano’ punch. It gave rise to more prefabricated work, some of which was done indoors and resigned the skilled plater to semi-skilled work under a greater degree of supervision.<sup>278</sup> Such changes in the working environment within the shipyards prompted workers to protect their craft knowledge and defend their skill.

As noted, protecting the status of skilled workers was achieved in part by adherence to the apprenticeship system, albeit, rather than formal training, apprentices would learn by observing skilled workers, picking up skills as they went along.<sup>279</sup> The apprenticeship system was well-established within industries such as shipbuilding and entrance to trades was guarded by strong trade unionism on Clydeside that protected minimum wages and working conditions, even during the depression.<sup>280</sup> Yet the social construction of skill is evident in apprenticeships at John Brown’s Shipyard in Clydebank. During the depression

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<sup>275</sup> Stephen Wood, ‘Introduction’, in *The Degradation of Work? Skill, deskilling and the labour process*, ed. by Wood, S. (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 11-22, p. 17.

<sup>276</sup> Cockburn, *Brothers*, pp. 116-7.

<sup>277</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 203.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>279</sup> Thompson, ‘Playing at being skilled men’, 45-69 (pp. 54-55).

<sup>280</sup> McKinlay, *Making Ships*, p. 16.

in the 1930s this shipyard was dependent on apprentices as they could be paid lower wages than skilled craftsmen this resulted in the active concealment upon completing the official period of apprenticeship.<sup>281</sup> This system prevailed during the inter-war period when men maintained their apprenticeship status while undertaking the work of skilled craftsmen and questions not only what elements of apprenticeship were simply ‘time-serving’, but why it lasted so long. Although the significance and formalities of apprenticeship had declined, it was a system that survived into the post-Second World War era. Hence, the introduction of new technology and new forms of work organisation in industries established in Scotland as part of post-war economic restructuring, seemed to be in stark contrast to the strong craft culture on Clydeside. It is clear from the oral testimonies that the car plant, as one of the new industries, attracted a workforce with a diverse range of skills. Combined with the nature of work in the plant it is feasible that those from traditional craft backgrounds may have perceived a greater need to protect their skilled status.

### 2.7.3 Deskilling

A *whiggish* interpretation of history would lead to the expectation that with improved education and training, over time there would be an increase in workers’ skills.<sup>282</sup> Yet Knox argues that specialisation increased the degree of deskilling in fitting and turning within engineering.<sup>283</sup> Further, McIvor notes that studies by Thompson, Hobsbawm and Foster on a variety of work groups have also rejected this interpretation of skill development.<sup>284</sup> Braverman is one of the major proponents of this opposing thesis. Underpinned by Marxist ideology he believed that the application of scientific management or Taylorism to work processes essentially constitutes the separation of knowledge and practical application, and when combined with increasing mechanisation of work within factories, as well as clerical work environments, resulted in a continual deskilling process.<sup>285</sup> Indeed as Meyer writes, in his study of work at the Ford Highland Park plant in Michigan: ‘[t]echnical and organizational innovation displaced skill’ as unskilled workers could be taught limited repetitive tasks and had no responsibility for the organisation of their work.<sup>286</sup> These workers were known as new types of specialised

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>282</sup> Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964 [1998 edn]), p. 424.

<sup>283</sup> Knox, *Industrial Nation*, pp. 206–7.

<sup>284</sup> McIvor, *History of Work*, p. 8.

<sup>285</sup> Braverman, *Monopoly Capitalism*.

<sup>286</sup> Stephen Meyer, *The Five Dollar Day: Labour Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company 1908-1921* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 10.

workers.<sup>287</sup> Over the course of the twentieth century Scottish employers adopted scientific management practices that led to a reorganisation of work methods. There is evidence of this as early as 1911 in the Clydebank Singer factory. Kenefick and McIvor point out that work began to be broken down into simpler, more repetitive tasks. Subsequently, rather than workers having some control over the pace of work, machines set the pace thus the establishment of scientific management within Singer meant the ‘dehumanising and degrading’ of the worker, which overwhelmingly changed the experience of work.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, there was an increase in the number of married women in the labour market and multinational employers, in particular American companies, sought semi-skilled female employment for assembly work.<sup>289</sup> Coupled with the development of factories in new areas, such labour policies were favoured by these new industries. Indeed Lee suggests that in a bid to avoid the ‘organised labour’ of militant skilled workers from the traditional industries, electronics firms setting up in Scotland during the post-war period established policies of employing women. Therefore, the evidence suggests that in new industries employers attempted, through their recruitment policy, organisation of work and technology, to avert recognising the traditional skilled workforce and associated work culture.

If skill is considered as dynamic and evolves with developments in technology, arguably perceptions of skill are retrospective and motivated by the desire to sustain autonomy in the workplace; delineated by associated monetary value that can be used in wage negotiations. The social construction of skill is not simply a tactic of labour. Management’s acknowledgement of the differences between groups of workers can in effect be a divisive approach to the collective solidarity of the workforce.<sup>290</sup> In factories managerial tactics such as setting the pace of work to the most experienced workers, as well as the system of quality control, were resented among the workforce and caused industrial agitation.<sup>291</sup> As the dominant explanations for industrial conflict relate to the difficulties in adjustment for shop floor workers, the focus of this thesis is the narratives produced by this group of workers.

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>288</sup> Glasgow Labour History Workshop, ‘A Clash of Work Regimes’, 193-213 (p. 195).

<sup>289</sup> Bill Knox and Alan McKinlay, ‘Working for the Yankee Dollar: American Inward Investment and Scottish Labour, 1945-70’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 7 (1999), 1-26 (p. 10) and Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing*, p. 17.

<sup>290</sup> Harriet Bradley et al., *Myths at Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 113.

<sup>291</sup> Glasgow Labour History Workshop, ‘A Clash of Work Regimes: ‘Americanisation’ and the strikes at the Singer Sewing Machine Company, 1911’, in *The Roots of Red Clydeside 1910-1914? Labour Unrest and Industrial Relations in West Scotland*, ed. by W. Kenefick and A. McIvor (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1996), 193-213, p. 196.

## 2.8 Evidence of Deskilling?

### 2.8.1 Skill in the car plant

Assembly or flow-line work is synonymous with car manufacturing yet this perception can be challenged as evidence from the 1971 and 1981 population censuses reveal consecutively that repetitive assemblers comprised just 13 and 10 per cent of the car industry's manual workforce.<sup>292</sup> The relatively low percentage of assembly-line workers accords with the interviewees' narratives of a shop floor consisting of small parts work, inspection, material handling, fork-lift truck driving and on the clerical side wages clerks and secretarial staff. There would have been a proportion of jobs within the car factory identified as skilled, but it was small by comparison as empirical evidence on the composition of the workforce at the time of Linwood's closure in 1981 indicates; 14.3 per cent of the 4893 employees were classed as 'manual skilled workers', whereas 49.3 per cent were noted as 'manual semi-skilled' and a further 15.7 per cent were considered as 'manual unskilled'.<sup>293</sup> These figures are slightly different from the survey of nearly 4800 workers made redundant after closure which indicated that the majority of the workforce performed manual work and that '79 per cent of the manual workers and 65 per cent of the total workforce were semi-skilled'.<sup>294</sup>

Whilst these figures differ slightly, they highlight that the largest proportion of the Linwood workforce was engaged in semi-skilled manual work. However, it is important to bear in mind that the proportion of skilled work may have been higher in the earlier years of the car plant. For example, it was noted in a document produced by the workforce that from 1967 the work in the Linwood tool room started to be transferred to other locations within the UK for example 'Body Design, Jig Design, Die Design and Estimating, including the body Drawing Office'.<sup>295</sup> The same source reports that whilst in 1967 there were 300 employees in the Linwood tool room in 1967, yet by 1981 there were just 30.<sup>296</sup>

Due to the automated control of production at Linwood many of the semi-skilled workers were likely to have worked on the main assembly lines and sub-assembly lines.

<sup>292</sup> Thompson, 'Playing at being skilled men', 45-69 (p. 49).

<sup>293</sup> MRC, MSS.315/p/3/14, 'Linwood Plant Closure'.

<sup>294</sup> Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (England: Manpower Services Commission, 1984), p. 10.

<sup>295</sup> Talbot Action Committee, *Linwood, The case for full employment and NO CLOSURE: The Workers Answer* [sic], March 1981, p.17.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.* Another source reports that in 1970 the tool room employed 770 in 1970 but it is accepted that employment levels of the tool room decreased in the 1970s as it became a significant subject in discussions within the Planning Agreement Working Party discussed in Chapter Four. FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, 'Tooling Facilities'.

With reference to the work process itself, documentary evidence and oral testimonies suggest a continual deskilling process and subsequent absence of intrinsic rewards relating to work in concurrence with Knox's thesis. In order to evaluate this argument consideration will be given to the experiences of skilled work at Linwood and the link between skill and engagement with work.

From the Rootes era there was a purpose-built Technical Training School at the car plant,<sup>297</sup> and through different periods of ownership various apprenticeship schemes operated at Linwood. Three of the interviewees started at the car plant as apprentices with one leaving before completion of the apprenticeship.<sup>298</sup> The youngest was Craig Wallace one of thirty apprentices who started in the Training School in 1979. Wallace's apprenticeship as a fitter machinist consisted of one year in the training centre – including day release at a local further education college – two years in Die Repair and the main Tool Room, before completing his final two years in Coventry after the closure of the Linwood factory.<sup>299</sup> Thus it seems that within the Linwood car plant there was the continued provision of apprenticeships until the closure of the plant.

When exploring their engagement with work, it is Bill Stewart in particular who describes his apprenticeship as a, 'Really good interesting job'.<sup>300</sup> He started in Linwood in 1960 as an apprentice draughtsman, which took five years including two years' workshop experience and three years in the Press Tool Design Drawing Office.<sup>301</sup> When discussing work, a prevailing feature in his narrative was his respect for skilled work and his skilled knowledge was a dominant aspect of his workplace identity. In particular he appreciated the autonomy the press tool designers were able to assert over the designs they produced and compared this negatively to engineering draughtsmen:

in the engineering drawing office everything had to be the right, printed the same way, and neat and tidy whereas in the tool design office you could use your own flair, your own printed style. You, you could look at somebody's drawing and ye knew that was Harry's, that was Ian's or that was Gordon's because you knew their style. And it was nice to be able to do that.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 3, 'Linwood', Company Pamphlet produced by Rootes Motors Scotland Limited. Not dated but estimate this was produced around 1969.

<sup>298</sup> Bill Reid left Linwood before completing his apprenticeship as he did not like the factory environment and wanted to join the fire brigade. Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

<sup>299</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Wallace, Interview 1.

<sup>300</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>301</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>302</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

However, in his second interview Stewart revealed that at times the apprenticeship had involved doing jobs that he found boring:

... and some of that was a bit boring but, because you were workin in different departments ye know you were learning and picking up lots of different things, you were meeting other people anyway so there was, there was good bits about it but sometimes you got jobs which... were a bit boring... but once a was in the drawing office that was different. You were actually given live work and design work and I thoroughly enjoyed that.<sup>303</sup>

Therefore, despite the apparent engagement with his work, appreciation of skilled work and his enjoyment of the job, there were varied experiences. In spite of this, a dominant theme in Stewart's narrative is of the prominence of his skilled identity. This is evident when he told of the willingness of the apprentices to stay at work in their own time in order to learn more about the job:

We actually asked if we could stay, if we could stay on at night to, to tell us a bit more about it. So we, we were quite willing to spend our own time and he was quite willing to sit with us an, and find, a bit, a little bit more about it especially the more complex designs.<sup>304</sup>

This desire to learn combined with his respect for the training involved in development of a skill is apparent when he explains:

it was a great job. I thoroughly enjoyed it ... We had some guys in the drawing office who'd come through, older than us, who'd served their apprenticeship and had done some die design for ... some of the smaller production jobs but they, they'd developed into becoming good press tool designers and, we picked it up.<sup>305</sup>

Bill Reid presents a similar narrative in which he expressed a pride in the trade as well as a respect for skill of those training the apprentices:

And we went to training school and we had a wonderful little man. An instructor called Mr. O'Brien. Dapper little gentleman ... he, he had a colleague who was the same but ah've forgotten his name, great sense of humour, wicked wee man, what a welder, he could weld battleship plate onto silver paper. An he taught well an he taught by example eh an not a wee man tae mess around with. Probably came off the line, probably served his time, did his trade, worked for years an that's how he became ehm, the engineer technician.<sup>306</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 2.

<sup>304</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>305</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>306</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

The acknowledgement of skill as a laudable attribute in the workplace emerged later in the interview when discussing the tasks apprentices had to undertake:

But those were the lovely basic skills. We learned about lead loadings. A skill that's long gone now other than the classic car trade. We learned about dressing panels, and learned about little dents and so on. And the apprentice schools were good.<sup>307</sup>

Despite his engagement with work, Stewart expressed sympathy for what he perceived as the different experience for line workers in the CAB with a more negative insight into their work:

The noise it's horrendous. Spot-welding guns battering away as well. Ah can understand sometime it, I'm quite sure guys would purposely do something tae stop the line. Because he just got maybe fed up with the foreman or fed up with the job or just couldn't take it.<sup>308</sup>

It was a similar experience for Craig Wallace's narrative when he spent time on the shop floor during his apprenticeship; he also exhibited a disconnection from the product he was producing:

You're buildin cars but you're a million miles away from this thing that rolls off the production line.<sup>309</sup>

It is a perception shared with Bill Reid who worked at Linwood for six months in 1971 as a technician apprentice but decided to leave the car factory to pursue a career in the fire brigade, as he did not like the factory. When asked to recall impressions of the Linwood plant Bill Reid stated, 'it was pretty horrific there's no two ways about it'.<sup>310</sup> Yet later on he describes the production processes in a romanticised yet vivid way:

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<sup>307</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

<sup>308</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>309</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Wallace, Interview 1.

<sup>310</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

And the lines were wonderful ye know, you've huge rows of cars, an ye've had all the, the air tools runnin' an the smells and the lights an the it wis, they were building Hillman Hunters and Imps. Ah'll come back to the Imps, and ah remember, there was a very special Hunter at the time, the Hunter GLS and the Hunter GT ah think it was that had an engine a Holby engine which sat at the back of that part of the plant and they had brightly coloured air filters, assemblies and you, ye know ah, ah lusted after one of these. Ah didn't have a car, but ah wanted the engine ye know. It was how, how stupid can you get? That was a nice memory.<sup>311</sup>

The positive narrative and romanticised perception of the products combined with his earlier comments on respect for skilled engineering are juxtaposed against Reid's comments on disliking the atmosphere at Linwood due to troubled industrial relations which will be explored in Chapter Five of the thesis. It highlights the different levels on which people experience their job and working environment. As a fire-fighter he expressed the satisfaction gained from working for a public service and knowing that he was 'saving lives':

when ye come down the stair wi the wee girl in yer arms an ye go, [nods] "Ah did that." ... Workin on an assembly line gives you absolutely nothin. You just got ae have the money. [sighs] Bugger that.<sup>312</sup>

These perceptions of assembly-line workers' experience of work are quite different from that experienced by the apprentices and demonstrate the disjunction between personal experiences of work at Linwood and perceptions of work in other sections in the plant. This was apparent in the narratives produced by all the former apprentices.

Traditional skills were sustained through the apprenticeship system at the plant but the training points to a process of deskilling as noted in Mike Berry's description of welding; a skill that had been associated with the heavy industries:

*And did you get training when you went into the car plant, or when you went into Pressed Steel at first?*

Oh yes, you get, you get training eh very basic, basic eh, they'll show you what to do and a couple of hours and you're right into it. Welding they had to took, take you away in for eh, a welding course which was pretty basic again. It wouldn't pass as a, you wouldn't pass yourself as a, eh qualified welder, eh to get into a factories but eh, in that, it was all, all small stuff. Eh, and as far as the trucking you got training and they brought in, people in to train you. ... That's about all.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

<sup>312</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1.

<sup>313</sup> Oral Testimony, Mike Berry, Interview 1.

This testimony is consistent with Meyer's findings about the similar 'destruction' of traditional craft metalwork skills in Ford, 'superintendents and foreman claimed that they could make an unskilled immigrant into a "first-class molder [sic] of one piece in three days"' .<sup>314</sup>

David Crawford described his job as semi-skilled. He had worked previously as a butcher and then worked as an inspector from 1954 until closure in various buildings. When asked about training he stated, 'It was on the job trainin, main, mainly at that time':

Aye some, some o them eh, came intae there, they could be bricklayers, ye got everythin. But if they were tradesmen, they were employed eh, in the engineering trade, they were employed as eh, trained inspectors an they worked in the machine room, where, where it was all eh, precision work.<sup>315</sup>

Furthermore, employment of workers for semi-skilled and unskilled jobs was not acknowledged as necessitating comprehensive or indeed structured training. The majority of the semi and unskilled manual workers described the training as *on the job* training; it consisted of watching another employee doing the jobs for a short time period and then taking on the responsibility themselves as revealed in the following exchange between the interviewer and Archie Watson, a process worker assembling components in the Unit Machine Block:

*How long was the training?*

[Laughing] Five minutes!

[Laughing] *Five minutes?*

They jist took ye tae a machine an says right, press this, press that, press this, press that ... an that's it. Right ok yer daen it. [both laugh] So, oh but, during the period yeh end up daen a lot o other things as well, an ye jist pick it up as ye went along.<sup>316</sup>

Later on in the interview he reiterates:

tell you, five minutes gettin shown how to work a machine. "That's you. Ok? Right start. Carry on." [laughs] Ye don't mess in, that's it, flung in at the deep end.<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Meyer, *Five Dollar Day*, p. 52.

<sup>315</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

<sup>316</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>317</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

The idea of being ‘flung in at the deep end’ forms part of the narrative of chaos that is constructed by numerous interviewees, ‘we got two days of learnin how to do the headlinin and you had tae be up to speed on the two days.’<sup>318</sup> McGuinness told of missing the training due to being initially allocated to another section of the factory, and describes how:

Ah was more or less in at the deep end right from the scratch, “Do this, do that. Right, do this an that.” But after about a dozen motors, ye know? You could do it blind folded. ... it was easy tae do.<sup>319</sup>

This expression of the job being easy is similar to the Douglas McKendrick’s testimony:

The man that wis doin the job, ah hud tae walk along wi him an watch him puttin the, the see I started puttin the carpets in, ye know. ... But that was what ye did, and ye learnt on the job. Ah mean there wis no skill attached to it ... after ye’d been doing it fur maybe three month ye could do it wi yer eyes shut. Ye know? Ye literally could do it wi yer eyes shut ... do it by touch.<sup>320</sup>

All three of these men were engaged in track work, Watson on sub-assembly, McGuinness on the main track, and McKendrick on the main and rectification tracks, and their testimonies highlight the minimal training reflecting the lack of technical skills involved in their jobs. Some academics have argued that for workers who had never worked in such an environment this new form of work could be considered as a form of re-skilling. Watson and McGuinness had never worked in a factory environment, therefore working as a process assembler was a form of re-skilling. Yet taking the example of Watson, as the job comprised a small repetitive task in the process of gearbox assembly – the component parts were delivered to him – and he was not involved in the planning of the task, the actions involved in this process were deskilled as they reflect the division of labour as described by the likes of Adam Smith.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>319</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>320</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>321</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: A Selected Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 12-13.

## 2.8.2 The Nature of Work

At Linwood developments reflected those in other car plants with the application of scientific management techniques and included Measured Day Work (hereafter MDW) at the Linwood plant. For workers who had previously worked under a piece work system of payment in the shipbuilding and engineering firms of Clydeside the move to Linwood, where MDW existed in the South Plant 1963 and introduced in the North Plant in 1968, was a contentious issue.<sup>322</sup> The response of the workforce to implementation of such techniques is explored in Part Two of this thesis. Under this system the company issued man assignments calculated on the number of men necessary for each task and the duration of each job, which meant that work was timed and rated. Conflict arose when shop stewards and the workforce disagreed with management over the duration and number of workers needed to complete a job. Beynon notes that within Ford Halewood many of the workers were sceptical of these timings and they were not perceived to be scientific.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, there is documentary evidence produced by the trade unions at the time, which similarly makes the case that the system of MDW was not *scientific*.<sup>324</sup> Shop stewards sought to control the availability industrial – work study – engineers had in measuring work, whilst they defended the scientific nature of correct timing and ratings for processes and tasks. As explained by Adam Fleming, an industrial engineer who worked up to the position of Production Manager:

Eh, and I had a good number of Industrial Engineers because we were still, we were still working in the early days on the piece work system eh, and we were moving off that one to Measured Day System. That was, that caused big industrial relations problems both at Linwood and in the rest of the car companies in the country. But, they, they recognised that when we were man, when we were monitoring hours per car we really needed to know what the, the eh the wages bill was gonnae be and of course when you were on piece work an other types of systems that was something that wasn't known so eh, it varied from week to week so there was a big desire for everybody in the, in the car industry to go onto Measured Day Work.<sup>325</sup>

Division of labour by management was also determined by the implementation of technology. Braverman argued that increased automation results in increasing deskilling of

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<sup>322</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), pp. 6-7.

<sup>323</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 135.

<sup>324</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>325</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

work.<sup>326</sup> One particular method of production that has been debated has been the effect of flow / assembly-line production. In this kind of production, each worker undertakes one element of production repeatedly and the line controls the speed at which they work. With the stages of the production process broken down to limited tasks the work was highly repetitive and controlled by management who set the pace of the machines. Consequently, during peak periods workers on the car-assembly line were capable of producing sixty vehicles per hour. The technology and organisation of production in car manufacturing meant that there was no necessity for the process workers to be skilled. Meyer refers to an early study of automobile production that describes automobile workers as:

“shaped to meet the demands of these rigid machines. The requirements of dexterity, alertness, watchfulness, rhythmic and monotonous activities, coupled with a lessening of much of the older physical requirements... .”<sup>327</sup>

It seems that when discussing the experience of work at Linwood debates about deskilling are not entirely useful as for a large section of the workforce this concept had limited significance and the continued use of the term is reified by the process workers being labelled as semi-skilled although some even seemed unsure themselves as to whether to call their job semi-skilled or unskilled. McKendrick’s narrative highlights that to work on the assembly line no skill was required and no prior experience of the job. He stated:

But there wis no, specialists until you learned, you only became a specialist there at the job ye know.<sup>328</sup>

He therefore identifies the work as being highly specialised but when I asked how he would define the job in terms of skill he stated:

Unskilled because you learned yourself, you learned on the job.<sup>329</sup>

The application of technology and the organisation of work meant the stages of the production process were broken down to limited tasks. This is evident in the way shop floor process workers described their work: McGuinness described his job working inserting the headlining into cars:

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<sup>326</sup> Braverman, *Monopoly Capitalism*, p. 217.

<sup>327</sup> Meyer, *Five Dollar Day*, p. 49.

<sup>328</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>329</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

it was the best job ah ever had. ... ah found it easy because ah was quite thin then ...Ye jumped from one end, tack it, a couple of tacks on it, tack it, an then jump to the front end, pull it tight. Ye know? And then tack it, tack all down, and then a couple of wee clips, ehm, and, and then put couple of wee crosses where the lights would go on the dash. That means that the electricians ... the ones puttin the wires in could, could feed it through.<sup>330</sup>

Similarly Watson said:

ah brought this big tool through it an it cut a square hole an then ah went ae the next wan an it more or less finished it at the exact size because it hud tae be very eh...close tae the, the speculation ye know... so that's wit a did tae start wi and eh, but through time a learned how ae do aw the other machines an ah could do the whole lot, fae start ae finish... And eh, ye jist continuous...ye put em in the machine do it, put it back on ye know ye could always did an empty one an ye took off a one tray an ye out it on ae the next wan an then when that wis finished ye goat the next wan, an ye always hud an empty tray tae fit them on ae ... An everybody hud like an empty tray at their machines, an then when it, a full tray came along they jist put it through the machine and pit it ontae the empty wan, an then passed it ae the next wan. An that's how, that's how it went, it jist went roon in circles aw the time.<sup>331</sup>

Both excerpts indicate that their jobs consisted of limited processes and they had limited control over the pace of work. It is common to suggest that highly repetitive work lacked intrinsic rewards and could become monotonous. Within the oral testimonies there were line workers who acknowledged the repetitive and tedious nature of their work and that whilst working it was important not to focus on the number of cars they had completed:

People just wanted to get it done and get home. You had to switch off. You could go nuts if you thought, "Oh here's another car".<sup>332</sup>

Of the small sample of interviewees, the assembly-line workers were most likely to juxtapose their jobs at Linwood with their experiences in previous employment which provides some indication as to the changes they experienced in work. When asked whether the work at Linwood was stressful, George Wilson stated that at Linwood the work was easy and you had to 'switch off' before comparing this to his previous job as a roofer where he worried about his work, for instance if there was rain he would worry about whether there had been any leaks on roofs he had completed.<sup>333</sup> This highlights the change from working in a job that involved a degree of responsibility and self-regulation of work,

<sup>330</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>331</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>332</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>333</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

associated with a craft background, and working on an automated assembly line where workers feel that their job is devoid of responsibility.

The linkage between deskilling and worker autonomy is apparent in the testimony of Barry Stubbs who worked in the Car Assembly Building [hereafter CAB]. When asked about work on a day-to-day basis he stated:

It was repetition aw the time. Complete repetition. Once ye got tae dae yer, know yer job, you just went through it. Just like bein a robot. You, you were a robot.<sup>334</sup>

This narrative on the repetitive nature of assembly-line work is reinforced in a second interview:

It was horrible. It was horrible. ... Imagine bein on a track for eh, every day in life doin sixty cars an hour. That was yer job. As soon as you went in there ye didnae need a foreman, the line was yer foreman.<sup>335</sup>

This participant became one of the inspection staff, but even then his job was repetitive and this process of inspection was limited in scope. As a ‘viewer’ on final inspection he worked underneath the high track with a checklist of twenty-one items, inspecting a car a minute.<sup>336</sup> This evidence and the oral narratives strongly suggest a continual deskilling process and subsequent absence of intrinsic rewards. They support Braverman’s model of work intensification and greater managerial control associated with both increased mechanisation and scientific management principles. In this respect the established explanation of conflict at Linwood holds true.

### 2.8.3. The nature of work revisited

Dominant narratives are not entirely supported however, by the Linwood sample, as a wide variety of attitudes towards work are exhibited. Turning first of all to the line workers, these participants spent less time describing their jobs and provided little reflection on the physical work environment with the exception of their first impressions which were usually juxtaposed with their previous working environment and job, ‘Oh ah hated it that was ye know. That, the noise, the noise was terrible ... everythin brushing, people brushin

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<sup>334</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

<sup>335</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 2.

<sup>336</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 2.

past you, they're workin on the line'.<sup>337</sup> Alternately, George Wilson stated, 'But ah enjoyed, naw ah enjoyed goin doon there everyday ae ma work.'<sup>338</sup> Similarly, David Munroe claimed, 'it was an experience. Ah enjoyed it and if ah, if the place opened up the morrow, ah would go back to the job ah left'.<sup>339</sup> However, he then seemed to contradict himself when asked whether his job was interesting:

Naw it was, it was boring actually. Boring, doing the same thing day in, day out ... you're doing the same job fur eight hours or whatever it was. And it, just a wee machine went round aw day, aw day long.<sup>340</sup>

This apparent contradiction can be explained in the following narratives, which reveal control over the pace of work as an important element of engagement with work in the car plant. Therefore, both the desire for a better wage and some control over work converge as perceived advantages to the job of line worker at Linwood.

Although tedious, the assembly-line work was considered easy and provided the opportunity to exercise control over the workplace. All of the semi-skilled assembly operators in the sample, with the exception of Barry Stubbs, constructed a narrative of work as being so easy they worked faster than the dictated speed. Subsequently they could work on vehicles further back on the line and 'create' time away from it. For instance, David Munroe stated, 'I worked with another chap right, so we worked ... a half hour on, a half hour off'.<sup>341</sup> Likewise, Douglas McKendrick's narrative supports the notion that assembly workers were able to obtain job control – to some degree – in that they were able to share their work and work back on the line to gain time. In his free narrative he stated:

Eh, because o, on the door pad section on the line wi the cars comin along it all the time it was just repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat you could do it, ye literally did, do it wi yer eyes shut ye know. Ah mean ... ah used tae put in, eh, seven screws along the bottom of the front and the back door on the one side ye know, an, when ye started it was difficult, it was a difficult job to do wi all the car ye, yer mov, movin along wi the car moving all the time ye know.<sup>342</sup>

The repetitive nature of the job on the line that was constantly moving is evident. However, he then composes a similar narrative to George Wilson where he supports the notion that assembly workers were able to obtain a degree of job control in that they were able to share their work and work back on the line to gain time:

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<sup>337</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>338</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>339</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

<sup>340</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

<sup>341</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

<sup>342</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

But after yer at it a while ye just looked at the screws an they jumped in. Ye know. An it got that, ye became so good at it, you and, see the, you an yer mate, there wis a man doin, ah wis doin the one side of the car goin along the line, an there wis another man doin the other side of the car goin along the line. It got, after a while that, eh ye got so good at the job ye could do the two sides, know? So ye used to work half hour breaks, an [pause] it was a, it was a fight tae see who got the break eh, nearest the stoppin time, ye know, because ye could be up at the gate waitin' tae get out, just as soon as that horn went [claps one hand against the other] ye were right out the gate, ye know.<sup>343</sup>

When asked 'Did you ever feel under pressure or sort of stress?' Douglas replied:

Oh Aye. Aye ye were under pressure; ye were under stress aye, aye. An particularly at the last half hour of the day ye know, eh, see the thing was, everybody wanted ae be the first at that gate ye know. Ready tae get out, an get away. A mean you're talkin about maybe six, seven hundred cars there ye know. Got tae get out. Took you longer tae get from a car park in Chrysler tae the main road than it took ye tae get from the main road to Glasgow. ... But everybody wanted tae work up the line, work further up.<sup>344</sup>

He conceptualises the stress with self-imposed pressure to work up the line; rather than pressure directly caused by keeping up with the line at the pace set by management to achieve production targets. It was similar to that experienced by George Wilson who described the job as being fairly straightforward. Eventually he could work back up the line completing his work before the machine brought it to his station on the line, 'it was night shift an ye were only workin five hours out the ten hours. An out that five hours ye, ye were only workin two hours, sort o thing'.<sup>345</sup> He worked with a 'mate' drilling holes on either side of each vehicle. However, he claimed that he was able to complete both their jobs. This allowed one to rest while the other worked, and both to work further back on the line, enabling two hours breaks, 'I had ma bed, underneath the tables we a' had wur beds to go fur a sleep ... it was great'.<sup>346</sup>

Oral testimony evidence suggests such practice was commonplace and accepted by foremen. Rodger McGuinness told of working in pairs to fit headlining on the front and the back of the car. Eventually he was able to do both ends and the men worked in turns enabling one of them to take a break and play dominoes or chess: 'the foreman says to us, "I don't care: you can work five hours about if you like"'.<sup>347</sup> However, McGuinness also acknowledged that not all workers could structure their workload in such a way. When he

<sup>343</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>344</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick Interview 1.

<sup>345</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>346</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>347</sup> Oral Testimony, Robert McGuinness, Interview 1.

started at Linwood he was initially allocated to work on the high track, a suspended track to allow people to work above their heads on the underneath of the car, and he did not enjoy the experience of this work:

If you're away up on the high track, then you don't get any time at all, but if you're away at the low bit of the track then you could work up and give yourself about twenty-five minute's break. ... the ones that were on the high track itself, they couldnae. They were streeched, and they werenae movin. They've gotta catch every single one of em [car bodies] and as ah say, ah had that job for two days. In fact, ah don't even think it was two days ... ah did it the first night and the second night and after dinner time, ah just says, "ah cannae do this job".<sup>348</sup>

Thus, whilst McGuinness constructed a positive narrative pertaining to his headlining job, he responded negatively to the high track work due to both the necessity to work overhead and also due to the pace involved in that job. The testimony of Barry Stubbs comprised a narrative of negative engagement with his work: he 'hated' his work and only stayed as he had a mortgage to pay.<sup>349</sup> However, his testimony notes his inability to leave the line or even negotiate the pace of work, thus denying the opportunity of some control. The level of engagement was not necessarily rooted in the work process itself but linked to the degree of control workers had over their time on the assembly line.

Some of the interviewees recognised that their work could potentially have been boring but they learned to switch off from the job. Others such as McGuinness said he did not find the job monotonous as he only did his headlining job three days a week and on the other days he did jobs including relief work, which meant that he was not working on the line and again could avoid having his pace of work entirely controlled by the assembly line. Similarly, Archie Watson found that he could work forward on the line doing the work of other operatives and this created variety at work:

Oh they say repetition got monotonous, ah never really hud that because eh... what wid happen ... ah'd be workin away ... an suddenly ah'd find out there wis nothing ae dae an the fella who wis in front o me had probably went tae the toilet or somethin like that an never came back, so ah wid jist go ontae their machine and do a tray, an then go back ae ma machine an dae that. So ah'd a wee break in daen somethin else. Because a bet, ye actually could dae aw the things throughout the whole process fae start ae finish. Ye know, although a started off on one machine, ah was able ae do the whole lot eventually.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>349</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interviews 1 and 2.

<sup>350</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

Therefore, the testimonies reveal that the theme of autonomy is significant in determining the experience of work. Indeed this need not be perceived simply as autonomy over the work process but also as autonomy over oneself in the workplace. Thus highlighting that the search for control occurs as well as forming part of the industrial politics of the organised parts of the workforce.

To return to the experiences of the skilled workers who were interviewed for the thesis. The Linwood Lives testimony of Andrew McIntyre reveals that whilst working as a skilled electrician within the car plant there were times that he felt the pressure to maintain production meant that his skill was undermined. The pressure on production staff was initiated from the top down as production targets had to be met and any stoppage of the line could lead to lay-offs in other parts of the plant:

The press shop was a difficult one, if one of the tools in the presses had a problem, that stopped the whole production line so you'd tae think really quickly on how you were going to get this up and running ye know ... so that was pressure, that was real pressure.<sup>351</sup>

At times this led to significant pressure on foremen to diagnose the reasons for stoppages and McIntyre claims he witnessed production foremen risking their health and safety by going into warm 'ovens' when cars had come off the track.<sup>352</sup>

There is also evidence to support the notion that work at Linwood posed a potential clash of cultures for skilled workers adjusting to the new working environment of a mass production factory. This is also evident in the testimony of Barry King, who when reflecting on his work as an inspector foreman says:

Awe ah took quite a pride in it because it was [pause] it was part of ma trade, and it, it was good from the point of view that eh.<sup>353</sup>

But then he goes on to reveal that, in his experience, work at Linwood was lacking in variety:

But it was ehm, how would ye say ... Ye didn't have the variety, of work, that ah wis used to. So it was a wee bit more boring, although I enjoyed it, it was a wee bit more boring because ye were doing the sort of same things all the time.<sup>354</sup>

<sup>351</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 2.

<sup>352</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>353</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>354</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

Thus also pointing to the potential for conflict for those who were working in Linwood in their trade between their former experience of work and the work culture within the factory. Later in his testimony King explains that one of the aspects of his job that he did not like was the importance assigned to maintaining continuous production as this led to tension between the inspection staff and production foremen:

They wanted figures. Production. An that was where, we had a lot o animosity with production. Because they were under pressure from management side tae get cars out, tae sales. Whereas, so would we inspection wise but we wanted them out in a reasonable condition so as the customer would be satisfied because, if the customer's not satisfied he doesn't buy it. So that, that sort o, we had tae, ah had tae try an keep ma inspectors in tow an teach them right fae wrong an all this kind o stuff, but even although they knew what was right from wrong an what was required they would still do the opposite o what ye wanted them ae do. [laughs] That's human nature again ye know. ... So it was quite, eh sometime it was quite eh, traumatic.<sup>355</sup>

Other members of inspection also comment on the tension generated due to the pressure to continue production even if faults were highlighted.<sup>356</sup> David Crawford worked in inspection and claimed:

Well the thing is, is in as far as inspection's concerned there's always pressure on a production line, but, it's either go or it's no go. An as ah used tae tell wur Yankee friends when they wur, tryin tae pressure us an things, the thing ye've got tae keep in the forefront o yer mind wi these cars, "we're selling them, we're not givin them away".<sup>357</sup>

Later on he asserts that the pressure was on the production staff rather than the inspectors however, even if inspectors were not under direct pressure, tension arose due to the production targets that had to be met. Therefore, the pressure on production emerges as a dominant narrative in the oral history interviews.

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<sup>355</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>356</sup> Oral Testimony, Peter Gordon, Interview 2.

<sup>357</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1

## 2.9 Conclusion

Oral testimony is not, of course, unproblematic or straightforward and consideration has certainly been given to potential exaggeration of the amount of control workers had over their work. There is evidence in the entire sample that there was constant pressure on foremen and inspectors to increase the rate of production, which could undermine assertions of working back along the line. Yet given the similarities between the narratives from interviewees from different job locations within the car plant, there is a commonality in the testimonies with foremen allowing workers back on the line as long as production was maintained.<sup>358</sup> It will be argued in Chapter Five that, to a large extent, workers at Linwood displayed elements of craft attitudes in terms of ‘intrinsic rewards’ concurrent with those of Goldthorpe et al. Hence, as Knox noted, ‘craft attitudes were, at least for a time, kept alive in a totally different working environment’.<sup>359</sup>

Yet, those working on the track depict undertaking work that required limited skill and seemingly provided few intrinsic rewards. Narratives related to their motivations for working at Linwood prioritise the high wages. However, it seems that line workers like McKendrick, Wilson, McGuinness and Munroe sought to obtain control over their pace of work and effort required despite working on an automated line. It seems that such opportunities to make money and gain some control over work including when they could stop, converge as perceived advantages to a job as a line worker at Linwood. The most negative narrative of working at Linwood was constructed by CAB Viewer Barry Stubbs, which was related to the lack of control over his immediate work environment yet he remained in the job due to having taken on a mortgage. Such a narrative correlates with the alienation thesis: despite his objectification Stubbs continued at Linwood in order to ensure he could pay his mortgage.<sup>360</sup> This is in contrast to how some workers asserted their autonomy through manipulating their work and by collectively organising themselves so as to be able to achieve time away from the line. It was in this time created away from the line that workers regained control over their person at work, through choosing to play cards, sleep or drink thus proving that the search for autonomy is not necessarily sought within the work process itself. For some workers, despite having their work pace determined by technology, they were able to complete their allocated work with a degree of control over themselves within the working environment.

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<sup>358</sup> For example, the testimonies of Adam Fleming (Production Manager); Peter Gordon (Inspection); Andrew McIntyre (Electrician) and Barry King (Quality Control Foreman).

<sup>359</sup> Knox, ‘Trade Unionism’, p. 128.

<sup>360</sup> Chris Haywood and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, *Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research and Social Practice*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2003), p. 29.

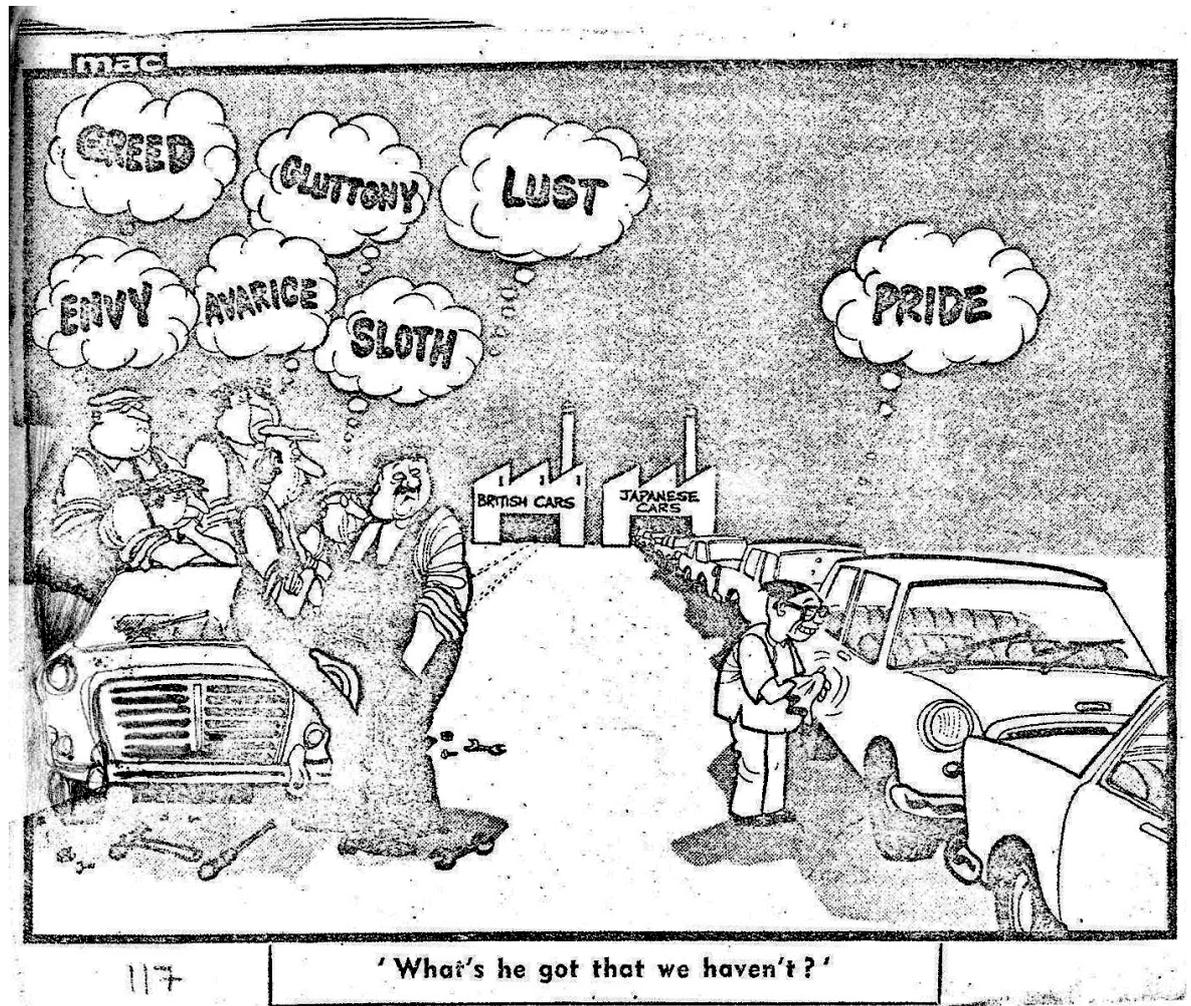
Whilst Stubbs seems aware of his objectification, to the extent of comparing his time at Linwood to the film *Modern Times*<sup>361</sup>, the other line workers actively sought autonomy in the production process by *beating* the line and creating their own time during work hours. Demands for greater control, autonomy and initiative by the shop stewards and convenors are evidence of a desire for intrinsic rewards. Consequently, job control and the speed of the assembly line were two of the key areas of conflict at Linwood. Acknowledging skill as socially constructed allows us to question over-simplistic notions of deskilling and to look more closely at the tasks people undertook in the car plant and understanding of work control. What becomes apparent is that while those working on the assembly line appeared to relinquish control, obtaining and maintaining control over their pace of work was a central tenet underpinning the nature of work in the car plant and the 'rewards' associated with it. Within this varied pattern there appears to be a correlation between background and narratives produced. The oral testimonies reveal a more complex pattern of working cultures than that which has appeared in the literature, with a substantial heterogeneity of experience at Linwood. Indeed, Scottish author Jeffrey Torrington, who had experience of working at Linwood also reflected that having seen Chaplin's *Modern Times*: 'I was seduced by my first ever sight of the real thing: the cars on the main-track seemed hardly to be moving at all. Why, I even saw two operators playing at chess, taking their time about it, not being rushed'.<sup>362</sup> The non-work behaviour of Linwood employees is the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>361</sup> In *Modern Times* the little tramp works on a production line in which he tightens two bolts on every component. His pace of work is determined by the line speed which is closely monitored by the manager and the consistency of work means little autonomous thought or action is afforded to the worker. When he stops work his body continues to involuntarily imitate the process of tightening the bolts thus the little tramp appears de-humanised and eventually, after being dragged through the cogs of a machine and embarking on an episode in which he attacks the factory control panel, is declared insane. Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times* (1936).

<sup>362</sup> PCL, PC 12561 L.W., 629.222 O/S, 'The French Disconnection', *Scotland on Sunday Magazine*, 18 April 1993.

## Chapter Three



Source: FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 2, newspaper and date unknown, year estimated as 1975.

## Chapter Three

### Organisational Mischief: Employee autonomy at work

#### 3.1 Linwood Lives: Douglas McKendrick

There was quite a few alcoholics in the place, me included ye know. Eh, ah finished up goin to the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] ye know. And, goin to meetins, things like that ye know. But, for a good while, eh, when ah wis in there ah, tae pit ye in the picture ah live in Paisley hen, ye know, an ah lived quite a good distance away from, we're talkin about maybe four miles, maybe more away from the Chrysler car factory but ah was so very fond of drink that ah used tae drink ma bus fare ye know, ah, ah didnae have the bus fare. So ah finished up with an old push bike ye know and ah cycled backwards and forwards tae ma work an, this ah put this, ah'll put this bit in just now eh, there wis a man used tae sit in the car park in his car in Chrysler's and he didn't work in Chrysler all he did was buy stolen stuff from the workers in Chrysler's, ye know. An, ah used to, ah never missed a day ye know, eh ah couldnae afford to miss a day eh, because ah needed the money for drink and ah used tae get on ma old push bike hail, rain, snow as well you know, an ah used tae go in there an hour early in the morning, ye know, so that ah could walk out wi the night shift men goin out, ye know, with an alternator stuck down ma belt ye know. An ah could get out an over tae the car park an get eight quid off o the guy that bought the stuff, an then get back over an get ma old push bike an up tae the village in Linwood, get ma newspaper, ma tobacco an ma half bottle. You weren't supposed tae get your half bottle, the laws were terrible in those days ye know, eh it, you couldn't buy drink until such and such a ti, time like ye know. But eh, the man got to know me an he sold me ma drink early in the mornin. Well ah, ah needed that half bottle o whiskey just tae be normal ye know, just tae to do ma, see without that half bottle o whiskey ah wis sha, ah wis all over the place, ah, ah could hardly do ma job ye know. But when ah had that half bottle, no bother ye know. That lasted me tae lunchtime an as ah wis telling you earlier me an ma mate worked half hour breaks, well ah always got the half hour break before the lunch break ye know. So that ah could get out through the whole in the fence wi an alternator, over tae the car park, eight quid ye know. Up tae the village, sometimes when ah got back from the Ponderosa pub in Linwood eh, ah couldnae scratch maself never mind work ye know. Ah could hardly talk, ye know. An ma mate he used tae sit me down in the corner and cover me up wi all the old cardboard boxes and he would work away do the job, the job the whole afternoon and just give me a shake eh about quarter past four in time for me ae go and get another alternator and get it down the dukes and get over to the, the car park. Ah stole more out o there than what ah got in wages [laughs].<sup>363</sup>

Douglas McKendrick worked at Linwood from 1973 until the plant closed. He worked as an assembly-line operator in the Car Assembly Building and later moved to the Car Conditioning area where damaged cars were rectified. Over three separate oral history interviews McKendrick described how he enjoyed working at Linwood and attributed this to the relative easiness of the job in comparison to previous employment. He offers a

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<sup>363</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

candid narrative on his activities at the plant, but many of the details related are largely consistent with the majority of interviewees and provide a suitable starting point from which to explore ‘misbehaviour’. While many of the interviewees mentioned activities such as drinking at work, theft, card schools and people sleeping at work, McKendrick was the only interviewee to construct such a frank account in which, as well as sleeping during working hours, he explicitly detailed his systematic theft of factory property in order to fund his alcoholism. This was a highly individualistic and premeditated activity but required the collective complicity of his nearby workmates. McKendrick is the archetypical Linwood worker ubiquitous in popular memory, reconstructed in a fictionalised account of the Linwood car factory written by former employee Jeffrey Torrington, and recounted in the oral histories; that is of a highly individualistic and opportunistic idler.<sup>364</sup> This stereotype is depicted in the contemporary press such as the following account given by an employee of the individuals he encountered at Linwood:

Only last week I overheard a young apprentice boasting he’d succeeded in getting through a shift in which he’d done only one hour’s work.<sup>365</sup>

Prior to deconstructing the types of misbehaviour evident in the source material, it is worth reflecting upon some of the methodological issues in undertaking oral history interviews that influence the interpretation of testimony. A loose thematic schedule was utilised in the interviews so that the interviewer could be reflexive to the topics the interviewee raised. Many of the interviewees mentioned forms of misbehaviour without being probed; however they tended to speak of these as activities other people were involved in rather than themselves. While there are various influences affecting the narratives that individuals construct, it is understandable they may have wanted to avoid implicating, or incriminating themselves by revealing involvement in such activities while working at Linwood. Indeed, more admissions were made *off the record* than in the official recorded interview. In contrast, McKendrick was very open about his participation in such activity, which he freely discussed in a public area of Glasgow Transport Museum.<sup>366</sup> The revelations during the course of the first interview of his parallel activities to work at the plant seemed to be said with the intention of eliciting shock in the interviewer, which he

<sup>364</sup> Jeff Torrington, *The Devil’s Carousel*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996) & Jeffrey Torrington, Obituary on The Scotsman Online <http://news.scotsman.com/obituaries/Jeff-Torrington.4085105.jp> Accessed 16 September 2008.

