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**POWER
BELOW**

Tom Snow

January 1988

Submitted for the degree of
M.Litt. on the basis of
research carried out in the
Department of Sociology,
University of Glasgow.

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SUMMARY

This study consists of an interpretation of a series of discussions tape-recorded in three workplaces - among cleaners in a University Chemistry building, in a Hospital laundry and an Old Peoples Home. The report includes edited transcripts of the discussions themselves. The interpretation centres on powerful ideas, ideas which stand out in the collective thinking of the three groups of workers, and which they imply to be effective in their lives. It is argued that most of these ideas confer a position of powerlessness on those who hold them. They are set in the context of wider views of the world which also imply powerlessness. This sense of powerlessness is also found in views of the union. Here, power is firmly located at the top.

The interpretation is offered in three distinct contexts of knowledge and understanding, the union, socialism and social research. In the first, the separation of the union from its members is addressed; in the second, the separation of socialism from immediate issues of workplace power. In the third, an understanding