<sup>365</sup> PCL, 629.2222, REN 27, PC 669, OS, Linwood Car Plant Volume 1, *Sunday Post*, 21 December 1975.

<sup>366</sup> The location was agreed by the interviewee who rejected the offer of conducting the interview in his home or private meeting room in the museum, despite reservations held by the interviewer about the nature of the discussion and the background noise affecting the recording.

may have perceived as a young, middle-class female academic. Therefore, it is conceivable that the identity of the interviewer may have had an impact on the way in which the interviewee constructed his testimony. For example, upon being asked whether he was worried about getting caught, McKendrick exclaimed:

Ah'm a thief hen ... let me be the first to tell you intae that wee machine o yours, Ah'm a thief, Ah've always been a thief. Ah would steal the sugar oot your tea ye know. Ah've done time fur stealing ye know. But eh, you pick who you steal aff o. Ye know. Ye only steal aff o [pause] insurance company things that can, the ones that can afford it ye know.<sup>367</sup>

Yet, many of the details within McKendrick's narrative correlate with the testimonies of other interviewees therefore this leads to the exploration of the motives for the construction of a narrative in which the interviewee openly declares himself as a thief.

McKendrick's discussion on his work experience prior to Linwood reveal a varied employment history mainly comprised of jobs that could be described as marginal employment: chimney sweep, conductor on Glasgow Corporation tram cars, scaffolder at Fleming and Ferguson Shipyard in Paisley and as a self-employed window cleaner. In these jobs McKendrick linked his enjoyment of work to being able to earn *unofficial* wages and boasted about the ways in which he was able to take advantage of 'the fiddle' in particular in the tramcars and as a chimney sweep.<sup>368</sup> This open endorsement of 'fiddling' was described as a way of making some money on the side to supplement his wages:

But the thing was, the fiddle was great ye know, same as these [points at tram cars]... tramcars the fiddle was great on them. ... What you could make on the side. See. That was, everybody was a fiddler wh, eh, what you could get on the side.<sup>369</sup>

These references to 'the fiddle' and being a thief were an assertion of McKendrick's identity and could be interpreted as elements of working-class masculinity. Rather than the macho culture that is identified as prevalent in the Scottish traditional industries by McIvor and Johnston,<sup>370</sup> McKendrick displays a working-class masculinity based on finding

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<sup>367</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>368</sup> By 'the fiddle' McKendrick means the appropriation of extra cash aside from the official amount he should make during the period of work. In the trams he claimed he overfilled the tram with both seated and standing patrons and would split the fare money for those on the top deck of the tram with the driver.

<sup>369</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>370</sup> See Chapter One.

individual ways of maximising economic return that perceived management control as impotent.

He depicts his systematic theft and working while under the influence of alcohol as a daily occurrence. A degree of caution must be exerted when analysing McKendrick's testimony as the frequency of theft and the economic gains from this activity as their plausibility may be exaggerated. Receiving eight pounds for a stolen alternator at three stages during the day would have provided a daily income of £24 resulting in *unofficial* wages of £120 a week. Although these figures, frequency and the scale of this activity seem inflated, his narrative is telling as to what he would liked to have done and what he thought people could have done at Linwood. This also suggests that there was a lot of activity happening on the shop floor aside from work, and that it was possible to steal, be drunk, and sleep at work. The narrative he depicts is of the quintessential Linwood worker that the other interviewees refer to: the work colleague described in numerous testimonies as arriving at work intoxicated and then sleeping throughout the rest of the shift.

To evaluate underlying motivations for such types of behaviour within the Linwood car plant, the following discussion will be structured around three explanatory approaches: first of all related to the key concept within industrial sociology – control; secondly, consideration of the implications of changes in terms of worker responsibility; and finally the importance of non-structural factors affecting behaviour. The chapter will explore labour process theory; reflecting on the position of the wage labourer within capitalism.<sup>371</sup> The analysis includes behaviour in the wider working environment, specifically activity that was not meant to happen in the eyes of management: both action and inaction that was deemed inappropriate and counter-productive. Common forms of organisational misbehaviour at the Linwood plant will be identified and motivations and meanings underpinning such activity evaluated with consideration given to the implications for industrial relations. In this chapter 'organisational mischief' will be the term adopted to refer to such behaviour.<sup>372</sup> Although McKendrick's narrative differs from those of other interviewees in the way in which it is constructed, there is a commonality of recollections and perceptions of life on the shop floor. These will now be used to deconstruct the types of behaviour deemed inappropriate in the workplace that occurred at the Linwood plant. The analysis of oral testimonies and shop steward diaries illuminates the varied meanings

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<sup>371</sup> Tony Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry* (London: Routledge, 1980 [2003 edn]), p. 238.

<sup>372</sup> Watson uses the term 'organisational mischief'. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

underpinning workplace behaviour and the material challenges the perspective that all forms of mischief are attributable to the control - resistance paradigm.<sup>373</sup>

### 3.2 Theoretical Framework of the Discussion

In a meeting of the Joint Representative Council of the Linwood Car plant in October of 1977, management presented a list of activities that were ‘causing concern to the management of the Linwood Plant’:

1. Lateness and absenteeism
2. Early leaving
3. The playing of cards and other games
4. Lateness back on to the section after relief and break times
5. Breaches of the agreement concerning flexibility of labour
6. Excessive overtime demands
7. The allegation of safety hazards following breakdowns
8. Stoppages of work which were unconstitutional and outside procedure
9. The ‘blacking’ of cars because of model mix<sup>374</sup>

The list is revealing on two accounts; the inclusion of activities such as lateness, the playing of card games and leaving work early is indicative of frequent occurrence rather than being isolated incidents. Their prioritisation in the list suggests management perceived these passive activities as causing greater concern than collective actions such as resistance to demands for flexible working practices and unconstitutional stoppages. It implies that the workers involved in such actions and inactions did not conform to the organisational behaviour expectations of management at the plant. This delivery to the Joint Representative Council was a management-oriented perspective focused on restricting these variables to the efficiency of the company, rather than understand why the workers withheld effort.

As the labelling or ‘linguistic construction’ of actions can be influenced by the ideological viewpoint of those seeking to explore their meanings, it is first of all necessary to define what is meant by this misbehaviour and why it has been chosen to encompass the

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<sup>373</sup> James Richards identifies five distinct dimensions to misbehaviour and that this activity ‘in some instances as little to do with the labour process itself.’ James Richards, ‘Developing a theoretical basis for the concept of organizational misbehaviour’, PhD Thesis, (University of Stirling, 2007), p. 43, pp. 50-2.

<sup>374</sup> TNA: PRO, FV 22/96, Meeting with the JRC, 10 October 1977.

behaviour discussed in this chapter.<sup>375</sup> What constitutes appropriate behaviour at work is defined in accordance with the formal structures of authority within the workplace. Ackroyd and Thompson argue that Sprouse's definition of sabotage can be extended to encompass activity they understand as misbehaviour: "anything you do at work you are not supposed to".<sup>376</sup> This behaviour is not necessarily criminal furthermore; employees may not perceive their activities as deviant or wrong.<sup>377</sup> However, the term organisational mischief, as opposed to misbehaviour, can be more useful as this term encompasses the behaviour of both workers *and* management within an organisation, thereby recognising that all employees of the firm may engage in organisational mischief. Such behaviour can be identified as that which:

... according to the official structure, culture and rules of the organisation, "should not happen" and ... contain[s] an element of challenge to the dominant modes of operating or to dominant interests in the organisation.<sup>378</sup>

Walton and Taylor provide one of the most significant academic contributions to debates on industrial sabotage in which they defined this activity as, 'the rule-breaking which takes the form of conscious action or inaction directed towards the mutilation or destruction of the work environment...' and that this action may comprise unofficial 'grass-roots' action.<sup>379</sup> Geoff Brown considered this definition too narrow; he links sabotage to the whole context of industrial conflict between capital and labour in that the acts of mischief are an active strategy by the labour force in conflict over shop floor control. Both of these studies situate the activity of sabotage within the realm of debates on the labour process and control on and of the shop floor. These early studies of industrial sabotage have therefore served to draw attention to the usefulness in analysing mischief within the wider context of social and technical organisation at work, and have highlighted what is considered by Marxists to be the ubiquitous dynamic within capitalism: conflict.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> F. Analoui, 'Workplace sabotage: its styles, motives and management', *Journal of Management Development*, 14 (1995), 48-65 (p. 49).

<sup>376</sup> Sprouse quoted in Ackroyd and Thompson, *Organizational Misbehaviour* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999 [2000 edn]), p. 2.

<sup>377</sup> Academics such as Gerald Mars and Jason Ditton have shown that 'pilferage' and 'fiddling' are terms commonly used to describe theft which is accepted amongst the workforce, even recognised by some managers, as a significant component of earnings in certain work environments. Gerald Mars, *Cheats at Work* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982) and Jason Ditton, *Part-time crime: an ethnography of fiddling and pilferage* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

<sup>378</sup> Watson, *Sociology, Work and Industry*, p. 230.

<sup>379</sup> Laurie Taylor and Paul Walton, 'Industrial Sabotage: Motives and Meanings', in Stanley Cohen (ed.), *Images of Deviance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 219-245 (p. 219, p. 222).

<sup>380</sup> John A. Hughes, Wes W. Sharrock, Peter J. Martin, *Understanding Classical Sociology: Marx, Weber, Durkheim* (London: Sage Publications, 2003 [2004 edn]), p. 41.

Within his study on workers at Ford Halewood in the 1960s, Hugh Beynon commented that:

there is every reason to expect that, in a society where most people have only their labour to sell, a conflict over control will be a feature of work situations.<sup>381</sup>

Thus highlighting control as the stimulus of conflict as well as the importance of the ‘effort-bargain’ in influencing the dynamics of the workplace. It identifies conflict between the interests of management and labour in the process of exchange within capitalism as central to workplace behaviour. Richard Edwards perceives a linkage between the processes of conflict and resistance on the shop floor, the ‘contested terrain’ and wider class struggle:

The labor process becomes an arena of class conflict, and the workplace becomes a contested terrain. Faced with chronic resistance to their effort to compel production, employers over the years have attempted to resolve the matter by reorganizing, indeed revolutionizing, the labor process itself.<sup>382</sup>

This analysis suggests that conflict and resistance are inherent processes within the structured antagonism in capitalism. He describes the divergence of interests between capital and labour:

Workers must provide labor power in order to receive their wages, that is, they must show up for work; but they need not necessarily provide *labor*, much less the amount of labor that the capitalist desires to extract from the labor power they have sold. In a situation where workers do not control their own labour process and cannot make their work a creative experience, any exertion beyond the minimum needed to avert boredom will not be in the workers’ interest.<sup>383</sup>

Marx’s theory on the production of absolute surplus-value can be utilised to explain this conflict of interests arising within organisations. In the process of exchange within capitalism, the owner of the means of production purchases ‘labour power’ rather than labour. Essentially the firm or organisation is purchasing the potential for labour, held within the worker, as a commodity: ‘The purchaser of labour-power consumes it by setting

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<sup>381</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 129.

<sup>382</sup> Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (USA: Basic Books, 1979), p. 16.

<sup>383</sup> Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, p. 12.

the seller of it to work'.<sup>384</sup> As the labour power has been purchased the labourer is set to work under the control of the owner of the means of production who will then own the product of labour and make profit from what Marx called the extraction of 'surplus-value'. The basis for conflict is rooted in this exchange relationship. What are not accounted for are worker effort and the degree of labour desired by the firm, which necessitates control of the labour process in order to maximise surplus value.

The ways in which different groups attempt to exert control within workplaces has been a focus of orthodox labour process writers. Thompson argues that whilst there may be occasions where 'responsible autonomy' alternatives seem to suggest a relinquishing of managerial control over the workplace, upon closer inspection, in industries such as automobile production, managerial control is sustained due to the automated production process and scientific management.<sup>385</sup> Within British factories this relationship has become known as the 'frontier of control' and is epitomised in shop floor conflict over the effort-bargain and rates of pay.<sup>386</sup> For the duration workers are paid they are on management time and in the interests of capital this time should always be 'put to use'.<sup>387</sup> Thus activities such as moving away from the workstation, playing cards, sleeping, and clocking in for one another can all be understood as the theft of time. At Linwood the application of scientific management and MDW were applied to the organisation of work in an attempt to retain managerial control over wages rates and the pace of work. The relationship between time and effort is extremely important when analysing behaviour at work. In the effort-bargain the interests of the workers and management appear polarised. The labour force seeks ways of exerting control within the effort-bargain part of which comprises the theft of time. When labour is put to work, management aims to achieve as high a work rate as possible from workers on a daily basis. But, what constitutes a fair day's work is open to interpretation and management will attempt to achieve what it conceptualises as a fair day's work through controlling the workforce.

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<sup>384</sup> Karl Marx (with Friedrich Engels), *Communist Manifesto; Wages, Price and Profit Capital (Selections); Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, (London: The Collector's Library of Essential Thinkers, 2004), p. 203.

<sup>385</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates on the Labour Process* (London: Macmillan Press, 1983 [1989 edn]), p. 75, pp. 136-7. Arthur McIvor asserts that within firms that adopted Taylorist techniques in work organisation there remained traditional direct control structures. McIvor, *History of Work*, p. 98. Similarly Geoff Brown notes that when Measured Day Work was implemented at Linwood this required three times the number of supervisory staff than at the Rootes' plants that were on piece-work. Geoff Brown, *Sabotage: A Study in Industrial Conflict* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 1977), p. 354.

<sup>386</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 129.

<sup>387</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38 (1967), 56-97 (p. 91).

Reference to the wider social and economic context draws attention to the different interests of labour and capital. Beynon claims that workers who practice some form of output restriction do so in order to monitor the supply of labour “If we all worked flat out it would be dead simple what would happen. Half of us would be outside on the stones with out cards in our hands”.<sup>388</sup> This resembles the testimony of a clerical worker within the car plant who recalled her workmate’s advice to slow down:

and ah loved to go quick. Ah really loved it. And the girl that was sitting opposite me, she used to say, “Take yer time Anna. Take yer time. See when you’re dead, you’ll see your thingamy going across that road there and somebody will be sittin in your desk!” So, it never made much difference tae me. Some o them were older women and they, you know, would sit and do it very quite slowly, and you’d be that keen tae get up and get another bundle ye know, “Oh that’s four ah’ve done, or five ah’ve done”.<sup>389</sup>

Anderson’s direct work narrative is positive and indicates her desire to do a job properly. She compares herself in contrast to some of the other workers whom she believes may have worked slowly in order to gain overtime:

If you wanted to go a wee bit slower and we thought, this is before it was the two shift system, and we thought we could get overtime out of it. These docketts werenae finished at the right time so we got overtime.<sup>390</sup>

She explained:

So ah, ah, ah personally didnae do it, ah might have done it near the end, but at the beginning, cos I remember ma grandmother saying tae me years ago, “If a jobs worth doing, it’s worth doing well”. And, no matter what ah’ve done in ma life, ah’ve even marked the board in a bookies years ago, and then men used tae shout “oh God, Anna will you just write it up”, but mine’s had to be right, all beautiful writing. [laughs] But, in Chrysler, yeah, ah, ah believe some of them did hold it back, so as we would get some overtime. Or sometimes we got a Sunday if the docketts werenae all through. ... Yeah, you could go slower.<sup>391</sup>

When Anderson starts to discuss this example of work restriction, her use of the collective ‘we’ indicates her inclusion in the task as performed within the work group. She then goes onto say she did not participate in this action. Situated within the economic context, the women who worked in the office were aware of production levels and could have predicted

<sup>388</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 133 and Allan, R., *Geoffrey Rootes’ dream for Linwood: Pictorial look at a landmark in British car manufacture* (Oxfordshire: Bookmarque Publishing, 1991), p. 37.

<sup>389</sup> It is understood that the word ‘thingmy’ refers to a coffin. Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>390</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>391</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

periods of short-time working. Therefore, while seemingly irrational not to do the job 'well' the women who restricted their output, due to being paid an hourly rate, were able to maximise their returns. There is also the sentiment within Anderson's narrative that there were workers who lacked the motivation to work as fast as they could. The environment in which the clerical staff worked was quite different from the factory shop floor, yet even here Anderson's narrative suggests that clerical staff would legitimate not working as fast as they could as there was no tangible reward for increasing their rate of work. In actual fact by working slower the employees would benefit through additional overtime pay. Her testimony reveals a form of organisational mischief and an example of a way in which an employee can exert autonomy over his/ her self at work. In this case, in a situation where individuals could increase their economic return.

Anderson's testimony resonates with the findings of Jason Ditton's research on a baking factory in which the workforce were able to manipulate 'time' to their advantage.<sup>392</sup> In the post-war period management of British firms responded to manipulation of 'time' in the workplace by attempting to improve control through the system of payment, technology, and organisation of production. It has been argued that a piece-rate mode of payment would incentivise workers and obviate the need for direct supervision and disciplinary mechanisms, whereas forms of payment based on time-rates create the necessity for workers to be disciplined through the organisation of work as there is a lack of financial motivation.<sup>393</sup> Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, Braverman's work on Frederick Taylor drew attention to the effect of the increasing application of technology and associated organisation of work, and the apparent deskilling of work. At Linwood, the predominant production mode of assembly and sub-assembly track work, as well as the introduction of the system of MDW articulate with the classic Marxist analysis of alienation. Rooted in the notion that human beings have an essential need, fulfilled through labouring to produce the requirements for subsistence, and by commanding nature in order to execute this process, specialisation gives rise to jobs that are narrowly defined, repetitive and often boring.<sup>394</sup> Within such systems working fails to provide satisfaction for workers and is seen by them as providing labour for someone else who will acquire the benefits of this exploitative relationship. Thereby, if management fails to engage the workers' individual needs at work incentives are often extrinsic. Hence, work becomes alien to the worker who:

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<sup>392</sup> Jason Ditton, 'Baking Time', *Sociological Review*, 27 (1979), 157-67.

<sup>393</sup> Nichols and Beynon, *Living with Capitalism*, p. 133 & Brown, *Sabotage*, p. 358.

<sup>394</sup> Ken Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought*, (London: Sage Publications, 1995 [2000 edn]), p. 92.

does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself...His labor [sic] is therefore not voluntary but coerced; it is *forced labor* [sic]. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it.<sup>395</sup>

Robert Blauner further developed this analysis by linking the technological and social organisation of work to the attitudes of workers and their alienation. He argues that the extreme division of labour within car manufacturing and in particular, for assembly-line workers, the lack of control over the pace at which they work results in resentment amongst the workforce. In response to this attitude workers then look to achieve autonomy by establishing, ‘illegitimate, subterranean [sic] arrangements in order to maintain some control over their work pace’.<sup>396</sup>

The workers interviewed for this thesis were far from ‘ruining their minds’. On one level, work was indeed satisfying an external need. Many claimed they were attracted to the high wages at Linwood, and the oral testimonies reveal that many found their work boring. But the creative and imaginative ways workers behaved whilst at work reflect a myriad of influences; ultimately their ‘mischief’ was defined by the specific context as well as reflecting social, cultural, political *and* economic motivations.<sup>397</sup> This chapter aims to move the debate on from the classic alienation thesis, as summarised above, offering a more nuanced approach – examining different types of mischief and how these were affected by working at Linwood. Behaviour at work not only reflects the engagement of workers with their work but the engagement of workers with their workplace and colleagues. This is engendered in the distinction between ‘bored at work’ and ‘bored in work’,<sup>398</sup> with distinct and contrasting layers in the individual experience that become evident in oral recollections.<sup>399</sup> The track workers interviewed for this thesis constructed narratives in which boredom at work was disconnected from boredom in work. This is not completely dismissive of the notion that conflict occurs within the workplace as groups or individuals desire control within the labour process. Yet it is difficult to perceive all mischief, either conscious or subconscious, as employees exerting control. Rather, the actions discussed in this chapter take place within an all-encompassing dynamic of the

<sup>395</sup> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 71.

<sup>396</sup> Robert Blauner, *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964 [1967 edn]), pp. 98-99

<sup>397</sup> Mars argues, ‘it is *situations* which fix the broad limits of behaviour and which indeed define what is considered permissible and appropriate.’ Mars, *Cheats at Work*, p. 137.

<sup>398</sup> McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class*, pp. 122-3.

<sup>399</sup> Arthur Marwick refers to layers of experience at work. *The Pelican Social History of Britain, British Society since 1945* (London: Penguin, 1982), pp. 118-9.

quest for control in its multitude of forms. The discussion will consider the existence of a ‘factory culture’ which permitted particular types of mischief in certain situations.

### 3.3 Workplace Mischief

Despite the resilience of the craft tradition in the west of Scotland, the prominence of highly standardised jobs, in particular assembly-line technology and MDW, removed much of the responsibility and control over work. The previous chapter indicated that the skill profile of Linwood interviewees was mixed, but prior to taking up employment in the plant few of the shop floor semi and unskilled workers had worked in an environment in which the nature of production or organisation of work had granted so little job control. As management sought greater control over the work process by for example, increasing the speed of the assembly line, the sense of insufficient time to complete the task properly created the potential for poor workmanship and employees ‘letting things go’ when they knew that something was wrong with the job.<sup>400</sup> Audio recordings of workers at the Ford Halewood plant in 1974 substantiate this argument. A press-shop worker describing potential reasons for sabotage stated:

You weren’t interested in the job you were actually performing. You were never made to feel responsible in any manner – so consequently, I think that some people tended to think that if we’re all going to be treated like children we’ll fucking act like children.<sup>401</sup>

Linked to the effort-bargain and keeping workers motivated, when disinterested in their work employees sought opportunities to engage in forms of mischief.

When he first started at Linwood, Douglas McKendrick was told to slow down his pace of work by fellow workers:

see when ah was working in the chimney sweeping, and the windae cleaning, the more ah ran, the more ah earned, ye know. Well ah assumed it was just the same in the car plant. Oh ahI went in, “Hey you, he just, you slow doon there’s other people here you know.” An ah’m [puts head down and imitates working / hammering]. Ah wis getting money for nothing. Ye know? Ah mean, as ah said tae ye, after a while ye looked at the screws and they jumped in, ye know. [laughs] Ye know. The money was so easily made ... for someone who had been self-employed run, run,

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<sup>400</sup> Brown calls this ‘sabotage by default’ *Sabotage*, p. 373.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

run ye know. But eh, in there everybody accepted this ... Walkin about, yer slouchin about ye know.<sup>402</sup>

Therefore, while the men at Linwood were not working in what could be called solidary work groups such as in the docks or shipbuilding industries, there was a degree of self-regulation of the workforce by the workforce. Industrial sociologists have drawn attention to the existence of unofficial forms of collective organisation and small groups of workers, as a means of organisation for employees not involved in official forms of trade union action. The informal self-organisation of the work group has important implications for the study of mischief.<sup>403</sup> Mischief that constitutes resistance often requires some informal organisation furthermore, the ability of workers to succeed in mischief without detection or reprimanded may require the complicit support of other workers with whom they may hold shared values. McKendrick's narrative is complex: he portrays himself as a conscientious employee. This is in marked contrast to the excerpts from his first interview – presented at the beginning of this chapter – in which he recalls drinking at work and sleeping through his shifts. This could be explained by positing that over the duration of his employment at Linwood his behaviour changed. Initially he worked efficiently then, over time, and as his alcoholism developed, his behaviour changed.<sup>404</sup> His behaviour could also be linked to a process of adapting to a factory culture in which he knew he could get away with behaving in a certain way: he became socialised into this behaviour.

The factory culture at Linwood reflected a west of Scotland work culture influenced by masculinity. As noted in Chapter Two, figures on the Linwood workforce are limited, but drawing upon the oral history material, the Manpower Services Commission survey and the general pattern in the west of Scotland, it would be fair to say that the majority of the workforce would have been men with women employed in secretarial, catering and cleaning roles as well as in areas of the shop floor such as the Trim department.<sup>405</sup> The number of women employed on the shop floor at Linwood was likely to have reflected the changes in work in the late 1960s and 70s with, not sizeable, but a significant increase in women employed in industry linked with the increasing mechanisation and the development of new industries such as electronics.<sup>406</sup> Most

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<sup>402</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>403</sup> Donald F. Roy, "'Banana Time': Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction', *Human Organization*, 18 (1959), 158-168.

<sup>404</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 3.

<sup>405</sup> Manpower Services Commission, *Closure at Linwood: A follow-up survey of redundant workers* (England, 1984).

<sup>406</sup> Arthur McIvor, 'Gender Apartheid?: Women in Scottish Society', in Thomas Martin Devine and Richard J. Finlay, *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 188-209

interviewees associated women employees on the shop floor as those who worked in departments such as Trim. Some of the interviewees who worked on track production recalled working with women, but that they were in the minority on the main lines and which is more so the case on the North Side of the plant reflecting the traditional engineering background of the buildings previously owned by Pressed Steel. This suggests that within Linwood there was an embedded masculine culture permeating the workplace. The link between masculinity and control is evident in secondary literature on the American automobile industry, which defines one of the essential characteristics of manliness as standing up to supervisors and management, both overtly and covertly.<sup>407</sup> Similarly Stephen Meyer argues that:

On the shop floor, soldiering and output restriction – that is, the individual and the collective establishment of shop activities, behaviour and rules – often rested on masculine bonds and understandings developed in the locker room, tavern, union hall, or shop floor.<sup>408</sup>

Historical research on masculinity in Scotland points to the prevalence of a ‘machismo’ work culture based on displays of strength and a heavy-drinking culture.<sup>409</sup> It was a form of work culture that appeared to be inherent in Clydeside shipyard culture, discernible in Jimmy Reid’s appeal to the trade unionists involved in the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders’ Work-In in 1971 that, ‘there will be no bevvying’.<sup>410</sup> The Linwood plant provided a new industry and represented a culmination of change: it was a different work environment, introduced new payment systems, and new multinational management in the 1970s. Such changes are likely to have led to changes in dominant masculinities. Meyer’s analysis of the American automobile industry can be applied to Linwood. He argues the motor industry witnessed a combination of both rough and respectable masculinities reflecting skilled and unskilled workers, and that masculinity was shaped by the increasing application of technology, undermining the control of workers, resulting in a masculinity in

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and Linda McDowell, ‘Gender divisions’, in Chris Hamnet, Linda McDowell and Philip Sarre (editors), *The Changing Social Structure*, (London: The Open University, 1993), 158-98 (p. 163).

<sup>407</sup> Wayne A. Lewchuk, ‘Men and Monotony: Fraternalism as a Managerial Strategy at the Ford Motor Company’, *Journal of Economic History*, 53 (1993), 824-856 (p. 834).

<sup>408</sup> Meyer, ‘Work, Play and Power’, 13-32 (p. 25).

<sup>409</sup> Johnston and McIvor, ‘Oral History, Subjectivity’, 234-249 (p. 242).

<sup>410</sup> Quote from Jimmy Reid Speech

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/hist/employment/ship/section\\_d/page01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/hist/employment/ship/section_d/page01.shtml)

Accessed: 20 September 2008. Also quoted in Johnston and McIvor, ‘Dangerous Work’, 135-51 (p. 143). Knox makes the distinction between a rough and respectable working class. Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 198.

which workers sought to ‘take the piss’ or ‘get one over’ management within the workplace.<sup>411</sup>

To return to the initial theme of conflict, studies of workplace mischief have tended to explain this activity by making links between resistance and the structural relationship between capital and labour, or as resistance as an expression of informal work group cohesion. However, these approaches fail to consider non-structural factors as well as the subjectivities of the individual workers involved in such activities. The employees are independent actors and as such behaviour can vary greatly, as can the motivations behind similar types of mischief. The defining of work identities is a dynamic process and it is therefore important that within studies of mischief the subjectivity of individuals is explored. The focus has been on the issues of conflict, control, resistance, autonomy. Organisational mischief is multi-dimensional and as such the meanings involved in this behaviour can vary furthermore, what is defined as mischief can vary.

Many of the types of behaviour, on the list identified by Chrysler management at the beginning of this chapter, occur in the narratives of former Linwood employees. The main types, within the testimony and archival material are:

1. Drinking at work
2. Card schools and gambling
3. Sleeping at work
4. Leaving work early
5. Clock-card and over-time fiddles
6. Theft of items
7. Theft of wages
8. Sabotage

For the purposes of this analysis items one to five will be classified as Theft of Time as this behaviour results in a direct loss of labour power that has been purchased by the firm. For example, when an employee drinks at work he/she is not working for the full period of contracted employment, thus constituting theft of labour during ‘company time’. Items six, seven and eight comprise theft or destruction of materials or part of the work environment. The analysis will therefore be structured into two broad sections Theft of Time and Theft of Items.

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<sup>411</sup> Meyer, ‘Work, Play and Power’, 13-32.

### 3.4 Theft of Time

#### 3.4.1 Alcohol

One of the most common acts of mischief referred to in the oral testimony and documentary source material is of employees turning up for work under the influence of alcohol.<sup>412</sup> Turning up for work inebriated or drinking whilst at work can be categorised as theft of time as employees engaging in such behaviour either do so on management time or, as a result of drinking alcohol, are unable to work efficiently, sleep or are absent from the shift if they leave the workplace. Within the oral testimony evidence, turning up for work under the influence of alcohol is depicted as a common occurrence:

Oh aye common, very common, very very common. An then goin oot, like ah said, going oot through the holes in the fence. See when their half hour's up ... it's only a half hour ah know but they'd be oot an in, five halves an back in again. Oh there was an auffae lot o drink taken in there.<sup>413</sup>

This perspective is supported in the repeated noting of similar activity in the shop steward diaries:

A bit of a disturbance up in the old toilets next to the foreman's. A. Gillespie (janitorial) was found to have been assaulted by someone whom he refused to name. A. Gillespie was under the influence of alcohol and gave loads of abuse to the nurses at the Surgery and Hosp. (He's for the chop and a member of the AEUW) Later on a further member of the janitorial was found under the influence of alcohol he comes from the B+W [Body in White] area, but was found sleeping in the storeroom next to the old toilet in the trim.<sup>414</sup>

The majority of alcohol related incidents involved men, but this behaviour was not limited to men:

I had one of the seat sect [section] who came in late tonight and it was pointed out to me that she [emphasis original] was under the influence of drink. She was sent home and will go into the office tonight.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> In the majority of the interviews alcohol was mentioned in the third person, with the exception of three interviews: Douglas McKendrick, admitted he was an alcoholic; Anna Anderson claimed her husband was an alcoholic; and inadvertently Rodger McGuinness told an anecdote wherein there was an occasion where himself and some workmates drank at the social club prior to going onto the night shift. Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1; Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1; and Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>413</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1. Only the Plant Manager Adam Fleming made no reference to alcohol and UMB operator Archie Watson claimed that drinking rarely happened. Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1 and Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>414</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 3 May 1979.

<sup>415</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 16 November 1977.

The underlining of *she* in the diary suggests this was unexpected or rare behaviour for women workers in the factory. However, there exist other examples within the diaries of women partaking in this activity, for example:

I had Grace Stewart of the Diathermic in on Discipline for reporting for work on Fri [sic] night under the influence of alcohol. She was sent home \_ hour [sic] after the start of the Shift on Fri-night [sic]. I explained to Thompson about Grace being under considerable strain owing to family illness. The outcome being she got a final warning.<sup>416</sup>

- Consequences

As in the above example, employees who were identified as being inebriated were subject to the three stage company discipline procedure and faced a warning, suspension, or to be fired. There are also diary entries that refer to occasions when work sections considered whether to stop work in support of a colleague who had been disciplined. Regardless of union affiliation the shop steward would speak to section members to establish whether there was support for a stoppage:

... we had Bro Colin Morrison (Trucker) in the office at 1.50 P.M. Comp. [company] are saying he was unfit for work (after reporting back late) Thro' [sic] Drink. They sent him home to report to personell [sic] 8 A.M. to-morrow. I met his section at the tea-break to see if their [sic] was any support for him. I was told politely no way.<sup>417</sup>

However, a month later in January 1979, disciplinary action resulted in an unofficial stoppage when three members of the assembly line were disciplined and the section discussed the possibility of striking in support of the disciplined workers:

3 ops from U/Seal [under seal] across the Road alledgedly [sic] bringing in a "cairry-oot"<sup>418</sup>!

The Works Committee later 'unanimously' decided not to support the three men although there was a section stoppage in support of one of them, which lasted for one shift.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> It is presumed that Thompson is either a member of the Industrial Relations Department or of management but his specific job title is unknown. ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 29 November 1977.

<sup>417</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 5 December 1977.

<sup>418</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 25 January 1979.

<sup>419</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 29 January 1979.

Supporting a colleague generally depended on the individual and whether their behaviour was a regular occurrence:

Later on at approx 1 A.M Bro T. Haggarty of the sequence line...was approached by Smith and Strachan and told he was unfit to work because of the demon Booze. They sent for the I.R.O. [Industrial Relations Officer] and a Stage 2 took place...after Dinner the sequence line stopped saying they were stopping in support of bro Haggarty ... When I held a meeting with them, the females said they were not supporting him and he is lucky to get away with it for so long.<sup>420</sup>

It is apparent in this record that this was not unusual behaviour for Brother Haggarty and for this reason he was not supported by the female shop floor workers. The evidence suggests that perhaps turning up at work on a few separate occasions was condoned by colleagues however, when the behaviour became more recurrent it was deemed less acceptable. It could also point to a different response towards this type of mischief by women workers. The above examples suggest that there were instances of women being caught under the influence of alcohol but the occurrences may not have been as common as men.<sup>421</sup>

Throughout the discipline procedure the shop steward represented the worker, negotiating on their behalf, and had to be present when the employee reported to the Personnel Department. If it was decided to contest a dismissal the steward instigated the appeal to the Industrial Relations manager.<sup>422</sup> Within the shop steward diaries there is the impression that in many cases the disciplinary procedure was a formality, as there was the expectation that if employees were caught under the influence of alcohol the steward would be able to get the decision reversed:

The fellow on the Diathermic, who, was accused [sic] of being drunk on Thursday night, went to a stage 3 on Friday morning. He was represented by Bro's Herron and McGregor, and the upshot was that he got the bag ... the man recons [sic] that the senior stewards of his union made a mess of the matter.<sup>423</sup>

The pressure on shop stewards to ensure that employees evaded being fired was likely related to the fact that this activity was common throughout the factory and that evidence

<sup>420</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 1 July 1977. The exact job description of Smith and Strachan is unknown however they appear to have been foremen or members of the supervisory staff.

<sup>421</sup> This is supported in the oral history interview material as no interviewees referred to women turning up to work inebriated or drinking at work.

<sup>422</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, 'A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant', 17 February 1971.

<sup>423</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 20 November 1977.

indicating employees, including shop stewards and foremen, were ‘turning a blind eye’ to such mischief, unless it directly affected production or the activity was discovered by a more senior layer of management or an Industrial Relations Officer (hereafter IRO). The narratives constructed within the oral testimonies indicate that attempts were made to convince inebriated workers to go home or they were simply hidden on the factory floor, with a ‘blind eye’ turned to such activity. The following example from a diary points to this activity happening at night but also that it was being obscured from management by the shop stewards:

We had a “Helluva” night in here. First we had Chris Currie of the rear estates reporting for work; well under the influence of drink. James and I managed to get him to go home.<sup>424</sup>

This excerpt is consistent with the testimony of Craig Marsden who worked as an IRO during the Chrysler phase of ownership. Marsden described the style he adopted within his job wherein he would provide the opportunity for the worker to leave the site in order to avoid being disciplined for turning up at work under the influence of alcohol:

The style I had was, in the end was, for example if somebody presented themselves for work and they were drunk, or deemed to be drunk, if they walked in the factory it was dismissal. So what I used to do was when I heard of that, I would speak, phone up the shop steward and tell the shop steward, “Look there’s a guy down there who, one of your member’s coming in, security think he’s eh drunk, eh, if you get down there and persuade him, before I get there eh, to go home, he’s dealt with under the lateness and absence procedure which is just a warning. If he comes in, ah’m gonna have to bag him.” ... An that way then [pause], the steward had credibility, the steward’d say look, the guy told us and gave us warning but he decided to come in he’s not, ye know ... But ye know, ... the guy’s been playin the game and been stupid. And you’ve got a bit of credibility cos you gave everybody a bit of space. So the stewards knew that you were fairly honest ... and that was the only way to do it you know.<sup>425</sup>

When Douglas McKendrick was asked about the foremen’s response to his behaviour, of turning up to work under the influence of alcohol and then sleeping at work he stated:

No, no the, they turned a blind eye ... ah can only say this as ma opinion hen, but they turned a blind eye eh, tae a lot o things just tae keep the peace, tae keep the, the line runnin. ... Because, their job was on the line as well as oor job bein on the line ye know. ... Ah’m quite sure ma wee charge hand eh, knew that ah wis lyin sleepin on a Friday ye know.<sup>426</sup>

<sup>424</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards’ Diary, B Shift, 1 July 1977.

<sup>425</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>426</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

Therefore, a dominant theme within the oral testimonies was that foremen and supervisors were complicit in this form of misbehaviour by condoning workers sleeping in the factory, as long as the activity was covert and undetected by senior management and most importantly that production was maintained: ‘as long as the lines keeps goin, the job’s done’.<sup>427</sup>

Another reason why workers may have expected the stewards to be able to ensure that they evaded punishment was in the distinction between workers arriving at work inebriated and those who identified themselves as alcoholics. Those who were taken through the discipline procedure were mostly aware that they could claim they were an alcoholic if there was any threat of dismissal. David Munroe worked as a union convenor for the ASTMS union and when asked about the common issues for which he had to represent union members through the company discipline procedure he stated:

Maybe absenteeism: that was the biggest problem. Maybe [pause] eh alcoholics, people like that, people wi, people wi problems ye know.<sup>428</sup>

At Linwood, workers were given the opportunity to declare themselves as alcoholics to the resident nurse Sister Jackson. The company recognised alcoholism as a medical condition and as Munroe recalls this reflects the fairness of the managers with whom he had contact and the discipline procedure:

if ye were an alcoholic ye had the chance tae admit ye were an alcoholic things like that, and then, but as ah say unless ye were really, really bad, they were quite fair.<sup>429</sup>

- Explanations

The prevalence of drink at Linwood was one of the main types of mischief referred to in the oral testimonies and there is a variety of explanations for this type of behaviour. The above excerpts indicate that the firms managing Linwood recognised alcoholism as a problem. McKendrick stated that he became an alcoholic while working at Linwood but unsure as to why it developed at that time. There was some suggestion that men who were alcoholics at Linwood had always been heavy drinkers:

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<sup>427</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>428</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

<sup>429</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

I think they done it for, ah think, think they done it for years. Ah mean ... tae me a gambler's always a gambler. ... they betted before ... they were gamblers or else they were drinkers, but wi that kind o money they were drinkin more and gambling more ... by far.<sup>430</sup>

Implicit in this narrative is that the higher wages at Linwood in comparison to other industrial employers in the area meant that employees at the plant had greater disposable income to spend on alcohol:

That was common quite a bit eh. Ye've got ae realise these people had a lot o extra cash in their pocket, An they were gonnae spend it, wan way or another an drink always comes intae it. Ah meant it was, was a, most o their, most o their problems was in there, was drink, ye know.<sup>431</sup>

As the workers received their wages on the Friday morning this is consistent with the claim that drinking was especially common at the end of the week once the wages had been paid:

It did happen. Mare on a Friday. That guy on a Friday used tae maybe get a few drinks an [pause] these things happen. That wis the foreman. It wisnae just the men. The foreman did as well [laughs].<sup>432</sup>

This is further underpinned by the IRO recalling the number of wives of Linwood workers that gathered at the factory gates every Friday lunchtime to collect money from their husbands before they had the chance to spend it.<sup>433</sup> These statements indicate a linkage between the higher wages at Linwood and increased spending on alcohol. During the era of the Linwood factory many women continued to have the responsibility of controlling the household budget. Having given a proportion of their pay to the household budget, for men working in the plant the higher rate of pay meant they had more disposable income, which could have been spent on their leisure activities or alcohol. Women on the other hand did not have access to the same levels of disposable income as their husbands.

Greater disposable income may have afforded workers more money to spend on alcohol but it is an insufficient explanation as to why workers thought it acceptable to drink prior to going into work, and risk losing their job if found intoxicated or in possession of alcohol. If workers were arriving in the plant under the influence of alcohol this could be attributed to alcohol addiction; symptomatic of a culture in which alcohol was

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<sup>430</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>431</sup> Oral Testimony, Mike Berry, Interview 1.

<sup>432</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

<sup>433</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1. This was also mentioned in Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1.

prevalent and transferred into the factory, or reflecting a particular attitude towards work. One possible explanation for workers arriving on the night shift drunk was due to the lack of alcohol availability when they had finished their shift. It was documented in a meeting of members of the TGWU that shift workers experienced the difficulty of when to fit in social activities. Several senior stewards stressed the need for recreational facilities so that nightshift workers could for example, ‘drink at cockcrow’.<sup>434</sup> The regularity of diary entries that report drunken workers suggests that for a number of workers it was difficult to find a compromise between social activities and night-shift work. Interviewees told of meeting other workers at the plant social club prior to starting on the night shift and that workers who shared a car to travel into work would go into Linwood village for drinks before work.<sup>435</sup> When asked about whether drink was more of a problem during the day or night shift George Wilson commented:

Oh aye comin on the night shift. Ah mean they’d sit in the pub fae five o’clock oh aye. They’d come in, some o them couldn’t stand, honestly, some o them couldn’t stand comin in.<sup>436</sup>

There were also interviewees who claimed drink was common during the day as there was a prevalent culture where workers drank during lunch time and in particular, Friday lunch time after being paid. In the above excerpt Wilson’s claim that workers were drinking to the point they were unable to do their job, consuming alcohol with workmates prior to attending work, or during the working day, can also be seen as a socially cohesive activity amongst informal work groups.<sup>437</sup> The above excerpts refer to shop floor employees but it was not an activity that was specific to this layer of employees. Barry Stubbs refers to a foreman attending work drunk, and both the drawing office clerk, Bill Stewart, and the wages clerk, Colin Jackson told of drinking socially with work colleagues. For Stewart this comprised a lunch time drink on a Friday but Jackson constructed a narrative in which socialising with colleagues at the Rootes Club was common after work and during the day, which suggests there was a work culture based on drinking with colleagues, ‘Drink was always involved with everyone involved in Chrysler payroll. No gambling but everybody liked a drink’.<sup>438</sup> Yet, this does not explain why workers regarded this as acceptable

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<sup>434</sup> ML, Linwood Box 23, Item 892748, Note of Meeting with Representatives of the Transport and General Workers Union.

<sup>435</sup> The Social Club was referred to as the Pressed Steel Club, Rootes Club and Chrysler Club in various interviews. This building was on-site and there are conflicting narratives as to whether it was run by management or the workforce. Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>436</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>437</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>438</sup> Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1 and Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

behaviour, or why so many shop floor workers were either directly involved through attending work under the influence of alcohol or by concealing the activity of fellow workmates.

In part this can be explained by recognising that alcohol was a fairly imbedded element of working-class culture in Scotland and the pub was an arena, not only for socialising, but where the relationships of the workplace were reinforced. For instance, in industries such as shipbuilding where gangs organised work, men could secure entry to the gang through negotiations in the pub and further still enticements of the liquid variety could be offered to foreman in exchange for sought-after work.<sup>439</sup> Furthermore, time spent drinking with work mates was an important element in the formation of group cohesion and group identity. While many of the interviewees claimed not to ‘socialise’ with work mates they did describe a culture in which many workers drank at lunch time and confessed to on occasion drinking prior to coming into work. It should be highlighted that most of the interviewees did not live in Linwood but it is probable that factory workers that did live locally were more likely to drink with people they worked with.<sup>440</sup>

The importance of drinking, and spending time in the pub, was also of key significance for notions of masculinity. Historically masculinity has assumed many ‘changing’ and ‘divergent’ forms but as a discourse has been extremely influential in determining the behaviour of men.<sup>441</sup> In the west of Scotland a heavy dinking culture permeated notions of being a man. The workplace ‘provided an important site for the incubation of *macho* values and attitudes...encapsulated in the “hard” Glaswegian working man’.<sup>442</sup> Hence, the level of consumption and the ability to hold one’s drink indicative of masculinity and a crucial part of male self-respect.<sup>443</sup> Subsequently, masculine culture transferred into the factory. In addition, from the early 1960s a crisis of masculinity may have exacerbated the ‘hard’ image, as male machismo was undermined by an increasing number of women workers in highly automated work, as in the North Side of the Linwood plant – relatively clean production. In this sense, a worker going on shift under the influence of alcohol reflects cultural as well as attitudinal forces.

The attitude of workers towards their work was certainly a factor in determining whether they would turn up to work under the influence of alcohol and can be understood

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<sup>439</sup> McKinlay, *Making Ships Making Men*.

<sup>440</sup> This viewpoint is reiterated in many of the interviews.

<sup>441</sup> Michael Roper and John Tosh, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 1

<sup>442</sup> McIvor, ‘Dangerous Work’, p. 136

<sup>443</sup> Richard Finlay, *Modern Scotland, 1914-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), p. 148

when linked with the difficulty level and responsibility associated with the job. The testimony examined in Chapter Two points to the ease with which some of the employees claimed they worked. If the jobs were considered easy as there was little physical or mental challenge or concentration required, then the attitude may have been it was acceptable to attend work under the influence of alcohol. Similarly, the removal of responsibility for work - through MDW, scientific management, and a high day rate of pay - could have had a similar effect. Yet what is suggested within Anna Anderson's testimony is that women may have had a different attitude towards turning up for work inebriated. For instance, in one of the above diary entries the steward identifies the 'women' of a section as refusing to support a worker. In the period during which the Linwood factory was open there were many pubs in the area but they tended to be the preserve of male clientele. Women tended to play a peripheral role in the traditional drinking culture based in pubs.<sup>444</sup> In Anderson's testimony she suggested that as her husband and his male friends were able to declare themselves as alcoholics they were able to get away with drinking alcohol and sneaking out of work during the day to go for a drink, without fear of being sacked. She identifies her husband as an alcoholic but she claimed that the company policy did not help matters as it ensured an income while sustaining his addiction.<sup>445</sup>

Drinking in the plant when on shift, rather than before work or during lunch time, is more likely to reflect an addiction to alcohol or boredom at work. As Meyer writes, 'alcohol numbed the body's senses and reduced the tedium, fatigue, and monotony' for those working in mass production jobs in the American automobile industry.<sup>446</sup> To some extent this could be attributed to the absence of responsibility as well as autonomy in mass-assembly work. Blauner argues that due to the extreme sub-division of labour in assembly work there was little variety in the immediate work process.<sup>447</sup> This is evident in Barry Stubbs' narrative:

Aye maybe just the, the, the, the pressure oh the jobs. It wis a horrible job. See workin on a track daen sixty cars an hour. ... Imagine what, ye didnae have a minute tae yerself. Ye went in wan car, oot a the car, in the car, oot the car and in the car.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Knox makes this point relating to the period 1914 to 1945. Knox, *Industrial Nation*, p. 198.

<sup>445</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>446</sup> Stephen Meyer, 'Work, Play and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automative Shop Floor, 1930-1960', *Men and Masculinities*, 2 (1999), 115-34 (p.124).

<sup>447</sup> Blauner, *Alienation and Freedom*, pp. 97-8

<sup>448</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

The pacing of work by conveyor technology and work output determined by scientific management meant a severe restriction on the autonomy of the worker and related pressures of lacking control over the pace of work. Anderson attributes alcoholism at the plant to monotony experienced by assembly-line workers:

Ah remember Andrew [Anderson's husband] saying a friend of his, ah'm trying not to say anybody's name, it was boredom. Boredom and, not boredom, monotonous. Some of the jobs they had on these lines were monotonous, and ah think that had a lot to do wi it.<sup>449</sup>

The testimony is consistent with Meyer's analysis of the American car industry which links drinking in the workplace to attempts to counteract monotony:

For mass production workers in the automobile plants, alcohol numbed the body's senses and reduced the tedium, fatigue, and monotony of their work.<sup>450</sup>

The testimony of Barry King, a skilled coach trimmer who worked in the rectification area, and then as an inspector foreman, reveals a contrary attitude to drinking in the workplace:

An they would go out on strike for somebody that was out, caught out drinkin. Maybe a guy was suspended and they would all want tae hit the street because he was suspended for drinkin. Now, no way, eh, ah could not condone that at all ye know, ah'm dead against that sort o thing.<sup>451</sup>

King was a skilled worker and therefore the link could be made between a rough unskilled or semi skilled working class and a respectable skilled working class, the latter traditionally characterised by temperance. On the one hand, when interpreting this testimony there was an awareness of the concept of 'composure'; in that individuals will construct a persona of themselves in narratives that they wish to project. King may have been projecting an image of himself as a skilled worker that always completed his job on time and did not condone alcohol in the workplace, thereby adhering to a respectable working-class masculinity.<sup>452</sup> Yet in his testimony he recalls reluctantly having to strike in support of an employee who was sacked due to being under the influence of alcohol. Confirming that at times there was support for workers in such situations and collective

<sup>449</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>450</sup> Meyer, 'Work, Play and Power', (1999) 13-32 (p. 22).

<sup>451</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>452</sup> Summerfield, *Reconstructing*, p. 17.

pressure for action. David Bright, a wages clerk who worked alongside interviewee Colin Jackson, although he did not include himself he acknowledged that some of his workmates were heavy drinkers.<sup>453</sup>

The reasons employees at Linwood would engage in this form of misbehaviour are due to a combination of factors including a synthesis of their attitude towards their job as well as the influence of a factory culture that was shaped by predominant masculinities. It is conceivable that one of the reasons the firms at Linwood provided the opportunity for workers to declare themselves as alcoholics was in part, recognition that a hard-drinking culture was so prevalent at that time and also that drinking alcohol is behaviour that is not as tangible as say theft. As workers were able to declare themselves as alcoholics they could avoid being fired. Or if inebriated workers were encouraged to go home they would receive a suspension or lose out on a day's pay rather than lose their job. That the stewards and foremen 'turned a blind eye' further points to this behaviour as being perceived as somewhat acceptable and understandable. Only three of the sample admitted to attending work under the influence of alcohol but the distinction can be made between rough and respectable behaviour. Whilst drinking was rough behaviour, it was accepted as inherent component of factory culture.

### 3.4.2 Sleeping at Work

Another form of behaviour described in the interviews is of employees sleeping during working hours:

an there was many a story's came out of it that there would be guys found sleepin up on top of pallets instead of bein on the job.<sup>454</sup>

A common link was made between intoxication and sleeping at work. For example:

some things that happened werenae true, used tae bring in bottles o wine at dinner time. ... They used tae, sea sick. [imitates someone rocking from side to side] It's that way they were, that drunk they used tae lie about the place. It's unbelievable so it wis.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Oral Testimony, David Bright, Interview 1.

<sup>454</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>455</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

As noted in Chapter Two, Barry Stubbs felt under constant pressure at work and did not have time to take a break. He found it incomprehensible, not only that people had the time to sleep and expect to get away with that behaviour, but would be able to participate in such mischief without being reprimanded. In the previous example, the connection is made between inebriated workers and sleeping yet, the oral testimony evidence analysed in Chapter Two of this thesis drew attention to the testimony of line workers who worked back on the line in order to create time away from the line. One way of passing the time away from the line was to sleep. Thus in effect, sleeping constituted a method by which workers exerted control over themselves within the workplace. Within the oral testimony and documentary sources there is evidence of varying responses to employees who slept during a shift. The skilled workers in the sample were critical of such behaviour as it was seen to reflect laziness and failure to work efficiently. These workers distinguished this behaviour as different from their own and reflecting a different attitude towards work.<sup>456</sup>

- Consequences

Evidence of sleeping and the response of management also exist in the shop steward diaries. As with being caught under the influence of alcohol, workers that were caught sleeping at work could be taken through the discipline procedure and faced losing their job:

There were two cases in CAB [Car Assembly Building] where the people were caught sleeping. Company wanted to dismiss these people. The Works Committee agreed to bring in T. Robertson [TGWU Senior Steward] on this one.<sup>457</sup>

A diary entry on the 7 May 1979, noted that:

Bro Williams (man in toilet sleeping thurs [sic] night) was given a 2 week suspension for sleeping. Bro Gillespie failed to turn up for stage 3.<sup>458</sup>

Similarly, there is evidence of workers being disciplined for sleeping at work. For instance, paint sprayer Mark Ellison described a scenario in which a shop steward was caught sleeping and fired the next evening.<sup>459</sup> What is apparent from the documentary and oral history evidence is the inconsistency in response to employees caught sleeping. In the

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<sup>456</sup> For instance, Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1 and Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>457</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 18 October 1977.

<sup>458</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 7 May 1979.

<sup>459</sup> Oral Testimony, Mark Ellison, Interview 1.

above diary excerpts, in one instance employees were threatened with dismissal whereas in the second excerpt the employee was given a suspension. Both diary entries refer to the same department, but with a two-year time difference between the events. This latter example occurred during Peugeot's phase of ownership of, 'Any strikes and we'll move out.'<sup>460</sup> On assuming ownership the company had made it clear in the PSA Declaration of Intent that commitment to providing employment was conditional on, 'prevailing economic conditions'.<sup>461</sup> Although the late 1970s was a period of adverse market conditions Peugeot had achieved productivity improvements, therefore dismissal of Brother Watson may have elicited a solidaristic response from his section that could have disrupted production.

Comparisons can be made between the response of fellow employees and managers to inebriated workers and sleeping workers. When a worker was caught sleeping in work and disciplined, this could result in industrial action, a strike of solidarity. There is an example of this in October 1976 when 130 electricians and plumbers walked off the job in support of a plumber who was sacked after 'allegedly' being found asleep on the night shift.<sup>462</sup> But also it appears that sleeping was another activity to which a 'blind eye' could be turned and sleeping colleagues would be obscured from management by fellow workers. Yet again, there is evidence to suggest that foremen were complicit in this process:

Hide them! Gaffers [foremen] as well. That ah've seen gaffers doin it as well. See, see like ah'm sayin ah had that box wi the, underneath, an a lot of people tae sleep in, they put them in there out the road. An peopl'd do their job fur them. They'd soon cover it up. ... An gaffers didn't want nothing to do wi it cos they'd, they'd be a, they'd have again, they'd have a strike on their haund if they'd put somebody home that wis drunk.<sup>463</sup>

Here the complicity can be explained with reference to a discourse that can be labelled 'pressures of production'.<sup>464</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, this discourse is based upon the notion that due to production demands foremen and managers, during periods of high demand, were unlikely to undertake action that may disrupt production. Foremen would 'turn a blind eye' to certain behaviour as long as production was not interrupted.

<sup>460</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 2.

<sup>461</sup> FAI, Box Seven, *Making Cars and Marginalising the Workplace Organisation: Management industrial relations strategy at Linwood*, Peter Bain and Cliff Lockyer, British Trade Unionism Conference 1997, p. 17.

<sup>462</sup> *The Times*, 8 October 1976.

<sup>463</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>464</sup> This narrative is introduced in Chapter Two.

This resulted in an inconsistent management approach, as at other times management would discipline workers for the same actions.

Sleeping at work is depicted within the oral history material as an activity that is linked to workers turning up to work drunk, and that some of the workers who worked back up the line in order to achieve time away from the line, used it as an opportunity to sleep. This was an activity in which the informal workgroup could be compliant. When working in pairs, working back on the line required coordination between both workers and a convergence of interests between workers in the section as workers further back on the track would allow workers from further down the track to work back, which resulted in more than one employee working on the vehicle at one time. Furthermore, when individuals were asleep the work group would collude in this activity in order to prevent detection by supervisors or IROs. The oral testimony highlights this was another activity that was met with an inconsistent response from management. It is evidence in the diaries that there was an official discipline procedure but the existence of a competing discourse emerged during the interviews: as long as production was not interrupted there were foremen who ignored certain types of mischief.

- Explanations

The behaviour described points to an indifferent attitude towards work. The above testimony lends itself to an instrumental interpretation of attitudes to work and there is evidence in the interview material to support the view that workers at Linwood were disengaged and sought extrinsic rather than intrinsic satisfaction. For workers who stated their work tasks were boring and monotonous, sleeping offering a form of escapism or simply rest from work. As many of the assembly jobs consisted of repetitive processes requiring limited responsibility and control over the planning and pace of work, this would have nurtured an attitude in which employees absolved themselves of responsibility over what would happen if they walked off their job. The majority of the sample who took on track work experienced a distinct change in their experience of work and for some this was met with a degree of resistance in the form of employee mischief. This is not to suggest an overly determinist analysis based on the technological system or the social organisation of work, rather that there can be differing factors influential in a worker's decision to sleep at work. Workers at Linwood may well have sought intrinsic rewards through mischief. Sleeping is evidence not only of escapism but also as an attempt by an employee to regain autonomy over their time and effort within the work place. The above example of Brother

Williams disciplined for sleeping in the toilet and Brother Gillespie failing to turn up for the disciplinary procedure may well be explained by cultural factors. The diary entry was for two shifts on May 7 1979. Not only was it the May Day Holiday it was also the day on which four prominent league teams in the west of Scotland were playing football: Celtic, Greenock Morton, Partick Thistle and Rangers.<sup>465</sup> It is feasible that Gillespie did not turn up to work as he wanted to take a holiday on the May Day and furthermore, watch the football which in turn may have potentially offered him a degree of intrinsic gratification at having achieved this day off work.

For George Wilson, workers who slept during the working day displayed a lack of responsibility towards not only their job but absolved themselves of responsibility for their work:

it wis ... mostly the same wans awe the time that wis doin it. Cos they know they were gettin away wi it. Ye know what ah mean, they knew it. They'd come in awe the time and they'd go fur a sleep, "Auch somebody else'll dae it". The, these kind o wans.<sup>466</sup>

At first it seems like there is an inherent contradiction within Wilson's testimony as despite the sentiment in his quotation, he admitted the job at Linwood meant he did not feel the same responsibility towards his work as when he had worked as a roofer. He too admitted to sleeping at work underneath a table. However, for him there was a distinction between workers like himself, who were able to sleep at work because either they had co-ordinated with other workers to ensure their job was completed and took it in turns to have time away from the line, and workers that worked back on the line enabling time away from the line. At times this was because workers had completed their 'designated' work. Although these activities could be viewed as mischief, both perceptions on sleeping on shift reveal a desire for autonomy over oneself.

Evidence suggests that although mischief such as moving away from the line, playing cards, or sleeping, did occur, employees still completed their jobs:

And I know that a couple of my husband's friends, well it was about four or five of em, they were younger then remember, they all went about together, they used to climb over the fence at dinner time, and you'd be lucky if they came back cos they'd made their tally or something. You know that, I saw a lot. Not just my husband and his friends, a lot of it.<sup>467</sup>

<sup>465</sup> <http://www.statto.com/football/stats/results/1979-05-07>  
Accessed 29 September 2008.

<sup>466</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>467</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

These workers had asserted control over the labour process and manifested an attitude that, as the work had been completed they could do what they wished with their time. The employees as individuals and informal work groups found ways of exerting control over the effort-bargain during the hours they were at work, which in effect comprised theft of company time. The line workers that partook in this activity did not conceptualise the exchange of labour as the purchase of their time, and the overtime scam is an ideal way of exploring this attitude towards their work.

### 3.4.3 Clocking In / Overtime Rota

Research on theft in the workplace indicates that the most common form of what the authors call ‘production-deviance’ amongst employees, was taking more time than allocated during lunch or tea breaks. The same study found that in the manufacturing sector specifically ‘coming late or leaving early was the second most prevalent item.’<sup>468</sup> At Linwood the theft of company time occurred on an individual level by employees that were not directly involved in production. Due to living in such close proximity to the plant the IRO, Craig Marsden, recalled the convenience of being able to use his factory walkie-talkie from his kitchen window, thus suggesting that he was not always on-site during his hours of work.<sup>469</sup> Similarly, David Crawford who worked up to Inspection Supervisor in the paint plant spoke of being able to take extra time at the end of his lunch break when he was aware there was ‘a gap in the line’.<sup>470</sup> These acts comprising theft of time were individualised however, in the interviews the shop floor production workers described the ability to collectively organise in order to cover lateness or leaving work early.

At the Linwood car plant a clock card machine established the presence of workers onsite. Each had a personalised card and stamp number that had to be inserted into the machine on arrival and when they departed at the end of a shift. The system enabled management to monitor time-keeping and importantly, highlighted whether there were enough workers present to commence production on the integrated assembly lines. When George Wilson was asked what the consequences were for lateness he immediately stated, ‘You’re clocked in’.<sup>471</sup> In his working area employees would clock in for one another. Despite attempts by management to control this system, Stubbs of the CAB told of it being

<sup>468</sup> Richard Hollinger and John Clark, *Theft by Employees* (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1983), p. 44.

<sup>469</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>470</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

<sup>471</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

common for everybody in a section to be stamped in by the first person to arrive at the start of the shift:

So, in a lot o cases folk would say, “Auch just stamp the card ... You stamp awe the cards.” An the first wan in would stamp awe the cards. ... That was alright, but when the somebody let you doon like that, you say well, “Ah’m no stampin his card cos he’s very unreliable”. That’s where yer teamwork came in, an the gaffer’s just turned a blind eye. Ok you would get people comin in eh an sayin right, eh [pause] we’re no gonnae let them, let them do that. So they pulled them up.<sup>472</sup>

This process meant employees were able to evade management control as they could turn up late knowing that their cards had been stamped and they would not be penalised. It was another activity in which there were times when foremen were complicit as long as they had enough men for the line to start. However, this did cause problems if individuals failed to turn up for work:

An, ah always remember eh wan gaffer an, he thought he was Mr. Nice Guy and, auch, “Ah’ll just stamp their card an, ah’ll let, let them know they’ll be in.” An it just so happens this day two o them never came in so he hadnae enough, and he’d already pressed the button for the track to start. “Awe they’ll be in”, but they never appeared. So they let the, let him down. So he got reprimanded fur it.<sup>473</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that utilising the stamping system to exert control over work time was undertaken in a systematic fashion, with greater opportunity when the workers undertook overtime during which time the foremen were not always present. Rodger McGuinness explained that when workers were given an overtime allocation they were frequently able to finish the work well within the shift, ‘There might have been five or six of us asked to come in, but only one would ... need tae stay back to clock the cards’.<sup>474</sup> Such testimony depicts it as being common for workers within a section to take it in turns to stay behind until the end of the shift. George Wilson was in charge of the overtime rota for his section and he constructed a similar narrative to McGuinness in that there was a rota for the overtime. While the rest of the overtime workers would leave the car plant via holes in the fence, one worker remained and was responsible for ensuring that the cards were stamped at the end of the shift, ‘Your turn ae stamp out, you’d wait tae four

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<sup>472</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

<sup>473</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

<sup>474</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

o'clock but he'd be away at wan'.<sup>475</sup> Line workers told of an acknowledged agreement between the two shifts, in jobs where it was possible, workers would work back on the line, meaning that at the start of each shift, there would always be a break in the line for some workers. This informal work-group organisation meant that the workers were able to manipulate management time as well as completing their allocated work. Thereby during such periods, informal work groups or sections could use the system of 'clocking-in' to obtain some control over their time at work.

- Consequences

During periods of high demand, of key concern for management was productivity and intrinsic in meeting production targets was the efficient deployment of workers. Equally, time management was a fundamental element in improving production rates and in 1979 the PSA management decided to undertake head counts at the start and end of shifts:

All shop stewards informed their [sic] will be a Head Count in every section 5 mins [sic] before lunch + 5 mins [sic] before stopping time. Anyone not at their place of work during count will be taken thro' [sic] procedure. This will take effect from Mon 19 Feb. '79 [sic].<sup>476</sup>

Unauthorised movement of workers around the factory was regarded by management as detrimental to efficiency rates. Within the diaries there is evidence of management crackdown on this activity in the late 1970s. However, this evidence is in marked contrast to the testimony of the line workers who portrayed a working environment where they achieved some autonomy over the pace at which they worked and, when there was less supervision during weekend and night shift overtime, could collectively organise themselves to ensure that they would maximise their earnings and complete their allocated work, despite not working for the full shift.

Time management was a measure taken by management to tackle the practice of workers clocking on for each other:

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<sup>475</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>476</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 15 February 1979.

I had 3 people in the office tonight 2 u/seal [under seal] and 1 trucker all for the same thing it was that they were reported not in but all there [sic] time cards were stamped before starting time and when they came in they failed to report to their foreman that their cards were stamped ... the company was saying that they were trying to defraud them. 2 of them got final warnings the 3<sup>rd</sup> man who was already on a final warning for the same thing they were suspending him for 3 days so failure to agree was lodged and I will be going to a stage 3.<sup>477</sup>

By lodging a failure to agree, the shop steward had decided to support the member of his section to prevent him from being suspended. Shop stewards did not necessarily support every case that arose in the factory, and at times there was no sectional support from the workforce for individuals who had displayed poor behaviour and were subsequently disciplined by the company. For example, ‘Works Com [Committee] meeting today decided not to support member from paint who was bagged for bad timekeeping’.<sup>478</sup> However, McGuinness implicates management in this process when he recalled that when discussing the overtime rota the foreman told the men in the section:

“Ah don’t mind, as long as the place is kept clean.” He says, “the jobs are done that ye’s are told tae do. Ah don’t mind ye’s going away”.<sup>479</sup>

This is another instance when foreman condoned the behaviour of workers even when it was against the rules of the company. It was an act meaningful to the employees involved as it was another process by which they could gain a degree of autonomy over their actions while at work.

- Explanations

Clocking in for people that are late falls into the category of looking out for other workers in the same way as hiding drunken workers and covering for those who were sleeping on shift. The action of clocking in all of the cards for a work group was a way in which management control over the start time of work could, to some extent, be ‘renegotiated’. In this sense these attempts to manipulate time and prevent management control can be compared to the practice of ‘the welt’ in areas such as Liverpool. The ‘moral economy’ of casualism that was pervasive in Liverpool port work was transferred into the new industries in the post-war period. Ayers argues that, ‘the practice of the welt was transported into some of the shops at Ford’s with men on night shift covering for each

<sup>477</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards’ Diary, B Shift, 10 November 1977

<sup>478</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards’ Diary, A Shift, 10 January 1979

<sup>479</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

other while they took time out to sleep, play cards'.<sup>480</sup> In the west of Scotland, the skilled working-class identity was staunchly defended by workers in the traditional industries. At Linwood the workforce adopted some of the elements in this tradition in their resistance to new methods of managerial control. Clocking in other workers' cards indicated the existence of collective identity that protected workers from penalties for lateness as well as aiding workers in their creation of time away from the line.

Nonetheless, there is an indication that there were divisions within the workforce, and whether a worker's card was stamped was depended on geographical loyalties and circle of friends. An employee who commuted to Linwood from Glasgow claimed that:

Certain people would do it for their pals. ... It was people who lived locally who were more likely to do it because they were more in cahoots with each other. We were living further away and in less contact with local people.<sup>481</sup>

Furthermore, the process of stamping in the cards commanded a commonality of respect among the group of workers. Having been clocked in, if an individual did not turn up for work or was excessively late and attracted the attention of the foreman or a more senior management figure, this would lead to animosity amongst the group workers who would refuse to stamp the individual's card in future.<sup>482</sup> The overtime system functioned in the same way. If an employee failed to stamp the cards or take his turn to stay on shift and allow the others to leave early, he was perceived as having let the group down and was excluded from the system. The overtime rota involved greater co-ordination: McGuinness explained that there was a rota system to decide the workmate who had to stay back to stamp the cards and was a means by which the employees could maximise their economic return.

Part of the reason that such clock 'fiddles' developed was linked with the attitude workers held towards the effort bargain. To refer back to George Wilson's explanation for the behaviour of the workforce in terms of pride, previously mentioned in Chapter Two, he reconstructs a viewpoint that reflects the classic alienation thesis:

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<sup>480</sup> Pat Ayers, 'Work, culture and gender: the making of masculinities in post-war Liverpool', *Labour History Review*, 69 (2004) 153-67 (p. 157).

<sup>481</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>482</sup> Oral Testimony, Mike Berry, Interview 1.

But no, ah, ah go back again tae pride. There wis nothin, there wis nae prise wi it, just a, a menial job tae, ah don't know about the pride on the other side o the line. When it came tae the finished article ye know. Puttin in awe the, it was only shells we were working wi, it wis only a shell, ye know. Ah don't know wi across the other side o the Car Con [Car Conditioning]. A mean when it came tae the polishin putting awe the final touches tae it. Wit kind o pride they had in the car goin oot. But in oor side there wis definitely, there wis nothing.<sup>483</sup>

The lack of pride in the job can also be linked to the argument made at the beginning of this chapter that due to the division of labour, for workers that had tasks that were highly specialised, repetitive and subject to measured day work – with their pace of work determined externally by technology and organisation – this resulted in an absence of responsibility towards their work. When such behaviour is considered within perceptions of time in capitalism the workers did not view the time away from their work to be the theft of time as they believed that if they were meeting the production targets as established by MDW, the means by which they achieved the targets was insignificant. That the management deployed a team of men to undertake a job quota that could be completed in two hours as opposed to seven was not a concern of the workers. These activities were fuelled by a factory culture in which ‘getting one over’ on management was important and the overtime rota was a method that allowed significant job control for workers that were able to partake in this form of mischief. In Nichols and Beynon’s study of a chemical processing plant following the introduction of a New Working Arrangement, interviews with employees reveal that many shop floor workers resisted the re-grading of job categories and subsequent changes in work organisation by continuing to work as they had done. One worker told the authors that, “[we] let them think we’re doing it their way”.<sup>484</sup> Thus the workers in the plant found methods of resisting managerial control in a covert manner.

The Linwood interviewees depict the overtime system in the plant as overt and condoned by the foremen or gaffers as long as the work was completed. This complicity may reflect the promotion of foremen from the ranks of the shop floor as it was difficult for them to challenge activities they were once involved in. Failure to challenge this form of mischief concurs with the narrative of avoiding industrial action. However, the oral testimony can also be interpreted as being constructed to glorify risk at work. Johnston and McIvor have argued that within the testimonies of former workers of heavy industries such as shipbuilding, interviewees, usually males, have constructed an ‘heroic’ discourse related

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<sup>483</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>484</sup> Nichols and Beynon, *Living with Capitalism*, p. 136

to the physically hard nature of work in these industries.<sup>485</sup> At the Linwood plant the work was not as physical. It may have required dexterity and continual effort but the majority of jobs involved machinery and did not require the application of demanding physical strength. The discourse of risk that emerged in the interviews was an important element of the factory culture and in particular, masculine identities at the plant. Few of the workers exhibited concern about being caught for instance, sleeping at work. This can be understood as the heroic discourse being transferred into the new working environment at the plant, and then adapted from glorified risk associated with the challenge to masculine strength and health, to the risk involved in mischief.

### 3.4.4 Card schools, gambling and games

On the shop floor workers were able to counteract the monotony and boredom experienced at work by playing games in groups. These ranged from activities that could be done whilst working – crosswords and ‘liney’<sup>486</sup> to games that were played away from work such as dominoes and cards. As explored in the previous chapter, interviewees told of experiencing satisfaction in being able to work back on the line in order to achieve time away from the line and regarded it as their own time in which they could play cards. Playing cards during the hours of work was more achievable by workers that were able to move away from their workstation. It was one of the most common games mentioned in the interviews and within the plant card schools were formed, which normally involved gambling:

Auch aye! [laughs] Guys used to loose awe their wages [laughs] Fur goodness sake aye! Aw that happened aw the time. Ah wis never involved in that.<sup>487</sup>

Albeit, George Wilson recalled that two of the women assembly operators in his sections also participated in card games, the majority of the references to gambling in the testimonies are related to men.<sup>488</sup> This is reinforced in references to card schools taking place in the factory, sometimes in hidden locations described as ‘wee dens’,<sup>489</sup> or in Watson’s testimony where he claimed the ‘gambling dens’ were ‘nearly always [in] the toilets’.<sup>490</sup> The occurrence of gambling throughout automobile plants, in particular the

<sup>485</sup> Johnston and McIvor, *Dangerous Bodies*, p. 141.

<sup>486</sup> ‘Liney’ was a game wherein men had to kick an object towards a line and scored points for being nearest to or landing on the line. Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 2.

<sup>487</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

<sup>488</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>489</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>490</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 3.

toilets has been noted as a social space where men would engage in the ‘collective expression of relief’ from the pressure of work on the shop floor.<sup>491</sup> This was substantiated by an interviewee who joined Linwood as a Technician Apprentice, in that not only did he recall being aware of gambling in the toilet but that access to the card game was controlled:

An ah went to walk into the toilet, and there’s two guys standin outside ... “Go somewhere else.” So ah kin o looked at them an as ah wis lookin at them the, a double swing door opened and ah saw into the toilet and there’s guys playin cards and there’s guys sittin on seats and ah’m goin eh, obviously whatever’s goin on in there ah’ve no tae see.<sup>492</sup>

As Bill Reid was an apprentice and the card games occurrence were during management time, the group of workers involved were seeking to regulate access to the group activity as well as prevent being exposed to management. Reid was not only a physical outsider from the group, but as an apprentice was not conceived as being *a man* therefore could not join in these activities.<sup>493</sup> Therefore, the toilets were used for such group activities that solidified the group identities within the plant. It is unclear as to whether these groups were identified along sectional lines or prowess at playing cards, but the above excerpt indicates the parameters of the group were policed.

Employee control of the toilets, as projected in Reid’s testimony, is noteworthy in terms of significance in industrial politics. Employees working on track work had to seek a relief man to do their job in order to get a break to go to the toilet. Management have traditionally attempted to control visits and time spent in the toilet so as to minimise disruption to work output.<sup>494</sup> The congregation of workers in the toilets to partake in a leisure activity and control of access, presumably to warn on the approach of managers suggests effective worker control of an area that management had sought to police access.

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<sup>491</sup> Meyer, ‘Work, Play and Power’, 13-32 (pp. 19-20). In Polly Toynbee’s participant observation study of women workers in a factory producing components for can manufacturing she similarly found the toilets to provide a social space offering collective relief from work where ‘dozens of jolly women smoking and laughing’ would congregate. Polly Toynbee, *A Working Life* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971 [1973 edn]), p. 60.

<sup>492</sup> Oral Testimony Bill Reid, Interview 1

<sup>493</sup> McKinlay, ‘Making Ships’, 21-28 (p. 21-3).

<sup>494</sup> Martin Bellamy described how in the west of Scotland shipyards workers were allowed a maximum of seven minutes in the toilet and taking more time than this would incur a penalty of fifteen minutes pay. Martin Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), p. xiv.

- Consequences

Resistance to management was often a collective effort within work sections in the plant. During 1977 there is a record of an ongoing issue between workers and management over the playing of cards during company time. The company issued a statement to a Works Committee, which was commented on in the shop stewards' diaries:

3. The playing of games. The company are saying that their [sic] will be no games played between the hours of 7.45A.M. until 12 noon and from 12.40P.M. until 4.30 P.M. As you knowe [sic] their will be a difference of opinion on that.<sup>495</sup>

The next day six workers in K Building were issued with final warnings for playing cards during work time.<sup>496</sup> Further discussion occurred between management and the unions regarding the playing of cards as the night shift steward noted in the diary:

The Company have made a new statement regarding playing of games. They are as follows: 1. We can play games on our tea break and mass relief. 2. We cannot play games on personnal [sic] relief, All operators are to get up when breaks are finished.<sup>497</sup>

However, the management response to this activity was varied. IRO, Craig Marsden, recalled that due to the large amounts of money that were staked on a card game, there were times when the stewards would inform the IROs of this activity. Implicit in his narrative is that rather than the activity being unifying amongst work groups, there were times when the activity worked against the interests of the cohesive group:

periodically you used to get ehm [pause] eh card games stating and they would fleece some of the gullible of their entire ... week's wages. And those, so long as you, you know. You were often warned of the occasions when you were warned by the stewards that there was a card game going and, and who to hit.<sup>498</sup>

Therefore, there is the sense that management was actively targeting the playing of card games at work not simply to enforce control over the workforce during the hours of work but also to protect workers who were subject to groups of workers coalescing to ensure that one worker lost the card game. Andrew McIntyre, who worked as a skilled electrician in the paint shop, commented that workers were not allowed to play games in this area and if

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<sup>495</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 11 October 1977.

<sup>496</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 12 October 1977.

<sup>497</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 13 October 1977.

<sup>498</sup> The verb 'to fleece' someone is used to describe stripping someone of their money. Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

discovered, ‘you’d get your books’.<sup>499</sup> In many of the line workers interviews, as with other behaviour noted above, there is the discourse of ‘turning a blind eye’:

They shut their eyes tae everythin. Naw. The guys were too hard fur that. They used tae play at dinner time an awe that.<sup>500</sup>

Although it is with reference to an earlier time period, when gambling was illegal, Ross McKibbin’s article on gambling draws attention to the arrangement of bookies and their agents in factories, and that while management were often aware of this activity, ‘most turned a blind eye’.<sup>501</sup> The link can be made here with the discourse of avoiding industrial action. In his oral history interview, Marsden joked that there were certain aspects of factory life that you had to be aware of such as, ‘never sack the bookie’s runner. Yeah. Not unless you wanted a strike’.<sup>502</sup> This is supported in the narrative of McGuinness:

You got other ones that ... in Linwood itself they were actually bookmakers. You could put your horse racing on and your football on in Linwood. And they, they didnae bother anybody because there were two bookies that actually, that everybody knew ehm that were bookies.<sup>503</sup>

It was easier to allow the gambling to take place as long as work was being completed.

- Explanations

From the above oral testimony excerpts despite management attempts to prevent the playing of cards during working hours, the shop floor appears a social space where the distinction between work and leisure was never fully broken down. The defence of playing cards or reading the newspaper at work was derived from a rough masculine culture that developed in the new mass-assembly environment, and remained as ‘illicit activities’ representing masculine play.<sup>504</sup> The playing of games at work, in particular cards, was an activity that had also occurred in other industries and whilst this activity can be reasoned as a methods of counteracting monotony or boredom at work, it has functions other than

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<sup>499</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 2.

<sup>500</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 1.

<sup>501</sup> Ross McKibbin, ‘Working-Class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939’, *Past and Present*, 82 (1979), 147-78 (p. 160, p. 176).

<sup>502</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>503</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>504</sup> Stephen Meyer, ‘Work, Play and Power’, 13-32 (p. 19).

simply as a form of escapism from work or as a means of earning some extra cash (through gambling).<sup>505</sup> Andrew McIntyre described playing the game liney:

So ye had a thing like a, a round tin lid lyin on the floor, and ye kicked that with yer foot an if you made it lie against a line near near where your opponent was you got a point, and he would get the bin lid back to you, near the line where you were.<sup>506</sup>

This game was played not only to pass the time but also functioned as an informal method of determining which workers would take on tasks such as making the next batch of tea. The card schools and gambling performed other functions within the car plant other than providing a form of relief or ‘skiving’ from the job. Historically, betting and gambling were important elements in working-class communities; balancing the focus on the physical demands in the workplace with mental and intellectual stimulation in leisure time. McKibbin’s study deconstructs the involvement in gambling to argue that rather than being inherently about chance, the strategies devised and knowledge of stakes and form functioned to contribute to a form of cultural capital.<sup>507</sup> Therefore highlighting that such activities can offer both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards for those participating.

When applied to the car plant, gambling was significant in shop floor culture in terms of working class informal hierarchy. The organisers and key players in large card schools commanded the respect of fellow employees and challenges to the hierarchy could be made by winning or controlling the card table, rather than through violence. Furthermore, the collusion amongst workers in order to ‘fleece’ someone of their wages may also have been a reflection of workplace hierarchies. Whilst McKibbin’s article points to the long history of such activities, in Linwood their function in determining responsibilities or cultivating hierarchies, meant they had additional purposes that to some extent mirrored that of work groups or gangs in traditional heavy industries. In Linwood, the autonomy of the gang in the labour process may have been absent, but activities such as games provided ordering functions amongst work groups or those working in close proximity to each other.

The ability to play cards at work thus created time away from the line, either through ‘skiving’ or working back on the line and represented the ability of the workers to demonstrate their autonomy at work. As Mars argues:

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<sup>505</sup> McKibbin, ‘Working-Class Gambling’, 147-78 (p.165).

<sup>506</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 2.

<sup>507</sup> McKibbin, ‘Working-Class Gambling’, 147-78 (pp. 166-71).

When the pie salesman understocks a supermarket, he is not, in his eyes, performing a criminal act; rather, he is demonstrating that he is on top of the job and that the job is not on top of him.<sup>508</sup>

Involvement in such activities was an important representation of the autonomy of the workers over themselves within the workplace. However, the illicit participation in these games also had important cultural and social functions for the workers involved which call into question distinct categories of intrinsic and extrinsic reward.

### 3.5 Theft of Items and Industrial Sabotage

The distinction can be made between the theft of time, which can be perceived as intangible and open to interpretation, and the theft or destruction of the firm's property or the production process, which is more easily identifiable.<sup>509</sup> This section focuses on examination of the primary evidence relating to such activity as well as a discussion on the meanings of such behaviour. In the shop steward diaries, relative to issues associated with the theft of time, there is little mention of theft of items or acts of sabotage. By comparison, within the narratives constructed in the oral history interviews, there are references to this behaviour in its many different forms.

#### 3.5.1 Theft of Items

In the free narrative section of his interview Andrew McIntyre, a skilled electrician who worked predominantly in the North Side paint plant, commented on theft within the plant:

The thievery went on all the time. Ye'd be workin at yer bench, people would roll car tyres by ye time after time after time, going out towards the back fence. Presumably the car tyres went over the fence. Ah don't know but just, they were comin from one side an goin out the other.<sup>510</sup>

The anecdote about tyres being stolen from the car factory by being bounced over the fence was reiterated in four of the interviews:

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<sup>508</sup> Gerald Mars, *Cheats at Work*, p. 176

<sup>509</sup> However, the acts involved in the theft of items would be bound up ultimately with the theft of time: 'Cos they hud tae have their wee bits to get out, and the wee bits to get back in. An the wee bits tae steal stuff ye know. Take the stuff through the fence an awe that.' Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>510</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

They used tae bounce, they used tae bounce tyres over the thing ... they were stealin them, bouncin right over the fence an the other guy at the other side ... away wi it. Some o the things. Oh dear me. Batteries. Hang the batteries round the big coat. Walkin oot wi batteries.<sup>511</sup>

Bouncing tyres over the fence may have been an activity that was obscured from management detection due to the absence of modern close circuit television at the plant. Furthermore, that this narrative is constructed in more than one interview arguably gives credence to this event occurring with the regularity that is claimed in the interviews. On the other hand, theft of tyres by bouncing them over the factory fence may have been an event that happened on a few instances and has taken on a legendary quality in the memories of the interviewees. The anecdote – stealing in such a blatant manner – optimises the ability of the workers to ‘get one over’ management, resistance to management control, and as such it is understandable that some workers would reconstruct this in their narrative. This is particularly true for an employee like McIntyre who, as was explored in the previous chapter, experienced a heightened awareness of management attempts to undermine his skill. In his interviews he exhibited a degree of pride in the ability of workers to get away with autonomous activities such as stealing.<sup>512</sup> He recalled the theft of other comparatively valuable items such as cable for its copper content. He witnessed an employee wrapping cable round a workmate, ‘There’d be people who’ll come in skinny an go out fat’.<sup>513</sup> The concealment of stolen goods around the body was similarly uncovered amongst car workers in Coventry by Paul Thompson.<sup>514</sup> There are accounts throughout the testimonies of theft that was achieved by concealing company property under heavy jumpers, parka jackets, down trouser legs or as Douglas McKendrick recounted, he was popular amongst fellow employees who used his empty whiskey bottles to steal car windscreen fluid.<sup>515</sup>

Staff narratives also contained reference to this type of mischief:

It is apparent that different types of theft took place aside from the theft of small car parts for personal use by workers who owned cars. Parts were also stolen to order: There is an auffae lot o things went on ... It was unbelievable. It really was ye know. You could put your order in fur a certain thing fur a car.<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>512</sup> A dominant element of Andrew McIntyre’s testimony was what could be called a ‘narrative of chaos’.

<sup>513</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>514</sup> Thompson, ‘Playing at being skilled men’, 45-69 (p. 64).

<sup>515</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>516</sup> Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1.

Foreman Dan Nelson identifies batteries, tyres and wheels as the types of things that would be stolen.<sup>517</sup> These are items that for people who owned a car would be items that could need replaced. Therefore, individual workers had a potential self-interest in stealing car parts for their own cars. Yet this kind of activity did not only involved material that would be used for cars, but could include material that could be sold on for other purposes:

Ah know that [theft] definitely went on ... I know for a fact it did cos I remember getting paint [laughs] from a certain person on the shop floor.<sup>518</sup>

Larger scale organised theft was also mentioned in the oral testimonies and this involved collusion with individuals that did not work within the plant:

Big lorries would come in, filled with spare parts an cushions or other bits an pieces that there would be fur the, the factory, and some of them would go out with complete cars inside them.<sup>519</sup>

Similarly Barry Stubbs recalled an incident where an employee conspired with a lorry driver and they worked together to remove items from the plant:

Then gettin them takin, up tae his garage. Apparently, they they caught him, an he finished up with three or four hundred pound o stuff in his garage. Batteries an eh, you name it.<sup>520</sup>

This is similar to Dan Nelson's account of the raid of a local petrol garage:

ah don't know how word got around but there must have been some sort of investigation and eh the police went in an raided the garage and of course, there was a pit, a service pit ... full of wheels, tyres, wheels with tyres on them, tyres on their own, batteries, all sorts of stuff. An ah remember, ah never saw anything about it but it was, everybody talked about it in the factory. So there was lots of theft went on.<sup>521</sup>

Either individuals or groups may have stolen and sold on goods to the garage, thus highlighting the economic motivations for such theft. A further example of materials from the plant being utilised for external commercial purposes is raised in McIntyre's testimony when he explains hearing a rumour concerning the use of plant material:

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<sup>517</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>518</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>519</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>520</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 2.

<sup>521</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

heard that the stores personnel at one point had been [pause] interviewed by the police an a lot o them got sacked, the high heidyins o that. Because they'd buildin houses elsewhere usin the, the company stores as the source o the materials. Whether they just signed off bits o paper or materials actually came in an back out ah don't know.<sup>522</sup>

Whilst Anna Anderson reasoned misbehaviour as a response to boredom and monotony within her testimony she also states:

A lot of em would go into the pubs, men pinching, pinching paint. Do you need any paint, do you need this, and do you need that? That went on, putting them under their coats and trying to get parts out that somebody wanted, and they would sell them.<sup>523</sup>

Therefore highlighting the potential extrinsic motivations for engaging in this type of activity.

Clerical staff may have appeared to have limited opportunity to steal materials from the plant however, Colin Jackson, who worked as a wages clerk, told of a scandal involving the wages department at Linwood and claimed that a wages clerk was taken to Paisley Sheriff Court responsible for the theft of unclaimed wages. This situation of unclaimed wages arose when employees had been off work, long term sick and were provided with an income tax rebate that would be made up in the wages department:

But an awful lot of people didn't realise they had money. So we'd go fur say three or four weeks, five weeks and this one hasnae turned up for this an he's got five envelopes lying here wi five pounds in each envelope an things like that ye know. An it was tempting for us in the wages department tae sae, "This, they haven't a clue". ... That was tempting for a few people.<sup>524</sup>

This was also recalled by Jackson's colleague, David Bright and referred to by McIntyre who claimed:

Wages Department they got raided by the police, they got carted off in Black Marias at one point for some fiddle goin on wi the wages, the [sic] disappeared.<sup>525</sup>

<sup>522</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>523</sup> Oral Testimony, Anna Anderson, Interview 1.

<sup>524</sup> Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1.

<sup>525</sup> 'Black Marias' is a colloquial term used to refer to police vans. Oral Testimony, David Bright, Interview 1 and Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

Therefore, whilst the references to theft occur predominantly in the interviews with semi- and unskilled workers and in the main refer to shop floor activity, this is not to say that members of staff were not involved in activities that constituted the theft of items from the company. Two of the interviewees that worked in the paint plant told of one of the management perks that consisted of having their cars re-sprayed. Paint sprayer Mark Ellison recalled working on his own on some night shifts as he was selected to spray cars owned by managers.<sup>526</sup> McIntyre provides a consistent account of managers' cars being painted on the night shift and goes so far as to accuse management of taking further advantage of this situation:

There was, some o the gaffers were presumably doin, eh all their friends' cars as well cos their, gaffers cars would come in regularly.<sup>527</sup>

Although this activity was seen as a 'perk' of the job afforded to managers, in essence it was theft of company property – paint. Ensuring a single paint sprayer completed this work during the night shift concealed the theft of the paint but was also theft of company time. Dan Nelson describes another example of an incidence of theft by a foreman in which he was implicated. Whilst working as a foreman, one night whilst leaving the staff car park another foreman drove into the back of his car:

He said, "I'll get ye a new engine lid." ... An ah mean, eventually he, he got me a new engine lid, an he took it out the factory his-self, ye know, in his own car an brought it to me an gave me it. A never ever fitted it to the car.<sup>528</sup>

Nelson identified the engine lid as stolen therefore he gave it away. He described how he did not want to refuse accepting the part from the other foreman:

Ah didn't want it. Ah didn't want to be connected with that. Eh, an ah couldn't refuse to take it cos he was such a nice chap ye know, an ah didn't want to offend him by sayin', "Oh no ah can't take that it's stolen property." ... An ah woudn't go an report him or anything, ah wouldn't get up to these sorts o things. ... it came out, it was all painted the right colour for the car an everything ... an a never fitted it. When ah sold the car ah still had the dent in it.<sup>529</sup>

This situation highlights that whilst there were some workers who perceived it to be acceptable to take items from the factory. Others perceived it as stealing. The foreman

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<sup>526</sup> Oral Testimony, Mark Ellison, Interview 1.

<sup>527</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>528</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>529</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

stole the part as it prevented him having to pay to repair the car or Nelson having to complete an insurance claim. What is interesting in Nelson's narrative is that when asked about searches he states that items stolen from the factory would have been, 'taken out in the back o cars' and then goes on to reason that:

it could only a been staff members' cars ah, ah would think, cos the workmen, the workers weren't allowed their cars into the factory...or maybe they were takin' them out in the back of trucks that were taken out the factory ye know.<sup>530</sup>

Even at the top-level staff there is suggestion of misbehaviour. In 1976 a case was brought to Glasgow Sheriff court in which a buyer at the Linwood plant was implicated. The Managing Director and Sales Director of Rotary Tools were charged with fraud and corruption including a charge concerning, 'alleged payments to officials of Chrysler Linwood.'<sup>531</sup> During the trial it was alleged that 'Mr McKay (buyer at the Chrysler Linwood plant) had demanded 5 per cent of the value of orders'.<sup>532</sup> These allegations were denied during the trial however, point to the potential for corruption amongst senior members of staff and management.

- Consequences

Within the Linwood plant there were security men that at times would undertake searches as employees vacated the building at the end of a shift. McIntyre also stated that security men patrolled the plant and the employee car park:

if anybody had a new or up to date radio or something the car should ah had, their number plate was taken an they were identified an, had tae explain, show receipts they'd actually bought these things somewhere otherwise it was their books.<sup>533</sup>

This indicates managerial attempts to prevent employee theft. These strategies were depicted as ineffective as the searches only occurred at particular times rather than frequently:

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<sup>530</sup> Oral Testimony, Dan Nelson, Interview 1.

<sup>531</sup> *The Times*, 2 June 1976.

<sup>532</sup> *The Times*, 5 June 1976.

<sup>533</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

Ah think when they knew something was missing, that's when the searches would happen. ... nine times out of ten time, they wouldn't have known because the wheels and tyres that get thrown over the fences are unbelievable.<sup>534</sup>

Or workers would avoid being caught by getting rid of the items when they became aware that a search was on:

There would be a search on, and everybody would know there would be a search on, there would be guys there with stuff tied to their body, goin out and they'd pull the string and it would drop down and they would all walk by and all the stuff would be lyin all over the ground.<sup>535</sup>

The threat of being caught stealing by a security guard was described as minimal in the testimonies of those who discussed theft. Searches did not occur frequently, employees stealing items could hide within the crowd passing through the factory gates and if people became aware that a search was happening would dump the stolen material.

There is a distinction between theft of items from the plant and other types of activity in that it could not be defended, unlike drinking at work and playing cards. It was a form of mischief that was tangible and would not be supported if taken to disciplinary procedure and according to the narratives usually resulted in instant dismissal. McGuinness claimed that theft occurred on a daily basis and when asked what would happen if someone was caught stealing:

Oh aye, aye, that would be the sack right away, sack right away, well, eh, because it's theft isn't it?<sup>536</sup>

David Munroe, who was an Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs' representative, was asked to represent a security man who had been stealing material from the plant and reported by his wife. His testimony highlights the limits of negotiation when theft was referred to the formal disciplinary process:

a security man who'd been, who'd been twenty-five year in the place ... "ye know ah cannae, ah can just go in there and plead yer case but, the first thing they'll say, 'you're here, your job is eh secure, security. You're here to make sure it's secure'." <sup>537</sup>

<sup>534</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>535</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>536</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>537</sup> Oral Testimony, David Munroe, Interview 1.

Despite theft being described by many of the interviewees as an activity that could not be defended, George Wilson adheres to the discourse of management's ineffectiveness due to the threat of industrial action. He claims that even when searches did occur the security guards deliberately avoided searching certain individuals:

They wid go fur the wan that looked awe right. Ah mean if they seen, somebody comin wi. Wi bulges oot here. They would let them go. That kind o, that kind o thing. Ye know. They didn't want involved wi it either.<sup>538</sup>

He extends this viewpoint to include foremen who 'turned a blind eye':

Aye, ah'd just shut the blind eye. Ah'm doin ma car, what can ye do? Tell the foreman? The foreman's no, he didnae want ae know. ... Ah'm no joking, there must have been three or four cars going oot, goin oot o there everyday in lieu [laughs].<sup>539</sup>

This complicit collective acceptance of theft as a common occurrence was defended by Douglas McKendrick. When asked what his relationship was like with the other workers in his sections he replied:

Quite good, quite good because they helped me tae steal, an' ah helped them tae steal ye know. Ye were, ye were all thieves, thieves under the skin so tae speak ye know.<sup>540</sup>

Here he defined his relationship with the workers in terms of helping each other out in stealing from the plant therefore, he remembers workers to be more active in aiding each other to steal. By implication his narrative is based on the notion of a shared collective value. Perhaps, if the security guards were employed from within the local community they deliberately sought to avoid uncovering theft as there may have been repercussions outside the car plant. So there appears to be a mixed picture on attitudes towards and reactions to theft. Some workers worked together to steal from the plant as an organised group activity, whereas other theft occurrences were on an individual level of which there was awareness, but the workplace solidarity did not necessarily extend towards defending a worker caught stealing.

Theft appears in the interviews to be an activity that could not be defended if taken through the disciplinary procedure and whilst some shop floor workers, security men and

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<sup>538</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>539</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson Interview 1

<sup>540</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

management may have ‘turned a blind eye’ for a variety of reasons, when dealt with at a disciplinary level this activity could not be defended and the support of the work group would not generally be expected. Douglas McGuinness told of not only having his tools stolen on numerous occasions, but also that he had had wages stolen from the pocket of his jacket at his workstation:

... it must have been somebody that has been working with me for a long time because it could only have been up to twenty people because they were the only ones that could work down to my line, you know, so it only could have been one of twenty people. I just couldn’t believe it.<sup>541</sup>

The solidarity of the immediate work group did not mean that workers were immune from being the victim of theft.

- Explanations

Mars’ work focuses on what he calls, ‘institutionalized pilferage’ and in particular the role of work groups and power relations in the workforce in this activity. He identifies the term ‘the fiddle’ as the name for activities through which the waiting staff in the hotel business can obtain monetary gain, which is perceived as a legitimate aspect to their wages. Thus, due to the low wages in the industry the act of pilferage is justified.<sup>542</sup> Likewise, Bellamy argues that theft from the Scottish shipyards was deemed acceptable due to the harsh conditions, long hours and low wages for shipyard workers. For the Linwood employees this is not a dominant factor in the justification of such activity. As McGuinness noted:

So the thing is you say it yourself why do they need to do it? The money that they’re getting, you say to yourself, why take the risk for four or five quid.<sup>543</sup>

By comparison the Linwood workers appeared to have had high wages<sup>544</sup> and it questions the need to steal for economic gain. Yet, the testimonies point to a range of theft extending to large-scale and organised theft, which suggests that there were workers involved in order to make extra money in addition to their wages. For workers who owned vehicles that had been produced at the plant, stealing parts was a method by which they could update the car model, repair or replace damaged or broken parts without the financial

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<sup>541</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>542</sup> Gerald Mars, ‘Hotel Pilferage: A Case Study in Occupational Theft’, in *The Sociology of the Workplace: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 200-10.

<sup>543</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 1.

<sup>544</sup> According to the narratives explored in Chapter Two.

outlay. This type of theft reflects an economic need as well as opportunistic attitude. Where considered within the context of the economic downturn in the 1970s and subsequent periods of short-time working and the three-day week, theft was a means of combating the instability of employment at Linwood.<sup>545</sup>

Theft is a topic mentioned in all but two interviews, ranging from people saying they knew of it but neither observed or were directly involved in it as an individual or collectively. To those who acknowledge theft as a common daily activity, it ranged from pilfering and ‘perks’ to entrepreneurial activity. None of the interviewees conceptualise these activities as financially detrimental to the company ergo the workforce and lends support to Mars’ argument that within larger organisations the incidence of theft is increased due to ‘the impersonality of large organisations’.<sup>546</sup> Within Linwood the scale of the plant in part meant that the availability and access to goods that could be utilised in the workers own vehicles or sold on, and could be small enough to remove from the site, contributed to the occurrence of theft at the plant. The testimonies of the Linwood workers reveal that amongst the semi-skilled process workers, attitudes held towards work, in terms of the priority of extrinsic rewards are mirrored in their attitude towards theft:

Aye, so? Repeats, there was nothin that way – Aye So? Take it what’s it got ae do wi me I’m no losing anything. It’s back to what I’m sayin as long as Ive got ma pay in ma hand on the Friday.<sup>547</sup>

What is obscured from the workers is the implications of their actions for the efficiency and profitability of the plant:

There was an awfae lot o thieving goin on. ... Its like, you’re lookin fur Mark, Marks and Spencers or Woolworths, some oh the guys came in there an thought it wis a shop. Just came in there tae steal awe the stuff oot an go away wi it. Oh it happened awe the time.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> The workers at the plant experience periods of short-time working and three-day week due to a period of economic recession, the Oil Crisis in 1973, falling domestic car sales and increased foreign competition. The economic impact on the interactions between workforce and management will be discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>546</sup> Mars, *Cheats at Work*, p. 157.

<sup>547</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>548</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry Stubbs, Interview 2.

### 3.5.2 Sabotage

There is limited evidence of forms of sabotage directly linked to the destruction of property or products in the plant. However, it seems likely there were less occurrences of this type of mischief, given the fewer references to this activity within the interview material and denial of such behaviour when interviewees were asked whether they had any memories of sabotage. One of the most recurrent examples of resistant behaviour was that of damage to cars in production:

We had a problem at the rear seats last night. Someone is Sabotaging [sic] the cushions by putting scissors or a knife through them. (We all have our suspicions as to who this is).<sup>549</sup>

This is in addition to attempts to stop mechanised track work:

The people on the conveyor lines; some o them were sensible, some of them were almost criminally lunatic. Ye got sometimes got somebody put an iron bar through the chain that was draggin the cars round, just tae stop the, the conveyor... to give themselves a break presumably cos of this mind numbing conveyor job. But the iron bar coulda jumped out an killed somebody, the cars would jump off the line somewhere else goin round a bend.<sup>550</sup>

- Consequences

If a worker was caught participating in this type of activity it is certain they would have been disciplined and likely they would have been fired however, due to a lack of documentary evidence on this form of mischief it is problematic to provide an analysis of the consequences of such action.

- Explanations

Paul Thompson stated that even for skilled workers who adapt to the working in the car industry, there is an atmosphere where:

Occasionally you'd get people that was absolutely browned off and they'd let fly at something so they chuck a spanner in the works, stop the track going and all have an hour off whiles they sorted it out.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 25 November 1977.

<sup>550</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

<sup>551</sup> Thompson, 'Playing at being skilled men', 45-69 (p. 60).

Thus suggesting that sabotage was an expression of dissatisfaction with work or that it was perceived as a measure by which workers could gain autonomy over the track and pace of work allowing them to have a break.

One of the few workers to recall sabotage was Archie Watson whose conception of sabotage mirrors the explanations offered by Blauner and Chinoy; that workers sought a break in their highly automated work:

A lot o things was eh, some people would stick spanners in the works, an stop it cos they wanted a break [...] oh aye that happened on more than one occasion. But oh nobody knew who it wis.<sup>552</sup>

This perspective is reiterated later in the same interview. When discussing the restriction on movement for men in the UMB and that permission had to be sought from the foreman before going to the toilet in order for relief cover to be provided he claims:

... but other people oot o badness, auch, stuck spanners in tracks tae, an the whole thing would awe clog up and the whole things wis stop. Now that happened eh, an awful lot eh I don't know how many times but eh, quite a lot.<sup>553</sup>

This narrative remains consistent in a second interview with Archie Watson where he claims that vandalism aimed at stopping the track was committed by 'Lots of people like that who just didn't want to work'. He also referred to sabotage such as the breaking of tools or missing things out as deliberate by 'people who wanted a break.'<sup>554</sup> Watson constructs a narrative in which the act of sabotage is depicted as a highly individual act that occurred regularly. Furthermore, while he highlights that such activity was motivated by a desire to achieve a break, therefore as an example of a worker seeking autonomy on the shop floor, he further links the activity with the character or personality of workers that were doing things out of 'badness'. This is similar to the testimony of Mike Berry in the CAB who claimed to observe workers:

mixin up a left and the right hand hinges and things like that. They would do it deliberately to stop the track at the finish up. This is where ye got the bad ones. Uhuh because they wanted a break, tae away an play cards or somethin like that. It happened in every factory. A, a longer break so that, ye, that ye, you had tae, it was your job tae make sure they didn't do tha.<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>553</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>554</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 2.

<sup>555</sup> Oral Testimony, Mike Berry, Interview 1.

While the source material suggests such examples were rare, when they did occur they seem to be an extreme response to systems of work in the plant where workers felt dislocated from and subordinate in the production of the end product. Stopping the line provided, ‘a resistance to the managerially desired rationalisation of a worker’s time.’<sup>556</sup> Indeed Blauner goes so far as to say there was something of a “Sabotage Attitude” amongst car workers; a view supported in the work of Ely Chinoy who found in his study of car workers that the workers were wishing for the track to break down, “break down, baby”, which he relates to the loss of control.<sup>557</sup> Similarly, Brown uses historical examples of workers that have employed more subtle tactics by which technology can be temporarily interrupted or by which workers will mediate the speed or consistency which they work at.<sup>558</sup>

However, the incidence of mischief, or more specifically sabotage, can be linked with change within the workplace. Specifically changes to systems of payment, or the organisation of work, can be met with labour force resistance in multiple forms rather than simply to take official organised action for instance in striking. There are examples of sabotage as a response to the application of scientific management in American car plants:

Workers recalled sabotage in the “friendly factory”, with cushions ripped out of car seats at final assembly, water put in gas tanks, and soda bottled placed in door pockets. Such practices disturbed some workers and further fractured the world of workers.<sup>559</sup>

Furthermore, Mike Berry’s quotation highlights that there may also be a personal dynamic underpinning the reasons for sabotage. Sabotage could be directed at particular foremen, inspectors or other workers and the consequence of a personal issue or something external to work.

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<sup>556</sup> Brown, *Sabotage*, p. 385.

<sup>557</sup> Chinoy, *Automobile Workers*, p. 71.

<sup>558</sup> Brown, *Sabotage*.

<sup>559</sup> John Bodnar, ‘Power and Memory in Oral History: Workers and Management at Studebaker’, *The Journal of American History*, 75 (1989), 1201-21 (p. 1213).

### 3.6 Conclusion and Implications for Industrial Relations

Three crucial points arise from above the above exploration of theft within the car plant: that of resistance to management control of labour on the shop floor; a deep-rooted apathy among the workforce indicative of a passive resistance to the work, and the complicity of the shop stewards and foremen often ‘turning a blind eye’ or obscuring such occurrences from senior management in order to avoid the official discipline procedure. At the start of this chapter there is reference to an account of the types of individuals at Linwood:

Only last week I overheard a young apprentice boasting he’d succeeded in getting through a shift in which he’d done only one hour’s work.<sup>560</sup>

While this is the observation by one individual it points to an attitude to work in which there is a conflict between the interests of the employee with management production strategies.

The discussion was situated in the context of theoretical models and debates on the effort-bargain, resistance and autonomy in the workplace. Workplace mischief is multi-layered however, the above cases highlight alternative ways in which workers extended autonomy during the hours that they were at work. The company had established time in the factory into distinct time periods as a means of structuring the working day and introduced systems to ensure employees turned up to work at allocated times. Yet, whilst the company may have purchased the labour power of employees, which was put to use within this structure, this did not ensure that the workers’ perception of their time and its use in the workplace concurred with that of management and that of the company. Hence it was subject to personal renegotiation and manipulation both on an individual level and at times collectively. At times, some of the managers would allow this to occur in order to avoid production stoppages.

The distinction is made here between the entire workforce and the company as the locus of control, because ‘perks’ such as re-sprays and repair of personal cars by management were as much organisational mischief as ‘bouncing tyres over the fence’, taking screw drivers and hammers from the shop floor. Despite the application of a variety of organisational and surveillance techniques the above accounts reveal a work culture in

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<sup>560</sup> PCL, Linwood Car Plant, *Sunday Post*, 21 December 1975.

which perks and pilfering were commonplace and highlight that misbehaviour is multi-faceted as well as an intrinsic dimension of the dynamic of control in the workplace.<sup>561</sup>

On the other hand, the chapter has also drawn attention to the variety of potential motivations for mischief. In exploring mischief in the Linwood car plant, the classic alienation thesis can be challenged, as can the notion of distinct intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The later are more fluid tendencies that at times can co-exist, overlap and be re-negotiated depending on the individual, group, or historical contingency. Types of mischief reflect the variety of ways in which autonomy can be sought. Furthermore, that when intrinsic rewards may be absent from work, workers can find other ways of exhibiting their autonomy or skill, exemplified in McIntyre's testimony:

There's one instance the, [pause] one o the small tools people eh, an his pal, had rigged up a calendar. It was a girlie calendar. An all the young lads were always quite pleased tae see girlie calendars above the work bench, ehm. ... But he'd rigged this calendar up if ye lifted a page it triggered a little switch and it squirted water at ye. So him an his, his mate always kept this reservoir filled up an any time ye got new people, there was regularly new people, comed along, lookin at the calendar, they would get soaked by this, windscreen washin thing that had been rigged up under the bench. It was always a laugh.<sup>562</sup>

Therefore, for workers coming from skilled background into Linwood, they adapted to this new working environment. The autonomy that was perhaps absent in work process, could still emerge in the work place. As Edward gross comments, workplace mischief highlights the:

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<sup>561</sup> For examples of workplace mischief in industries such as the customer service sector see Bain and Taylor, 'Entrapped by the "electrical panopticon"?' pp. 2-18, Keith Townsend, 'Electronic surveillance and cohesive teams: Room for resistance in an Australian call centre?', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 20 (2005), 47-59. The theft of time by employees has received media coverage due to the employees accessing social networking sites, such as Facebook, at work. See 'Facebook costs "businesses dear"', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/6989100.stm> Accessed 12 October 2008.

Greater attention has been directed recently to white-collar crime of which a prominent case was the 2002-3 investigation and law suits involving the Enron energy company and the Arthur Andersen accountancy firm. See 'The Enron Affair',

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/business/2002/enron/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/business/2002/enron/default.stm)

Accessed 12 October 2008.

Also see popular contemporary accounts Peter Elkind and Bethany McLean, *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise and Scandalous Fall of Enron* (England: Penguin, 2004 Edition) and Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (England: Robinson Publishing, 2005).

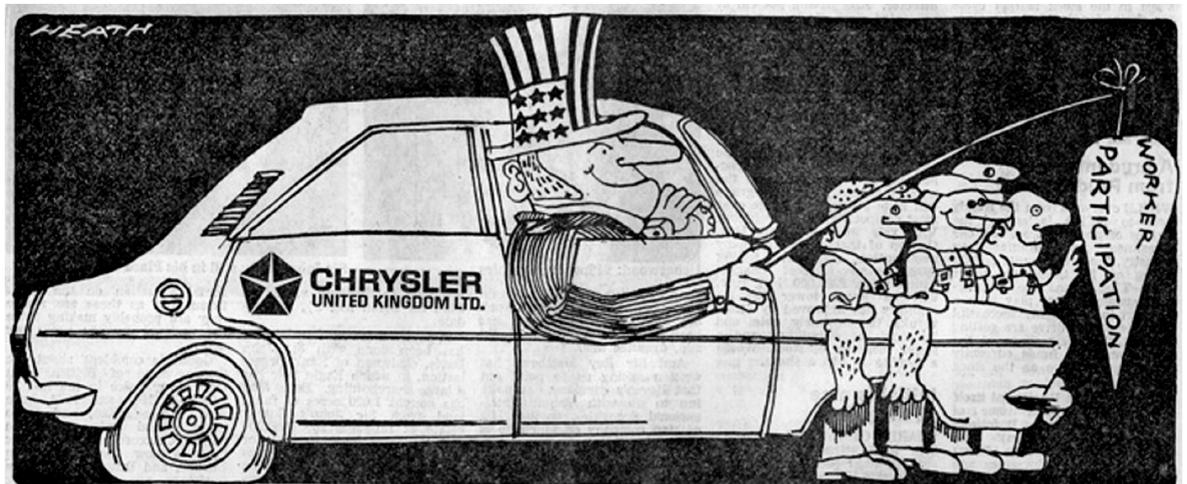
<sup>562</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 1.

innovativeness and originality of the human spirit. In spite of automation and computerization, containerization, and other technical changes, the worker is alive, and expressive.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Edward Gross, 'Fiddles and Crime: The Work That Deviants Do', Review Essay of *Cheats at Work* in *Contemporary Sociology*, 12 (1983), 610-11 (p. 611).

## Chapter Four



Source: FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 2, *The Sunday Times*, 11 May 1975.

## Chapter Four

### Managing Linwood: Company, Plant and Shop Floor

#### 4.1 Linwood Lives: Adam Fleming

Chrysler just lost the ability to manage its company right at the top and it filtered down. Good management trickles down, I'm sure they've taught you that. I was taught that sixty years ago. Eh, good management trickles down so Chrysler were a, never, they were always the third in the, in America. Eh and, when they moved over here, as I said, they hadn't learned the lesson of when in Rome do as the Romans do. Their products were, always sort of one behind, you know the, the market leader. Their eh [pause] their position in the market place therefore was affected so their, their revenue was affected so their investment was affected and it was a spiral. Eh, so I think it was a spiral of, of bad decisions and eh, and business acumen. Eh, it's interesting that eh, you know a few years ago, in fact I thought it was a disaster when the, Daimler bought Chrysler, and they merged and now they're de-merged because Chrysler's losing them a bomb. So Chrysler has never changed you know we're going back by forty odd years or thirty odd years ago. The [pause] whatever it is in the, in the eh, in the business acumen they just, they just won't make it. ... It nearly brought down Daimler-Benz. Eh so it wasn't Linwood and the bad practices industrial relations wise or other wise that closed Linwood, it was, it was the business [Chrysler] closed Linwood.<sup>564</sup>

This extract is from the testimony of Adam Fleming who was first employed in Linwood as an Industrial Engineer in the 1960s. He was promoted to management at Linwood, initially as Industrial Engineering Manager, then Production Superintendent in the Trim Shop before becoming Production Manager responsible for Body in White, Paint, Trim and Assembly. Finally he exchanged positions with American manager Art Hawkins to become Production Manager of the Power Train, otherwise known as the Unit Machine Block. Having previously worked in the American subsidiary Massey Ferguson, Fleming claimed he was surprised by the variety of work undertaken at the Linwood plant by Pressed Steel Company Limited, on the North Side of the plant, subsequently acquired by Rootes in 1966 and renamed Rootes (Pressings) Scotland. Under Pressed Steel ownership, the North side of the plant, as well as providing car bodies for Rootes production on the South side, was a significant producer of railway wagons, cabs for BMC commercial vehicles and car bodies for other car companies such as Volvo.<sup>565</sup> Fleming noted the manufacture of

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<sup>564</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

<sup>565</sup> TNA: PRO, BT 64/5338, Rootes Motors LTD., Background note by the Board of Trade, Previous action under the Monopolies and Mergers Act, 1965, 7 December 1966.

refrigerated lorries for a Danish contract as particularly innovative as he understood the Linwood plant to be amongst the first to produce refrigerated lorries in Britain.<sup>566</sup>

The diverse product lines at Pressed Steel in the 1960s reflect a manufacturing sector where there was a high degree of traditional engineering skills. The Rootes Group factory was originally built on the North Side to produce the new Hillman Imp in order to compete in the growing small-car market. Following the Chrysler takeover there were many changes to production at Linwood including a shift to solely vehicle manufacture, the cessation of the production of body panels for rival vehicle companies, as well as product rationalisation. Consequently, when Fleming left the Linwood plant in 1974 he had experienced working for three different firms at the site (Pressed Steel Company, Rootes (Pressings) Scotland Ltd, and Chrysler UK), as well as significant experience of different managerial positions. It is clear from Fleming's consistent narrative on his day-to-day experience of work at the car plant, both shop floor and managerial, developments at Linwood reflected major trends in industrial relations experienced in post-war Britain: initially industry-wide agreements initiated by employers' associations; followed by formalised plant-based collective bargaining, productivity and procedural agreements; and in the 1970s a shift towards greater centralisation and support for worker participation.<sup>567</sup> Such strategies and schemes introduced by successive management at the plant did little to defuse industrial tension on the shop floor. Therefore an exploration of developments at Linwood offers an opportunity to analyse the policies of firms that were attempting to negotiate a specific period in British industrial relations following the move away from formalised industry-wide agreements in the 1960s and prior to the development of human resource management in the 1980s and 1990s.

Managerial policies at Linwood were designed to improve industrial relations and lead to more effective management of the workforce, which involved responding to a variety of factors impacting on shop floor performance identified in Part One of this thesis. The emphasis in Part Two, is on management's exploration of mechanisms to improve shop floor relations. These foundered ultimately on key structural features of motor assembly in the 1960s and 1970s especially - competition, cost controls, market pressures

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<sup>566</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming Interview 1. The production of refrigerated wagons is also referred to by Jeffrey Torrington, PCL, PC 12561 L.W., 629.222 O/S, 'The French Disconnection', *Scotland on Sunday Magazine*, 18 April 1993.

<sup>567</sup> Such developments are detailed in Howard F. Gospel and Gill Palmer, *British Industrial Relations* (London: Routledge, 1983 [1993 edn]), Hugh Armstrong Clegg et al., *The Changing Nature of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979 [1980 edn]) and Paul Blyton and Peter Turnbull, *The Dynamics of Employee Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994 [2004 edn]).

– and the workforce desire for autonomy / control which is explored in the next chapter. Situated within the political-economic context of the post-war period with the focus on schemes introduced to increase productivity and improve industrial relations through consultation, co-operation and collaboration between management and workforce at Linwood, the aim of this chapter is to investigate the character of management at the plant and the apparent inconsistency between management rhetoric and reality in practice.

Within the chronology of the plant ownership, initially there will be a theoretical analysis of industrial relations, which will underpin examination of two significant strategies of labour management at the plant: the introduction of formal plant productivity bargaining in the 1960s, with the Brabloch Agreement, and moves in the 1970s to encourage worker participation and greater communication at the time of the Planning Agreement initiated in 1976. Consideration will be given to the distinction between joint consultation and joint decision-making, explored in the Employee Participation Programme and the Planning Agreement Working Party. Within the context of the Rescue Plan for Chrysler UK in 1975, a condition of the Labour government entering into a Planning Agreement with Chrysler, was for participation to be instigated in the form of a Planning Agreement Working Party. Using the rhetoric of consultation and working together with the workforce, employee participation in management decision-making and long-term planning suggests Chrysler seemed to have embraced notions of industrial democracy embodied in the Labour government's Social Contract – implying employee influence in the area of 'managerial relations'.<sup>568</sup> This projected a different style of management from that of the previous firms at the Linwood plant and saw the establishment of four management / union representative committees with the task of devising a short-term operational strategy to tackle Chrysler UK's financial problems. Yet changes in styles of management and attempts at industrial democracy through participation schemes did little to counter communication, consultation and decision-making asymmetries at the plant, as managerial policy was additionally shaped by historical contingencies meaning decisions made in response to wider market forces at times served to undermine a more consultative style of management.

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<sup>568</sup> Alan Fox, *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations*, Research Paper 3, (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 4, p. 6, p. 7.

## 4.2 Structures and Styles of Management at Linwood

### 4.2.1 Theoretical Framework of the Discussion

Successive managements at the Linwood plant utilised the rhetoric of co-operation and attributed industrial relations issues to small pockets of deviant workers. In his research paper for the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations chaired by Lord Donovan, Alan Fox identified this interaction as a unitary frame of reference within an industrial organisation whereby management is regarded as the only valid source of authority controlling the activities of a workforce with whom there shared commonality of interest in achieving the aims of the company. Diametrically opposed to this perception is the pluralist frame of reference, which Fox argued accommodated the existence of divergent and oppositional 'orientations' of workers and management – acknowledged by the management. The pluralist frame of reference accommodates conflict as an inevitable part of the interaction between different interest groups whereas in the unitary frame of reference, conflict is the result of confusion over the common aims or due to 'agitators'.<sup>569</sup> At Linwood the interaction between management and workforce was complex and concurs with John Eldridge's claim that there is a 'false consciousness' within British Management.<sup>570</sup> Although management at the plant appeared to support organisational pluralism and facilitate employee participation it retained unitary values. Indeed Jim Phillips has highlighted that unitary values and pluralist policies can co-exist within a single business institution.<sup>571</sup> The divergent conception of industrial relations was compounded by management's acceptance of union contribution to wage rate negotiations and bargaining – identified by Fox as market relations – but resistance to worker involvement in the area of managerial relations such as decisions on strategy and deployment of labour perceived as encroachment on the authority of management.<sup>572</sup> Within Linwood the style of management is characterised by a distinction between the rhetoric associated with intent to resolve industrial relations issues versus the reality of responding to wider economic and market forces.

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<sup>569</sup> Alan Fox, *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations*, Research Paper 3, (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 5, p. 8, p. 12.

<sup>570</sup> John Eldridge, 'A Tract for the Times: Joan Woodward's *Management and Technology* (1958)', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* 23/24 (2007), 181-207 (p. 197).

<sup>571</sup> Jim Phillips, 'Business and the limited reconstruction of industrial relations in the UK in the 1970s', *Business History* 51 (2009), 801-816.

<sup>572</sup> Alan Fox, *Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations, Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations*, Research Paper 3, (London: HMSO, 1966), p. 4, p. 6, p. 7.

The gap between the rhetoric and reality of industrial relations was shaped within the context of political economy and specific historical contingencies. The shift towards more interventionist economic management from the late 1940s meant greater interaction between government and industry as successive governments sought to address balance of payment deficits and control inflation.<sup>573</sup> Consequently, interactions between management and workforce at Linwood, underpinned by the humanisation of capitalism, articulate with Ramsay's cycles of control.<sup>574</sup> Hence, cycles are linked to the conditions which make challenges to management authority periodic. For example, Rootes management adopted pluralist measures during boom periods when wage concessions could be used to ensure productivity increases, thereby allowing management to evade Incomes Policies through productivity bargaining. In the 1970s Chrysler management pursued participation in an attempt to re-orientate the attitudes of employees during a period of economic recession, the Oil Crisis in 1973, falling domestic car sales, increased foreign competition and continued trade union strength. For Jim Phillips the effects of sustained unitary values within management 'compromised' pluralist industrial relations in practice and their impact on industrial organisation.<sup>575</sup> However, due to the apparent disconnect between rhetoric and reality it is more beneficial to conceive of the nature of management policy at Linwood as 'pragmatic pluralism'. This is evident in management attempts to facilitate improvements using emergent and indeed fashionable industrial relations policies, such as worker participation in the 1970s and, productivity bargaining in the 1960s, and seeking these through agreements with workforce representatives. Yet whilst these pluralist elements are apparent in such procedures, the evidence explored in this chapter points to the pragmatic force within management style when agreements were abandoned because significant – from the perspective of management – concerns intervened related to changing market conditions. Productivity driven by the cyclical nature of capitalism maintains asymmetrical power relations between management and workforce.

Fleming used the notion of culture to conceptualise the styles of management at Linwood in which asymmetrical industrial organisation is evident. He described Rootes and Pressed Steel Fisher as the 'British culture'; elaborating that it was, 'a sort of

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<sup>573</sup> Stephen Wilks, *Industrial Policy and the Motor Industry*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and Colin Crouch, *The Politics of Industrial Relations*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

<sup>574</sup> Harvie Ramsay, 'Cycles of Control: Worker Participation in Sociological and Historical Perspective', *Sociology*, 1977; 11, 481-506.

<sup>575</sup> Jim Phillips, 'Industrial Relations, Historical Contingencies and Political Economy: Britain in the 1960s and 1970s', *Labour History Review*, 72 (2007), 215-233 (p. 217).

gentlemen's culture'.<sup>576</sup> A hierarchical dichotomous structure based on traditional top down channels of communication and enforced managerial authority with at times dramatic negative recourse, such as dismissal of Rootes entire assembly line in May 1964 in response to industrial action over a bonus scheme.<sup>577</sup> It was a style of management that prompted Baddon to note that the 'abrasive side of management in the north side of the factory impressed Chrysler'.<sup>578</sup> Both Pressed Steel and Rootes adopted the multidivisional form (M-Form) of company organisation, which reflected broad developments in modern business enterprise and management in the UK that emulated US businesses. The M-Form, intrinsic in American big business from the beginning of the twentieth century, consisted of decentralised vertical organisation along the lines of separate divisions co-ordinated by a Head Office. From the inter-war period there are examples of some larger British firms such as ICI that adopted such structures, but it was not until the 1970s there was a shift towards the 'visible hand'<sup>579</sup> style of management commonplace in modern enterprise in the US as a growing number of British firms replicated and adapted the M-Form.<sup>580</sup> For Fleming the shift to Chrysler management created a clash of cultures:

I mean eh, it's a culture American way of life, is a culture different from the Scottish way of life, eh we, we have. I, you know what, when I was with the, the Rover company I mean BMW took over running of you know the, well they bought the Rover out. Eh, what in 1992. And you know gave it up x number of years' later. That was a clash of cultures as well.<sup>581</sup>

It was an unfamiliar style of management implemented by American personnel, and he attributed subsequent problems that arose in the plant to cultural differences that exacerbated prevailing tensions between management and workforce. How labour relations were conducted at Linwood was determined by management's perceptions of its formal relationship with the workforce.

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<sup>576</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

<sup>577</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>578</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Locker, Card Index.

<sup>579</sup> Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business*, (Belkano Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), History e-book project, ACLS Humanities E-Book, URL <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.00628.0001.001>, p. 12, p. 598. Chandler argues that this was due to British management structures continuing successfully within the domestic market therefore, there was no stimulus for a managerial revolution in the same way as in the US.

<sup>580</sup> Howard F. Gospel, 'The management of labour', in Chris Wrigley (ed), *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1939-1979: Industrial Relations in a Declining Economy* (UK: Edward Elgar, 1996), 84- 106 p. 86. Wilson argues that this did not necessarily mean great organisational changes. Despite the argument that further business expansion was generated through geographical dispersal, the development of multi-product lines and diversification, he argues that adoption of the M-Form gave the impression that significant changes had occurred in British business practices where in reality, apart from size, little change was evident. John F. Wilson, *British business history, 1720-1994* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 216-223.

<sup>581</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming Interview 1.

#### 4.2.2 Pressed Steel - 'Autocratic and Authoritarian'

Prior to Rootes building the South Side of the plant in 1960, Pressed Steel Company Limited had purchased the Beardmores factory at the Linwood site in 1947. The effects of post-war consumerism had created a demand for luxury items including cars and as Pressed Steel was a company associated with the development of growth industries such as car manufacturing, strong political pressure from Sir Stafford Cripps prevented the factory remaining under Beardmores.<sup>582</sup> With Board of Trade Finance Pressed Steel built a car body stamping facility at Linwood in 1959.<sup>583</sup> For a company with a style of management described by Bain and Lockyer as 'autocratic and authoritarian' – exemplified by the dismissal of the 'entire labour force' in 1948 in response to claims for pay parity with Cowley rates<sup>584</sup> – the task of dealing with expansion of the labour force, a skills shortage,<sup>585</sup> and industrial organisation based on de-centralised collective bargaining, embodied in a system of 'informal' industrial relations, was problematic as trade unions were in a strong bargaining position due to full employment. Upon assuming ownership of the plant Pressed Steel, federated to the Scottish Engineering Employers' Association (hereafter SEEA), sought information on industrial relations and local wage rates, and subsequently began consultation with the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Nevertheless, negotiations over piece rates continued to take place in an informal fashion on the shop floor; a process which Rootes later described in evidence to the Robertson Court of Inquiry reporting in 1968, as 'crude' and 'under constant threat of withdrawal of labour.'<sup>586</sup> The strong bargaining position of trade unions meant management was more likely to concede wage claims and trade union demands to avoid industrial action and prevent skilled workers seeking higher wages elsewhere. This contributed to over-manning, the continuation of restrictive practices and weak management.<sup>587</sup> This implies a pluralist pattern of labour management in existence at Pressed Steel. One former-employee commented on the competitive nature of sectional wage claims:

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<sup>582</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, *Making Cars and Marginalising the Workplace Organisation: Management industrial relations strategy at Linwood*, Peter Bain and Cliff Lockyer, British Trade Unionism Conference 1997.

<sup>583</sup> Wilks, *Industrial Policy*, p.77.

<sup>584</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, *Making Cars and Marginalising the Workplace Organisation: Management industrial relations strategy at Linwood*, Peter Bain and Cliff Lockyer, British Trade Unionism Conference 1997.

<sup>585</sup> Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) under the Chairmanship of J. N. Toothill, *Report on the Scottish Economy*, (Edinburgh, 1961), pp. 112-3.

<sup>586</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Evidence for Government Court of Inquiry, Rootes Motors Scotland Ltd., 31 May, 1968.

<sup>587</sup> John Sheldrake, *Industrial Relations and Politics in Britain, 1880-1989* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991), p. 62.

And when it came to negotiating salaries every year the, the production workers would go for an increase and they would get it, or they would negotiate for it, and eventually get it but then you had, the the skilled workers sitting there not had an increase, not getting an increase and em, so again then they would maybe go on strike ... And tae me, they, the managers should have been working together with the unions at the same time, and make sure they were both treated the same and then if the engineers went they got a wee extra, something extra, the unskilled guys 'wait a wee minute we want this' and this, this back to and fro all the time.<sup>588</sup>

Bill Stewart's testimony indicates an inconsistent system of pay negotiations that arose because Pressed Steel had to adapt to changes in production and the labour force that had grown from 250 workers in 1947 to over 3000 by 1968, as well as a requirement for skilled workers.<sup>589</sup> These changes were linked to the transition from the production of railway rolling stock to car body production in 1959, followed by further building expansion in 1962 to provide the manufacturing capacity for BMC lorry cabs and car bodies for the Hillman Imp in the Rootes factory on the South Side. Thus while Pressed Steel adhered to SEEA agreements, there was a parallel system of industrial relations whereby sectional wage-claims led to customary and informal shop floor bargaining.

With such changes management sought to address industrial relations issues and its growing concern over rising piece rates throughout its branch plants. The company was aware of the inadequacies in the existing management structure to effectively cope with influences on the payment system and wage negotiations. In a letter to the Board of Trade R.T. Chapman, the Personnel Director of Pressed Steel, commented that the company sought to improve the system of payment: 'We felt that the situation demanded fresh examination by minds untrammelled by years of custom and practice'.<sup>590</sup> Consequently, the company approached Emerson Consultants who had been responsible for the implementation of the Productivity Agreements in 1960 at the Esso Fawley Refinery.<sup>591</sup> The inclusion of the Emerson's report on Linwood is useful because it spreads further light on structures of management at the plant as well as the effectiveness of new pay schemes and impact on productivity.

<sup>588</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Stewart, Interview 1.

<sup>589</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 4.

<sup>590</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, Letter dated 9 December 1963 addressed to Mr. Wilson (Regional Controller), Board of Trade, Cromwell House, London from R.T. Chapman (Group Personnel Director). He had been introduced to Mr. W.W. Allen, MD of Emerson in Europe, through Mr. Duncan Dewdney, Managing Director of Esso.

<sup>591</sup> This influential productivity agreement was one of the earliest extensive productivity agreements and is detailed in Allan Flanders, *The Fawley Productivity Agreements*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).

### 4.2.3 Emerson Management Consultants

Commencing in October 1962 the comprehensive six-month study of Pressed Steel recorded accusations of an inconsistent, inept and authoritarian style of management at Pressed Steel's Linwood plant, levied at plant management from shop floor and supervisory staff.<sup>592</sup> Despite the high labour turnover rate of sixty-two per cent in 1961, the personnel structure and staffing was inadequate for the size of plant and the Personnel Department played no role in creating an induction procedure or follow-up assessments of labour deployment. The absence of a manager with the specific remit of industrial relations and 'training of supervision and line management in the handling of men and the organisation of work' meant that the Personnel Manager was responsible for industrial relations issues.<sup>593</sup> The problems detailed in the Emerson study reflect the dominant narrative in management literature, as well as substantiating observations in the Donovan Commission; that despite increasing specialisation, and a growth in the area of personnel management, many such managers lacked formal training and specialised job functions.<sup>594</sup> The absence of managerial role and ad hoc style are indicative of the lack of importance assigned to labour management by Pressed Steel in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Emerson sought to bring about a shift from the existing defensive and authoritarian style of management through structures that would facilitate co-operation and consultation:

Perhaps the most pressing need is to instil an acceptance that conferring does not imply subordination or incompetency; that communicating does not imply the incapacity to make decisions, does not weaken a manager's position.<sup>595</sup>

This necessitated systems of dialogue between line management and senior management, as well as within line management and supervision. While there is little evidence in the source material of the development of personnel policies at Pressed Steel, it appears that attempts were made to improve communication with different layers of management including department heads, superintendents and foremen, and in the provision of

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<sup>592</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, 'Personnel Management at The Linwood Plant of The Pressed Steel Company Limited', Prepared by Dr. R.A. Willett, The Emerson Consultants Limited, London, November 1962.

<sup>593</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, 'Personnel Management at The Linwood Plant of The Pressed Steel Company Limited', Prepared by Dr. R.A. Willett, The Emerson Consultants Limited, London, November 1962.

<sup>594</sup> Gospel and Palmer, *British Industrial Relations*, p. 88.

<sup>595</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, 'Personnel Management at The Linwood Plant of The Pressed Steel Company Limited', Prepared by Dr. R.A. Willett, The Emerson Consultants Limited, London, November 1962.

information regarding managing workers which, along with implementation of a new payment scheme, formed key elements in the Linwood Plan.<sup>596</sup>

#### 4.2.4 The Linwood Plan (1963)

The Emerson report had drawn attention to a potential source of tension for labour management at the plant as being the relatively low wage rates at Pressed Steel in comparison to the high day rate received by Rootes workers in the adjacent factory:

A way must be found to reconcile the differences in rates and systems between Rootes and Pressed Steel and, more importantly, to create some means whereby the devastatingly bad management, that allowed the seeds of such a situation even to germinate, will be avoided in the future.<sup>597</sup>

The system of Payment by Results (hereafter PBR) was no longer deemed to be an efficient method of payment, largely due to inflationary wage claims resulting in competitive claims between sections and loss of managerial control in the context of increased bargaining power. Consequently, the Linwood Plan was implemented on 28 September 1963 as a year-long trial to be followed by the introduction of the scheme in other Pressed Steel plants. The main points of the plan were the reorganisation of the grading structure which saw piecework replaced by high day rates accompanied by a plant-wide bonus scheme based on the differential between labour costs per car to sales ratio. Collective bargaining continued as unions were involved in negotiating the basic rates of pay and then a factory bonus rate was applied to these rates.<sup>598</sup>

Prior to the Linwood Plan, consultation with trade unionists occurred through a Works Council which was described in the 1968 Court of Inquiry as ‘purely a consultative body and did not discuss wages and conditions’.<sup>599</sup> The style of management at that time meant that in practice, the Work Council was a vehicle for management to dictate on general issues rather than a forum for negotiation and worker input. The Linwood Plan aimed to redress this and facilitate better consultation with the introduction of a stratified managerial structure including thirty-four departmental Productivity Committees that

<sup>596</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, ‘Good Management Under the Linwood Plan’, 28 January 1964.

<sup>597</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, ‘Personnel Management at The Linwood Plant of The Pressed Steel Company Limited’, Prepared by Dr. R.A. Willett, The Emerson Consultants Limited, London, November 1962.

<sup>598</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, *New Society*, ‘The Scanlon Plan – A New Departure’, 17 October, 1963.

<sup>599</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 5.

consisted of one supervisor and two employees, which reported to a Steering Committee responsible for discussing employee suggestions for improving efficiency.<sup>600</sup> Furthermore, a bonus scheme linked to productivity was envisaged as an inducement to encourage employees to suggest ways of improving productivity.<sup>601</sup> There was a strong unitary sentiment to this new incentive scheme as it promoted the need for the ‘co-operative efforts’ of the workforce in order for everyone to gain from the bonus scheme. It represented a shift from existing individualistic approaches to maximising earnings under PBR, and reported as bringing about changes in attitudes at the plant, engendering co-operation between workers and management.<sup>602</sup> This policy move by Pressed Steel was depicted in the contemporary press as a pioneering scheme in employer-management relations: ‘the management, shop stewards and men seem to be working towards a degree of “fellowship” and joint enterprise which would surprise many men in industry’.<sup>603</sup>

Initially the scheme appeared to be successful with improvements in productivity, substantial reduction in labour turnover, fewer strikes and despite full employment in the region, the company gained control over wages. The crucial weakness in the Linwood Plan was it was a reactive approach by the company to under-productivity as bonus increases were wholly dependent on sustained demand for cars. As highlighted by Jim Phillips, ‘uneven growth’ was central to the nature of industrial relations at Linwood,<sup>604</sup> which is substantiated by experiences at Pressed Steel. During cycles of low demand for car bodies, such as during Spring 1964 and Winter 1965, bonus payments were limited and the plan became unpopular with the workforce. Under these conditions managerial authority was challenged as trade unions responded with demands for wage increases.<sup>605</sup> Furthermore, the reality of consultation saw workers input remain at shop floor level as Productivity Committees did not provide for employee involvement in decision-making or the implementation of suggestions. Indeed, Peter Griffiths, MD of the Rootes Linwood plant in

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<sup>600</sup> Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979 [1980 edn]), p. 152. In the UK Joint Production Committees were introduced in the 1940s, and marked the beginning of a process by which worker representatives were incorporated into joint consultation procedures.

<sup>601</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, *New Society*, ‘The Scanlon Plan – A New Departure’, 17 October 1963.

<sup>602</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, ‘Memorandum of Understanding between Pressed Steel Company Limited (Linwood Works) and Amalgamated Engineering Union; Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers; Association of Supervisory Staffs; Executives and Technicians; Clerical and Administrative Workers’ Union; Draughtsmen’s and Allied Technicians Association; Electrical Trades Union; Heating and Domestic Engineers’ Union; National Union of Sheet Metal Workers and Coppersmiths; National Union of Vehicle Builders; Plumbing Trades Union; United Patternmakers’ Association and Linwood Office Committee’, p. 1.

<sup>603</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 4, *The Financial Times*, Wednesday March 11 1964.

<sup>604</sup> Phillips, *Industrial Politics*, p. 29.

<sup>605</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Evidence for Government Court of Inquiry, Rootes Motors Scotland Ltd., 31 May, 1968.

1964, commented that many employee suggestions were ‘left pending and unresolved far too long’.<sup>606</sup> Thus, with fluctuating demand for cars, the Linwood Plan could only ever function as a temporary measure to secure workforce compliance in an attempt to increase productivity and did little to improve labour management.

The managerial policy of encouraging worker-management committees and processes of consultation in effect comprised a coercive strategy to increase productivity because managerial rhetoric did not synchronise with the reality of the ‘joint enterprise’. Management at Pressed Steel utilised the rhetoric of consultation to facilitate dialogue on workers’ knowledge and skills that could then be used to inform work studies in an effort to improve operational effectiveness, and workforce compliance gained by the use of monetary incentives to assuage industrial conflict. Underpinning much of the conflict was the company’s unwillingness to resolve the issue of pay parity with the workers’ counterparts in England, which negated monetary incentives devised by management. Pay parity was also a significant factor for the management of Rootes when the company commenced operations in 1960 and formally opened in 1963 in what became known as the South Side of the Linwood Car Plant – across a dual carriageway from the Pressed Steel Company on the North Side. Like Pressed Steel, Rootes had access to a workforce with a similar skill background. In many respects the style of labour management at Pressed Steel was in accord with that of Rootes in its plants in England. A strong unitary sentiment was indicated in comments by Geoffrey Rootes when he attributed strikes to the ‘subversive action and the increasing influence of extremists’.<sup>607</sup> This analysis will now examine initiatives at Rootes’ Linwood plant to indicate that these also were shaped by pragmatic pluralism and that there is further evidence of disparity between the rhetoric and reality of Rootes’ industrial relations policy.

#### 4.3 Rootes – ‘handicaps of geography’

At the official opening ceremony of Rootes Motors Scotland Ltd there was acknowledgement of the need for cultural sensitivity to management of the Scottish workforce. Geoffrey Rootes spoke of the importance of ensuring senior managers at Linwood were either Scottish or well informed on ‘Scottish conditions’ and that the

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<sup>606</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 3, Draft copy of ‘Good Management under the Linwood Plan’ by Peter Griffiths to all managers at Linwood. Dated, 29 January 1964.

<sup>607</sup> Cited in Phillips, *Industrial Politics*, p. 29

majority of supervisory staff and junior management should be Scottish.<sup>608</sup> The absence of documentary evidence makes it difficult to assess Rootes' adherence to this commitment in the earlier days of the factory. However, unlike Pressed Steel, Rootes adopted the broader pattern of specialisation within British management with the appointment of an Industrial Relations Manager and provided courses for junior management and supervisors on 'modern techniques of communication'.<sup>609</sup> The company responded to indiscipline amongst the workforce and restrictions on output by facilitating greater training for operators and supervisory staff, which imply support for a pluralist framework in Rootes Linwood factory.<sup>610</sup> But company rhetoric was divergent from reality, apparent in the company's managerial strategy on establishment of the plant at Linwood.

#### 4.3.1 The Brabloch Agreement (February 1960)

Within the Transport Museum collection there is an unsigned 'Memorandum of Agreement between: 'Messrs Rootes Motors Ltd; the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation; the Amalgamated Engineering Union; the Electrical Trades Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union'. The document was drawn up at the time of the signing of the Brabloch Agreement on establishment of Rootes at Linwood and it gives an idea of the company's intentions towards labour management during the settling in period.<sup>611</sup> Rootes indicated that it sought to improve industrial relations perceived as being achievable by the implementation of strategies outlined in the agreement. Three of the clauses detailed in this memorandum are outlined below:

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<sup>608</sup> RAC, 'Speeches made on the occasion of the Luncheon at the Official Opening of the Linwood Factory of Rootes (Scotland) Limited by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., K.T., on Thursday, 2 May, 1963.

<sup>609</sup> RAC, 'Speeches made on the occasion of the Luncheon at the Official Opening of the Linwood Factory of Rootes (Scotland) Limited by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., K.T., on Thursday, 2 May, 1963.

<sup>610</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>611</sup> The researcher has been unable to locate a copy of the signed Brabloch Agreement, however it is likely this Memorandum is the agreement. ML, Linwood Box 10, Memorandum of Agreement between: 'Messrs Rootes Motors Ltd; the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation; the Amalgamated Engineering Union; the Electrical Trades Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union'.

2. WAGE RATES AND EARNINGS [sic] will be in line with those already established in the district.

4. ... The Company regards as a managerial right the use of the techniques of work study and work measurement and the use of the shop in the normal way in operating such techniques.

6.... The Company has the right to preserve the mobility of its labour force within the factory.<sup>612</sup>

From these three points the company's intention to exert its influence over labour management, cutting across central tenets of trade unionism in the West of Scotland, is evident. Like Pressed Steel the company sought to control wage rates and as early as November 1960, prior to establishing the factory at Linwood, approached the SEEA to ascertain 'wage rates in the area'.<sup>613</sup> Crucially, for Rootes the workforce at Linwood was a source of cheap labour so it implemented a system of payment at Linwood that differed from that in its other factories. In addition, Rootes initially paid semi-skilled operators at the Linwood plant low rates in comparison to industry pay levels, which it justified as being due to the fact, 'most of the labour would initially be inexperienced in car assembly and unaccustomed to the pace of work'.<sup>614</sup> Management assumed that workers' acceptance of the new pay system was dependent upon the training of operators to communicate more effectively with the workforce. Although trade unions were involved in the negotiations on terms of employment, Rootes was able to take advantage of local rates that were lower than those of the company's Coventry workforce as the trade unions involved in negotiations were 'eager to secure exclusive recognition and recruitment rights'.<sup>615</sup> Consequently under the Brabloch Agreement Scottish unions allowed Rootes to implement a regional rate structure that meant, although wages at the plant were higher than existing regional rates, until July 1976 workers at Linwood were paid less than their counterpart Rootes workers in the Midlands. It was a contentious issue at parent company level with forty-nine wage claims based on parity with Coventry rates cited in the report to the Donovan Commission in 1966, and continued to impinge on wage negotiations after the company took over the Pressed Steel factory to form Rootes Motors Ltd.<sup>616</sup> Management

<sup>612</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, 'Memorandum of Agreement between Messrs Rootes Motors Ltd, The Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation and the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Electrical Trades Union, and the Transport and General Workers' Union', dated 2 February 1960.

<sup>613</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Letter addressed to D.G.N. Hannay, Company Secretary of the Rootes Group from Secretary of the Scottish Engineering Employers' Association, 17 November 1960.

<sup>614</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>615</sup> Jon Murden, 'Demands for Fair Wages and Pay Parity in the British Motor Industry in the 1960s and 1970s', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 20 (2005), 1-27 (p. 6).

<sup>616</sup> Murden, 'Fair Wages', p. 8.

justified the disparity as necessary due to the higher costs associated with manufacturing in Scotland.

As noted in Chapter Two, Rootes had been directed to Linwood by the Government as part of a major regional policy tool to tackle unemployment associated with the decline of heavy industries in the west of Scotland; thus the company expected a compliant workforce that would accept conditions of employment, including wage levels that were lower than in Rootes' English factories and not open to negotiation due to the Brabloch Agreement.<sup>617</sup> There was the assumption that as Rootes – beset by the 'handicaps of geography' and the 'increased distribution costs' related to opening a plant north of the border<sup>618</sup> – was providing regional employment, the move should be appreciated regardless of the rates of pay that were offered.<sup>619</sup> This was problematic from the beginning on two accounts: first, the terms of wage structures at the new plant were set at local levels as part of the Brabloch Agreement signed by the unions, which had not been in a position of power to negotiate these terms. As every employee had to be a member of a union as a condition of employment,<sup>620</sup> wages rates were a fait accompli, determined by management, and like the experience of workers at Pressed Steel, were linked to prevailing economic conditions and demand for cars. As noted above the early 1960s experienced a rise in post-war consumerism with increasing demand for Hillman Imps and the need to bring Linwood up to full capacity production of 2500 cars a week, which forced the company to concede wage claims.<sup>621</sup> Plant management agreed to wage claims on condition that planned productivity levels were met, yet despite the incentive of a pay rise these levels were not always met.<sup>622</sup> Secondly, the dominance of management in setting pay structures cut across key elements of working culture that had dominated the heavy industries in the west of Scotland – crucially collective bargaining and negotiation over piece rates, which negated Geoffrey Rootes' claims of sensitivity to 'Scottish conditions' that would shape

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<sup>617</sup> Documented in Sims, and Wood, *Car Manufacturing* and Phillips, *Industrial Politics*.

<sup>618</sup> RAC, Speeches made on the occasion of the Luncheon at the Official Opening of the Linwood Factory of Rootes (Scotland) Limited by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., K.T., on Thursday, 2 May, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>619</sup> Phillips, *Industrial Politics*, p. 30.

<sup>620</sup> *Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations 1965-1968*, (London: HMSO, June 1968), p. 25 and FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Card Index.

<sup>621</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June 1966.

<sup>622</sup> These wage claims were granted subject to rises in productivity that in some cases were not obtained. July 1963 a wage increase was granted on basis that productivity would be increased to 1,450 cars a week by August. The productivity increase was not achieved but a wage increase was granted in October 1963 on the premise of an increase to 2,000 cars a week. The workforce failed to meet this target and so there was no increase given at a wage review in November. FAI, Box Seven, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

management of the Scottish workforce. This dictatorial style of management is similarly evident in management responses, such as the laying-off of the entire assembly line in May 1964 due to industrial action over the bonus scheme.<sup>623</sup> This reaction is likely to have been shaped by high demand and a pressure to maximise production at this time however, such evidence does not suggest a managerial policy that was sensitive to Scottish work culture and practice in industrial relations.

In the period between the Brabloch Agreement in 1960 and when the company gave evidence to the Donovan Commission in June 1966, the system of payment and accompanying wage structure formed the basis of ninety per cent of negotiations with management.<sup>624</sup> The interaction between management's resistance to pay parity demands and the erratic compliance of the workforce meant it was period characterised by a series of attempts to introduce bonus / incentive schemes linked to productivity, and the application of scientific management techniques in order to establish rated norms. The latter was a significant area of conflict for a workforce used to the PBR or piece-rate system as it became further removed from control of pay structures.

#### 4.3.2 Scientific Management: Work Study

It is clear from clauses Four and Six in the memorandum that Rootes wanted to rationalise the pay structure at the plant, achieved by the application of scientific management principles to determine rates of pay. The new system of labour management included a fixed day-rate system incorporating work-study techniques based on Taylorist principles.<sup>625</sup> Jobs were observed, broken down into simple processes and timed by work study officers or engineers. Work study circumvents problems associated with PBR, advocated by Taylor, such as piecework bargaining that gave rise to wage inflation. For plant management the system meant exact production levels could be specified that enabled control over the workforce and subsequent consistent levels of pay. For the workforce it represented further control of the shop floor that restricted worker bargaining in the process. PBR had given workers some control over their work while at the same time sustaining productivity levels. Paradoxically, work evaluation and work study removed the worker from that role, which required more supervisory staff. Significantly, it

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<sup>623</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>624</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966, Conclusions.

<sup>625</sup> Braverman, *Monopoly Capitalism*.

required a major re-orientation in the attitudes and training of shop stewards in bargaining, which was problematic in the early days of adjusting to the application of work study and high day rate.

The nature of this style of labour management created a ‘clash of cultures’ because, as noted by Knox, ‘craft attitudes were, at least for a time, kept alive in a totally different working environment’.<sup>626</sup> To a large extent, workers in both plants displayed elements of craft attitudes in terms of ‘intrinsic rewards’ concurrent with those noted by Goldthorpe et al.<sup>627</sup> So unsurprisingly, the application of work-study and high day rate was met with resistance on both sides of the plant because many of the manual workers were used to PBR and wanted to retain personal control over their pace of work and therefore the wages they could earn. As the pace of work began to increase, especially following commencement of production on moving tracks in January 1963, sectional wage claims began to emerge resulting in a system of industrial relations dominated by plant negotiations between management and shop stewards. Resistant to piecework the company hired consultants in 1963 to devise a plant-wide incentive scheme linked to conditions of productivity, but skilled workers opposed the associated job evaluation so it was not implemented. Along with the establishment of a Productivity Committee in spring 1964 comprising both management and shop floor representatives, these policy initiatives were perceived by management at the plant as, ‘essential to obtain the interest of all employees in the profitability of project [sic] as a whole’.<sup>628</sup> However, that there were times when shop floor workers were able to oppose the implementation of industrial relations policy, suggests that the dictatorial style of management at the time of signing the Brabloch Agreement, could and was, challenged with success by the workforce. This inconsistency points to the need to situate the discussion within a broader context, in order to explore the influence of external factors and specific historical contingency on industrial relations policy.

#### 4.3.3 Incentive Schemes and Productivity Bargaining

In light of the prevailing macro-economic conditions in the UK Harold Wilson’s Labour government’s strategy to restrain rising inflation by controlling potential pay and price rises with the introduction of Incomes Policies in 1965-1969, the productivity agreement

<sup>626</sup> Knox, ‘Trade Unionism’, p. 128.

<sup>627</sup> Goldthorpe, *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes*, p. 14.

<sup>628</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

was a method by which firms in the private sector could circumvent governmental control of pay awards.<sup>629</sup> Thus during a period of high demand, as in March 1964, management implemented a bonus scheme, which sought to prevent sectional wage claims, as a short-term measure to ensure continuity of production.<sup>630</sup> Such strategies further intensified the ‘clash of cultures’ on the shop floor. Many of the sectional wage claims were ‘protective measures’; one wage claim would result in a series of claims from other sections, but management responded with a process of re-grading at the plant. The key point here is wage claims were linked to the status of groups of workers. For example, on the South Side in March 1966 a group of workers went on strike upon the implementation of a new grading structure as it narrowed the wage differentials between craftsmen and semi-skilled operatives.<sup>631</sup> With strict demarcation central to the craft culture of the west of Scotland, for groups of skilled workers it was a fundamental condition of employment that the pay differential between grades of workers was upheld.

In evidence submitted in 1966 to the Royal Commission, Rootes pointed out that the process of gaining agreement on wage differentials ‘took far longer than was really necessary’.<sup>632</sup> This statement suggests frustration and that management was insensitive to the importance of skill status among the workforce and resistant to conceding ground to demands for associated pay differentials. In February 1966 management responded to a series of wage claims by undertaking job evaluation and subsequently introduced a new grading system that cut the existing eighteen grades in the plant to seven.<sup>633</sup> In addition, although it had been established in 1964, such streamlining of the pay structure suggests the role of shop floor representatives on the Productivity Committee was nominal because they did not have the authority to discuss wages or conditions.<sup>634</sup> As such it was ineffectual at facilitating greater management-workforce bargaining, but was instead a channel of communication utilised by management, which, when it became a Works Committee to discuss matters affecting the entire plant, Rootes claimed ‘operated successfully’:

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<sup>629</sup> Frank Blackaby, ‘Incomes Policies and Inflation’, *National Institute Economic Review*, 58 (1971), 34-53 (p. 45).

<sup>630</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>631</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 10/2834, Industrial Relations Report, 30 March 1966.

<sup>632</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June 1966.

<sup>633</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June 1966.

<sup>634</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 5.

In discussion with this Committee on bonus schemes and in domestic discussions in accordance with the ... Domestic Procedure, the Personnel Department played a major role, and in fact represented the official view of the Company at all of the meetings which took place.<sup>635</sup>

Underpinning this assumption was the unitary sentiment that industrial tension caused by streamlining the grades, stoppages and disciplinary issues was linked to the workforce failing to recognise the aims of the company. Equally, for the workforce, the process of re-defining categories of jobs required management acknowledgement of custom and practice, as well as adherence to a pay hierarchy within the workplace based on traditional notions of craft skill and associated pay differentials. Hence the polarity between management's stance and the 'clash of cultures' meant pay negotiations and productivity agreements were bereft of sustainable commitment.

As with Pressed Steel's Linwood Plan, the slump-boom cycle of fluctuating sales in the car industry, coupled with inflationary-deflationary economic measures, meant there was no guaranteed longevity to such schemes which were only viable as a short term attempt by plant management to meet peaks in demand. For the workforce scepticism of the management's motives was justified. Following the introduction of the August 1964 bonus scheme, the company announced short-time working and redundancy proposals for up to 400 employees of the 2400 strong workforce.<sup>636</sup> Not only did this give rise to industrial tension at the plant, it undermined future bonus schemes and wage negotiations. Plant management found itself in a continual cycle of short term fixes to ensure continuity of production while at the same time conceding to sectional wage claims despite the workforce failing to meet agreed productivity levels. These examples are indicative of the pragmatic pluralism shaping labour management at Rootes' Linwood plant. The complexities of labour management were exacerbated, not only by the takeover of Pressed Steel in 1966 when initially the North Side and South Side of the plant remained under their respective management, but also the necessity for investment to address the company's burgeoning debt.

When Rootes took over the North Side factory, the Linwood Plan was terminated. Bonuses under the plan had fallen due to a fall in Hillman Imp sales therefore the management replaced it with the Rootes Pressings Productivity Plan.<sup>637</sup> Like the South

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<sup>635</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Evidence for Government Court of Enquiry [sic], Rootes Motors Scotland Ltd., 31 May 1968.

<sup>636</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>637</sup> TNA: PRO LAB 10/2834, *The Sunday Times*, 25 May 1969.

Side plant this was based on work study, organised by an Industrial Engineering Department and introduced on 30 April 1966.<sup>638</sup> The new management sought a method of rationalising the existing pay structures in the two factories and undertook bargaining with shop stewards rather than union officials and in doing so, to some extent undermined their authority on the shop floor. The company regarded shop stewards as having greater understanding of the specific branch plant situation than union officials. Paradoxically these were the shop stewards that the company claimed needed further training in order to negotiate more effectively over pay and productivity, rather than bargaining with the local union officials.<sup>639</sup> This perceived commonality of interest was flawed because the Pressed Steel workforce was aware that its wage rates were lower than comparable rates in the Rootes South Side factory, which in turn were lower than their English counterparts and it impinged on wage negotiations at the plant. Despite the unions, representing employees on the South Side, having signed the 1960 Brablock Agreement, in the 1966/67 negotiations that led to the Court of Inquiry, the Chairman of the Works Committee on the North Side commented that he would not enter into negotiations with management on increased productivity and flexibility until Rootes Pressings workers received wages in parity with Coventry hourly rate.<sup>640</sup> It is therefore understandable fluctuations in demand for the Hillman Imp not only intensified workforce resistance to management's increasing control of the shop floor, but made the workforce more determined to achieve the highest wage increases possible to counter these effects and subsequent periods of bonus and higher wages followed by short-time working and lay-offs.

Both Pressed Steel and Rootes managements attempted to both exploit and coerce the Scottish workforce by paying low wage rates as well as at other times incentivising it with generous bonus schemes. However, what neither firm recognised was that financial incentives were only part of the motivations for the workforce; evident in the fact that despite successive wage agreements industrial action occurred over issues that cut across traditional work patterns and workers' independence. This 'clash of cultures' was exacerbated by managerial adherence to the existing disparity in wages between the Linwood and the Coventry plants.

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<sup>638</sup> TNA: PRO LAB 10/2834, 'An Agreement between Rootes Pressings (Scotland) Limited and Representatives of its hourly-paid employees', 19 May 1966 and FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 5, 'Industrial Engineering Department., P.S.C., Linwood, Work Study, Work Measurement'.

<sup>639</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

<sup>640</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Rootes Motors Ltd, Report for Royal Commission, Development of Scottish Project, Rootes (Scotland) Limited, Linwood, June, 1966.

In 1966, Rootes had informed the UK government that due to debts of £10.8 million the company urgently required capital. Chrysler offered financial investment but this was subject to an increase in its voting shares to effectively allow a takeover. The proposal was met with concern amongst the Labour Cabinet over the influence of three American car firms in the UK and the subsequent impact on the domestic car market. Therefore, Anthony Wedgwood Benn (Tony Benn, then Minister of Technology) gave consideration to the possibility of a merger between Rootes and BMC or Leyland, but neither firm was interested in a merger.<sup>641</sup> Rootes had experienced losses of £2.1 million in 1965 and £3.6 in 1966: the escalating debts meant the situation was untenable.<sup>642</sup> The company's financial problems were so significant that for the UK government to offer a resolution would have meant a long-term financial commitment; as Benn highlighted, for the government this would have meant investment in 'an insolvent enterprise company without any guarantee that in this way it would remain viable'.<sup>643</sup> Cautious about state intervention because of the use of public money in such investments, Benn sought assurances from Chrysler that the company would maintain a majority of British directors and also that it would expand its British operations.<sup>644</sup> The interaction between politics and economics was significant because despite low unemployment and relative economic prosperity, the Labour government, under Harold Wilson, recognised the political importance of maintaining high employment levels that could potentially be secured with increased investment from Chrysler. As Young and Hood concluded:

It was here, yet again, that the government was caught in what was later to prove the crucial pincer movement in 1975, between open-ended financial commitment and employment.<sup>645</sup>

The unemployment ramifications in the west of Scotland meant the future of the plant was a key issue in discussions with Chrysler. Thus, in January 1967, the government conceded to a Chrysler takeover as being the most viable option available and provided government funding through the Industrial Reorganisation Committee, which obtained fifteen per cent of the total Preferred Ordinary Shares.<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> TNA: PRO, BT 64/5338, 'Rootes Motors Limited, Notes of a Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1966'.

<sup>642</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, p. 82.

<sup>643</sup> Cited in Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, p. 84.

<sup>644</sup> TNA: PRO, BT 64/5338, Letter from Chrysler Corporation to Anthony Wedgwood- Benn, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1967. Tony Benn was to change his stance and by 1975 supported the total nationalisation of Chrysler UK, Tony Benn, *Against the Tide, Diaries 1973-76* (England: Arrow Books, 1991) p. 478.

<sup>645</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>646</sup> TNA: PRO, BT 65, *The Economist*, 21 January 1967.

#### 4.4 Chrysler: 'Yank Among the Thistles'

Upon assuming control of Rootes in 1967 Chrysler restructured management, evident at company level with the appointment of five new directors on the Rootes' board including American representatives. At Linwood, Peter Griffiths, Managing Director of Rootes was replaced by American manager, Robert Irwin. Furthermore, as mentioned in Adam Fleming's testimony, American production managers were transferred to the plant. Fleming was replaced by Art Hawkins as Production Manager of the assembly line.<sup>647</sup> Hood and Young attributed some of the industrial relations problems within Chrysler plants to 'the employment of middle and some senior managers more in tune with practice in the United States than in Europe'.<sup>648</sup> There was discussion within the press on how Chrysler would handle industrial relations at the plant as the American personnel were faced with a radically different factory environment. For instance, the *Scottish Daily Express* pointed to the potential difficulties facing Irwin because his managerial experience in America and Australia meant working with one union in each plant, whereas there were nine unions at the Linwood plant.<sup>649</sup> As noted above, for Adam Fleming the takeover by Chrysler created a 'clash of cultures', which he attributed to the unfamiliar style of management implemented by American personnel at the plant. He expanded upon his original point:

And I had deduced, the problem Chrysler had in managing in the UK so it was Scotland as well as Ryton, but predominantly because a Scot's a Scot, is they'd never heard the saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do". So they were trying to manage the Scottish plant the way they managed their Detroit plants. The, the senior eh Director in Managers that came over, eh, especially the Plant Managers level, thought that the Scots would react in the same way that the American shop floor workers would react. And of course the Scots don't do that. I mean we're a much more independent group eh, and we don't eh, the Scots you know, couldn't be bought off.<sup>650</sup>

The proposition that multinational management should manage in the style to which the indigenous workforce was accustomed is underpinned by the notion that the American managers were insensitive to the embedded culture of organised labour in the west of Scotland. It disregards the perceived advantages to international firms of establishing branch plants in the UK as well as potential economic benefits that could help to re-dress the Balance of Payment deficit. Although the UK had been the main exporter of cars in the

<sup>647</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Card Index.

<sup>648</sup> Hood and Young, *Chrysler UK*, p. 219.

<sup>649</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder SF/14, *Scottish Daily Express*, 4 June 1969.

<sup>650</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming Interview 1.

world in the immediate post-war period, during the 1960s it was superseded by European, American and Japanese car industries that had grown exponentially. Unlike the UK, both France and Germany had invested Marshall-Aid money in industry so were better placed to respond to demands both at home and globally. As noted, in the domestic market demand had been restrained by government regulations on hire purchase. Albeit the inclusion of the Pressed Steel factory meant that from this point on the site at Linwood became responsible for producing car bodies for all of Chrysler UK facilities, the company lost £4.5 million at Linwood alone in 1967.<sup>651</sup> The new management's response to re-dress this deficit was a strategy of rationalisation of the existing pay structures in the two factories and approached the unions to enter into plant-based productivity bargaining.

#### 4.4.1 Shop Stewards: New Roles – Old Problems

Prior to the introduction of the Linwood Wage Grading and Productivity Agreement in 1968 there was no negotiation structure that incorporated both North and South Sides of the plant. In addition, on the North Side there was no representative body as management would not acknowledge the Works Committee following the withdrawal of the National Union of Vehicle Builders (hereafter NUVB) representatives in November 1967.<sup>652</sup> The intention of Chrysler was to introduce a uniform method of negotiating that included both North and South Sides, that would facilitate bargaining with the unions – through shop steward representatives – to reach common agreements. Two key points arise here: first of all, inclusion of the shop stewards in formalised negotiations pointed to support of power-sharing and decision-making between management and shop floor, which was a shift from the approach under previous ownerships. Secondly, Chrysler management's style transferred greater responsibility onto the shop stewards by drawing them into a key role in the allocation of wages in the plant. Like Rootes, production in Scotland offered companies such as Chrysler a reservoir of low-cost high-skilled labour that enabled expansion of production without increasing unit labour costs. Therefore, this move created a conflict of interest for the unions.

The Agreement meant that payment by results and piecework was replaced by a system that linked pay grades to levels of operator performance. It replaced the high day rate on the South Side and the day rate based on work standards accompanied by the bonus

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<sup>651</sup> Hood and Young, 'Linwood Experience', p. 125.

<sup>652</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 14.

scheme on the North Side. Crucially for the workforce it was a payment system that included changes to work practices. Two main areas of contention were the withdrawal of the Bonus Scheme and mutuality relating to MDW.<sup>653</sup> The Amalgamated Engineering Federation (hereafter AEF) and several craft unions on the North Side were resistant to the agreement because the bonus scheme, albeit related to increased track pace determined by management, provided some degree of incentive on levels of production and worker autonomy. This autonomy was diminished within the terms of the Agreement because:

provision was made for improvements in labour utilisation by double day-shift and three-shift working; for the use of work study techniques to establish work standards and man assignments for all operations; for the abolition of non-essential jobs such as craftsmen's mates; and for greater mobility and flexibility in the use of available manpower.<sup>654</sup>

Mutuality was equally important to the unions opposed to the new productivity plan and argued for the standards to be brought under collective bargaining. Like Rootes' productivity determinism, wage grading took place during a period of Incomes Policies (1965 to 1969) and for companies like Chrysler was the main method used to evade governmental control of wage awards. Chrysler management would not allow work standards to be subject to collective bargaining and under the Pay Agreement the labour force had to work to these standards while taking any disagreements through procedure. This allowed management to shift from conceding inflating wage claims to the introduction of changes in the workplace.

When considered within the context of the slump-boom cycles experienced at the plant, for management of a company competing in a global market it was a strategy that transferred risks onto the workforce.<sup>655</sup> The changing nature of work propagated a new insecurity among large segments of the workforce. It is therefore understandable that discussions between unions and management lasted for over a year. Negotiations were ongoing from February 1968 but despite only having the agreement of the Transport and General Workers' Union (hereafter TGWU) and the NUVB, Chrysler implemented the Agreement on 6 May 1968. Together these unions represented sixty per cent of the hourly-paid employees at Linwood, however six other unions, mainly representing craft workers,

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<sup>653</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 13

<sup>654</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 3, 'Linwood', Company Pamphlet produced by Rootes Motors Scotland Limited. Not dated but estimate this was produced around 1968-9.

<sup>655</sup> David Byrne, *Social Exclusion*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000).

did not participate in negotiations yet had the payment agreement forced upon them.<sup>656</sup> The implementation of work standards and increased flexibility as (detailed in the initial Agreement) resulted in industrial stoppages in the Press Shop and amongst maintenance staff that led to the shut down of the plant until 7 June 1968. The key point here is, consultation with the unions and shop stewards was framed in unitarist rhetoric of company and workforce commonality of interest articulated by the managing director, Robert Irwin in a Paisley Daily Express article entitled ‘Yank among the thistles, How Robert Irwin MD plans to weed out the prickly workers of Rootes’:

Much of the trouble here... is inspired by small groups who are impatient, unwilling to listen to the other side, completely resistant to change. And [sic] looking for any excuse to have a day off.<sup>657</sup>

Paradoxically, the Court of Inquiry concluded that the locus of blame for the industrial conflict lay with Chrysler management: inadequate communication during negotiations and acting ‘with rapidity in a situation requiring patience’, the Agreement, regardless of how acceptable it seemed, should not have been implemented with the agreement of only two unions in a multi-union plant.<sup>658</sup> Inducements of co-operation and de facto acknowledgment of all unions in negotiations were underpinned by conflicting aspirations for the Agreement. For management it was a means of overcoming resistance to change and improving labour organisation. For the workforce the disparity between joint consultation and joint decision-making was sustained by placing the onus on shop stewards, not necessarily determined by union demarcation, which weakened the channels of collective bargaining. As such, reflected the inadequacy of ‘common interest’ in the acknowledgement of issues of importance to workers. This was a contention that informed subsequent attempts at industrial democracy during Chrysler’s period of ownership. The Court of Inquiry acknowledged severe financial loss and the absence of a plant wide negotiating framework as extenuating circumstances in which the company had introduced such changes before reaching agreement at Linwood. Consequently, aware of the potential repercussions of commercial failure on unemployment in the west of Scotland, the Court of Inquiry advised all unions accept the Agreement, which enabled Chrysler to introduce work-study techniques and MDW throughout its UK operations in 1968.

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<sup>656</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 4.*

<sup>657</sup> ML, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 2, Folder SF/14, *Paisley Daily Express*, 5 June 1969.

<sup>658</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 31.*

#### 4.4.2 Changes to payment systems: Measured Day Work

When describing the work-study techniques Fleming indicated an orientation with the management's desire for efficient organisation and timing production processes. He commented that:

The skills of a work study engineer were all to do with evaluating the process and also to put a time on that process and the time of course was, as a result of man doing work.<sup>659</sup>

Under the terms of the Agreement Industrial Engineers were engaged by management to undertake job evaluation in order to identify and organise the most effective use of labour and manning levels. Fleming noted that such studies took into account the dexterity of workers and suitability for their allocated job, as well as rating each work study in terms of pace, for instance fast or slow. Work-study techniques and MDW were extremely contentious because they necessitated the implementation of 'accurate time standards' for each job in the factory and these formed the basis of ratings and the designation of a '100 performance' as a standard performance rating throughout the factory.<sup>660</sup> For Chrysler MDW was a method of accurate work allocation and enabled management to control the corollary between pay and productivity. The unions denounced the system as non-scientific:

Whilst time study is presented by management as scientific, nothing could be further from the truth...It must be recognised that in the main time studies are simply judgements, they are not scientific or accurate.<sup>661</sup>

The craft unions disagreed with work-study and MDW because as noted in Chapter Two, how quickly a job could be performed and the way it was undertaken was central to the craft tradition that had dominated work culture in the heavy industries in the west of Scotland. Working to different standards, labour would effectively be conceding to management that the new pace was achievable and make future changes to manning level and job allocation difficult to challenge. Fleming commented on the workers' responses to the timing allocated to jobs:

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<sup>659</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

<sup>660</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 7, p. 10.

<sup>661</sup> ML, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 2, Executive Council of the Amalgamated Engineering Federation 'A Guide to Time Study', p. 48.

Oh they hated it [with reference to workers subject to work study] ... There were all ... the guys were eh, were always eh tryin to get [pause] get the fiddle going. Eh, so that they got more time on the job than what they really need.<sup>662</sup>

The opposition to MDW reoccurred in the oral testimonies of production workers that worked under Chrysler management. When asked about MDW Archie Watson, operator in the UMB, responded:

according tae them ye sh, ye had tae be workin every minute o the day right, but ye're were allowed a certain a, amount o time but they were the ones that was telling ye what that amount o time was, that you could go ae the toilet right, or ye can huv a break. Ye know, there wisnae something that you decided on, it was what they decided on, an that was the measured day work.<sup>663</sup>

He also recalled the response of the workforce to Industrial Engineers or 'Time and Motion Men':

if anybody knew that the time study was in the, the vicinity they [pause] they would actually eh, slow the thing doon, take a wee bitty longer daen it, a wee bit longer.<sup>664</sup>

This is similar to the experience of line operator, Douglas McKendrick who stated that when his section was informed it would be subject to time study, the slowest man in the squad undertook the task so that 'the times were better'.<sup>665</sup> In this instance by 'better' means slower so as to ensure a greater time allocated to the task – enabling the workforce to 'steal a few seconds'.<sup>666</sup>

For skilled workers in particular, this presented a potential source of conflict. One interviewee who worked as an electrician at the plant recalled the strict demarcation of skilled work at Linwood, and more importantly that workers would attempt to protect their skilled status by guarding their knowledge and preventing other sections and skilled groups from gaining information on how to undertake particular jobs and that retaining this skilled knowledge from management meant it had less power to control the workforce:

The less skills ye have the worse conditions the more ye have to do wit yer told. ... The real asset of being skilled was that you had choice, more choice about what you did.<sup>667</sup>

<sup>662</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

<sup>663</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>664</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>665</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>666</sup> Oral Testimony, Douglas McKendrick, Interview 1.

<sup>667</sup> Oral Testimony, Stephen McIntosh, Interview 1.

The rating technique brought management and the shop floor into conflict because, as Adam Fleming highlighted, although it was difficult to contest the actual timing of each task, there were frequent objections to the rating assigned by the industrial engineer.<sup>668</sup> It was the element of MDW that the unions claimed could not be accurately measured. As Braverman pointed out, workers would never fully divulge information that could reveal ‘trade secrets’ that would result in greater loss of control to management and the potential lose of their jobs, so from the perspective of management cannot have an input into the process of work study.<sup>669</sup>

The response of management to worker resistance to work evaluation and MDW is exemplified in a company statement in *The Times* in August 1968:

This is a case of shop stewards countermanding management instructions ... indeed it is tantamount to a suggestion that they can veto management directions. This, of course, is a situation which the company is not prepared to accept.<sup>670</sup>

In this statement the company’s unitary values are evident – the shop stewards were an inherent source of the problems. Two key points emerge from this statement; first it highlights the centralised locus of control within Chrysler UK, exhibited by North American firms in the UK.<sup>671</sup> Management controlled the assembly-line track therefore could increase work rates to achieve higher productivity by increasing the speed of the track. Hence, managerial decisions on work evaluation and MDW were able to by-pass the unions and shop stewards. Secondly, it indicates a low level of branch plant autonomy that meant the polarity between managerial rhetoric and reality in practice was sustained, in that union and shop steward input progressed little further than consultation in the process of decision-making if it did not concur with company strategy. Lockyer and Baddon argue that Chrysler UK’s determination to maintain continuous production in the early 1970s resulted in the company neglecting quality and industrial relations in the branch plants.<sup>672</sup> With Chrysler UK’s withdrawal from the Engineering Employers’ Federation and Scottish Engineering Employers’ Association effective from 1970, it presented greater scope for negotiation with the unions. In reality it circumvented the constraints of the employers’

<sup>668</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming 1.

<sup>669</sup> Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, p. 81.

<sup>670</sup> Cited in Hood and Young, *Chrysler UK*, p. 229.

<sup>671</sup> Stephen Young et al., *Decision-making in foreign-owned multinational subsidiaries in the United Kingdom*, Working Paper No. 35, Multinational Enterprises Programme, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1985, pp. 2-6 and Hood and Young, ‘US Investment in Scotland’ and Young and Tavares, ‘Centralization and autonomy’, p. 217.

<sup>672</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 3, Cliff Lockyer and Lesley Baddon, ‘Linwood: Forty Years of Manipulation and Marginalisation’, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Strathclyde.

associations and ‘official’ trade unionism as the intention was in-house negotiations between productivity driven management and shop stewards rather than union officials. Chrysler UK’s departure from the employers’ associations mirrors wider UK developments, where there was a shift from industry-level to firm-level bargaining. This was part of the general trend to decentralisation within industrial relations. However, within Chrysler UK this actually formed part of a move towards greater centralisation, as policy was developed at UK level to be implemented throughout the various branch plants.

It does however appear Linwood management sought to improve industrial relations, not simply by expanding industrial relations personnel but by encouraging shop stewards to become IROs.<sup>673</sup> This was a strategy of incorporating militant and vocal stewards into the management structure; bridging the communication gap between management and workforce as industrial relations problems could be handled in-house. It suggests that the company recognised the specific nature of industrial relations and the potential benefits of hiring individuals more accustomed to the system of industrial relations in Scotland, and the custom and practice to which the workforce was familiar. A former IRO, Craig Marsden, who had not been a steward but had joined the company as a graduate, noted the ease with which former stewards would walk around the shop floor ‘networking’ and finding out ‘what was brewing’.<sup>674</sup> When questioned about the status of the IROs within Linwood, Marsden stated:

You were the meat in the sandwich. You had to try and educate management: they couldn’t treat people in certain ways. Now you wouldn’t have an IR Department – it would be driven by HR and you would have advisors dealing with policies ... In those days, driven by IR matters ... it was essentially a strategy to resolve disputes as quickly as possible to try and ensure continuity of production because that was the ... that was the real employment problem.<sup>675</sup>

His testimony indicates that avoiding stoppages affected the approach of the IROs. For instance, as revealed in Chapter Three, he learned very quickly never to sack the ‘bookies runner’ and at times ‘turning a blind eye’ to events on the shop floor that if led to a disciplinary procedure, could result in a stoppage.<sup>676</sup> Therefore, despite the existence of a more highly organised and centralised industrial relations staff structure, at plant level certain traditions and practice continued.

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<sup>673</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 3, Cliff Lockyer and Lesley Baddon, ‘Linwood: Forty Years of Manipulation and Marginalisation’, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Strathclyde.

<sup>674</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>675</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>676</sup> This was a worker who went to the bookmakers to put bets on for the workers. Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

Amongst the documentary material from the car plant, there is evidence to suggest that there were shop stewards who were seeking greater influence not only in the area of industrial relations but also in addressing some of the production and quality issues at the plant, therefore in the area of managerial relations. In a document entitled ‘Chrysler-Linwood Plant, Statement Re. Proposed Enquiry [sic]’, the shop steward position is quoted at length:

Many other examples could be mentioned which required co-operation and co-ordination of Management and Trade Unions to resolve, and despite offers and suggestions from the Stewards to jointly study and work at resolving any existing problems which would prevent moving into a quality and acceptable production figure, Management insisted that there were no problems ... It is difficult to understand Company’s rejection of advice and co-operation offered by the Stewards. We do not believe Local Management make [sic] these arbitrary decisions, it is our opinion that these are taken by National Representatives of the Company.<sup>677</sup>

The low level of branch plant autonomy during Chrysler’s period of ownership was recognised by the Linwood plant shop stewards. As the above document suggests, little if any progress was made to include shop stewards in effect discussion on production and industrial relations. Instead it points to a style of management emanating from the parent company in which it was the responsibility of stewards to enforce any agreements on the workforce. This style of management undermined the authority of the unions and put a strain on industrial relations at the plant, and may well have contributed to the trend in reactionary ‘wild-cat’ strikes prevalent during Chrysler’s ownership. It facilitated the plant’s move into a phase of industrial relations where issues were dealt with at a local level but the overall strategy and co-ordination were provided by an Industrial Relations Section at Whitley, which will now be examined within the context of branch plant autonomy.<sup>678</sup> There will be further discussion on the shop stewards’ position in the plant in Chapter Five.

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<sup>677</sup> MRC, MSS.315/P/3/14c, Chrysler – Linwood Plant, Statement Re. Proposed Enquiry.

<sup>678</sup> TNA: PRO, PREM 15/1670, ‘Chrysler UK – A General Note’ [Background brief prepared ahead of meeting between Prime Minister and Riccardo 16 June 1972].

#### 4.4.3 Productivity and Branch Plant Autonomy

In his oral testimony Adam Fleming recalled that at the end of each day plant management at Linwood participated in a conference call with the Detroit management of Chrysler Corporation. The parent company set production targets for its UK plants and productivity was closely monitored in each plant.<sup>679</sup> There is consensus within the literature that operational management decisions such as wage rates and work conditions tended to be less centralised, so provided local management with an area over which it had most autonomy.<sup>680</sup> Hood, Young and Dunlop also note that as well as the strategy of greater European integration, a loss of competitiveness by the European companies was met with greater rationalisation and reorganisation.<sup>681</sup> A more difficult economic environment, unemployment and a weakened labour movement gave rise to increasing centralisation in MNCs in the 1970s. Therefore, while branch plants had a degree of autonomy over certain areas, it was determined by the global strategy of the parent company. The parent company set production targets but it was down to plant management to ensure these were met, which in turn influenced the style of management in the branch plant.

In the late 1960s high demand for cars and subsequent pressure for continuous production saw management respond with increases in the speed of the line. This resulted in the attitude among some workers that, ‘Doing the job properly was not the priority.’<sup>682</sup> It created friction between the Production Supervisors and the Quality Supervisors because when the latter requested rectification work on cars this affected productivity targets for the plant.<sup>683</sup> Oral testimony evidence indicating that workers were aware of the pressure of maintaining production and high levels of productivity, Chrysler continued to under-utilise the site at Linwood, which it justified as being related to the low productivity of the British labour force compared to its French operations.<sup>684</sup> In a note prepared for the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, the company was described as having ‘to concede relatively high pay increases’ so as to avoid production stoppages.<sup>685</sup> Similar to Rootes’ strategy during its

<sup>679</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

<sup>680</sup> Hood, N., and S. Young, ‘US investment in Scotland – aspects of the branch factory syndrome’, *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 13 (1976), 279-94. (p. 279, p. 282) and Young, S., et al., *Decision-making in foreign-owned multinational subsidiaries in the United Kingdom*, Working Paper No. 35, Multinational Enterprises Programme, International Labour Office, Geneva, 1985, pp. 4-5.

<sup>681</sup> Hood et al., ‘Global Strategies, Multinational Subsidiary Roles and Economic Impact in Scotland’, *Regional Studies*, 22 (1988), 487-97 (p. 489).

<sup>682</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 2.

<sup>683</sup> Commented upon in Oral Testimonies, Peter Gordon, Mike Berry, Barry Stubbs and Andrew McIntyre.

<sup>684</sup> TNA: PRO, PREM, 15/1670, Commercial: In Confidence, Dated 16 June 1972 [Note to Geoffrey Holland Esq., Department of Employment from the Prime Minister].

<sup>685</sup> TNA: PRO, PREM 15/1670, Chrysler UK – A General Note, [Background brief prepared ahead of meeting between Prime Minister and Riccardo 16 June 1972].

period of ownership, Chrysler resorted to offering pay rises in order to achieve increases in productivity.

In the negotiations for the 1970 Wage and Productivity Agreement, the company acknowledged that parity remained a highly contentious issue for the Linwood workforce but would not yield on worker demands. The workforce made a claim for an increase of £10 a week but the company was only willing to offer wage increases that would amount to £4.10/-. The unions implemented an overtime ban in December 1970 with the threat of further industrial action but ended the ban before Christmas. Despite the threat of industrial action the company responded by drawing the lack of finance available in Chrysler UK to the attention of the workforce. In the factory newspaper *Gilbert Hunt*, Managing Director claimed, ‘there is not much money left in the till’. He implored the workforce to consider its actions in any industrial dispute as they could be extremely detrimental for the UK operations, ‘Any employees inclined to test the Company’s strength might find themselves creating a situation which takes us beyond the limit of our resources.’<sup>686</sup> Such rhetoric linked the wage claim to failure of the Linwood plant. Management used the rhetoric of responsibility again in 1978 during the company proposals for the Chrysler Incentive Plan. This time Managing Director Chrysler UK, Peter Griffiths implored the workforce to consider the wider implications of the way in which it worked:

We want everyone to realise that the speed with which they react and respond to possible delays in production can have a real effect upon their Plant’s and the Company’s performance.<sup>687</sup>

Negotiations over the 1970 Pay agreement continued into January 1971 before the unions accepted the pay increase of £4.10/- with incentives of improvements in the company pension, raising the rates of female employees and increased personal relief time in return for increased productivity. Robert Irwin, Linwood Managing Director in 1970, commented in a letter to employees that ‘this is a good offer – the highest increase the Company has ever made to hourly paid employees at any of its plants’.<sup>688</sup> While it fell short of the initial union wage claim, it exceeded the norm in terms of previous wage rises; implying that the workforce should be grateful. From the perspective of the workforce, this statement was insensitive to the fact that despite this wage increase it maintained pay disparity between the Linwood workforce and counterparts in other Chrysler UK operations. For the

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<sup>686</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 43/595, Industrial Relations Section, Scotland, First Report Engineering (Vehicles), IRO, AG Mackenzie, 30 November 1970.

<sup>687</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, The Chrysler Incentive Plan, 1978.

<sup>688</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 43/595, Letter to Chrysler Scotland Ltd. Employees from R. H. Irwin, Linwood Manufacturing Director, 2 December 1970.

company it was a wage increase it was prepared to pay in order to maintain continuous production at Linwood.

The wage rise granted at the plant was indicative of the parent company's intention to set its own agenda in disregard of the economic conditions and concerns regarding the disparity between wage increases in the public and private sectors in the United Kingdom during this period. This was evident in the company's interactions with the government. Towards the end of 1970 the Managing Director of Chrysler UK, Gilbert Hunt, attended a meeting of motor industry representatives that met with the Secretary of State for Employment to discuss the issue of wage restraint.<sup>689</sup> Yet despite company losses of £10.9 million in 1970, the Chrysler UK group conceded a wage claim of almost eighteen per cent, while at the same time the government was attempting to keep a claim by mail workers down at eight per cent.<sup>690</sup> An editorial in *The Guardian* exemplifies reaction to the company's decision, 'it drives a coach and horses through the Government's attempts to carry out a policy for incomes and Whitehall can rightly feel betrayed.'<sup>691</sup> Chrysler conceded to the wage rise because the company was launching the Hillman Avenger in America on the 20 January 1971 and was dependent on car body shells and component parts from its branch plant in Linwood.<sup>692</sup> It was clear Chrysler's interests ran parallel to the national interests.

The demand for continuous production and increased productivity meant management at Linwood responded by increasing the speed of the assembly line. This occurred even though management knew that the assembly technology was not built with the technical capacity to increase the number of vehicles in a given time above the original maximum set-up level. As Fleming commented:

And it was when I was the eh the Plant Manager of the Assembly plant that we were able to raise the production level from what the design level was, was 48, I think it was about 48 units an hour. ... we really had a production requirement for one a minute so we raised the production from 48 an hour up to the 60 an hour. And that was an absolute disaster. As a young manager it was my first introduction to overstretching mechanical facilities.<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 43/595, *The Times*, 18 January 1971.

<sup>690</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 43/595, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 17 January 1971 and TNA:PRO, LAB, 43/595, *The Guardian*, 20 January 1971.

<sup>691</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 43/595, *The Guardian*, 16 January 1971.

<sup>692</sup> TNA: PRO, LAB 43 /595, *The Guardian*, 20 January 1971.

<sup>693</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming Interview 1.

He went on to detail that when the machine speed was increased beyond the set-up level the rate of assembly line breakdowns increased, rendering this managerial strategy to meet production targets not only ineffectual but detrimental to production. However, increasing the speed of the line at Linwood car plant was a key condition in productivity bargaining and effected changes in the workplace such as flexibility in the deployment of labour in return for improved rates of pay. Such bargaining meant management could attempt to make gains in cutting across intrinsic craft demarcation lines at Linwood car plant.<sup>694</sup> Yet productivity in the branch plant remained below that of international competitors and was attributed to strikes and disputes.

In 1975 the Central Policy Review Staff (hereafter CPRS) outlined poor communication between management and the workforce as a significant factor in industrial tension within the British car industry.<sup>695</sup> Similarly Hood and Young have argued that within its UK subsidiaries Chrysler management should have dedicated greater attention to developing effective communication procedures.<sup>696</sup> Conversely, documentary evidence suggests that Chrysler UK centralised management directed a great deal of attention to improving communications with its workforce, incorporated into a larger participation agenda. Indeed, Elliot commends Chrysler as ‘one of the more progressive new entrants to the participation arena’.<sup>697</sup> The attempts at worker participation within Chrysler were centrally co-ordinated by the Central Industrial Relations Department and the Employee Participation and Communication Department based in Whitley, Coventry. The aim was to solve the problems of ‘monotony, frustration and overall working environment’ by providing the workers the opportunity of contributing to management decisions and planning.<sup>698</sup>

#### 4.4.4 Employee Participation: ‘A new basis for Managerial Authority’

Although Fleming had left employment at Chrysler prior to the introduction of the Planning Agreement, his testimony provides a salient commentary on the burgeoning number of participation schemes and attempts at industrial democracy throughout the car industry in the 1970s:

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<sup>694</sup> Clegg, *Changing System*, p. 155.

<sup>695</sup> The Central Policy Review Staff, *The Future of the British Car Industry* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 101.

<sup>696</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, p. 223.

<sup>697</sup> Elliot, *Conflict or Cooperation?*, p. 153.

<sup>698</sup> ML, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Employee Participation Programme – Explanation of the 4 Principles Contained in the Company’s Statement of the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1975, Central Industrial Relations, 7 August 1975.

one of the ‘in’ words in the seventies was participation. Where, and it was after you know the sort of Ryder Report and the bringing together of eh, of the eh, the and the creation of BL. Eh, and the recognition within the government that not only was productivity a problem but industrial relations were a problem.<sup>699</sup>

This trend was noted by Clegg who suggested that during the 1970s: ‘the word “participation” came into vogue’ with the increased popularity of joint consultation.<sup>700</sup> The emphasis on participation is significant when placed within the context of the Linwood plant’s history of poor industrial relations and suggests that consultations between management and representatives of the shop floor were problematic. Fleming’s narrative offers some acknowledgement of the problems likely to have impinged on consultations between management and shop floor:

the management and trade unions would agree to set up working groups so that the working group would hear what the management plans were and eh, they would agree the need for those plans and would support them. But of course, it really didn’t, didn’t work because that meant that the trade union representatives even the more, I mean we’re talking about bringing in shop stewards sittin down with senior managers and directors eh, sittin down with their eh, with their eh local reps and their national you know reps so, it was, it was a whole mix of people.<sup>701</sup>

Implicit in this narrative is recognition of difficulties attributed to fundamental differences between the trade union representatives and management. An argument for worker participation is it improved the position of trade unions in collective bargaining; this was not the case at Linwood as the company was attempting to move towards company-wide wage negotiations. Placating the leadership meant there was less likelihood of strong shop stewards taking the ‘Linwood Lemmings’ out on strike.<sup>702</sup>

Developments in employer-union bargaining at Linwood reflect major patterns in industrial relations of the post-war period in Britain: initially industry-wide agreements initiated by employers’ associations; followed by formalised plant-based collective bargaining, productivity and procedural agreements; and finally a shift towards greater centralisation and support for worker participation.<sup>703</sup> Blyton and Turnbull have argued that examination of the purpose, scope and outcomes of participation schemes give an indication of the extent of employee involvement and influence in decision-making.<sup>704</sup> The chapter will now move on to a consideration of the motivations and interactions

<sup>699</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1. The Ryder Committee was appointed by Tony Benn in December 1974 to investigate the financial situation of British Leyland.

<sup>700</sup> Clegg, *Changing System*, p. 156.

<sup>701</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming Interview 1.

between company, management and workforce during two key participation strategies in the 1970s, namely the Employee Participation Programme (hereafter EPP) and the Planning Agreement Working Party.

#### 4.4.5 Industrial Democracy: Motivations, Interactions and Transactions

Prior to returning to government in 1974, the Labour Party had worked to rebuild its relationship with the trade union movement and the Trades Union Congress (hereafter TUC) as part of the Social Contract. Central to this concept was a Labour government commitment to industrial democracy. At this time Jack Jones, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, was influential in persuading the TUC and the Labour government to recognise industrial democracy as a central issue on the political agenda. To some extent the government was influenced by membership of the European Economic Community (hereafter EEC) from January 1973, which led to debate on the adoption of common labour laws throughout the EEC. The Labour government provided a commitment to industrial relations legislation in favour of labour, in return for voluntary wage restraint. As part of the Social Contract, Jack Jones had argued for worker participation in the form of worker directors. This model of industrial democracy was met with a divided response within the TUC. On the one hand worker participation was perceived to be incorporating employee representatives into management which could nullify their ability to represent their members. On the other hand, access to managerial information was potentially beneficial to representatives in the collective bargaining process. This was important for those who sought to increase collective bargaining within increasingly complex organisations, including MNCs, where at times it was difficult for stewards to gain access to information.<sup>705</sup> The EPP was perceived as providing workers an opportunity to contribute to management decisions and planning.<sup>706</sup>

From the spring of 1975, having abandoned the idea of worker directors due to workforce opposition,<sup>707</sup> the Industrial Relations Department of Chrysler UK began

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<sup>702</sup> The term 'Linwood Lemmings' makes reference to a press cartoon by Jak which is referred to in Jim Higgins, *The Lessons of Linwood*, (February 1976), originally published in the Spectator. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/higgins/1976/02/linwood.htm>  
Accessed 14 September 2009.

<sup>703</sup> Such developments are detailed in Gospel and Palmer, *British Industrial Relations*, Clegg, *Changing System*, and Blyton and Turnbull, *Employee Relations*.

<sup>704</sup> Blyton and Turnbull, *Employee Relations*, pp. 254-255.

<sup>705</sup> Crouch, *Politics of Industrial Relations*, p. 109.

<sup>706</sup> Elliot, *Conflict or Co-operation?*, p. 158.

<sup>707</sup> Elliot, *Conflict or Cooperation?*, p. 158.

developing an EPP, which included two employees at Board level and union representation on committees at central company level. In addition to a national negotiating committee, the programme was to introduce Plant Employee Representative Councils and sub-committees within each plant. Each would be composed of manual and staff union members to ‘discuss and review the operation of the plant on a weekly basis’, as well as maintain communication between management and the unions.<sup>708</sup> Such proposals suggest a Chrysler UK central management that had embraced organisational pluralism and acceptance of employee influence in what Fox defined as ‘managerial relations’.

Acceptance and implementation of the EPP was a condition of the 1975 wage agreements. The company offered to pay £50 to each employee on condition of acceptance of the EPP in principle by all negotiating groups by the summer, followed by an additional £50 providing the EPP was fully accepted by the end of the year. The wage claim was submitted in May 1975 and the Linwood workforce was told it had to accept the EPP in principle by 12 July and implementation by 24 December.<sup>709</sup> Attached to the wage agreement proposed for the Stoke Engine Plant, which encompassed the proposals to set up the EPP, was a Chrysler UK statement claiming that the company was offering an ‘across the board’ wage increase and ‘not willing to engage in collective bargaining with different work groups’.<sup>710</sup> Although this statement was issued with reference to the engine plant at Stoke it gives some indication of the company’s attitude to joint negotiation and employee participation in the setting of wage rates. In effect a unilateral company decision that obviated employee representatives in wage rate negotiations. The EPP was not accepted at Linwood, or indeed in any of the Chrysler UK subsidiaries.<sup>711</sup> The implementation of these wage agreements led to strike activity in both the English plants and Linwood before wage rates were negotiated and increases accepted.

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<sup>708</sup> ML, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Employee Participation Programme – Explanation of the 4 Principles Contained in the Company’s Statement of the 23 May 1975, Central Industrial Relations, 7 August 1975.

<sup>709</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 5, *International Socialism*, Peter Bain, ‘Linwood 1975: One Year in a Car Factory’, January 1976.

<sup>710</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, An Agreement on Pay and Associated Conditions between Chrysler United Kingdom and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, The Transport and General Workers’ Union, The Vehicle Building Automative Section (T.G.W.U), The National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, Representing Hourly Paid Employees at the Stoke Power Train Complex, May 1975.

<sup>711</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 7, Cliff Lockyer, et al., ‘Industrial Democracy: Management Participation and the Search for Control, A Forty Year Case Study’, Draft Paper for the B.S.A. Conference Bradford, April 1984.

A former shop steward at the Linwood car plant, Peter Bain points to management's motives:

By August, the EPP still had not been accepted, but after assuring the Linwood stewards that all they had to do was to allow the company to state publicly that the unions were prepared to discuss the proposals, the JRC [Joint Representative Council] got the go-ahead to sign. The £50 was then paid, but the eventual combine statement went a good deal further than the Linwood stewards had agreed. It was claimed that Chrysler were desperate to convince the government that labour relations were good so as to help them obtain the loan they had requested.<sup>712</sup>

In light of Chrysler UK losses of £17.8 million in 1974, the offer of £100 per employee to ensure the acceptance and implementation of the EPP and resistance to engage in plant-based collective bargaining could be seen as a strategy to avoid inflationary wage claims. Like previous incentive schemes, cash inducement showed little genuine commitment to the principles of industrial democracy. It was a coercive transaction between management and workforce to encourage workers' acceptance of the EPP that circumvented employee participation in the setting of wage rates and consultation.

During this phase of ownership the buoyant market of the 1960s had given way to a down-turn in economic growth, falling domestic car sales, in particular between 1970 and 1974, exacerbated by quadrupling of the price of oil between 1973 and 1974 due to the OPEC oil embargo<sup>713</sup> With a diminishing global market due in particular to increased competition from Japan, it became apparent that the Chrysler Corporation did not have the finances to invest in the development of new models in Chrysler UK and maintain its threatened market share. With Chrysler UK sustaining losses of nearly £80 million between 1967 and 1975 the long-term viability looked pessimistic.<sup>714</sup> The urgency to implement the EPP was political strategic management to assure the Labour government of the company's commitment to proactive employee participation in consultations and decision-making in the branch plants in order to secure financial aid.

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<sup>712</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box Five, *International Socialism*, Peter Bain, 'Linwood 1975: One Year in a Car Factory', January 1976 and Peter Bain, Obituary, *guardian.co.uk*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2007/apr/09/obituaries.murrayarmstrong> Accessed 19 February 2008.

<sup>713</sup> *The Observer*, 22 June 2008.

<sup>714</sup> Marsden et al, *Car Industry*, p. 19.

#### 4.4.6 The Rescue Plan: Reactive Political Intervention

Doubts over the sustainability of Chrysler UK were not unexpected. In December 1974 Harold Wilson had ordered an inquiry into British Leyland under Sir Don Ryder, as well as the government think-tank, the CPRS under Sir Kenneth Berrill to investigate problems facing the entire UK car industry.<sup>715</sup> The latter study reported that the car industry in Britain was overcapacity and characterised by low productivity in comparison to European car plants. The conclusion of the report predicted that divestment was inevitable with Chrysler UK as one of the firms most likely to downsize its operations.<sup>716</sup> In November 1975 Chrysler stated its intention to close its UK subsidiary within four weeks unless the Government intervened with financial assistance.<sup>717</sup> The urgency to implement the EPP was political strategic management to assure the Labour government of the company's commitment to proactive employee participation in consultations and decision-making in the branch plants in order to secure financial aid. Notably, publication of the CPRS Report in early December 1975 was deliberately postponed while discussions took place between the Chrysler Corporation and the government.<sup>718</sup>

Chrysler's threat to withdraw its UK operations presented the government with a dilemma – secure equity stock in the UK subsidiary; pursue a rescue strategy similar that of British Leyland and nationalise the company; do nothing and let the Chrysler Corporation shut down the branch plants or offer financial assistance to the company. Equity participation meant the government's involvement in the company would be driven by the market interests of the parent company in Detroit which may not have been in the interest of the UK economy. Acquisition of the UK subsidiary may have resolved this problem with comparatively little cost to the Government, but this had to be offset against substantial liabilities and long-term viability of a company too small to compete and succeed without access to wider market developments that could be provided by the Chrysler Corporation. Alternatively, the government could simply have let the Chrysler Corporation close down its UK subsidiary but this could have had economic and political ramifications. Although the UK subsidiary's share of the domestic car market was 6.6 per cent in 1975, the contract with Iran – 60,000 Avengers in 'kit' form – accounted for 71 per

<sup>715</sup> Sir Kenneth Berrill, Obituary, *The Daily Telegraph* 18 May 2009.

<sup>716</sup> Central Policy Review Staff, *The Future of the British Car Industry*, (London: HMSO, 1975).

<sup>717</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/4/1, Chrysler UK, Building the New Chrysler: The facts about the agreement with the Government, the reasons why it was necessary and what we are going to do next, February 1976 and PCL, Folder 692.2222, REN 27, PC 669, OS, Linwood Car Plant, Vol. 1, *Scottish Daily Express*, November 19/ 1975.

<sup>718</sup> Tessa Blackstone & William Plowden, *Inside the Think Tank: Advising the Cabinet, 1971-1983*, (London: Mandarin, 1990), p. 137.

cent of its production in 1975.<sup>719</sup> If Chrysler withdrew, the potential losses of £150 million from the Iran contract and increased foreign imports of cars from Japan would have had an impact on the already high deficit on the balance of payments.<sup>720</sup> As the Iran contract was with the Chrysler Corporation, the parent company was in a position to exert a certain degree of leverage on the government.<sup>721</sup> Closure would also have had a noticeable effect on rising unemployment with the addition of the 25,000 Chrysler workforce made redundant and subsequent redundancies in the supply and distribution industries amounting to an estimated total of 55,000 unemployed.<sup>722</sup>

Closure meant 7000 of those redundancies would have been at the Linwood plant and coincided, with not only a surge in support for the Scottish National Party, but the formation of the Scottish Labour Party by two Labour MPs, Sillars and Robertson, in opposition to the Government's White Paper, *Our Changing Democracy: Devolution to Scotland and Wales*, published on the 27 November 1975.<sup>723</sup> The *Scottish Daily Express* reported on rumours of resignation of Scottish Secretary of State, Willie Ross and Secretary of State for Industry, Eric Varley, over the Chrysler talks. Allowing for a certain degree of bias as well as journalistic licence, the newspaper warned of the potential ramifications of Linwood closure drawn to the government's attention by Willie Ross:

unless it started a rescue operation which would preserve at least part of the Linwood workforce, Scotland would be handed on a platter to the Nationalists.<sup>724</sup>

Crucially, formal production of North Sea Oil had started on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1975. As noted at the time by the economist Gavin McCrone, the income from North Sea Oil could sustain an independent Scotland with a balance of payments that would enable its economy to, 'break out of the "stop-go" cycle and plan a sustained rate of growth'.<sup>725</sup> Written in 1974 and submitted to the Cabinet on 23 April 1975, for the Department of Trade and Industry it confirmed the revenue expectations from North Sea Oil. Such was the fear of rising Scottish nationalism that the document remained secret (until February 2006) because the political security of the Labour Party in the central belt of Scotland was

<sup>719</sup> Wilks, *Industrial Policy*, p. 119.

<sup>720</sup> Central Policy Review Staff, *The Future of the British Car Industry*, (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 48.

<sup>721</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, Vol. 905, Col. 1133-204, 17 February 1976.

<sup>722</sup> Evidence from the Department of Employment, Trade and Industry Subcommittee (TISC), (1976), Minutes of Evidence 1975-76, (HC 104), in Wilks, *Industrial Policy*, p. 157.

<sup>723</sup> Wilks, *Industrial Policy*, p. 160.

<sup>724</sup> PCL, Folder 692.2222, REN 27, PC 669, OS, Linwood Car Plant, Vol. 1, *Scottish Daily Express*, 13 December 1975.

<sup>725</sup> Professor Gavin McCrone, 'The Economics of Nationalism Re-examined' Report, (1974), p. 11.

[www.scotlandoffice.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/release](http://www.scotlandoffice.gov.uk/freedom-of-information/release)

Accessed 27 June 2008.

already destabilised by the threat of constitutional change from rising nationalism following the ‘It’s Scotland’s Oil’ campaign by the SNP prior to the general election in October 1974. The threat to Labour’s political security in Scotland could have intensified with the closure of the Linwood plant in an area heavily affected by industrial decline.

At the time of the negotiations between the Government and Chrysler, a joint union delegation of shop stewards and staff representatives produced a document, *Chrysler’s Crisis: The Worker’s Answer* [sic] that was submitted to the Government, in which they detailed the problems with Chrysler UK and outlined a three-stage rescue operation. The document accepted that there was over-capacity in the UK car industry and related it to over-production of cars in the same range. The shop stewards offered a solution to this over-capacity and suggested it could be used to build commercial and specialised vehicles such as buses, off-road vehicles, tractors, heavy vehicles that would be of benefit especially in the ‘Third World’. Suggestions were made, for example, to transfer some of the production at British Leyland, of Land Rover type vehicles for which there was a long export waiting list, to the Ryton paint shop, although this would require adapting the paint shop from the electrostatic technique to paint on aluminium. With foresight, the shop stewards noted the importance of ecological and environmental considerations and urged the company to concentrate on the development of new vehicles. However, the following introduction in the document gives an idea of the workers’ perception of their role in planning for the future of the company:

Discussions and decisions about the future of Chrysler (UK) have been taking place behind closed doors. Those most directly affected (the workers, their families and their shop stewards) have been shut out from even meeting Riccardo ----- in spite of the company’s blaze of publicity about more “worker participation” as recently as May of this year.<sup>726</sup>

This was a document based on feasibility using information gathered from the various branch plants and showed commitment to the long-term future of the company. Yet as noted, during the process of negotiations in the winter of 1975 union officials were not invited to participate in talks or offer solutions until a rescue package had been agreed between Chrysler and Government.<sup>727</sup> The unions were simply asked to agree to the principles of the Rescue Plan so were essentially issued with an ultimatum rather than afforded involvement in any form of negotiation. The main worry for the Government was

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<sup>726</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/4/3, *Chrysler’s Crisis: The Worker’s* [sic] *Answer*, 8 December 1975.

<sup>727</sup> PCL, Folder 692.2222, REN 27, PC 669, OS, Linwood Car Plant, Vol. 1, *Scottish Daily Express*, 27 November 1975.

the reaction of the workforce to the agreed redundancies identified in the plan. Employees were left to speculate on the future of their jobs. In December 1975, Linwood was on a three-day week, with no start date following the Christmas holidays and rumours of a pullout circulated bolstered by Riccardo's reported statements in the press. Despite the agreement in principle of the EPP, there was no employee participation at such a crucial stage for Chrysler UK either at national or plant level.

On 17 December a Rescue Plan was agreed of £162.5 million in grants, loans and guarantees as well as a strategy for Chrysler UK viability into the 1980s. It included a commitment to meet half the potential losses of £40 million in 1976, £40 million in 1977, £30 million in 1978 and £20 million in 1979, as well as a loan of £55 million to finance capital expenditure on plant and model development. The necessary rationalisation of the car plants was to be at the expense of 9000 jobs of which 3000 were to be at Linwood.<sup>728</sup> The Rescue Plan was contentious because investment in a company of tenuous long-term viability could not be reconciled with the criteria for assistance in the Government's new White Paper, *Approach to Industrial Strategy*, published on 5 November 1975. With the onset of Planning Agreement negotiations between the Government and Chrysler, Michael Heseltine, at that time MP for Henley, drew attention to the contradiction between rhetoric and reality in the Government's industrial strategy in the following quotation from the White Paper:

By and large, profitability and return on capital, measured in financial terms, remain the best prima facie indicator of an industry's or company's efficiency in using resources.<sup>729</sup>

He further noted that under the heading, '*Assessment of Viability*':

An assessment of viability is a matter of facts, figures and commercial judgement in which wider economic and social factors have no part to play.<sup>730</sup>

Using these criteria Chrysler UK was a weak company and its viability untenable. It is feasible to suggest that the Government anticipated a growth in Chrysler's profitability indicated by the reduction in estimated losses over the four-year period of the Rescue Plan. However, the company's rationalisation plan involved greater focus on assembly rather than the more profitable manufacturing side of the industry in plants such as Ryton where

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<sup>728</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, Vol. 902, Col. 1530-65, 17 December 1975.

<sup>729</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, Vol. 904, Col. 173-207, 26 January 1976.

<sup>730</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, Vol. 904, Col. 173-207, 26 January 1976.

the Alpine was assembled using component parts manufactured by Simca in France and only a third of its capacity. At the time the UK was in the depth of a recession and had experienced an unprecedented rise in inflation to 29.6 per cent in August 1975<sup>731</sup> falling to 25.2 per cent in the December.<sup>732</sup> The Government was relying heavily on North Sea Oil to redress the deficit in its Balance of Payments but the full effect of that revenue would not have been felt until the early 1980s, thus it is conceivable that financial assistance of Chrysler UK was political expediency. The motivations for the transactions between the Government and the Chrysler Corporation that produced the Rescue Plan for Chrysler UK may well have been reactive intervention to the convergence of these economic and political events.

#### 4.4.7 Planning Agreement Working Party: New Chrysler – ‘new attitudes’

A central component of the Rescue Plan was the development of a Planning Agreement with the Government, the formulation of which commenced on 5 January 1976.<sup>733</sup> Its scope covered company strategy between 1976 and 1979. The broad objectives were to rationalise production in the UK, improve the market share of the company as well as attitudes among the workforce, perceived as crucial to improving industrial relations and dealing with productivity and quality. It also included a commitment to consultation with employee representatives on employment levels and productivity. No finance would be provided until the rescue plan was ‘agreed in principle’ by the trade unions.<sup>734</sup> The Government loan of £55 million to finance capital expenditure on plant and model development as well as a £35 million guaranteed bank loan was on condition of a ‘Certificate of Progress’ that verified the company’s collaboration with the workforce in future planning and strategy discussions.<sup>735</sup> Government documentation identified the potential benefits of the Planning Agreement in dealing with symptoms labelled as the ‘British disease’: attitudes, productivity, quality and industrial relations. It outlined the requirements for ‘meaningful consultation’ that required of management ‘a readiness to

<sup>731</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, Vol. 972, Col. 4-6, 22 October 1979.

<sup>732</sup> *Hansard*, HC Deb, Vol. 902, Col. 1624-6, 18 December 1975.

<sup>733</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/4, Chrysler UK Limited Planning Agreement 1976 (Second Draft) ‘As amended at meeting 21.12.76’.

<sup>734</sup> PCL, Folder 692.2222, REN 27, PC 669, OS, Linwood Car Plant, Vol. 1, *Scottish Daily Express*, 3 January 1976.

<sup>735</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/4/1, Chrysler UK, Building the New Chrysler: The facts about the agreement with the Government, the reasons why it was necessary and what we are going to do next, February 1976.

disclose to union representation a substantial amount of information of a planning nature'.<sup>736</sup>

The formulation of the Planning Agreement Working Party (hereafter PAWP), suggests that Chrysler management had adopted a pluralistic approach to its interactions with the shop floor. The PAWP comprised four sub-committees that negotiated on a national level: Sales and Product, Sourcing and Manufacturing Facilities, Finance, Employment and Productivity. On each sub-committee there were three senior management figures representing centralised management at Whitley and four employee representatives, albeit union representatives from the branches. Following consultations at sub-committee level a report was produced for the PAWP as a whole to discuss the recommendations or resolve arising dilemmas. The four sub-committees focused on a different set of issues and in the constitution of the PAWP the company stipulated a specific objective for each committee as detailed below:

1. Sales and Product – To devise a product timing chart and sales and export forecasts.
2. Sourcing and manufacturing – To produce capital plans, relative to sources, facilities and transport, for each plant.
3. Employment and Productivity – To issue plans for manning levels, training programmes and a 'code of practice'.
4. Finance – To develop a programme of capital investment including projected sales revenue, overheads and tax.<sup>737</sup>

Whereas previous plant-based joint consultation had tended to focus on operational management issues, this brief outline on the scope of each committee suggests that the areas for discussion between employee representatives and management were comprehensive and include managerial relations as defined by Fox. For the workers access to planning information and influence on the decision-making commercial strategies of Chrysler UK marked a significant development in the company's industrial relations strategy. Prior to the PAWP the great uncertainty about the future of Chrysler operations in the UK was exacerbated by limited communication between management and shop floor on strategy and long-term planning. The inclusion of employee representatives on the working party suggests a major shift in the interactions between management and workforce at the Linwood plant.

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<sup>736</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/6, Implementing a Planning Agreement, A note for discussion prepared by Department of Industry Officials.

<sup>737</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, 'Planning Agreement Working Party, Constitution and Terms of Reference of Sub-Committees, 20 May 1976.

The nature of participation was discussed on establishment of the PAWP. An information booklet distributed to employees use terms such as ‘New Chrysler’ and ‘new attitudes’ and emphasised a change in the industrial relations strategy of the company. Involving employee representatives in planning decisions necessitated ‘taking into account not only the interests of all sides but using the information and ideas of all of them too’.<sup>738</sup> Yet, at the third meeting of the PAWP in June 1976 the employee representatives criticised the format of sub-committee meetings which they described as question and answer sessions. Within the terms of the PAWP constitution the company did provide information however; the representatives stated this was essentially little more than ‘reiteration of the Government plan with which they are already familiar’.<sup>739</sup> The contention arose because although Chrysler management adhered to the aim of the PAWP, to facilitate ‘a real exchange of ideas and proposals’ to ensure government endorsement of the Planning Agreement<sup>740</sup>, the role of the employee representatives in the decision process was to sanction ‘plans presented by Chrysler as a fait accompli’.<sup>741</sup> Chrysler management attributed the problem in its interaction with the employee representatives as being unused to this new concept in industrial relations and the inadequate briefing of management representatives involved.

At the time of the planning agreement the Linwood Toolroom capacity was a key ‘interest’ among the workforce and a recurrent issue in PAWP meetings from September 1976. A brief examination of management’s response to meaningful discussion on this issue reveals much about Chrysler’s motivations. At Linwood, by the early 1970s the Linwood Toolroom had been phased-out resulting in 200 redundancies.<sup>742</sup> The Manufacturing and Sourcing Sub-Committee raised the issue of the Toolroom at the September PAWP meeting and a failure to agree was recorded. Management disagreed with the full-capacity use of the Toolroom due to quality issues at Linwood, cyclical labour requirements, and that it was more cost effective to sub-contract tooling work than to re-establish the Toolroom.<sup>743</sup> This issue was raised again at a meeting in December 1976 and

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<sup>738</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/5, Facts about the Planning Agreement, Building the New Chrysler, March 1977, Number 3.

<sup>739</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, DRAFT, Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Planning Agreement Working Part held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room, Whitley – on Wednesday, 16 June 1976 at 14.30 Hours.

<sup>740</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, DRAFT, Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Planning Agreement Working Part held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room, Whitley – Wednesday, 16 June 1976 at 14.30 Hours.

<sup>741</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Planning Agreement Working Party, Newsletter, 1 July 1976.

<sup>742</sup> TNA, PREM 15/1670, ‘Chrysler UK – A General Note’ [Background brief prepared ahead of meeting between Prime Minister and Riccardo 16 June 1972].

<sup>743</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Draft, Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Planning Agreement Working Party held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room, Whitley on Tuesday 14 September 1976 at 1300 Hours.

became a recurrent issue on the agenda of meetings in early 1977 if only due to employee representatives raising the matter, rather than any decisions achieved.<sup>744</sup> The Manufacturing and Sourcing Sub-Committee commented that an investigation would need to take place, into the capability of the Linwood Toolroom. The company could not afford delays in tooling and management representatives commented that, ‘Chrysler Europe lack confidence in Linwood Toolroom’s ability to reliably meet dates’, thus the decisions on Linwood was postponed.<sup>745</sup> The Toolroom was due to be reviewed at the end of 1977 however, the company announced in the July PAWP meeting, that the company was undertaking a report on European standards and requirements, and only when this report was finalised would the PAWP have the opportunity to consult this report and then come to a decision on Linwood.<sup>746</sup> Company reservations about quality and productivity at Linwood were raised in other PAWP meetings. On the one hand it is understandable that the Chrysler was hesitant about investment in re-establishment of the Toolroom, equally so that it would wish to investigate European standards given increasing rationalisation. On the other hand the refusal to make a decision on Linwood could also be viewed as a delaying tactic until after the signing of the first planning Agreement in March 1976.

There was undoubtedly some overlap on the issues discussed at sub-committee meetings and plant committees. Potential tension was recorded in one of the early meetings of the Employment and Productivity Sub-Committee. The focus of this committee was to identify causes of poor labour utilisation and provide suggestions for improvement.<sup>747</sup> An employee representative, Phillip James from the Linwood plant, would not participate fully in the discussion on labour utilisation or procedure recommendations to enable improvement. As noted in the minutes of the meeting:

it became clear that the Linwood Representative, Mr. James was under instruction not to participate in any form of “E.P.P.” ... His particular concern, which was shared by the Stoke Representative, was that of infringing on the rights of the Plant Union Committees.<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>744</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/4, Minutes of the Planning Agreement Working Party Meeting on 22 / December 1976 held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room, Whitley.

<sup>745</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/5, Planning Agreement Working Party, 3 February 1977, Minutes.

<sup>746</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/5, Briefing: Immediate, Planning Agreement, 22 February 1977 and MSS.315/C/1/2/4, Minutes of the Planning Agreement Working Party Meeting held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room, Whitley on Wednesday 13 July 1977 at 13.30 hours.

<sup>747</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Employment and Productivity Sub-Committee, 11 June 1976. [Report to] Planning Agreement Working Party Agenda, prior to meeting planned 16 June 1976.

<sup>748</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Employment and Productivity Sub-Committee, 11 June 1976. [Report to] Planning Agreement Working Party Agenda, prior to meeting planned 16 June 1976.

James draws attention to the motivations for inclusion of senior shop stewards at this level in the management structure of the company. It suggests the potential for a clash of interest for the employee representatives with their role on plant union committees. In the first meeting of the PAWP the company gave assurances that the remit of the working party was in planning decisions and was not in a position to countermand the authority of plant union committees.<sup>749</sup>

Notably, a caveat in the PAWP constitution on sub-committee procedures prohibited the employee representatives involved in the working party from discussion on the content of the meetings with the workforce. Instead the agreed procedure was to produce a bulletin after each meeting containing information cleared for release to the workforce.<sup>750</sup> In addition there was no provision for formal arrangements on the PAWP for employee representatives to discuss shop floor input to the Planning Agreement.<sup>751</sup> As minutes of meetings could not be circulated on the shop floor, nor the proceedings discussed, this not only compromised the position of the employee representatives as shop stewards, but the selective areas of consultation on the sub-committees presented the potential for a conflict of interest for the employee representatives.

For the Linwood branch-plant, the provision of an in-house facility to refurbish tools or re-tool for new products meant the re-establishment of the Toolroom to full capacity was important. In *Chryslers Crisis: The Workers [sic] Answer*, produced in December 1975, the re-establishment of the Linwood Toolroom was outlined in the suggested rescue operation.<sup>752</sup> Thus, it is likely that the company was aware that this was an issue that would require attention in any planning agreement. As noted earlier, the government only agreed to provide investment on the condition that the management and workers worked together to devise the planning agreement. Chrysler UK could not risk the planning agreement failing on the basis of the Linwood Toolroom and so it appears delayed any decision on this area until after the first agreement was signed. In fact, no agreement was ever reached on the Toolroom. This example highlights an agenda driven by centralised management that rendered the shop stewards and unions impotent in the

<sup>749</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Minutes of First Meeting of Planning Agreement Working Part held in No.1 Conference Room – Whitley on Tuesday 11 May 1976 at 11.30 hours.

<sup>750</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Inter Company Correspondence, Planning Agreement Working Party, Agenda, 11 June 1976.

<sup>751</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1, Inter Company Correspondence, Planning Agreement Working Party, Agenda, 3 August 1976.

<sup>752</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/4/3, Chrysler's Crisis: The Workers Answer, 8 December 1975.

mechanisms of participation, thereby marginalising the status of the factory workers process.

After eleven months of consultation the first Planning Agreement was signed on the 8th March 1977 between Managing Director, George Lacy and Secretary of State for Industry, Eric Varley. Upon signing, George Lacy championed the improved communication through the PAWP and of the ‘opportunity for the employees’ representatives to become fully involved in the planning process’.<sup>753</sup> After the first planning agreement the company moved Arrow production to Dublin without consulting the UK workforce.<sup>754</sup> Following the signing the company moved its Arrow car production to its subsidiary in Dublin without consultation with the UK workforce. The employee representatives were only able to comment on this strategy after the company had made the decision. Similarly, the company announced that, following the launch of the Avenger in mid-1976, the introduction of another new model scheduled for production at Linwood would potentially have a ‘disruptive effect’ on continuity of production and so decided that it should be manufactured at Ryton. The U-turn on this planning issue meant that the reduction in models produced at Linwood, in preparation for the new model, continued as planned but without any contingency to maintain the level of work at the Linwood plant. The company advised that a second new car would be introduced in the 1980s but did not provide the employee representatives on the PAWP with any information on the timing of the introduction or type of car.<sup>755</sup> It is clear from the minutes of the January meeting in 1978 that the employee representatives on the PAWP were not included in any consultation procedure regarding this planning arrangement but were instead informed of the changes once the decisions had been made.

The response of the union Chairman, John Carty, was disappointment in the communication of this issue and accused the company of ‘deviating’ from the Planning Agreement. Management’s response was that the shift was ‘merely a change to the basic manufacturing source’.<sup>756</sup> However, this decision impacted on the overall number of models being produced at Linwood as detailed in the Planning Agreement, therefore the U-turn had implications for the long-term viability of the plant. These actions highlight that the rhetoric of consultation could not counter the prevalence of unitary attitudes amidst

<sup>753</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/5, Briefing: Immediate, First Planning Agreement Signed, 8 March 1977.

<sup>754</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/4/3, Chrysler’s Crisis: The Workers Answer, 8 December 1975.

<sup>755</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/6, Minutes of the Planning Agreement Working Party Meeting held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room Whitley on Wednesday 18 January 1978 at 11.00 Hours.

<sup>756</sup> MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/6, Minutes of the Planning Agreement Working Party Meeting held in the Industrial Relations Conference Room Whitley on Wednesday 18 January 1978 at 11.00 Hours.

Chrysler management. Decisions made by Chrysler UK management were introduced with disregard for the conditions of the Planning Agreement. It is feasible that Chrysler avoided consultation with the employee representatives in the knowledge that the response of the workers they represented on circulation of the decision would ensure this was pre-empted and met with firm resistance. The failure to discuss and negotiate joint decisions obviated the role of employee representatives in decision-making at the plant.

By 1978 both management and workforce attributed improvements in industrial relations, including an 80 per cent reduction in lost hours, to the planning agreements that the company had approved in consultation with the unions and government:

The planning agreements have contributed to the incredible drop in stoppages...this type of dialogue has in my view engendered a better relationship.<sup>757</sup> (Peter Griffiths, Deputy Managing Director Chrysler UK)

Similarly the AEUW Convenor at Linwood, stated:

I certainly think the planning agreements are contributing ... giving trade union people a better understanding about what Chrysler is trying to do.<sup>758</sup>

Given the apparent lack of communication in the branch plant in the early 1970s, the PAWP may appear as having been a radical change in company communications with the workforce and by association industrial relations. Aside from the publicity and the many bulletins informing the workforce on aspects of the planning agreement, the minutes of the meetings reveal a different picture of the Planning Agreement in practice. The company was seen to be promoting structures of consultation and improved communication between the workforce and management but this was selective.

Although many aspects of the EPP outlined above were never implemented, the aim had been to introduce participation throughout all levels of the workforce, which included plans for conferences and briefing meetings at the plants carried out by the Managing Director, as well as quarterly company bulletins and improving communications. But Management documentation relating to its strategy of 'Participative Management' points to the inability of management to fully endorse organisational pluralism in the plant and contributes to an understanding of the inadequacies in the

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<sup>757</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Tom Lester, 'The Crunch at Chrysler', *Management Today* (June 1978).

<sup>758</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Tom Lester, 'The Crunch at Chrysler', *Management Today* (June 1978).

Planning Agreement.<sup>759</sup> In a company document containing speeches from a Linwood Branch-Plant Communication Meeting held at Linwood, on 27 February 1976, the Chrysler UK Industrial Relations Manager Peter Griffiths acknowledged that the new style of management may be difficult:

Some of you, perhaps, will find participative management difficult to understand and harder still in practice to accommodate.<sup>760</sup>

By implication this acknowledges that the new style of management required a distinct change in attitudes and practice. However, closer inspection of the company documentation from the Communication Meeting points to the apparent contradiction and difficulties in the company's participation strategy.

Management perceived communication and consultation to be at the centre of this new style of 'Participative Management', in particular direct communication with all levels of the workforce. The slides used in the communication meeting compare the old and new styles of management at the plant. For instance:

Before:

Management decision understood – Questioned – perhaps disobeyed.  
Employee uninformed or wrongly informed of management objectives.  
Conflict follows.

After:

Decision discussed – questions answered – Joint agreement sought.  
Employees informed of facts and objectives.  
Less chance of conflict.<sup>761</sup>

These slides highlight the persistence of unitary values present within pluralist forms of industrial relations as conflict is attributed to misunderstandings of the company aim and poor communication. The aim of communication strategies was not therefore, to facilitate greater employee involvement in decision-making but rather, if channels of communication were improved this would ensure a compliant workforce. There is little recognition of the divergent interests of labour and capital within this viewpoint; little accommodation for challenges to the decisions of management. Chrysler's aims in 'Participative Management' are evidenced in one of the earliest slides entitled

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<sup>759</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, 1976: Communication Meeting, Linwood 27 February 1976.

<sup>760</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, 1976: Communication Meeting, Linwood 27 February 1976.

<sup>761</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, 1976: Communication Meeting, Linwood 27 February 1976.

‘Participation, A New Basis for Managerial Authority’. This slide is further useful when considering the motivations of Chrysler UK management in exploring various participation strategies. In particular three statements stand out:

The balance of power has changed away from established authority to organised labour.

A company consists of groups with conflicting aims, common objectives difficult, sometimes impossible, to establish.

But a congruence of purpose must be established - if continuing conflict is to cease.<sup>762</sup>

From this slide a complex yet somewhat contradictory picture emerges. First of all, the motivations of management are clearly identifiable as relating to a loss of managerial authority. On one level this saw management turn to a pluralist participation agenda in order to ensure continuity of production and to meet productivity targets. Management appeared to acknowledge the differing interest groups within the firm. However, on another level, implicit in this slide is the notion that the different interests groups can have a common goal. The evidence from this slide points to a participation strategy whereby management could work to reassert control in the plant and in no way balance the authority of labour and capital in decision-making.

In June 1978, two years after the introduction of the Planning Agreement Peter Griffiths, then Managing Director of Chrysler UK, indicated that the input to the PAWP meetings was heavily weighted towards management and issued the prophetic fallacy: ‘99% comes from the management side “but it will improve”’.<sup>763</sup> There was little time for improvements; in May 1978 the Chrysler Corporation had already begun formal negotiations on the sale of its European operations with the French company PSA Peugeot Citroen. The company omitted to consult the workforce at every level, or indeed the government, upon the takeover on 10 August 1978.<sup>764</sup> Chrysler’s disregard of the conditions of the rescue agreement proved frustrating for politicians such as Tony Benn, who claimed to have said to the Cabinet Committee (Economic Strategy):

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<sup>762</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Linwood Box 7, 1976: Communication Meeting, Linwood Friday 27 February 1976.

<sup>763</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Tom Lester, ‘The Crunch at Chrysler’, *Management Today* (June 1978).

<sup>764</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892723C, Transport and General Workers Union, ‘Chrysler – Peugeot Citroen Merger’.

In 1976, in what was supposed to be a planning agreement, Chrysler gave us assurances, in exchange for funds, that they would stay in Britain. Now we're supposed to just hand the company over to Peugeot.<sup>765</sup>

The situation was a *fait accompli* for Eric Varley, Secretary of State for Industry. Despite entering into negotiations with trade unions and exploring the possibility of a British Leyland merger with Chrysler UK, eventually he was forced to concede to the takeover agreed on 28 September.

Within source material related to the PAWP, there are continual references to management and employee representatives working together and of consultation. However there is a significant distinction between involvement and influence.<sup>766</sup> Despite advocating a commitment to employee 'participation' in the planning process there is limited evidence to suggest the Planning Agreement actually provided anything more than company information – albeit the employee representatives received it first-hand. The omission of major decisions from PAWP negotiations points to 'participative management' as a style of management underpinned by an unstable coexistence between company, employee representatives and workforce. At this stage in the plant's ownership the rhetoric of 'participation' by Chrysler management on the PAWP was used to placate the employee representatives long enough to satisfy the government's conditions of the Rescue Plan: investment on evidence of joint consultation.

#### 4.5 PSA Takeover: 'Any strikes and we'll move out'

In August 1978 attempts were made to protect the British subsidiaries of PSA through a commitment obtained from the company in the form of a Declaration of Intent, adapted from the earlier Chrysler version of January 1976. Clauses within the Declaration advocated a commitment to integrate Chrysler UK into the PSA operations and a guarantee that the UK subsidiaries would be in a position to supply component parts throughout PSA as well as a commitment to employment.<sup>767</sup> In an information booklet that was delivered to the workforce, it was detailed that within the UK subsidiaries 'There will be a smooth transition [to PSA ownership] with no major changes to management organisation'.<sup>768</sup>

<sup>765</sup> Tony Benn, *Conflicts of Interest, Diaries 1977-80*, (England: Arrow Books, 1991), p. 343.

<sup>766</sup> Blyton and Turnbull, *Employee Relations*, p. 255.

<sup>767</sup> Wilks, *Industrial Policy*, p. 255.

<sup>768</sup> MRC, MSS.315/P/4/4, Our Future with PSA Peugeot-Citroen, Chrysler United Kingdom.

Intended to reassure the workforce, it promoted a commitment to continuity of the Chrysler style of management and employee involvement, ‘CUK [Chrysler UK] will continue to work with its employees on the basis of employee participation to improve productivity and long-term performance’.<sup>769</sup> Despite these assurances there was some cause for alarm in that PSA structured its operations in a tripartite fashion with three distinct product ranges of Peugeot, Citroen and Talbot. From 1979 the Chrysler UK operations ran as Talbot. For a workforce that had experienced a diminishing input into the global market under Chrysler it is understandable that this may have been viewed with some scepticism as a deliberate attempt to sideline the British subsidiaries, preventing greater integration with the European operations.

Upon takeover the Linwood workforce was informed that improvements had to be made to both productivity and quality.<sup>770</sup> Furthermore the plant was promised a new model.<sup>771</sup> However, shortly after takeover it was becoming apparent to the workforce that the Linwood plant was unlikely to feature in the long-term strategy of the multinational management. A sense of the inevitable closure of Linwood is revealed in the oral testimonies of former Linwood employees:

well ah think we all knew the writin was on the wall anyway, long before they announced it, cos ehm, ah didnae see anythin happening ... ah think we knew when PSA was takin over that the writin was on the wall for Linwood. Ah don't know what other, the people thought but me personally, ah thought it was, that it was finished.<sup>772</sup>

Ye knew they were away because, there wis things on the telly at that time, it was even tellin ye on the telly at that time the British cars werenae sellin...that's when aw the Hondas were startin tae come.<sup>773</sup>

A new model promised for Linwood never materialised and that from the time of the PSA takeover there were redundancies and short-time working throughout the Talbot group. At Linwood, October 1979 saw the announcement of 1550 redundancies with a further 1300 in June 1980.<sup>774</sup> Thus to all extents and purposes it may well have seemed that the plant was being run down and that there were clear indications that PSA did not intend to

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<sup>769</sup> MRC, MSS.315/P/4/4, Our Future with PSA Peugeot-Citroen, Chrysler United Kingdom.

<sup>770</sup> MRC, MSS.315/P/4/4, Our Future with PSA Peugeot-Citroen, Chrysler United Kingdom.

<sup>771</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Linwood: The case for full employment & No Closure, The Workers Answer, March 1981, p. 15.

<sup>772</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

<sup>773</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>774</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Linwood: The case for full employment & No Closure, The Workers Answer, March 1981, p. 31.

continue production at Linwood. Indeed what is interesting from the commitment to providing employment in the PSA Declaration of Intent was that it was based on the caveat that this was ‘to the extent consistent with prevailing economic conditions’.<sup>775</sup> In the end PSA did in fact attribute the closure of Linwood to larger macroeconomic problems. Following losses of £91 million in 1980, Peugeot’s first experience of financial loss since 1945, the decision was taken on 11 February 1981 to close the Linwood branch plant.<sup>776</sup> In a letter to Strathclyde Regional Council PSA explained that ‘A combination of difficult market conditions in the U.K. coupled with a big fall in exports, caused by the high level of sterling, has made it impossible for the Talbot motor to continue the operation of the Linwood plant’.<sup>777</sup>

Bain and Lockyer argued that despite the continuation of the Planning Agreement, plant management at Linwood had little influence on parent company strategy relating to the branch plant, and alongside the unions did not hold positions of influence with the MNC.<sup>778</sup> Regardless of the aforementioned warning signs that the plant may close the announcement appears to have come as a surprise to some workers; on the level of the senior stewards due to the continuation of the PAWP and on the shop floor as productivity at the plant had been improving and there were fewer industrial relations problems. The introduction of a new pay agreement at Linwood in July 1979 may have produced an optimistic response to the PSA takeover. This agreement was dissimilar to the productivity bargaining of the 1960s and early 1970s in that it was not based on achieving productivity increases. Marsden et al., note that by the early 1980s, throughout the UK operations, Talbot had been able to utilise a period of adverse market conditions in the late 1970s to achieve productivity improvements of forty per cent by ensuring ‘continuous working, and the elimination of what they call “petty” disputes, unofficial relief time, late starts and early finishes, as well as tighter manning assignments’.<sup>779</sup>

At Linwood, the 1979 wage agreement introduced a new common grading structure, brought about the final pay increase to bring parity throughout the Talbot

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<sup>775</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, *Making Cars and Marginalising the Workplace Organisation: Management industrial relations strategy at Linwood*, Peter Bain and Cliff Lockyer, British Trade Unionism Conference 1997, p. 17.

<sup>776</sup> Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing*, p. 64.

<sup>777</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Linwood: The case for full employment & No Closure, The Workers Answer, March 1981, p. 49.

<sup>778</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, *Making Cars and Marginalising the Workplace Organisation: Management industrial relations strategy at Linwood*, Peter Bain and Cliff Lockyer, British Trade Unionism Conference 1997, p. 18.

<sup>779</sup> Marsden et al., *The Car Industry*, p. 95.

operations and also a five and a half per cent pay rise for all work grades.<sup>780</sup> With the benefit of hindsight it appears that this may have been a very effective strategy for placating a weakened labour movement, especially as the management had made it clear that it would not tolerate industrial action. The Talbot Action Committee (hereafter TAC), which was a collective of shop stewards set up to lead the fight against closure, commented in response to George Turnbull, Managing Director of Chrysler UK then Talbot:

He asked for extra production – he got it – we kept our part of the bargain – did he keep his – perhaps the wrong people are going!!<sup>781</sup>

This attitude is reflected in the oral testimonies:

so when Peugeot took it over, the first month they made their target and then the second month we made our bonuses and we'd never had bonuses in all the time we were there so that's why ah couldnae understand why they shut the place because, there was never a strike when Peugeot took it over, no strikes whatsoever because they warned em "Any strikes and we'll move out." But within two years of them takin over they shut the place down.<sup>782</sup>

A mixture of factors influencing closure is in evidence within the oral testimonies. However, many interviewees felt that labour relations had improved under Peugeot as had levels of production and wages. Therefore, this led to the accusation of asset-stripping such as within the TAC report on Linwood which was reminiscent of the document produced under Chrysler management, *Chrysler's Crisis the Workers* [sic] *Answer*, where the MNC was accused of asset stripping and taking advantage of government funding while running down the Linwood Plant. It was a sentiment reflected in Rodger McGuinness' testimony:

Peugeot was to blame for its closure because if you're making bonuses then that means that they're making money and there were never a strike. If there were strikes then ah'd say "right, fair enough, you did warn us. Shut the place, we've got ourselves to blame... When we heard about that it was just the machinery they wanted, they didnae want the staff, not from day one did they want Linwood, that was it, they wanted the work shop, they wanted the paint shop, they wanted these bits of Linwood. It was like strippin a factory down; you take what you want of it and get rid o the rest."<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>780</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, An Agreement of Pay and Associated Conditions Between Talbot Motors and All Trade Unions Concerned Representing Hourly-Paid Employees at the Linwood Plant Effective 1 July 1979.

<sup>781</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, Linwood: The Case for Full Employment & No Closure, The Workers Answer, March 1981, p. 5.

<sup>782</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 2.

<sup>783</sup> Oral Testimony, Rodger McGuinness, Interview 2.

Therefore, from the oral testimonies and shop floor documentary evidence there is an awareness of the power of MNCs to utilise the branch plant labour force, take advantage of favourable economic conditions, as well as government investment as it suited its organisational strategy but ultimately the Linwood branch plant was expendable regardless of the performance of the plant.

In many of the oral testimonies, the interviewees linked the closure of Linwood back to the original regional policy decision that denied Rootes an IDC to expand its operations in the Midlands:

A lot of people say the unions closed Linwood. I don't believe that. When the French took over the company was producing a lot of cars, on time, good quality. To me it was a political thing, Peugeot-Citroen is still a successful company ... the problem with Linwood was geography.<sup>784</sup>

And ah always remember the chap, the chairman of PSA from France, a chap called John Paul Parayre who came over and he, the exact words he used in the board room was "this is the first and the last time you will ever see me here." Thinking wurselves "oh well we're gonnae be all right" ye know. But, ah think it was two months later they announced that it was not viable, geographically, for Linwood to be here. Ah think they blamed the workers but, in fairness, ah think the management overall, the seven years ah was there management eh, had quite a bit tae blame for what happened eh, the escalated strikes.<sup>785</sup>

The 'handicaps of geography' mentioned at the official opening of Linwood, by Lord Rootes, proved difficult to overcome. However, as is suggested in the above excerpt there were numerous contingent factors influencing the closure, including industrial relations, the economic climate and this also should be considered within the context of the intentions of Peugeot SA in purchasing Chrysler UK. The irony being that as industrial relations had improved and parity finally achieved, closure was announced.

#### 4.6 Conclusion: Polarity between Rhetoric and Reality

The focus in this chapter has been the interactions between successive managements and workforce at the Linwood car plant and the significance of political economy. Attention was drawn to initiatives such as inclusion of unions through shop stewards in the structures of management and the EEP and PAWP that were introduced to reconcile organisational pluralism with unitary policies by giving the worker a 'voice' within the branch plants,

<sup>784</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>785</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

promoting the sense of collaboration and encouraging a willingness to increased commitment to productivity. Management in successive companies at the Linwood plant devised strategies based on consultative arrangements and facilitated communication. The inclusion of shop stewards, many considered to be militant by the company, functioned to manipulate the power relations between management and workforce to persuade employees that there was equity in the interactions between the two groups, motivating workforce compliance in managerial decisions. These processes of consultation and decision-making occurred within the context of unequal power relations and as such sustained the asymmetry of influence between management and employee representatives contribution to decision-making strategies at the Linwood plant. Such schemes were transitory in nature and a means by which management contained the power of labour rather than being a demonstration of a sustained commitment to worker influence in decision-making.<sup>786</sup>

Firms managing Linwood had to not only negotiate periods of difficult industrial relations, but the shift towards more interventionist economic management from the late 1940s meant greater interaction between government and industry as successive governments sought to control inflation.<sup>787</sup> Therefore, while the actions of management at Linwood point to a managerial strategy that was driven by, ‘a continual search for control of the shop floor organisation and to redefine the bargaining structure and agenda to meet production needs’, the political economy was also an influential factor in the nature of management.<sup>788</sup> The search for control was a dialectic process in which the interaction between the firms that owned the Linwood car plant, the government, the economy and the labour force, all served to shape management rhetoric and practice.

The interactions between management and workers at the Linwood plant explored in this chapter reveal a dichotomy between the rhetoric and reality of industrial democracy. Information asymmetries persisted that facilitated the flow of information from the shop floor to senior management, with little or no consideration of the worker’s ‘voice’, and used to enforce the best conditions for the company’s profitability. Despite democratic rhetoric, employee involvement schemes and participatory management functioned within the structural control of management and did little to disturb the hierarchical structure of power relations. Hence, shop floor representatives were rendered impotent by their

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<sup>786</sup> Ramsay, ‘Cycles of Control’, 481-506.

<sup>787</sup> Wilks, *Industrial Policy* and Crouch, *Politics of Industrial Relations*.

<sup>788</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, *Making Cars and Marginalising the Workplace Organisation: Management industrial relations strategy at Linwood*, Peter Bain and Cliff Lockyer, British Trade Unionism Conference 1997.

resigned compliance in consultation processes of involvement with little or no influence. It was a dialectic process where transactions between management and workforce appeared as tokenism. Consequently, there were no significant changes in company policies to accommodate worker or government demands for greater commitment to industrial democracy.

## Chapter Five



Source: <http://www.scran.ac.uk>  
Accessed 1 September 2009.

Workers casting votes outside the Rootes Linwood factory.

## Chapter Five

### Structures of Authority: Compliance and Coercion

#### 5. 1 Linwood Lives: David Crawford

Ma initial thoughts on the plant were it was a great, great place to work. A lot of good companionships but [pause] ah've been told we went into the car, car business it was not as, it was a happy enough time then but there was a lot of politics then an you've heard various stories about the, the strike for this and the strike for that. There was a lot a, silly, silly things. But the management were not eh blameless either. Ah can quote ye an instance where, ah was goin up the road, one night. ... a fella who worked in production control at the other side came over an we're speakin in the car park for a minute. An he said, "David, don't bring any pieces [sandwiches] wi ye in the morning." Ah said, "what ye talkin aboot?" "Awe" he said, "they'll be up the road by ten o'clock." Ah says, "ah never heard anything about it". He says, "we have no power train", the power train ... was a thing that wis sent up from Coventry, it eh powered, it powered the, the motor. He says, "there's been a, there's trouble down in Coventry an' they cannae get any o' these parts, we've run out o' them. We're gonnae run out tommorra at nine o'clock an we cannae get anymore for a week." So he says, "they'll have them up the road". An as sure as fate, ah went in in the morning an' says tae ma, ma fellow, by this time ah was a foreman inspector, tae ma colleagues, "Ah hear we'll, they'll be up the road." "Auch nonsense" they says, "nonsense." Low and behold, they were. Next thing we knew, Trim shop, which ah also worked in for a wee while, they were away oot on strike. It turned out, it was a [pause] a case had been pending of a, of a guy urinatin' outside at the other end o the building'. An he'd been called over to the personnel three weeks or so before it, this instance. An this case was pending. An they knew ... if they put this bloke up the road, his mates would go with him. An that's exactly what happened. That was only one instance a think. There was a lot o times when, ye were sure that the strikes were manufactured but eh, couldnae prove it. That instance we could.<sup>789</sup>

David Crawford worked for the inspection department from 1954, initially with Pressed Steel, until the closure of the plant in 1981. Throughout his period of employment at Linwood he worked in many different areas of the car plant and was also promoted to inspection foreman therefore became a member of staff. In the above excerpt Crawford constructs a narrative in which strikes occurred for 'silly' reasons. This explanation for strike activity is repeated later in his testimony and reflects a dominant popular narrative about Linwood, namely that strikes occurred over seemingly petty and insignificant issues.<sup>790</sup> Crawford's reference to one of the dominant discourses suggests his narrative is constructed in relation to the 'cultural circuit'.<sup>791</sup> That is not to say there is a lack of agency in the construction of his testimony: he states that many strikes were 'silly', but

<sup>789</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

<sup>790</sup> In a BBC Scotland Television Series entitled 'Power to the People' aired in 2006, similar narratives were constructed by a number of interviewees. Notably, Scottish comedian Andy Cameron who worked at Linwood, recalled a strike due to there being a problem with food purchased from the work canteen.

<sup>791</sup> Summerfield, 'Dis/composing the subject', 91-106 (p. 95).

demonstrates awareness of a complex variety of issues and influences operating at Linwood and constructs explanations for poor industrial relations.

In the above testimony Crawford makes a linkage between ‘silly’ reasons and strikes, which he attributed to a shortage of component parts, without which car bodies in the mechanical engineering blocks on the North Side could not be transferred along the track to the South Side for finishing and inspection. Two key points arise here; first, structural factors such as breaks in the supply chain were significant impediments in the continuity of production, exacerbated by the reliance on components parts from for example, Chrysler’s Coventry plant and secondly, the causal role of management in strikes. Crawford’s narrative highlights the need to look beneath the prevalent reasons for strikes and stoppages at the plant that are usually attributed to union militancy and a politically motivated shop steward system. This thesis asserts that inherent tensions existed at the Linwood plant that sustained a prevalent undercurrent of potential for disputes, which could be exploited by management and workforce. Hence, the chapter will advance the examination of power relations discussed in Chapter Four by extrapolating the layering of causes and significance of the wider context in which industrial action occurred, considered here from the shop floor up.

## 5.2 Main Themes

Among the central power relationships in industrial society are those between workers and management. As a consequence of post-war economic growth, full employment in the 1960s provided the context for a shift in power relations in favour of labour. A dominant narrative at the time attributed economic problems to industrial relations including the growth of the shop steward system, ‘unofficial’ strikes and union militancy driven by pay disputes and resistance to new technology that hampered the productivity of British industry.<sup>792</sup> In the Royal Commission survey undertaken as part of The Donovan Commission reporting in 1968, it was noted that shop steward power, in the context of post-war full employment, had resulted in fragmented workplace bargaining. Such bargaining occurred alongside union officials and employers’ organisations, resulting in both formal and informal systems of industrial relations co-existing ‘in conflict’.<sup>793</sup> Subsequently, the trend toward worker representation, not necessarily determined by union

<sup>792</sup> Tim Claydon, ‘Tales of Disorder: The Press and the Narrative Construction of Industrial Relations in the British Motor Industry 1950-79’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 9 (2000), 1-36 (p. 2).

<sup>793</sup> *The Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers’ Associations, 1965-1968*, Cmnd. 3623 (HMSO, 1971 Reprint), p. 36.

demarcation, gave rise to a shop steward system that began to function independently of union backing and affected the power balance within the labour movement.

Full employment coupled with fragmented bargaining meant that in the 1960s strikes became endemic in the motor industry with fifty-five per cent of major strikes attributed to wage disputes.<sup>794</sup> A corollary was identified between the development of independent shop steward systems and the proliferation of unofficial and unconstitutional strikes that heightened tensions in industrial relations in the industry.<sup>795</sup> Beynon posed that, as many of the struggles faced by shop stewards were related to the 'effort-bargain', namely control over the job, dismissals and discipline, as opposed to wage demands, this could be perceived as evidence of political motivations among the shop stewards that reflected, 'the potential for a grass-roots, extra Parliamentary, socialist movement within the working class'.<sup>796</sup> However, Hutton is dismissive of this notion and argues that the cause of much conflict that underpinned strike action can be attributed more to a desire by workers to protect jobs and status within the industry than any belief in or commitment to a 'class war'.<sup>797</sup> Goldthorpe et al., identified the link between the orientation people have towards their work and their orientation towards trade unionism. Thus leading them to argue that for process and assembly workers, unionism provides the opportunity for 'instrumental collectivism' as workers use collective means to attain individual goals.<sup>798</sup>

Discussion on industrial conflict was prominent in the oral testimonies of plant managers:

Stoppages, stoppages, stoppages, stoppages. Eh, they would stop just, just to make the point they would have a stoppage. Not realising that the effect was quality and the effect was lost production. And that meant there was, the company was gonnae lose money. ... so therefore, it was down tools, you know, send for the buses.<sup>799</sup>

<sup>794</sup> C. Wrigley, 'Strikes in the Motor Car Manufacturing Industry', in A. Charlesworth *et al.* (eds), *An Atlas of Industrial Protest: 1750-1990* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 202-9 p. 202.

<sup>795</sup> The Donovan Commission made the distinction between unofficial and unconstitutional stoppages in that the former are not approved by the union whereas the latter are strikes that occur regardless of procedures in place to resolve a dispute. *The Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 1965-1968*, Cmnd. 3623 (HMSO, 1971 Reprint), p. 97.

<sup>796</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 14.

<sup>797</sup> Will Hutton, *The State We're In* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 85.

<sup>798</sup> Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour*, p. 106.

<sup>799</sup> Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1.

As well as workers:

But, the unions still, they had, they had our, they had killed the place before they [Chrysler] even got it. They didnae have a lot o, [pause] it was a bad, bad thing fur them. They couldnae afford it, eventually ah don't suppose they could afford it. Ye cannae afford strikes everyday of the year.<sup>800</sup>

These comments correlate with the dominant narrative that the Linwood plant 'failed' because of the militancy of employees that contributed to problematic industrial relations and industrial disputes.<sup>801</sup>

Current analyses of industrial relations at the plant have tended to focus on external reasons to explain strikes, such as fluctuations in the economy and the centrally developed style of management associated with multinationals. Large strikes are well documented but are often discussed within the framework of Chrysler's entire UK operation, summarised within the UK car industry as a whole as are reasons for stoppages.<sup>802</sup> In the mid 1960s it appears the majority of strikes in the motor industry lasted four hours or less.<sup>803</sup> It is a trend mirrored at Linwood during Rootes ownership of the plant but reflected sectional disputes based on maintaining wage differentials. Subsequently, the Manpower Paper *Strikes in Britain*, published in 1978, identified pay issues as the primary cause of recorded strikes.<sup>804</sup> It concluded that in an average year between 1971 and 73 only two per cent of manufacturing plants experienced strikes large enough to be recorded by the Department of Employment. Thus British industry was not: 'widely or continually affected by industrial action; it ... [was] not "riddled" with strikes'.<sup>805</sup>

Albeit *Strikes in Britain* recognised that in large car plants there was a corollary between the size of the plant and concentration of stoppages, two major weakness in the analysis are: first, the recording threshold omitted stoppages of less than one-day duration thus did not accommodate short sectional strikes within a plant.<sup>806</sup> Secondly, such

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<sup>800</sup> Oral Testimony, Iain Macdonald, Interview 1.

<sup>801</sup> *The Times*, 2 March 1978.

<sup>802</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, pp. 216-48.

<sup>803</sup> Dave Lyddon, 'The car industry, 1945-79: shop stewards and workplace unionism', ed. by Chris Wrigley, *A History of British Industrial Relations, 1939-1979: Industrial Relations in a Declining Economy* (London: Edward Elgar, 1996), 186-211 (p. 203).

<sup>804</sup> CTB Smith *et al.*, *Strikes in Britain, A Research Study of Industrial Stoppages in the United Kingdom*, Department of Employment Manpower Paper No. 15 (1978), p. 53.

<sup>805</sup> CTB Smith *et al.*, *Strikes in Britain*, p. 88.

<sup>806</sup> CTB Smith *et al.*, *Strikes in Britain*, p. 157. The report observed that setting a recording threshold resulted in data limitations that affected the overall analysis. In order to redress this, the report considered data on strikes of an hour's duration if a thousand employees were involved and there was a loss of a hundred working days.

stoppages tended to be unofficial and unconstitutional and the document presents a narrowly defined analysis of stoppage activity, particularly within the car industry. This obscures behavioural trends in strike motivation that may have been particular to specific sections within an individual plant. Such constructions diverge from the more informed analysis of strikes pursued here, namely examination of the relative power of labour and management to highlight the persistence of *industrial* as opposed to *political* militancy, with strikes revolving round the organisation of production and job control.

The pattern of strikes at Linwood differed from that experienced by the car industry in the rest of the UK as well as during Chrysler's period of ownership, from that of its other UK subsidiaries. It was a trend of strike activity at the plant characterised by short strikes, often less than four hours, sectional and not directly linked to pay. In Chapter Two attention was drawn to the number of strikes in the Scottish car industry noting three hundred strikes between 1963 and 1969.<sup>807</sup> Chrysler company records of annual strike statistics from 1973 to 1975 alone show Linwood experienced 239 then 261 and 116 stoppages consecutively, of under four hours duration during this three year period, compared to Chrysler's Midland's operation where the stoppages of the same duration were 80, 106 and 54 during the same period.<sup>808</sup> Strike statistics kept by the company show very clearly that in comparison to the industry as a whole, at Linwood there was a prevalence of short stoppages of fewer than four hours.<sup>809</sup> Therefore, Linwood's experience of disputes was unusual in comparison to other plants owned by the company. Strikes were driven by events on the shop floor and were likely to have been unofficial due to the absence of a union official at the time of the strike. Many strikes were over before there was time to obtain official union approval. Most of the strikes mentioned in the trade union diaries (TGWU) were unofficial stoppages that lasted for less than one shift.

While the secondary literature on Linwood is limited, it is even more restricted by the lack of detail provided on industrial organisation at the plant. It is therefore useful to utilise a variety of trade union documentary material as well as the oral testimony to piece together an account of the organisation of shop floor unionism in the Linwood plant. This discussion shall begin with a brief introduction to unionisation in the industry at large and the changing position of shop stewards, before moving onto a detailed examination of shop steward organisation at Linwood. By doing so the discussion will consider the contested nature of trade unionism in the plant; the role of shop stewards and recognition of their

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<sup>807</sup> Knox, 'Class, Work and Trade Unionism in Scotland', 108-37 (p. 128).

<sup>808</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler U.K.*, p. 241.

<sup>809</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, p. 241.

functioning in the plant by management and shop floor, as well as political motivations. There were crucial differences in understanding between the stewards and management, as well as between stewards and the workers they represented, thereby challenging the notion of the all-powerful shop steward system. The discussion will include ‘narratives of tension’ that emerged in the oral testimonies to explore its significance in the interactions between different groups in the Linwood plant. The main finding that emerges from this discussion is the enduring importance of the workforce’s search for autonomy on the shop floor. Management attempts to overcome this phenomenon through industrial relations policy were analysed in Chapter Four of this thesis and this chapter duly reinforces how difficult it was to restructure industrial relations in the Linwood plant through the exploration of informal industrial relations and factors contributing to tension on the shop floor.

### 5.3 Multi-Unionism

The labour organisation of British car manufacturing displayed a fairly unusual pattern in comparison to the United States and Japan where one union represented all workers, and Western Europe where, although there could be more than one union representing car workers, the number was limited. Within Britain the experience was that of ‘multi-unionism’ with many unions representing different workers within the car industry. During the 1970s the Downing Street think-tank, the CPRS identified seventeen main unions representing workers of the car industry in the UK and asserted that this fragmentation provoking high number of disputes over demarcation and recruitment and impacted on continuity of production in the car industry.<sup>810</sup>

At Linwood there were at least eight unions representing the manual workforce as well as union representation of foremen, supervisory and clerical staff by unions such as the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff.<sup>811</sup> In the 1960s the Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) and the National Union of Vehicle Builders (NUVB) together represented sixty per cent of the hourly-paid employees with six other unions, mainly representing craft workers.<sup>812</sup> During Chrysler’s phase of ownership the majority of manual employees were represented by the TGWU and the Amalgamated

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<sup>810</sup> The Central Policy Review Staff, *The Future of the British Car Industry* (London: HMSO, 1975), p. 103.

<sup>811</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd. 3692 (HMSO, 1968), pp. 15-17.

<sup>812</sup> *Report of a Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a Dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd. 3692 (HMSO, 1968), p. 4.

Engineering Union. In the 1960s the problem of disputes related to wage claims was compounded at Linwood, as it was for other car plants, by ‘multi-unionism’.<sup>813</sup> For example, a dispute in 1964 involved 270 workers staging a ‘go-slow’ as they were dissatisfied with the unilaterally imposed bonus scheme throughout the entire plant, instead of a bonus system agreed with the individual unions.<sup>814</sup> It is noteworthy that in the TGWU documents consulted, including shop steward diaries and branch minutes, there were very few references to inter-union or demarcation disputes. The diaries consulted were in the main from the end of the Chrysler phase of ownership and are limited in that they represent something of a snap-shot of particular sections at that period in time.

Depicting a different scenario are sources such as the Robertson Inquiry that noted, in the 1960s a Joint Negotiating Body could not be organised at Linwood due to ‘difficulty between the unions’.<sup>815</sup> Furthermore, National Union of Vehicle Builders reports highlight that when pay negotiations broke down between management and the Amalgamated Engineering Federation (AEF), all unions were forced to cease negotiations as these occurred through a joint committee.<sup>816</sup> It is conceivable that there would have been tensions between the unions in the early years of this car plant, however by the late 1970s there is more evidence of multi-union communication and support between unions:

Discussions have taken place with other unions on the problem of representation. Allied Trades called a meeting with the T&G [TGWU] and wanted to know if they could mediate and try to solve the problem they declared their position in support of T&G.<sup>817</sup>

This is supported in testimonies of individuals such as David Crawford who asserted that industrial relations improved at the factory as time went on. Similarly, Craig Marsden, who worked as an industrial relations officer, suggested that there was a marked change in industrial relations following the Robertson Court of Inquiry.<sup>818</sup> As a result of the Inquiry the personnel manager<sup>819</sup> was sacked and Marsden stated that numerous convenors were replaced and industrial relations officers employed who had either been convenors in the factory or were convenors from other factories. He claimed this did result in a, ‘new era of

<sup>813</sup> Lyddon, ‘The car industry’, 186-211 (p. 188).

<sup>814</sup> *The Times*, 4 June 1964.

<sup>815</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd. 3692 (HMSO, 1968), pp. 15-17.

<sup>816</sup> ML, Linwood Box 25, Item 892792 14, ‘Summary of Organizers Reports’, National Union of Vehicle Builders, p. 4.

<sup>817</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards’ Diary, A Shift, 6 November 1979.

<sup>818</sup> See details of the Court of Inquiry in Chapter Four.

<sup>819</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11, Card Index.

industrial relations’ but believed this to be based in part on, ‘informal deals done between Rootes-Chrysler ... and the local trade unions’.<sup>820</sup>

Prior to the Court of Inquiry many disputes at Linwood were sectional and evolved around systems and rates of pay based on maintaining wage differentials.<sup>821</sup> This changed following the Inquiry as the agreement led to a shift from:

about a hundred an eighty ish rates of pay, to five grades of pay. That distorted a lot of historical differentials. So there was still groups, ye know, one got it, the other one wanted it, you still had that. But basically what the company had established, although I don’t think many people realised at the time, as flexibility of labour, across five grades, common agreement across the twelve unions.<sup>822</sup>

So whilst inter-union rivalry did not completely disappear, greater flexibility and fewer grades of work seem to have quelled that aspect of multi-unionism. That said there is evidence of apathy amongst workers at the plant, in terms of participating in union activity at both branch and shop floor level that may have been considered pointless by the functioning of the shop steward system. Shop floor representation developed on a cross-sectional basis. For instance, in the diaries the TGWU, stewards commented on the behaviour of all workers in their section, including members of other unions. In addition, shop steward notebooks from the early 1980s reveal that the unions worked together in coordinating campaigns against redundancies and the eventual announcement of closure.<sup>823</sup> This concurs with Clack’s study that found the important issue for stewards in mixed union departments was not the union a worker belonged to, rather that the individual was a union member.<sup>824</sup> In many of the car plants strong shop steward systems operated as an independent form of trade unionism distinct from the branch and official union control, a form labelled as ‘parallel unionism’.<sup>825</sup> Before exploring the position of shop stewards in car plants it is worth investigating the level of recognition of unions by management.

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<sup>820</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>821</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 8, Wage Claims and evidence towards the Donovan Commission .

<sup>822</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>823</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 10, Shop steward Notebooks, 1 March 1980 to 24 April 1980, and 6 September 1980 to 6 April 1981.

<sup>824</sup> Garfield Clack, *Industrial Relations in a British Car Factory* (London: The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 28.

<sup>825</sup> Turner et al., *Labour Relations*, pp. 216-23.

## 5.4 Union Recognition

The post-war period marked significant development in industrial organisation due to the expansion of the general unions and the emergence of shop stewards. Ford management at Halewood and Dagenham signed a Procedure Agreement in 1955 recognising the right of workers to be members of a union, although this agreement solidified the company intention that negotiations over wages and productivity were to be carried out with national union officials.<sup>826</sup> The development of trade unionism at Ford was different between Halewood and Dagenham. According to Beynon, in the Ford Halewood plant there was a TGWU stronghold that virtually existed as a closed shop. Although stewards were provided with full time status from 1963 and granted other provisions such as an office, they found their power was somewhat limited, as one steward said:

You've got to be requested before you can get involved in a dispute. You can't initiate anything. You're always on the defensive.<sup>827</sup>

Management was keen to contain the power of shop stewards therefore carefully controlled much of their activity on the shop floor. The resulting tensions over control of the shop floor gave rise to conflict as continual short stoppages were attributed to management refusal to negotiate with shop stewards.<sup>828</sup> Darlington argues shop floor militancy at Halewood was a response to the management's strict treatment of the stewards.<sup>829</sup> On the other hand, at Dagenham the shop steward system developed differently due to the existence of multi-unionism.<sup>830</sup> As shop stewards tended to represent men in their section who were of different unions, this led to a shop steward system independent of the unions and increased the power of the stewards. The potential power of the shop steward system was recognised in the Cameron Report noted in 1957, which observed that the shop-steward system at Dagenham was in essence:

a private union within a union, enjoying immediate and continuous touch with the men in the shop, answerable to no supervisor and in no way officially or constitutionally linked with the union hierarchy.<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>826</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, 'Agreements and Conditions of Employment Hourly Paid Employees', Ford Motor Company Limited, September 1965, p. 5.

<sup>827</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 213.

<sup>828</sup> Darlington, R., *The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism: Shop Stewards' Organization in Three Merseyside Plants* (London: Mansell Publishing Ltd, 1994), p. 194.

<sup>829</sup> Darlington, *Workplace Unionism*, p. 201.

<sup>830</sup> Darlington indicates that in two of the three plants comprising Halewood, 87 per cent of employees were members of the TGWU. Darlington, *Workplace Unionism*, p. 190-191.

<sup>831</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 48.

It was a similar experience in the Linwood car plant. From its opening in 1963 Rootes recognised that every employee had the right to join a union and made union membership compulsory. This continued throughout the Chrysler phase of ownership but by contrast the involvement of official macro-level unionism diminished with centrally coordinated labour management promoting micro-plant unofficial unionism. Therefore, during the Chrysler phase of ownership, plant management sought to negotiate with shop stewards rather than union officials. This was sustained during the Peugeot period of ownership however, stewards at the plant believed the company to be ‘anti-union’. During this period of ownership, the Talbot Action Committee (hereafter TAC) was formed. This group of stewards and convenors, responsible for organising the campaign against closure, endorsed a report to the European Trade Unionists Meeting in May 1980, which argued that the firm was attempting to weaken trade union organisation and had refused to ‘negotiate with or communicate through the unions (Talbot, UK)’.<sup>832</sup> As a consequence of the development of the shop steward system, ‘bottom-up’ workplace organisation occurred in the British car industry, which resulted in the union officials conceding some power over the movement.<sup>833</sup> This trajectory will now be discussed in more detail.

From the 1960s onwards shop stewards were acknowledged as worker representatives on the shop floor, with the number varying per section and according to the size of the department. They were elected from within their section on site between the November and December monthly shop stewards’ meetings. Out with that period elections would occur upon a steward retiring or ceasing employment.<sup>834</sup> Other industrial organisation existed at the plant in the form of Works Councils and Works Committee. Eleven shop representatives, from eight areas of the plant, sat on this committee with two additional shop stewards elected on a bi-annual basis. The Works Committee met weekly in the Convenor’s rooms and the shop representatives would hold weekly meetings of shop stewards to relay the details of the meeting. At the Bi-Annual General Meeting held in the union meeting room in Paisley, two sub-convenors would also be elected by the shop stewards to represent the North and South plants at Linwood.<sup>835</sup>

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<sup>832</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 7, ‘Linwood: The case for full employment & No Closure, The Workers Answer’, March 1981, p. 33.

<sup>833</sup> Lyddon, ‘The car industry’, 186-211 (p. 193).

<sup>834</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, ‘Chrysler (Linwood) Shop Stewards Constitution’, TGWU, p. 1.

<sup>835</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, ‘Chrysler (Linwood) Shop Stewards Constitution’, TGWU, p. 1.

Although this appeared to be a comprehensive structure that could enable improved communications between management and workers, the key point here is, acknowledging the benefit of communication with the shop floor did not always mean accommodating it. Management sustained control over the stewards' ability to facilitate effective communications by the imposition of restrictions on for example, their physical movement out of their own sections. For instance, in response to shop stewards leaving their place of work and visiting different sections, in 1970 a company statement was issued entitled, 'Correct Use of Facility Afforded to Union Representatives' that began by stating:

The Company recognises the need for Unions to be adequately represented and wan [sic] to ensure that properly elected Representatives are afforded the proper facilities to do their job and process all matters through procedure.<sup>836</sup>

With reference to shop stewards it later states, shop stewards were:

not allowed to depart from that area [the area he represents] without the permission of his Foreman or Manager and he is not allowed to enter or go into another area.<sup>837</sup>

Hence, shop stewards and their role on the shop floor were acknowledged, but the functioning of that role was impeded by variables identified by the management.

Following a period of poor industrial relations the Chrysler management began discussions with unions on working towards improved relations between the two parties. Subsequently, a Recognition and Procedure Agreement was produced in 1971 that outlined the expectations of each party towards each other in terms of labour organisation and formal procedure for resolving disputes. In addition, a Joint Representative Council (hereafter JRC) was organised that noted its purpose as being:

to enable the view of employees to be considered before decisions are taken by management which affect the employees in their work.<sup>838</sup>

It was envisaged that this council would give workers the opportunity to contribute to negotiations over employment conditions. The unions were supportive of this initiative and from the TGWU alone six representatives sat on the JRC including the Convenor, two

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<sup>836</sup> ML, Linwood Box 23, Item 892748-38, 'Correct Use of Facility Afforded to Union Representatives', 14 September 1970, J. W. Cameron (Personnel Manager), Chrysler.

<sup>837</sup> ML, Linwood Box 23, Item 892748-38, 'Correct Use of Facility Afforded to Union Representatives', 14 September 1970, J. W. Cameron (Personnel Manager), Chrysler.

<sup>838</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, 'A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant', 17 February 1971, p. 5.

Sub-Convenors and three representatives from the Works Committee.<sup>839</sup> So at a plant level workers were represented on the JRC by shop stewards rather than branch officials.

In 1968, whilst the TGWU and the NUVB had plant branches, the AEF district committee comprised shop stewards out with plant who could therefore influence the actions of Linwood stewards.<sup>840</sup> The company had begun to recognise the importance of communicating with shop floor representatives who were more in touch with the workforce than branch or national union officials. It was similar to changes in industrial organisation at Ford during the 1960s, which had included the establishment of Joint Works Committees. While the size of these committees varied according to plant size, there was a maximum number of eight company representatives and eight shop stewards. Election of shop stewards to the Joint Works Committee was by shop stewards from all unions at the particular plant.<sup>841</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, this formed part of a strategy by Chrysler on the withdrawal of the company from the EEF and the SEEA in 1969 to handle labour relations in-house.

The prevalence of such organisational structures suggests that Chrysler management had acknowledged the benefit of entering into discussion on local issues with shop stewards rather than national union officials. It pointed to a more flexible management style promoted in the 1971 Recognition and Procedure Agreement noting that ‘Agreement will not be unreasonably withheld’.<sup>842</sup> Similar to the Rootes’ condition of employment, Chrysler stipulated union membership as a condition of employment at Linwood, as it was perceived by management as the most appropriate method of dealing with grievances.<sup>843</sup> This flexibility extended to greater shop steward mobility and allowed them to have meetings on site. The company provided areas to meet if a request was made to the Industrial Relations Manager. Conscious of the importance of settling grievances quickly, if permission was sought from their supervisor, stewards were allowed to leave their place of work to conduct duties.

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<sup>839</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, ‘Chrysler (Linwood) Shop Stewards Constitution’, TGWU, p. 1.

<sup>840</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd. 3692 (HMSO, 1968), pp. 15-17.

<sup>841</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, ‘Agreements and Conditions of Employment Hourly Paid Employees’, Ford Motor Company Limited, September 1965, p. 8.

<sup>842</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, ‘A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant’, 17 February 1971, pp. 2-3.

<sup>843</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, ‘A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant’, 17 February 1971, p. 1.

This suggests a somewhat balanced relationship between management and shop floor, enhanced by the rhetoric of participation and joint consultation during the 1970s, previously discussed in Chapter Four. However, management's reluctance to extend joint industrial regulation becomes apparent when consideration is given to events on the shop floor. Following the announcement that two hundred white-collar workers were to be made redundant a dispute occurred in January 1975 because management refused to let the workers meet in the canteen.<sup>844</sup> In addition to seeking permission to pursue union duties the company requested that it was provided with a list of union representatives and informed of other activities such as elections. Even here, and at other times managerial intransigence and inflexible approach predominated and sustained an undercurrent of tension between both. In the four years following the 1971 Recognition and Procedure Agreement little had changed. Communications between management and workforce remained the prerogative of the management with its control and involvement in union responsibilities. It was a significant, contributory factor to tension within the plant and a pattern that prevailed until its closure, exemplified in the following examples.

The number of shop stewards representing each union was a figure that had to be agreed with management rather than simply a union decision.<sup>845</sup> Shop stewards facilities were discussed at the JRC meetings:

Shop steward facilities. Times of meeting confirmed. 16-17 men full time Union activities. Week on tues. no full time facilities back to work – deputies to get released as required through Industrial Relations [department] (Not for regular meetings) Released through request from Convenor. Senior Stewards in Building to be released when required.<sup>846</sup>

The shop stewards clashed with management in November 1977 when the latter refused to recognise TGWU elected stewards:

I had a word with M. Stearns regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> shop steward in D. Bld [building] and he told me that as far as he is concerned there are only two official S/S [shop stewards] in D. Bld.<sup>847</sup>

<sup>844</sup> 'New row hits car plant', *Paisley Daily Express*, 27 January 1975.

<sup>845</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, 'A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant', 17 February 1971.

<sup>846</sup> AI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 10, TGWU Shop steward notebook, 6 September 1980 – 6 April 1981, Joint Representative Council 18 September 1980.

<sup>847</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 15 November 1977.

Presumably M. Stearns was an IRO. This subject is raised in a future diary entry:

The company (M. Stearns!) is refusing to recognise 2 of our shop stewards, Bro's Reid and Elder in D. Bld.<sup>848</sup>

The following day developments are mentioned in the source however, the details are not discussed, which highlights a limitation of the source:

M. Stearns phoned me just after I talked to you today, he said he had told A. Weir the facts of the case in "D" Bld, and that Kerr was going to see Stearns early tomorrow, phone me tonight and I'll give you more details of what action we took today on this.<sup>849</sup>

However, the next diary entry reads:

Stearns took on E. Elder that he was not recognised as a Shop Steward during this time. When we[e] Dermott told the cutters and indirects they stopped work. I got over their [sic] and asked them to start back till we took this through procedure they did this after being off the clock for 30 mins. We then went to a Stage 2. After telling Stearns and Thompson, that we don't tell the management who to pick as foremen, they shouldn't tell us who to pick as Stewards. We failed to agree and will leave you to arrange the Stage 3.<sup>850</sup>

These diary entries point to the tension caused by management involvement in, and control of what were union responsibilities. In particular feelings of animosity were generated when the actions of management, or individual managers, undermined the status of shop stewards. The following example is an excerpt from a steward's notebook in which they comment on being reprimanded for consulting workers during work time:

Harry McBaron stopped me about 8.30 – and said I was to stop talking to Mech + Electricians – I spoke to them twice this morning – keeping them off their work. Okay to say Good Morning Good Afternoon – I said he was going over the score. After words he said I should forget it – he would – as long as I did what he said – pointed out men still worked on or he would do something about it. Considered the matter – need a Stage II – not working under Prison regulations.<sup>851</sup>

<sup>848</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 23 November 1977.

<sup>849</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 24 November 1977. It is presumed that Weir is either a member of the Industrial Relations Department or of management but his specific job title is unknown.

<sup>850</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 24 November 1977. It is presumed that Thompson is either a member of the Industrial Relations Department or of management but his specific job title is unknown.

<sup>851</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 10, TGWU Shop steward notebook, 6 September 1980 – 6 April 1981, 22 January 1981.

From 1975 the Industrial Relations Department of Chrysler UK began working towards an Employee Participation Programme in order to develop communication between the workforce and management – examined in depth in the Chapter Four. The aim of this scheme was to solve the problems of ‘monotony, frustration and overall working environment’ by providing workers the opportunity of contributing to the direction of the company in terms of local issues as well as larger plans such as product design.<sup>852</sup> Part of the programme was to organise Plant Employee Representative Councils within each plant that would be composed of manual and staff union members. The function would be to ‘discuss and review the operation of the plant on a weekly basis’ as well as to maintain communication between management and the unions.<sup>853</sup> Yet in the stewards’ diaries and TGWU branch-meeting minutes there is little evidence of this programme coming to fruition at Linwood. Ronald Rigby, convenor of the AUEW (formerly the AEU) announced in the *Talbot Voice* newspaper that after three years of engaging with the planning agreement, the trade unionist representatives ‘reluctantly withdrew’.<sup>854</sup> Management undermined the authority of the unions, which put a strain on industrial relations at the plant. So far the discussion has focused on the shop steward system, as the unofficial unionism within the plant. The chapter will now turn to a fuller exploration of the role of the shop stewards in regulating industrial relations.

## 5.5 Politics and the Shop Stewards' Movement

The post-war period marked an important development in industrial organisation as within car manufacturing shop stewards were recognised and participated in factory and departmental committees.<sup>855</sup> Within Linwood the shop stewards were recognised by management, therefore received full earnings even when undertaking union duties. Their

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<sup>852</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder Number C/RP/5, Employee Participation Programme – Explanation of the 4 Principles Contained in the Company’s Statement of the 23 May 1975, Central Industrial Relations, 7 August 1975, pp. 2-3.

<sup>853</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder Number C/RP/5, Employee Participation Programme – Explanation of the 4 Principles Contained in the Company’s Statement of the 23 May 1975, Central Industrial Relations, 7 August 1975, pp. 7-8.

<sup>854</sup> Rigby was quoted in the *Talbot voice* as saying the unions withdrew as ‘...the company never had money to install new equipment’. NLS, *Talbot Voice*, Edition No. 2, circa 1981 [No date on the edition but in notebook entry 4 February 1981 it is noted ‘Paper Launched yesterday’ perhaps suggesting that the second edition may have been in February or March 1981. FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 10, TGWU Shop Steward note-book, 6 September 1980 – 6 April 1981, 4 February 1981.

<sup>855</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, pp. 30-1. Beynon has noted that in some car plants, to take on the role of shop steward meant victimisation by foremen and supervisors, however there is no evidence of this within the TGWU source. Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 55.

responsibilities included weekly section meetings at which they would report both factory and union branch information to members.<sup>856</sup> In addition stewards had to attend a monthly shop steward meeting that for the TGWU was held in the union halls in Paisley.<sup>857</sup> Therefore they played an important part in linking the rank and file unionists with the branch. There was a marked difference in the role of the shop steward compared with union officials and the issues dealt with by these two groups. A brief examination of branch minutes highlights that discussion at meetings focused on the branch finance issues; donations to other organisations and charities; support for other social movements; wide financial issues such as changes to the Chrysler pension scheme; lengthy disputes and the development of trade union policy.<sup>858</sup> The shop stewards diaries reveal a shop floor organisation that responded to the immediate needs, grievances and day-to-day concerns of the workers rather than a unionism driven by the objectives of a left-wing labour organisation.

This is concurrent with secondary literature, portraying low worker interest in branch affairs reflected in low attendance at branch meetings even when they occurred on the premises.<sup>859</sup> It was a similar experience at Linwood, with attendance remaining so low, even when meetings were held in the work canteen; a quorum could not be obtained.<sup>860</sup> For management the shop steward was the formalised face of the union, for the worker the steward was the union. Indeed the contact of trade union members with their branch union official was generally minimal:

Most factory workers saw their union officials only at strike meetings – at which it was more than likely that they were being exhorted by the officials to return to work.<sup>861</sup>

Contact was made with union officials when entering into a grievance procedure. In the post-war period many companies introduced procedures to be followed when disputes arose. While at some car plants shop stewards were not involved in procedure from the beginning of the process, Chrysler management placed the steward as a central figure in

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<sup>856</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, 'A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant', 17 February 1971, p. 3.

<sup>857</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, 'Chrysler (Linwood) Shop Stewards Constitution', TGWU, p. 1.

<sup>858</sup> ML, Linwood Box 24, Item 892780-892789, TGWU Branch Minute Book, Selection of TGWU Branch Meetings, 26 August 1972 – 7 February 1977.

<sup>859</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 28. and John Eldridge, Peter Cressey and John MacInnes, *Industrial Sociology and Economic Crisis*, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 85

<sup>860</sup> ML, Linwood Box 24, Item 892780-892789, TGWU Branch Minute Book, 'TGWU Branch Meeting', 10 February 1974.

<sup>861</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 36.

the three stages of disputes procedure.<sup>862</sup> From Stage 1 ‘Procedure for Resolving Problems’ then Stage 2 ‘Method of Dealing with Major Breaches of Discipline for Which Employees Would Be Liable to Dismissal’, the shop steward could be present at meetings between the worker and management in order to provide union support. It was only upon Stage 3, failure to reach agreement between the worker, shop steward/ convenor, Department Head and Industrial Relations Manager that the shop steward had to organise the attendance of the full-time union official.<sup>863</sup> Therefore it was the shop steward who not only dealt with the daily discipline issues in the plant but was also the first union point of contact for workers.<sup>864</sup>

Goodman argues that these formal disputes procedures were not always adhered to and that the majority of stewards had methods of speaking to management out with formal procedure that at times would mean side-stepping their foreman. He goes on to argue that such action suggests that both the management and stewards pursued different approaches, other than formal procedure, as they may not find ‘formal procedures entirely appropriate for handling their relationships’.<sup>865</sup> Within the diaries there are references to stages of formal procedure; however, more informal communication with management was referred to in the oral testimonies.

A limitation of utilising documentary material is that the more informal procedures are sometimes not noted. However, within the oral history evidence it is evident that managers and trade unions at a sectional level would attempt to resolve issues in an informal manner, even if this meant ‘turning a blind eye’ for instance when workers were sleeping at work, ‘Gaffers turned a blind eye. Shop stewards would go to a gaffer and tell them, “so and so is under there”’.<sup>866</sup> IRO Craig Marsden spoke of the delicate balance that had to be maintained between official procedures and independent ways of resolving issues. He claimed that the relationship between stewards, IROs and managers was influenced by the personalised response of these individuals to industrial relations issues. Individuals that were viewed to be fair and that had the respect of their colleagues would

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<sup>862</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 41 and ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, ‘A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant’, 17 February 1971.

<sup>863</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, ‘A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant’, 17 February 1971.

<sup>864</sup> ML, Linwood Box 11, Item 52, Folder 8927223, ‘Shop Stewards Handbook’, TGWU, 1979.

<sup>865</sup> Goodman, J., ‘The Role Of The Shop Steward’, in *Conflict At Work: Reshaping Industrial Relations*, ed. by S. Kessler and B. Weekes (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1971), 53-74 (pp. 67-8).

<sup>866</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

normally be able to ensure unproblematic relations and would be able to find ways of diffusing tension. In referring to his style of working he said:

you had to operate the procedures with a consistency so that you had credibility. So in the end, you could ask a favour of of a steward ... But you can only ask a favour if you'd reciprocated, ehm an, an yeah, if they trusted you, then you got far more than those they didn't trust.<sup>867</sup>

Therefore, it seems that IROs, as well as stewards and managers, would developed highly individual strategies in labour relations that operated alongside, and adapted, industrial relations policy so as to avoid going through official procedure. Yet what is clear is that centralised management attempts to enforce procedure reflected a determination to maintain control of the involvement of personnel at different stages as well as the overall process of resolving grievances.

The role of shop stewards within car plants was diverse and stewards had to deal with a variety of different issues. Beynon notes that:

At its simplest they see their job as a steward to be to ensure that the lads on the line don't get messed about. To keep the lads happy – to look after their interests. It's not for nothing that the steward has been termed "a badly paid personnel manager".<sup>868</sup>

The shop steward had the responsibility within Chrysler of dealing with a multitude of issues ranging from individual grievances and discipline problems to raising safety concerns with the appropriate department. The stewards acted as the point of contact between management and the workforce playing a significant part in the 'day-to-day regulation of industrial relations'.<sup>869</sup> In addition they had the added responsibility of recruiting members and informing the workforce of trade union policy.

The role of the shop steward was not one that automatically commanded the respect of members.<sup>870</sup> Several studies have noted that the position of shop steward was not the most sought after position and there were many incidences where there were not enough candidates to have an election therefore people had to volunteer to take on the job.<sup>871</sup> Indeed, of the sample undertaken as part of the Donovan Commission forty per cent of

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<sup>867</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>868</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 218.

<sup>869</sup> Goodman, 'Role of the Shop Steward', p. 63.

<sup>870</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 30.

<sup>871</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 29 and Goodman, 'Role of the Shop Steward', 53-74 (p. 57).

stewards said they ‘had to be persuaded’.<sup>872</sup> It was difficult for stewards to strike the balance between accommodating workers as well as adhering to union policy line. Whilst the shop stewards held a degree of autonomy from their union, ultimately representing their members was done via the trade union organisation. As the shop steward had a responsibility of educating and informing their members on union policy, this had the potential to lead to a ‘conflict of loyalties’.<sup>873</sup> A TGWU Shop Stewards’ Handbook points to the different functions of shop stewards:

If you do your work well as a shop steward the workers will see daily evidence of their trade union membership. You need nevertheless to seize every opportunity of taking action to build up the strength of the Union – by recruiting new members, by keeping existing members up to scratch, and by turning “cardholders” into trade unionists.<sup>874</sup>

However, contrary to the argument that shop steward organisations formed a powerful but autocratic movement within factories, Clack found that the shop stewards’ organisation within his study was not driven by individual stewards or branch policy but instead: shop-floor influence on the stewards’ policies was strong – if not overwhelming.<sup>875</sup> This seems to be reflected in the stewards’ diaries where the stewards responded to the needs of other members. Stewards at Linwood did not necessarily take all grievances to management. They listened to individuals and would go round the workers of the section to gain their response and views on the issue.<sup>876</sup>

Beynon, has noted that there were occasions within different Ford plants where there were differences of opinion and splits between stewards and workers, which served to undermine the stewards’ authority.<sup>877</sup> Within the Linwood TGWU diaries there were few incidences of major divisions. There are various references throughout the diaries of stewards at times condemned stoppages and encouraged workers back to work. For example, in July 1977 a member of the sequence line had been sent home for turning up for work under the influence of alcohol, following this the sequence line stopped in support of their colleague however, the TGWU steward wrote, ‘At 2.42 I advised them to start and let us take it through procedure in the morning’.<sup>878</sup> Within the diaries there are many examples of the stewards’ work being dictated by the work place and incidents on the shop

<sup>872</sup> Goodman, ‘Role of the Shop Steward’, 53-74 (p. 57).

<sup>873</sup> ML, Linwood Box 11, Item 61, ‘Your Job As A Shop Steward’, Trades Union Congress.

<sup>874</sup> ML, Linwood Box 11, Folder 8927223, Item 52, ‘Shop Stewards Handbook’, TGWU, 1979.

<sup>875</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 40.

<sup>876</sup> ML, B Shift, 1 July 1977, TGWU Shop Stewards’ Diary, Item 8927252/1, Linwood Box 10.

<sup>877</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, pp. 211-2.

<sup>878</sup> ML, B Shift, 1 July 1977, TGWU Shop Stewards’ Diary, Item 8927252/1, Linwood Box 10.

floor rather than the stewards dictating to the work force. This view is evident in further documentary evidence. For example, the Donovan Commission asserted that while stewards did have the ability to direct attitudes, they were aware of their position in relation to the shop floor so at times agreed with the majority views regardless of direction in an effort to avoid isolating themselves.<sup>879</sup>

## 5.6 Political Militancy or Industrial Militancy?

In the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a shift to the political left observable in trade unions, symbolised by the leadership of the TGWU by Jack Jones and of the AEU by Hugh Scanlon, both on the labour left. Their opposition helped to block the Labour government's *In Place of Strife* trade union reforms. The politicisation of industrial relations continued with trade union opposition to the 1970 Conservative government's Industrial Relation Act, and various high profile strikes including the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes, which weakened and then defeated the government.<sup>880</sup> It was in this context that strikes in the car industry were also sometimes understood in terms of the political motives of motor industry stewards.<sup>881</sup>

It is difficult to establish the political motivations of the workers at Linwood from existing documentary source material. A persistent presumption, particularly in the media during this period was, as many of the workers came to the new plant from the traditional shipbuilding, engineering and coal-mining industries, where sectors were more but not uniformly militant, that the workforce at Linwood displayed similar attitudes. This reflected a view held on the motivations of workers in the car industry in general. *The Economist* attributed many of the short stoppages lasting less than an hour at Morris Motors and Rover Solihull – often workers returning late after lunchtime union meetings outside the factory gates – to the influence of ‘bowler-hated Stalinists among foremen’.<sup>882</sup>

Within the documentary evidence at the Mitchell Library there are a small number of Communist Party (hereafter CP) and Young Communist League leaflets containing information on unemployment figures, Northern Ireland, rising rents and rights for young

<sup>879</sup> Goodman, ‘Role of the Shop Steward’. p. 58.

<sup>880</sup> Robert Taylor, *The Trade Union Question in British Politics: Government and Unions since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 126-221 and pp. 168-9.

<sup>881</sup> John McIlroy, “‘Every Factory our fortress’: Communist Party Workplace Branches in a Time of Militancy, 1956-79, Part 1: History, Politics, Topography”, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 10 (2000), 99-140.

<sup>882</sup> Lyddon, ‘The car industry’, 186-211 (p. 203).

people as well as a tear off section for potential members. There is also a copy of a *Chrysler Branch, Communist Party Newsletter* with brief general comments on the effects of multinationals on living standards in Japan, Canada, United States and E.E.C countries.<sup>883</sup> This is followed by criticism of Labour government policies of 1974-79, as only benefiting, ‘industrial and financial companies who dominated the economy’. The subsequent three paragraphs comment on Chrysler’s multinational style of management as disregarding the interests of its workforce; criticism of Chrysler’s failure to invest in Linwood; the problems for unions in dealing with a company taking final decisions in another country and expressed doubt as to PSA Peugeot-Citroen being able to save the plant from closure:

We must realise that the only effective way we can control Multi-nationals be they based in Detroit, Paris or London, is by ensuring we have got democratic political control through Parliament, in conjunction with strong Trade Unionism over the decisions which can effect tens of thousands of British workers and their families.<sup>884</sup>

The presence of such literature implies the existence of CP members within the workforce. Furthermore, Knox and McKinlay’s study highlights the general acceptance that the CP ‘wielded considerable influence within the AEU’, which was one of the two main unions at Linwood.<sup>885</sup> However, there is limited evidence within the documentary evidence or oral history interviews of a strong CP organisation at Linwood dominating industrial militancy.

Revolutionary politics existed at Linwood in a minority form. There is evidence of the presence in the plant of the International Socialists which became the Socialist Workers Party in 1977.<sup>886</sup> Indeed, Lyddon has argued that the lack of communist organisation in the car plants does not necessarily reflect a lack of militant influence. He points out that in the 1970s ‘revolutionary socialist groupings’ took on the work of the communists.<sup>887</sup> Shop floor union convenors appear to have been more politically motivated, such as leading convenors Peter Bain and Alec Porter who were members of the International Socialists and Socialist Workers Party (hereafter SWP) respectively. The SWP politics emphasised

<sup>883</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, ‘Chrysler Branch, Communist Party Newsletter’, March 1979.

<sup>884</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, ‘Chrysler Branch, Communist Party Newsletter’, March 1979.

<sup>885</sup> B. Knox and A. McKinlay, ‘Working for the Yankee Dollar: American Inward Investment and Scottish Labour, 1945-70’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 7 (1999), 1-26 (p. 2).

<sup>886</sup> It is unlikely they had a large presence in the plant, as UK membership was about 4,000 in 1979. J. McIlroy, ‘“Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned”: the Trotskyists and the Trade Unions’, in *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, Volume Two, The High Tide of Trade Unionism, 1964-1979*, ed. by J. McIlroy, N. Fishman and A. Campbell, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 259-296 (p. 262).

<sup>887</sup> Lyddon, ‘The car industry’, p. 204.

the raising of consciousness among the workforce and the importance of stewards in organising workers. The group also produced a newsletter from May 1973. The *Chrysler Bulletin* coincided with the start of the dispute that led to the strike at Ryton. It contained articles on *The Press Shop Lockout* and *The Layoff Claim* that stressed the importance of solidarity between shop stewards and workers and between sections of the plant.<sup>888</sup> Yet by the late 1970s *The Socialist Worker* was critical of the stewards at Linwood due to their involvement in the Planning Agreement. Tony Cliff saw this as a policy of ‘incorporation’ by management, which would lead to divisions in the trade unions movement as the convenors and senior stewards involved became increasingly detached from the workers they represented.<sup>889</sup> This perception is understandable and probably shared by many trade unionists as it reflected scepticism of the motives of greater interventionist management through participation schemes, as well as employee representatives increased inclusion and function in the structures of managerial control within the workplace.

The lack of evidence relating to CP and SWP activity within the plant may be a deliberate omission from the diaries to avoid management hostility or recriminations, although in all probability the diaries were not read by management as entries included comments on IROs, managers and other supervisors. The content and tenor of the diary entries suggest shop floor unionism motivated by day-to-day issues and protecting the rights of workers within their sectional working environment, rather than an organised politically motivated movement. Thus, the spontaneous nature and cause of disputes at the plant was reactionary rather than revolutionary. Party members operated more as industrial activists rather than political militants in their determination to support workers’ grievances.<sup>890</sup> In terms of the car industry as a whole, Beynon has asserted that there is remarkably little evidence to support the idea that many of the strikes and industrial unrest in the car plants in the post-war period were actually due to the work of CP activists.<sup>891</sup> Comparing CP membership and strikes in different car plants further supports this assertion. Notably the CP branch at Ford’s plant in Dagenham had 100 members including three convenors and one deputy convenor. Jaguar had a similar strike record to Dagenham yet there were no CP members and notably, one of the leading ‘militants’ at the plant was a member of the Conservative Party.<sup>892</sup> Therefore the link between political affiliation and militancy is complex and clearly involves the interplay of various factors. This link became

<sup>888</sup> T. Cliff, *In the Thick of Workers’ Struggle*, *Selected Works Vol.2*, (London: Bookmarks, 2002), p. 364.

<sup>889</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 2, T. Cliff, *Chrysler Workers, The Fight for a future: A Socialist Worker Pamphlet*.

<sup>890</sup> McIlroy, ‘Every Factory’, p. 262.

<sup>891</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 59.

<sup>892</sup> Turner et al., *Labour Relations*, pp. 212-13.

more tenuous in the post-war period with the development of a distinct shop floor unionism. Consequently, there is an apparent distinction between the politics and aims of the nation delegates and union officials in comparison to those of the rank and file.<sup>893</sup>

This thesis is not dismissive of the existence of CP activity within the rank and file and shop steward system at the plant. Equally, although the work of Tony Cliff points to the presence of the International Socialists' party at the plant, evidence to support its presence in the plant has not been found in the source. Political activity underpinned by CP influence at the plant appears to be circumstantial. The TGWU diaries studied support Cliff's supposition that shop stewards tended to react to events rather than initiate them.<sup>894</sup> Oral history material indicates that many shop floor workers were not politically motivated, inciting other workers to strike. What does seem clear is that shop stewards had a solidaristic rather than instrumental commitment to trade unionism.

## 5.7 Industrial Organisation and the Motor Industry: solidaristic or instrumental?

Various commentators have pointed to a prevalence of strikes within the motorcar industry that can be attributed to pay disputes. This was a problem endemic in the British motorcar industry: in the 1960s fifty-five per cent of major strikes were due to wage demands and disputes.<sup>895</sup> The predominance of short unofficial stoppages at Linwood was less likely to have been about wages directly but linked to job control, conditions, flexibility or other situations rooted in the desire for individual or group control in the workplace. As noted in Service's testimony some strikes were labelled as 'silly' and accompanied with the accusation that, 'Some of them ... they would call a strike fur anythin'.<sup>896</sup> The causal role of management in short strikes will be considered later in the chapter.

The influences on strike behaviour require further examination by giving consideration to the types of strikes that occurred at Linwood, as this will reveal the issues important to workers. Recently commentators have questioned whether workers in the car plants were actually fully supportive of *solidaristic* strikes and instead, as Roberts suggests, 'endorsed collective means in pursuit of private objectives' that was, to secure

<sup>893</sup> H. Phelps Brown, *The Origins of Trade Union Power*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 2.

<sup>894</sup> Cliff, Tony, *In the Thick of Workers' Struggle: Selected Writings Volume 2*, (London: Bookmarks, 2002), p. 291.

<sup>895</sup> C. Wrigley, 'Strikes in the Motor Car Manufacturing Industry', in *An Atlas of Industrial Protest: 1750-1990*, ed. by A. Charlesworth et al (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 202-9 (p. 202).

<sup>896</sup> Oral Testimony, Colin Jackson, Interview 1.

higher wage rates.<sup>897</sup> As pointed out in Chapter Three, there were strikes of solidarity in support of workers deemed unfairly dismissed. The shop stewards' diaries and oral testimony provide some indication of the level of worker support for such strikes and the motivation behind this support. As many of the problems faced by shop stewards were related to the 'effort-bargain' – that is control over the job – as well as sackings and discipline rather than purely wage levels, Beynon suggests this could be interpreted as evidence of political motivations among the shop stewards.<sup>898</sup> Rootes denounced the Paisley and District Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Federation, which represented the majority of workers on the North Side, as 'militant'.<sup>899</sup>

Based on the assumption that workers from the declining heavy industries sought employment in the car plant, a dominant narrative is that these workers had a militant industrial background due to their background of trade unionism:

Well thur wis a lot o them in the unions ... an they're the die hard union men ... a lot had came from they, the shipyards, ye know the, if they, ur getting kicked oot o there, they wud go somewhere else. ... If they wur trouble makers ye'know, they'd get the sack.<sup>900</sup>

Indeed, three of the interviewees linked this to the militant reputation of workers in the west of Scotland and the influence of socialism and communism:

Remember we're talking about strong union, strong unions with a Clydeside background, a communist background, a red background, socialist background.<sup>901</sup>

This is not reflective of the entire workforce. The oral history interviewees depicted a workforce with a mixed occupational background and some of these workers would have come from non-unionised industries.<sup>902</sup> They may even have chosen not to be a trade unionist prior to working at Linwood:

Well ye more or less got forced intae joinin' ye know. Ye had nae option. Ye'd just tae join it an that was it. ... But prior tae that ah is, ah just ignored it ... ah refused fur a long time.<sup>903</sup>

<sup>897</sup> K. Roberts, *Class in Modern Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 94.

<sup>898</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 14.

<sup>899</sup> TNA:PRO, LAB 10/2834, 'Rootes Motors Scotland Ltd. Linwood Plant Wage Grading and Productivity Plan'.

<sup>900</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>901</sup> Quotation: Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 1. Mentioned in additional interviews: Oral Testimony, Adam Fleming, Interview 1 and Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>902</sup> For example, Mike Berry who had worked as a hairdresser and Archie Watson who had worked for an optical firm.

<sup>903</sup> Oral Testimony, Iain Macdonald, Interview 1.

Some workers may have explicitly constructed their involvement in trade unionism in opposition to militant activity. This was the case in the testimony of Barry King, who started as a skilled coach-trimmer working in rectification before becoming a quality control inspector and eventually quality control foreman. He became a member and sectional representative of the ASTMS union and claimed, ‘Ah wis anti-strike, anti-trouble, awe the rest of it,’ He goes on to recall telling his section:

And eh, ah said ... “ah’ll represent ye, ah’ll go to management an represent” ah said, “but ah’m not going to fight over anything, it’s got to be something which is very important.”<sup>904</sup>

It does not appear that the majority of workers joined trade unions and sought shop steward representation as part of a desire for social change. Particularly as from the introduction of car manufacturing at Linwood, union membership was compulsory. Within the oral history sample, most interviewees depict the majority of employees at Linwood as being union members rather than engaged and active trade unionists:

oh everybody was in the trade union but, ... maist people didnae actually bother. It was just the shop stewards wid. They kicked the workin people intae a frenzy, “oh we can’t do this an we can’t do that.” An ye’d say, “oh gie us peace.” [laughs]<sup>905</sup>

Also, despite trade union membership existing as a condition of employment at Linwood, only two of the sample recalled going to branch meetings outside of the plant. This concurs with Hutton’s argument that strike action was based on the desire to protect their jobs and ‘secure their relative status in the pecking order, as it was to a belief in any class war’.<sup>906</sup> While it is accepted that shop stewards played a crucial role in collective bargaining, which resulted in their elevated position and strength within the car plants, as Beynon concluded on the shop steward movement at Ford, ‘The shop stewards within the car plants may be militants but they are not revolutionaries’.<sup>907</sup> The involvement of shop stewards in wider issues was in fact still related to wage levels. In his study of car plant workers Clack noted the main grievance with management control of the assembly line and the resultant stop-go production was that gaps in production caused by the management affected wages.<sup>908</sup>

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<sup>904</sup> Oral Testimony, Barry King, Interview 1.

<sup>905</sup> Oral Testimony, Archie Watson, Interview 1.

<sup>906</sup> Hutton, *State We’re In*, p. 85.

<sup>907</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 318.

<sup>908</sup> Clack, *Industrial Relations*, p. 14.

The role of the shop stewards would therefore seem to suggest an *instrumental* approach to trade unionism as outlined by Goldthorpe et al in *The Affluent Worker* study on workers at Luton.<sup>909</sup> In their consideration of the ‘embourgeoisement thesis’ that is, as workers began to earn ‘to provide enough income to support a relatively affluent life-style’, they would adopt middle-class identity and values, Goldthorpe et al. established that individuals had a particular ‘orientation’ to work, trade unionism and leisure.<sup>910</sup> Goldthorpe and his colleagues rejected the thesis and continued to argue that an instrumental approach to work was evident among the ‘new working class’ at Luton in that workers were not concerned that the work they undertook was not intrinsically satisfying. This attitude was subsequently reflected in their relationship with trade unions. Their study revealed that only a very small minority of workers were union members, which they attributed to a ‘moral conviction’. They contended most workers joined unions due to an obligation to do so within certain plants or because of the attitude that ‘union membership pays’. The instrumental experience of membership was reflected in the low participation of trade unionists in branch activity and elections and the greater involvement in shop steward elections, which resulted in the growth of ‘unionism of the workplace’.<sup>911</sup> Similarly, Cannadine claimed there is little evidence that working-class ‘embourgeoisement’ in the 1960s and 1970s led to workers emerging as right-wing Conservative voters; the term is more of an ‘ideological stereotype’ than a political reality.<sup>912</sup> Indeed Beynon argues that instead of a thriving working-class trade union consciousness, what is more evident in the car plants during the post-war period is a factory or plant consciousness.<sup>913</sup>

It was the lack of participation in branch activity that prompted Turner et al. to coin the term ‘parallel unionism’; a development that saw official union bodies made redundant in terms of everyday affairs.<sup>914</sup> In the 1970s national trade union leaders concerned with union democratisation, such as Jack Jones of the TGWU, supported this development and attempted to forge closer links between the shop stewards and the official union body. Similarly, Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW encouraged the development of the shop steward system with increasing responsibilities, as he regarded the stewards as closely representing

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<sup>909</sup> Goldthorpe, J., et al., *The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>910</sup> R. Bocoock, *Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 26.

<sup>911</sup> Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes and behaviour*, pp. 98 - 102.

<sup>912</sup> D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 150.

<sup>913</sup> Marsden et al, *Car Industry*, p. 144.

<sup>914</sup> Turner, H., G. Clack, and G. Roberts, *Labour Relations in the Motor Industry: A Study of Industrial Unrest and an International Comparison* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1967), pp. 216-23.

the rank and file and that this should influence not only union organisation but the decisions and policies of the trade union leadership.<sup>915</sup>

## 5.8 Narratives of Tension

### 5.8.1 Tension in the Car Plant

To help understand the attitudes and actions of the Linwood plant workers this chapter turns to an analysis of why the workers did what they did. Chapters Two and Three have highlighted that intrinsic rewards related to skill and personal autonomy were extremely important to the Linwood workforce. The various systems of job control introduced by successive managements fuelled tensions on the shop floor because they disregarded the value workers attributed to these intrinsic rewards. Significantly, they removed control from the workers and created much resentment towards management intervention.

Identified in this thesis as ‘narratives of tension’, this undercurrent emerged in several of the oral testimonies. When asked why there was industrial conflict David Crawford stated:

Tension more than anything else. Because if you, if you’re doin a job on the line ye can shout all, all ye, ye like, that line just goes on, an on, an on, an on. An if ye huvnae time tae do yer job, in the specific area, that’s allocated to ye, that can cause tension. If your job isnae sort, eh, finished before the car moves intae the next stage, that causes tension. ... the usual match was eh, “It’s too much. It’s too much work fur one man.” ... ye got jobs that’s man assigned tae one an a half men. So if you only got one, one man an it’s not enough fur two, where d’ye get the other half fae?<sup>916</sup>

Tensions were further intensified by the structures of supervision that functioned to maintain systems of job control. Structures of control became ‘visible’ with high levels of supervision by management, supervisors, foremen and from within the ranks of the workers – the shop steward.

Drawing upon Bentham’s Panopticon notion of control Foucault argued that power within society is both ‘visible’ and ‘unverifiable’:

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<sup>915</sup> Marsden et al, *Car Industry*, p. 144.

<sup>916</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 2.

Visible: the inmate [or the worker] will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower, which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate [or the worker] must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so.<sup>917</sup>

When applied to the car plant, surveillance over the workforce was maintained in a number of direct and indirect ways:

When we attended the meeting closed circuit television and tapes were there we informed the company that this was not acceptable and they were removed.<sup>918</sup>

However, while the workforce rejected such overt signs of control, there were other methods by which the management attempted to control the shop floor, such as making the shop stewards instrumental in the disciplinary process. The following exchange took place at a Joint Shop Stewards meeting where the management's response to an ongoing dispute was to dock the pay of any worker issued with a warning:

Bro O'Leary said that warnings were coming out in most buildings. Works committee [sic] have said that that they do not recognise the discipline procedure and every case will be judged on its merits....  
Bro McLean This document is set out to make policemen out of shop stewards.<sup>919</sup>

This exchange reveals the distinction between a 'disciplinary society' and a society which is 'disciplined'.<sup>920</sup> The functioning of the shop stewards in enforcing the conclusive authority of management is clearly recognised, as is the distinction between receiving and accepting structures that will maintain that authority, which is renegotiated by either overt or covert individual or collective resistance.

In this thesis, primary source material has been used to highlight that there was opportunity for workers actively to challenge managerial authority. As previously noted, Beynon identified the existence of a 'factory consciousness' not necessarily driven by a left-wing political movement, but instead by a politics whereby the workers were aware of the hierarchical authority and articulated dislike of the management and the seeming attack on workers' job control through 'taking the piss' and stoppages.<sup>921</sup> At times some of the assertions of autonomy by line and process workers, who claimed they enjoyed being able

<sup>917</sup> A. McKinlay and K. Starkey, 'Managing Foucault: Foucault, Management and Organization Theory', in A. McKinlay and K. Starkey, *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory* (London: Sage, 1998), 1-13 (p. 2).

<sup>918</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892874, Minute Book, Monthly Stewards Meeting, 6 November 1976.

<sup>919</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892874, Minute Book, Monthly Stewards Meeting, 4 December 1976.

<sup>920</sup> McKinlay and Starkey, 'Managing Foucault', 1-13 (p. 2).

<sup>921</sup> Beynon, *Working for Ford*, p. 230.

to organise their work so as to gain time away from the line to sleep or to leave the plant through holes in the fence, may seem exaggerated. In constructing their narratives, interviewees may have embellished the extent of this behaviour potentially as a response to the extreme lack of autonomy over their work. Additionally, even if the detail in the testimony is not entirely accurate or ‘true’ in attaining composure in the oral history process, the narratives point to how the workers would like to have behaved at work and the actions they would have taken in response to managerial authority. Such behaviour, in particular ‘doubling-up’ to gain time away from the line occurs in other studies of working in the car industry, thus lends support to these narratives.

### 5.8.2 Man Assignments and Job Control

The following examination will highlight areas of tension that put strain on industrial relations in the Linwood plant. At Linwood control of production took the form of man assignments. This was a contentious issue for the workforce. It underpinned much of the conflict and was the cause of many disputes. Many of the workers would have worked under a piece work system of payment before moving to Linwood where the South Plant was Measured Day Work from 1963 and the North Plant changed to this in 1968.<sup>922</sup> The company calculated the number of men necessary to undertake tasks and the duration of each job, and then issued man assignments accordingly. When interviewee George Wilson was asked what he thought were the main reasons for strikes or industrial stoppages he said:

The main reasons... puttin more, somebody’s trying to put more work on somebody ... Comes back to time and motion, two of us did my job but ah could have done it on my own. If we had been told only one was to do it ah would have gone to the steward, Ah’d ah went tae the thingmy, ah wid have.<sup>923</sup>

Wilson acknowledged that although the job had been assigned to two workers, one individual could complete it in the same time. Here Wilson aligns himself with Braverman’s argument that workers never fully divulge information on the amount of time to complete a job.<sup>924</sup> For Wilson this would have meant conceding greater loss of control to

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<sup>922</sup> *Report of the Court of Inquiry under Professor D. J. Robertson into a dispute at Rootes Motors Limited, Linwood, Scotland*, Cmnd. 3692 (HMSO, 1968), pp. 6-7.

<sup>923</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

<sup>924</sup> Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, p. 81.

management. Conflict arose when shop stewards and the workforce disagreed with management over the duration and number of workers needed to complete a job.

In the following example the steward had met with the diathermic section about movement of labour:

They must have had a word with some of D/Shift regarding this they thought that I had conned them into that decision last night...they are back to the original agreement one moves then they all move so you will have to hold a meeting.<sup>925</sup>

When there were disagreements over man assignments these could be taken through procedure.<sup>926</sup> However, there are examples in the diaries of a compromise being reached between the workers and the management:

The company told me that on the cutting/80kw man/ass [man assignment] thay [sic] will agree to a month's trial with 5 men per shift, on the prevision [sic] that, if in the course of the trial thay [sic] find that the single man has to stop because he has not a partner, thay [sic] can draught a man in from another area temporarily. This has been agreed by A Shift cutting / 80kw so I have asked C. Ferguson [steward] for a name to go over.<sup>927</sup>

As the above diary entries indicate, the shop steward appeared to be instrumental in the movement of labour.

Furthermore, movement to other sections was often with little notice. For the workers this implied that all jobs required the same skills and subsequently created tension among the workers themselves:

management have approached the Stewards in D Bld [building] on the possibility of labour being transferred out of the building to general duties in other buildings. The stewards insist that if any people are transferred out of a particular section then the whole section should be closed. The decision being endorsed both by the day and night shifts. On hearing of this decision the management withdrew their request leaving it, as they say "until later". Therefore we'll "wait and see".<sup>928</sup>

This supports Foucault's understanding of control in that workers will challenge authority and decisions being forced upon them. Frequently, management response to lack of co-operation was to enforce authority by 'clocking off' the workers until they re-deployed:

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<sup>925</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 6 October 1977.

<sup>926</sup> For example: ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 10 May 1977.

<sup>927</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 10 November 1977.

<sup>928</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 12 May 1977.

Stage 3 today on movement of labour. Stemming from the Roofing Line moving this morn [sic]. The company at the Stage 2 made a statement that if in the future any section don't [sic] move imediatlay [sic] when told, then that will be off the clock.<sup>929</sup>

The consequent loss of pay as a result of resistance to man assignments contributed to the number of wild-cat strikes experienced at the plant:

The situation regarding the millwright as far as I knowe [sic] was that it happened last night on overtime. They were lined up to do this particular job and when they started it the company came to them and asked them to do this other job. They said that they were lined up to do this job and that they were not going to do the other one, so the company put them off the clock. The Millwrights on our shift came in and heard about this and outcome was they went home approx 11 o'clock.<sup>930</sup>

While there are a number of references in the diaries to stewards attempting to talk workers out of stoppages and on occasions officially failing to support them at Works Committees, workers frequently resisted explicit and covert attempts of managerial control with short unconstitutional stoppages that characterised industrial relations at the plant.

To the extent that workers viewed the changing social situation in the Linwood plant as increased strictness, their reactions were influenced by their notion of what was causing these changes. It seems clear from the following entries from different years that workers understood these changes as economically motivated:

Conveners [sic] feel the Company is to some extent manipulating events to bring about stoppages. The rate of men leaving has been in the order of three or four men per week – last week it was ten – this week seventeen and is in fact a way of operating a hidden redundancy.<sup>931</sup>

Bro. James: shut down in C.A.B is Company policy of shutting down where it suits them. Softening up men to make them grab at any offer on wages a [sic] more likely to grab at any lump sum the Company may offer before the holidays. Suggest we should put out a leaflet putting our views on Company strategy and dangers in.<sup>932</sup>

<sup>929</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 16 November 1977.

<sup>930</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 17 November 1977.

<sup>931</sup> This comment was recorded during a discussion on a report of a meeting between a representative of the JRC and a company representative. ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892874, Minute Book, Monthly Stewards Meeting, 19 October 1974.

<sup>932</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892874, Minute Book, Monthly Stewards Meeting, 21 June 1975.

West [management] said that we were not making Avenger launch – 7,900 units £4.7 mil [sic] lost. They felt that they could not continue to sign checks [sic] for 424. Discipline etc must be enforced. Hiring would not take place until schedules are met.<sup>933</sup>

The key point here is, many in the workforce were or had become disengaged from their work so the use of incentives could only ever be transitory to achieve short-term gains. The workers felt coerced into complying by the company's enforcement of restrictive practices such as clocking off and non-payment if a warning was issued. Consequently, the 'wild-cat strike' was a vent for heightened tension; an expression of the workers' resentment to increasing supervision and tighter discipline.

### 5.8.3 Communication

Marsden has argued that Chrysler was one of the better companies in terms of communicating with the workforce.<sup>934</sup> Equally, for Lester the significance of the planning agreements was not so much their content; rather they provided the channels for communication between the two groups.<sup>935</sup> These viewpoints conflict with that of Hood and Young who have argued that under Chrysler management, greater attention should have been paid to effective communication procedures.<sup>936</sup> There is evidence of developments in communication strategies in the car industry. In British Leyland, the management endeavoured to communicate the company line directly with their workforce either by requesting to speak at mass meetings or holding their own, as well as sending out letters to employees. This was a strategy to prevent disputes occurring rather than simply attempting to communicate with employees when there was a breakdown in talks. During a pay dispute in 1984 the management of Ford went so far as to send letters to the employees' wives so that 'employees could calmly and deliberately consider the situation with their families'.<sup>937</sup>

Similarly, at Linwood at times during industrial disputes management would send personalised letters to employees in an attempt to 'encourage' the workforce to reject calls

<sup>933</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892874, Minute Book, Monthly Stewards Meeting, 6 November 1976.

<sup>934</sup> Marsden et al, *Car Industry*, p. 146.

<sup>935</sup> ML, Linwood Box 11, Item 47, 'New Chrysler Bulletin', May 1978.

<sup>936</sup> Young and Hood, *Chrysler UK*, p. 223.

<sup>937</sup> Marsden et al, *Car Industry*, pp. 149-50.

for strike activity or to encourage them back to work. The workforce recognised these for what they were as the repercussions of not concurring were evident in the management's rhetoric. For example, in October 1966, Managing Director of Rootes Pressings, Peter Griffiths, wrote a letter to all employees asking them to reject a strike motion by the shop stewards.<sup>938</sup> Of the 4000 workers that voted at the mass meeting fewer than 100 supported the strike motion. It was reported that the works convenor:

said he thought the men had made a wrong decision. The lack of support was attributed to a "warning letter" sent out by the company yesterday saying a strike would create more pay-offs.<sup>939</sup>

This practice continued under Chrysler ownership. In 1978 Production Director, Stan Deason sent letters to 9500 employees at Linwood highlighting the 'gravity' of low productivity at Linwood, which he attributed to high rates of absenteeism and lateness.<sup>940</sup>

It is clear in the discussion in Chapter Four that from 1971 strategies were introduced to improve communications with the introduction of formal agreements between management and the unions at Linwood, and distributed to all stewards.<sup>941</sup> In the 1971 agreement the management at Linwood had asserted the importance of shop stewards receiving training so that they would have 'appropriate skills and knowledge required that would enable them to carry out their duties.' Yet management expected the unions to assume responsibility for the courses even though they would be administered by the Training Department.<sup>942</sup>

Chrysler UK management accepted there were communication problems and in 1975 organised an investigation. The study on communication revealed that within Chrysler, shop stewards and management received the least training and education: sixty-five per cent of plant managers and seventy-five per cent of shop stewards said they had received no training at all from the company to help improve communication in their

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<sup>938</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 8, File 2, 'Newspaper Cuttings re: Claim that work sharing be introduced instead of redundancy' *The Scotsman*, 19 October 1966.

<sup>939</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 8, File 2, 'Newspaper Cuttings re: Claim that work sharing be introduced instead of redundancy', *Morning Star*, 20 October 1966.

<sup>940</sup> *The Times*, 8 June 1978.

<sup>941</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, 'A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant', 17 February 1971.

<sup>942</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 892730-9, 'A Recognition and Procedure Agreement Between The Management of Chrysler Scotland Limited and The Trade Unions Representing Hourly Paid Employees at Linwood Plant', 17 February 1971.

work.<sup>943</sup> While stewards may have received some training from their union, this highlights a crucial problem that aggravated tension as managers and shop stewards did not know how to deal with each other.

Unfortunately the study did not include the manual labour workers at Linwood. In his summary Parsloe highlighted problems that sustain poor communications at the Linwood plant:

Long experience has taught him to believe that management information, proposals or actions are a combination of incompetence, class bias or downright untruthfulness.<sup>944</sup>

Parsloe suggested stewards may not have understood ‘management jargon’.<sup>945</sup> The role of the shop steward was compromised by joint consultations with management because stewards believed that no matter what the management were told they refused to act upon their advice, ‘without the threat of industrial action.’<sup>946</sup> Communications at the Linwood plant was a site of constant strained interactions because both management and workers recognised it as balanced towards the former. Thus, both were selective in what they chose to, or retain from the other party. Compounded by historical and economic contingencies, the dialectic processes of communication with little or no influence at the Linwood plant thwarted ‘true’ dialogue on the divergent interests of management and workforce. They were often the touch paper to underlying tensions and insecurities, particularly during periods of economic downturn and three-day weeks that resulted in short stoppages, as ‘the only language management listen to’.<sup>947</sup>

#### 5.8.4 Stoppages Relating to Safety and Weather Concerns

Management unwillingness to accept input of stewards reoccurred frequently in the oral testimonies and shop steward diaries as it often resulted in stoppages. A significant cause

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<sup>943</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Eric Parsloe, ‘Communication Problems: Employee Communication in CUK September 1975’, (1976).

<sup>944</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Eric Parsloe, ‘Communication Problems: Employee Communication in CUK September 1975’, (1976).

<sup>945</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Eric Parsloe, ‘Communication Problems: Employee Communication in CUK September 1975’, (1976).

<sup>946</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Eric Parsloe, ‘Communication Problems: Employee Communication in CUK September 1975’, (1976).

<sup>947</sup> ML, Linwood Box 2, Folder C/RP/5, Eric Parsloe, ‘Communication Problems: Employee Communication in CUK September 1975’, (1976).

of stoppages was safety. Working conditions were the concern of stewards who would communicate problems to either safety officers at the plant or supervisors. These ranged from simple problems such as hinges on doors being broken to more serious incidents that could lead to injury, and extended to the machinery used directly by the men. There are several incidences in the diaries where safety concerns are recorded by stewards. Insistent that the assembly line should not be stopped, management ensured compliance by threatening the section workers with loss of pay:

Last night we had Harris in saying that the seats [car seat production] would be off the clock if we stopped the line on the safety issue on STN 26-28. He agreed after the ...safety man was down that this job is a safety hazard and the line must be stopped to get the job done.<sup>948</sup>

Equally, the factory temperature could result in stoppages:

I had a meeting with Walker on the temperature in "D" Building. There is no heating what so ever and the main doors have been left half finished by the maintenance...His reply was that 1. he would agree to keeping the wooden door shut 2. he will start pushing the maintenance to complete the automatic doors 3. but he did not hold out much hope that the heating would be on for tonight. I told him that is the maintenance could not come up with an alternative source of heating then we are in for a stoppage over there tonight.<sup>949</sup>

The heating situation did at times result in stoppages and the workers lost their wages during such periods.<sup>950</sup> The undercurrent for dispute was often not contained in such situations because management did not always implement cold weather agreements.

The following example was one of several similar entries over a three-week period. It refers to the poor condition of canvas screens above the sewing area that protected the female workers from insects and pigeon droppings:

everything has been quiet to-night except the "D" Bld [ D Building] problem of the overhead canvass. One of the sewing opps [sic] Agnes McWilliam had to go over to the medical with a rash that was breaking out on her arms she is putting this down to these insects that are dropping from the canvass [sic]. Agnes went home after treatment...The rest of the opps [sic] are getting very restless [sic] over the delay at changing this canvass [sic]...we will probably find ourselves with a stoppage of work on our hands if this position drags on much longer.<sup>951</sup>

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<sup>948</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 13 October 1977.

<sup>949</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 1 June 1977.

<sup>950</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 5 July 1977.

<sup>951</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, Item 8927252/1, B Shift, 20 May 1977.

These examples highlight the length of time it took the company to attend to basic concerns about the work environment. They occurred in 1977, a year of industrial unrest, strikes and insecurity about the future of the plant. By marginalising these concerns management's slow response or inaction increased the level of underlying tensions in the plant resulting in reactionary short stoppages until for example, the heating complied with the agreements.

### 5.8.5 Uncertain Future

In seeking to explain feelings of insecurity among the workforce at Linwood existing studies have placed much significance on instability in terms of the viability of the plant. From the late 1970s increasing unemployment, in particular among the manufacturing industry and traditionally industrial areas such as the west of Scotland posed a real threat to workers in the Linwood plant. Due to the decline of heavy industries such as shipbuilding, many would have experienced redundancy prior to their work at the car plant.<sup>952</sup>

The nature of employment in the car industry in the 1960s and 1970s was characterised by periods of short-time working, three-day weeks, layoffs and the ongoing threat of redundancy that when juxtaposed against wages meant that 'in relation to employment and earnings such feelings [of insecurity] did seem widespread'.<sup>953</sup> There was evidence at Linwood of the ongoing reality of layoffs occurring throughout the car industry:

JRC [Joint Representative Council] met McDonald today on lay-offs, the company statement is:-

Garanteed [sic] first week of start back, and every chance of a further 2 days, trim manufacture will go on for an unspecified time after that, local talks in the trim will take place in good time to determine how many, and for how many people.<sup>954</sup>

The car industry as a whole was subject to production cycles of boom and bust, which for the workers meant a cycle of mass hiring then lay-offs and short-time working. Some of the interviewees claimed that despite being aware of these fluctuations they had never envisaged the plant would close:

<sup>952</sup> P. Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-2000* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 372.

<sup>953</sup> Clack, *Labour Relations*, p. 14.

<sup>954</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 11 July 1979. McDonald seems to be a member of the Management but his specific job description is unknown.

They were boom, boom an bust an things like that, but ye never thought fur a minute, that the whole place, it was always downsized an then, the next year, they would be a, an upsurge in, the knock a, the the they knock a shift off when they, they were, they downsize, usually the night shift. An then, eh maybe six months later yer back again, an eh, that shift was back on again. But ah never dreamt fur a minute that eh, the whole place would shut down, both sides oh the road.<sup>955</sup>

Conversely, there were interviewees that recognised the plant would never be economically viable due to the dependence on other plants and indeed the suspicion that Linwood was being run down:

I think that was rapidly replaced by a sense that this place couldn't survive. Ye know, I felt, event though I was there ... ten years eleven years before the place actually closed, I couldn't see how it could survive. It was chaotic, it was short-term. Lot's of people did there best and it would be wrong to demean that, but it was being slimmed down to be essentially the hmm, production of [pause] it was secondary importance to Ryton.<sup>956</sup>

The shop stewards commented on such threats in the TGWU diaries:

The company have made a statement regarding the work in the factory mainly CAB [Car Assembly Building]. The company have said that if they don't get a better percentage of ok cars off the final line then they would lay off the car assy [sic, assembly].<sup>957</sup>

A similar comment was made in the next entry of the diary:

Company had all the stewards in last night and told us that, unless the performance of the ... CAB area improved tonight and tomorrow, thay [sic] would be laying us off tomorrow night.<sup>958</sup>

In the 1970s the viability of production at Linwood was in turmoil therefore unstable. The fluctuations in employment were evident to the workforce as they could be dramatic, for example as TGWU convenor Jimmy Livingstone, commented in the *Talbot Voice*, 'In 1978, 8000 people were employed here on double-shift working. Now there are 4600 ... on a three-day week'.<sup>959</sup> In the eighteen years it was manufacturing cars Linwood rarely made

<sup>955</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1.

<sup>956</sup> Oral Testimony, Craig Marsden, Interview 1.

<sup>957</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, B Shift, 18 October 1977.

<sup>958</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 19 October 1977.

<sup>959</sup> NLS, 7.192, *Talbot Voice*, Issue Number 2.

a profit.<sup>960</sup> There were frequent threats of lay offs, short-term employment, scaling down of production, transferral of finance by the Chrysler Corporation to alternative UK plants, and the threat of closure. Whether the workforce believed the company threats or not, these contributed to general scepticism and distrust of the management.

### 5.8.6 Role of Management in Strikes

The distinction is made here between strikes and stoppages: the former reactive spontaneous collectivism and the latter a reactive response to structural factors. The key point is the ambiguous nature of stoppages. Structural factors were significant particularly during Chrysler's period of ownership because of the Linwood plant's dependence on other plants. A break in the supply chain, for whatever reason, impeded productivity and continuity of production, exacerbated by the reliance on parts from other plants. For example, in February 1970 a stoppage in the trim department at the plant led to 3000 workers being sent home.<sup>961</sup> Similarly, a dispute at GKN-Sankey in September 1970, affected 38,000 employees throughout the UK. Four hundred of those workers were at Linwood who were told not to report to work for a week because of this industrial action.<sup>962</sup> It was a prevalent problem at the plant, in May 1978, 550 workers in the paint shop went on strike resulting in 8000 workers classed as 'idle' for two weeks.<sup>963</sup> Shortages of components or the linear effect of industrial disputes at other locations often impacted on the Linwood workforce, as the following diary entry noted, 'Lay offs due to Stoke/Ryton Dispute'.<sup>964</sup>

It is clear in Crawford's testimony at the beginning of this chapter he makes a linkage between 'silly' reasons for strikes and shortage of components. Failure in the supply chain meant workers in the affected sections were surplus labour, but had to be paid. To negate this occurrence, at times 'silly' reasons such as, '... of a guy urinating outside at the other end of the building', escalated to disciplinary action and ensured a reactionary response from the workers. The ensuing strike meant workers were home, 'up the road by ten o'clock' without pay.<sup>965</sup> Crawford was an inspector at the plant and was considered to be staff. His perception of the management's role in strikes draws parallels with those of George Wilson. In his testimony at the beginning of Chapter One, Wilson

<sup>960</sup> Sims and Wood, *Car Manufacturing*, p. 58.

<sup>961</sup> *The Times*, 21 February 1970.

<sup>962</sup> *The Times*, 12 September 1970.

<sup>963</sup> *The Times*, 2 August 1978 and *The Times*, 5 August 1978.

<sup>964</sup> ML, Linwood Box 10, Item 8927252/1, TGWU Shop Stewards' Diary, A Shift, 14 August 1979.

<sup>965</sup> Oral Testimony, David Crawford, Interview 1

draws attention to the protracted strike following the disciplining of ‘a boy... peeing out the back door’, which also prompted a strike in K Building on the North Side of the plant with subsequent loss of wages.<sup>966</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain or substantiate if these actions by management were coincidental or deliberate. However, a re-occurring discourse in the oral testimonies is the corollary between disciplinary action by management for petty incidents and sectional strikes at times when there were shortages of components parts, which led to stoppages in other Blocks along the assembly line. The crucial point here is the causal role of management in some strikes. The insecurity felt amongst members of the workforce during these strikes and breaks in the supply chain was heightened by the mistrust of managerial actions that in turn could elicit a reaction from work sections directly affected by the shortages.

## 5.9 Them and Us

In this chapter a ‘bottom-up’ examination of shop floor organisation at the Linwood plant marked a departure from debates centred on the role of the unions and a ‘militant’ shop steward movement in the failure of the plant, with the discussion focusing on exploring the interactions of stewards and management, and stewards and the workforce they represented. The analysis builds on the argument developed in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis by highlighting the desire for control on the shop floor as well as demonstrating the informal and unpredictable manifestations of tension and industrial conflict at the car plant.

Workers at Linwood experienced an instrumental attitude towards their work – evident in the disagreements over job control such as man assignments, movement of labour and track speed. This was not always mirrored by an instrumental approach to trade unionism. The contested nature of trade unionism in the plant was revealed. This was the result of ‘bottom-up’ development of organisation at the plant that reflected the low participation of the workers in union branch affairs. The assertion in this thesis is solidaristic and instrumental engagements with trade unionism are tendencies and not absolutes. There are many instances of solidarity in the diaries not necessarily rigidly defined by union demarcation. These were neither solidaristic nor an instrumental use of

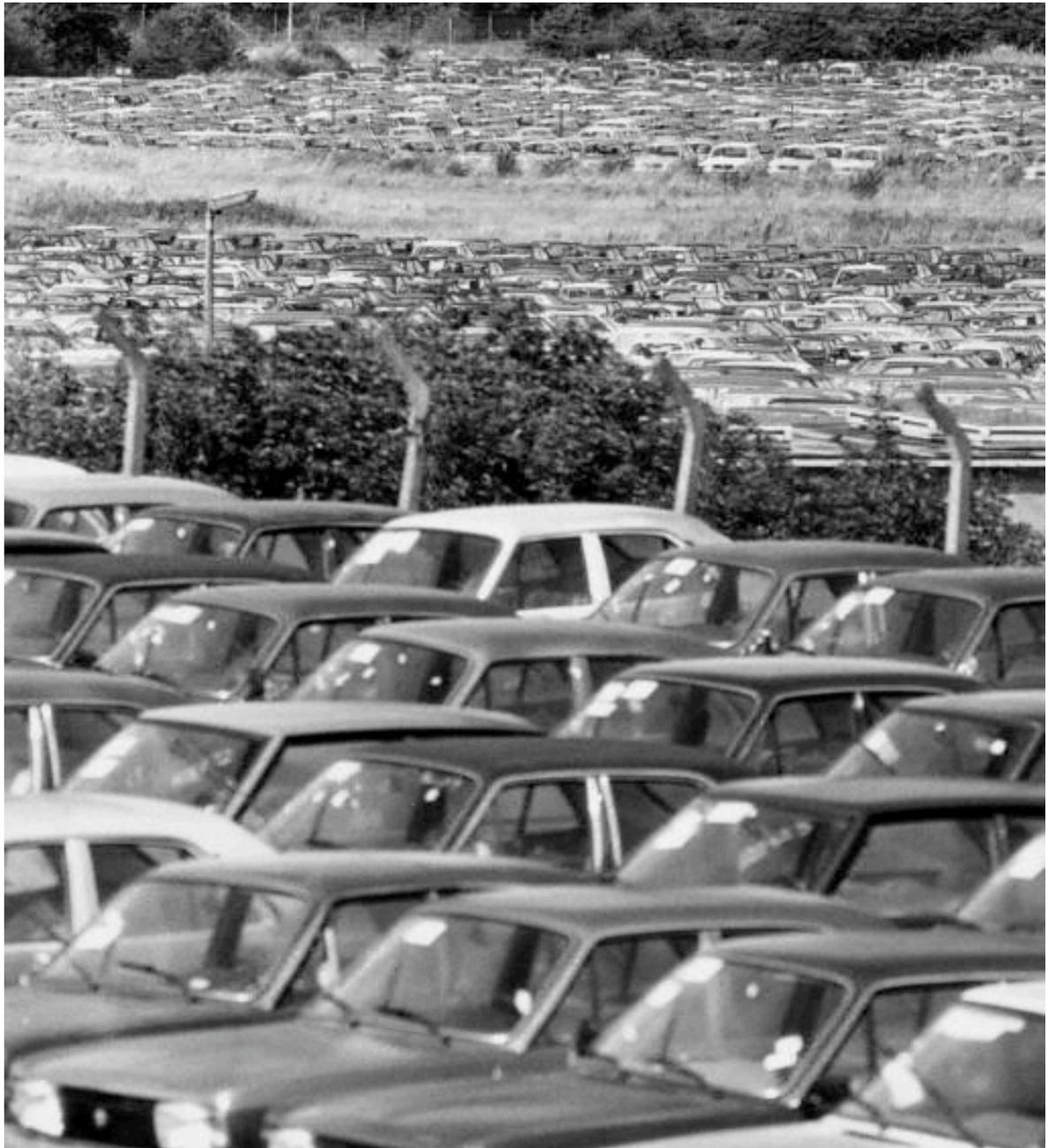
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<sup>966</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

the union, as multi-union solidarity was evident in sectional strikes. Instead this evidence points towards workers that had previously worked in 'gangs' or teams and therefore respected the commonality between themselves and their fellow workers, displayed in a factory consciousness and sectional solidarity.

Foucault's notion of control was introduced to develop an understanding of the role of the shop steward in the Linwood plant. On occasions stewards become complicit with management and facilitated enforcement of control, by preventing strikes and sticking to procedure. On the other hand, the behaviour of the workforce demonstrates a resistance to management's authority and the stewards were often complicit in members of their section evading the disciplinary actions of the management. There were crucial differences in understanding between the stewards and management, impeded by the latter's intransigence and inflexibility. The thesis challenges the notion of the all-powerful shop steward system in the Linwood plant inciting workers to strike, and reveals the persistence of *industrial* as opposed to *political* militancy, with strikes revolving round the organisation of production and job control.

## Conclusion



Source: <http://www.scran.ac.uk>  
Accessed 1 September 2009.

Stockpiled cars outside the Talbot Linwood factory, 1980.

## Conclusion: Coalition of Interests

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, a dominant narrative, and popular conception, is that the Linwood plant ‘failed’ because of the militancy of the ‘touchy’ workers that contributed to problematic industrial relations and industrial disputes<sup>967</sup> – reactive spontaneous collectivism to petty and insignificant issues. The Linwood workforce was perceived to have failed to adhere to company disputes procedures; was organised by a powerful and autonomous shop steward body, so ignored official branch union calls to return to work,<sup>968</sup> and were an intransigent ‘hard-boiled bunch even by British labour standards’.<sup>969</sup> The focus in this thesis has been to shift away from an examination of the reasons for the closure of the Linwood plant and, given the positioning of plant workers within the dominant explanations of ‘failure’, providing a more nuanced approach to understanding work culture and industrial relations at Linwood.

John Goldthorpe highlighted that within industrial sociology in the 1960s the number of studies on car assembly workers was greater than any other workgroup or industrial environment.<sup>970</sup> Yet, despite the academic scrutiny of car workers, the dearth of literature on Linwood is intriguing particularly given the dominant explanations proffered for problematic industrial relations.<sup>971</sup> Thus the exploration of work culture and industrial relations at Linwood presents an ideal case study in which to explore the experience of work in the context of industrial restructuring, especially given the assumption that the car plant provided the site for a clash of work cultures.

This explanation points to the process of adjustment to work at Linwood as problematic due to the clash between automated-assembly production and craft culture associated with traditional industry. To a degree, the findings of this thesis are consistent with this dominant explanation. The narratives of former employees point to the occupational background of the Linwood workforce, as comprising people from the contracting traditional industries, which therefore provided the potential for a clash of cultures. But, the thesis also provides scope for further development of this explanation, as what is also apparent is the variety and very mixed backgrounds of employees at Linwood. It is significant that for many of the employees, working in an industrial setting, in a new

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<sup>967</sup> *The Times*, 2 March 1978.

<sup>968</sup> *The Times*, 15 May 1965.

<sup>969</sup> ML, Linwood, Box 2, N. J. White and A. Collings, ‘The Battle of Britain’, *Newsweek*, 23 (1978), p. 52.

<sup>970</sup> J. Goldthorpe, ‘Attitudes and behaviour of car assembly workers: a deviant case and a theoretical critique’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.17, No. 3. (Sep., 1966), 227-44, (p.227).

<sup>971</sup> W. Knox, ‘Class, Work and Trade Unionism in Scotland’, 108-37 (p. 128) and Young and Hood, ‘Linwood Experience’, 123-40 (p. 125).

industry, on the scale of Linwood, provided a stark contrast with former experience in various ways.

Furthermore, implicit in the concept of a clash of work cultures is that there was a shift from employment, which incorporated autonomous craft control as contrasting with the relative absence of autonomy and skill in track work; which mirrors the Goldthorpe distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with work. Whilst the *Affluent Worker* study gave importance to the relationship between the nature of work and the type of reward, the thesis does not support the use of these distinct concepts as entirely distinct entities.<sup>972</sup> The thesis found that there were workers who, due to being deprived of autonomy in the work process, produced negative narratives on their experiences of work. Similarly, supporting the clash of cultures narrative, at Linwood the organisation of production and narrative of ‘pressure of production’ at times meant that those workers who came from a skilled background, and who worked in Linwood at their trade, articulated experiences of work at Linwood where their skill was challenged. This is supported in press coverage of Linwood where throughout the history of the plant there were strikes by skilled sections of the workforce when management were perceived to have undermined their autonomy.<sup>973</sup> This was the case in 1977 when there was a dispute by a ‘gang’ over manning levels required for a job: the workers claimed six people were required whereas the company decided four people.<sup>974</sup> Yet, on the other hand the testimonies also reveal that whilst semi-skilled process workers at first glance appear to have been attracted to seeking employment at Linwood by extrinsic, primarily monetary, rewards in return for relinquishing intrinsic rewards associated with work, upon closer analysis of their testimonies it appears that for the workers interviewed, the locus of control could be sought within the workplace but not necessarily within the job itself. Thus the thesis recognises worker autonomy as a crucial factor influencing positive or negative engagement with work, yet this can be achieved in different ways.

To this extent the notion of distinct rewards is challenged in Chapter Three where it is highlighted that apparently extrinsic rewards can also provide intrinsic gratification to workers. Through the exploration of occupational mischief, a variety of different interests are shown to exist within the car plant. Whilst studies of mischief or misbehaviour have tended to identify this activity as deviant or as a reaction to the relations of production within capitalism, this thesis has shown that mischief not only takes a variety of forms but

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<sup>972</sup> Goldthorpe et al., *The Affluent Worker: industrial attitudes*, p. 16.

<sup>973</sup> For example: FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 2, Various press cuttings.

<sup>974</sup> FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 2, *The Guardian*, 16 March 1977.

serves a variety of purposes to workers individually and collectively: cultural, economic, and social. Yet again, the rewards associated with mischief do not necessarily neatly fall into intrinsic or extrinsic reward. A worker who steals from the car plant may on the first instance seem to indicate extrinsic reward, but upon further reflection this can also provide intrinsic gratification: for example, through supporting a masculinity in which machismo signs of strength were replicated in Linwood.

Demands for greater control, autonomy and initiative by the shop stewards and convenors are evidence of a desire for intrinsic rewards. Consequently, job control and the speed of the assembly line were two of the key areas of conflict at Linwood. What are not accounted for are worker effort and the degree of labour desired by the firm. Managerial control was sustained due to the automated production process and scientific management. Man assignments and re-deployment of labour were contentious issues and elicited particularly resistant behaviour, whereby workers evaded management control. The necessity for economic return for these workers meant compliance with management by escaping, evading and subverting the 'functioning of discipline' at the plant.<sup>975</sup> There are frequent references in the oral testimonies and the trade union diaries of people leaving work early, sleeping, drinking and damaging cars.<sup>976</sup> Although these were not explicit demonstrations of conflict with management they did undermine managerial control within the plant. The oral testimonies in conjunction with the shop steward diaries as well as contemporary press report support the assertion in the thesis that despite democratic rhetoric, employee involvement schemes and participatory management functioned within the structural control of management and did little to disturb the hierarchal structure of power relations in the plant.

The thesis challenged the Goldthorpe distinction between solidaristic and individualistic categories of engagement with trade unionism. The evidence indicates that solidaristic and instrumental engagement with trade unionism are tendencies and not absolutes. Through an investigation of the variety of ways in which both individuals and the collective seek to satisfy their interests within the workplace the thesis highlights that 'workers' are not an homogenous groups, and concepts devised to categorise behaviour undermine the variety of experiences and interests at play in the car factory and that these are dynamic. Crucially, this thesis highlights the importance of seeking to understand the variety of interests within the workplace and that autonomy played a key role in the way

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<sup>975</sup> McKinlay and Starkey, 'Managing Foucault', 1-13 (p. 2).

<sup>976</sup> Walker and Guest, *Man on the assembly line*, E. Chinoy, *Automobile Workers*, and Lyddon, 'The car industry', 186-211 (p. 203).

the workers experienced work. However, it was recognised that this autonomy was prioritised in the realm of production and in the wider realm of the factory environment.

The final chapter provides a bottom-up analysis of industrial relations within the car plant drawing upon trade-union documentary evidence supplemented with the oral testimony of members of the Linwood workforce. In keeping with national trends industrial relations at Linwood were characterised by a strong shop steward system and multi-unionism. In the 1970s popular opinion of trade unions held them responsible for pushing up inflation and preventing the introduction of new technology therefore hampering the productivity of British industry. The media played an important role in depicting the unions as ‘greedy and stupid vehicles of militant shop steward power, solely responsible for running down the country’.<sup>977</sup>

A fundamental problem at the plant would appear to be with the communication and understanding between the workforce and management. There is evidence of the unwillingness of both management and workforce to compromise. In the Linwood car plant a cycle of action and reaction between workforce and management was informed by mistrust of managerial rhetoric, as issues important to workers such as pay parity were marginalised and exacerbated by the constricting nature of assembly-line work. The resultant tension meant, ‘Ye knew if you didn’t hear anything, there was somethin bubblin.’<sup>978</sup> Likewise, embedded in McIntyre’s testimony, there was a, ‘feeling of dispute the entire time.’<sup>979</sup> As these interviewees worked in different areas in the plant, their reflections indicate the pervasive undercurrent of tension that put strain on industrial relations in the Linwood plant.

In Linwood productivity was dependent on variables such as labour and time, with efficient shop floor organisation dependent on the control of sectional work. As examined in Chapter Two, this ‘specialisation’ gave rise to jobs that were narrowly defined, repetitive and often boring. Evidence in the TGWU diaries support the contention in the thesis that management failed to engage in the workers’ individual needs at work thus incentives were often extrinsic. As a result work failed to provide satisfaction for many of the workers and was seen as providing labour for a company that was the beneficiary of this asymmetrical relationship that left the workforce feeling disempowered.

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<sup>977</sup> W. Hutton, *The State We’re In* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>978</sup> Oral Testimony, Bill Reid, Interview 2.

<sup>979</sup> Oral Testimony, Andrew McIntyre, Interview 2.

The locus of autonomy emerges as important to the Linwood workers, although this is not necessarily achieved in the work process itself but sometimes in the wider workplace environment. For the workers involved, the sense of ‘getting one over’ on management recognised that managerial control was not absolute. It may not have been absolute but nevertheless conflict was an enduring feature of industrial relations at Linwood that intensified tensions between different groups in the plant. The thesis found that the management’s constant attempts to balance productivity with the constraints of the political economy often produced inconsistent responses to the workforce: sometimes seemingly cooperative as in greater shop steward mobility, at other times using coercion to encourage worker compliance, and at times implementing stringent disciplinary action for ‘silly’ reasons.

The paradox of shop floor relations at the Linwood plant was not always an ‘them and us’ orientated conflict. At times the stewards cooperated with management. Placement in the assembly line was determined by the market, decided by management and, although there were renegotiations and compromises, enforced by the shop stewards. Thus, to utilise man assignments effectively, movement of labour between different areas of the factory was commonplace and created tension between the workforce and the shop stewards. As work study was a particularly contentious issue industrial engineers could only carry out their work overtly and with the permission of shop stewards, ‘If not, there would have been a strike’.<sup>980</sup>

Management in successive companies at the Linwood plant devised strategies based on consultative arrangements and facilitated communication. The inclusion of shop stewards, many considered to be militant by the company, functioned to manipulate the power relations between management and workforce to persuade employees that there was equity in the interactions between the two groups, motivating workforce compliance in managerial decisions. These processes of consultation and decision-making occurred within the context of unequal power relations and as such sustained the asymmetry of influence between management and employee representatives contribution to decision-making strategies at the Linwood plant. Such schemes, introduced as successive employers at Linwood negotiated the shifting systems of industrial relations in the UK during the 1960s and 1970s, reflected the organisational pluralism shaping industrial relations policy at Linwood. However, changing historical contingencies meant that they were transitory in nature and the continuation of unitary values held by management resulted in a distinction

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<sup>980</sup> Oral Testimony, George Wilson, Interview 1.

between rhetoric and reality in policy approach which appears as a means by which management contained the power of labour rather than being a demonstration of a sustained commitment to worker influence in decision-making.<sup>981</sup>

What is apparent in the thesis is strikes at the Linwood car plant were not simply the collective action, with or without union backing, of a workforce motivated by a dispute with management over pay. They were instead, in many cases, a spontaneous reaction to work allocation, supervision and working conditions by workers in their sections. Tension arose as management attempted to increase production, strengthen control and improve efficiency in ways workers perceived as undermining their skill and autonomy. Many of the problems associated with poor industrial relations at the Linwood plant can be attributed to managerial intransigence and inflexible approach, which predominated and sustained an undercurrent of tension between both. A fundamental problem at the plant would appear to be with the communication and understanding between the workforce and management. The evidence confirms unwillingness by both management and workforce to compromise.

During its eighteen-year history, through different phases of ownership, the Linwood car plant was the nexus of a coalition of interests that was 'sensitive' to the inherent tensions that sustained the prevalent undercurrent of potential for disputes. The interactions and transactions between the management, workforce and company through productivity agreements, incentive schemes and participation were regulatory mechanisms of co-operation, coercion, and compromise that functioned to assuage inherent tensions in workplace relations.

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<sup>981</sup> Ramsay, 'Cycles of Control', pp. 481-506.

## Appendix One: Interview Schedule

Although an interview schedule was compiled the researcher was aware that at times the participant may want to discuss things not on the schedule thus opening up new areas of discussion. Therefore, in the interviews, the researcher did not adhere to a rigid schedule of pre-determined questions but instead allowed for the interview to be reflexive in response to topics raised by the interviewee. For that reason the schedule does not identify the wording of questions but instead outlines general topics/issues for exploration.

- Employment history

1. Dates of work at Linwood, length of employment.  
-Age upon commencement of employment.
2. Jobs previous to work at Linwood. Educational background or training.  
-Apprenticeship at Linwood or elsewhere?
3. Why chose to work at Linwood?
4. Background of workers  
-Workers from industries such as shipbuilding / engineering?
5. First impressions of work at Linwood.  
-Starting work  
-Comparisons with previous employment

- Experience of work

6. Department / building / section of work.
7. Job / jobs at Linwood
8. What did this work involve?
9. Experience of work
10. Discuss job control.
11. Changes to the experience of work?
12. The effect of different management on the experience of work
14. Impressions of the product
15. Relationship with other workers

16. Relationship between men and women.

17. Behaviour of the workforce

18. Insecurity associated with type of employment or previous experience of redundancy?

- Management

19. Management in particular section

20. Distrust of management?

21. Changes in management.

22. Management attempts at participation.

23. Top management – plant directors?

25. Management tactics for improving industrial relations

26. Perceptions of Industrial Relations Department and the staff.

27. How did this department and the staff deal with industrial relations?

- Trade unionism

28. Union membership.

- When
- Which union and why?
- Previous union experience?

29. Involvement in union affairs?

30. Impact union membership had on job.

31. Comparison between different unions / relationship between unions.

32. Opinion of shop stewards / convenors

33. Opinion of local and national union officials

34. Decisions to go on strike?

35. Main reasons for striking

36. Discussion of press and television media portrayal of industrial relations

37. Relationship between trade unions at Linwood and other plants owned by same company.

38. Militancy?

39. Evidence of Communist Party or IWP?

- Questions specifically for stewards / convenors

40. Main responsibilities and duties of stewards.

41. Changing position / influence of shop steward within the plant?

42. Contact between local / national union officials and stewards at Linwood

43. Contacts with stewards in other Rootes/Chrysler/Peugeot plants?

44. Joint Representative Council, Joint Shop Stewards Committee

45. Did the stewards do a good job?

46. Where the stewards liked / popular?

47. Support and respect for stewards?

- Concluding discussion

48. What was your overall experience of Linwood?

49. What was to blame for the plant closing?

50. Discussion of campaign to prevent closure.

51. Was the venture a failure?

52. End of work at Linwood.

## Appendix Two: Sample Details

### Anna Anderson

Previous Job: secretary (local stationary business)

Job at Linwood: secretarial staff

### Mike Berry

Previous Job: hairdresser

Job at Linwood: spot-welder, progress-chaser, inspection

### David Bright

Previous Job: n/a

Job at Linwood: office boy, wages clerk

### David Crawford

Previous Job: butcher

Job at Linwood: inspector, foreman inspector

### Mark Ellison

Previous Job: retail

Job at Linwood: Car Sprayer

### Adam Fleming

Previous Job: work-study engineer (Massey Ferguson)

Job at Linwood: senior industrial engineer, Industrial Engineering Manager, Plant Manager of Body, Paint and Assembly

### Peter Gordon

Previous Job: pattern maker (Fairfield Shipyard)

Job at Linwood: inspector

### Colin Jackson

Previous Job: clerical work (refrigeration company)

Job at Linwood: wages clerk

Barry King

Previous Job: coach trimmer

Job at Linwood: inspector, foreman inspector

Iain MacDonald

Previous Job: forklift truck driver in small engineering firm

Job at Linwood: forklift truck driver

Rodger McGuinness

Previous Job: butcher

Job at Linwood: process worker (headlining)

Andrew McIntyre

Previous Job: electrician in Glasgow docks

Job at Linwood: maintenance electrician

Douglas McKendrick

Previous Job: building scaffolding in shipyard, window cleaner, ticket-collector

Job at Linwood: process worker (CAB)

Craig Marsden

Previous Job: n/a (University Student)

Job at Linwood: industrial relations officer

David Munroe

Previous Job: labourer

Job at Linwood: process worker, foreman

Dan Nelson

Previous Job: engineer (City Bakeries and National Service)

Job at Linwood: engineer, line engineer, foreman engineer

Bill Reid

Previous Job: n/a

Job at Linwood: Technician Apprentice

Bill Stewart

Previous Job: n/a

Job at Linwood: Apprenticeship Draughtsman , Press Tool Designer, Planning Engineer

Barry Stubbs

Previous Job: material handler, (Paisley mills)

Job at Linwood: viewer,

Craig Wallace

Previous Job: n/a

Job at Linwood: Apprentice

Archie Watson

Previous Job: National Service, optical firm making spectacles, labourer

Job at Linwood: process worker, UMB

George Wilson

Previous Job: slater and plasterer

Job at Linwood: process worker

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FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 8

FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 10

FAI, Papers of Cliff Lockyer, Box 11.

Modern Records Centre (MRC) folders:

MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/1

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MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/5

MRC, MSS.315/C/1/2/6

MRC, MSS.315/C/4/1

MRC, MSS.315/C/4/3

MRC, MSS.315/P/3/14c

MRC, MSS.315/p/3/14

MRC, MSS.315/P/4/4

Mitchell Library (ML) boxes:

ML, Linwood Box 2

ML, Linwood Box 10

ML, Linwood Box 11

ML, Linwood Box 23

ML, Linwood Box 24

ML, Linwood Box 25

National Library of Scotland (NLS) folders:

NLS, P.1a.6511 PER

Paisley Central Library (PCL) folders:

PCL, 692.2222, REN 27, PC 669, OS, Linwood Car Plant, Vol. 1

PCL, PC 12561 L.W., 629.222 O/S

Rootes Archive Centre (RAC):

RAC, Miscellaneous Linwood Papers

Scottish Oral History Centre:

Linwood Car Plant, Oral History Interviews

[To be deposited after thesis examination and final submission.]

See Appendix One for sample details.

The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) folders:

TNA: PRO BT 64/5338

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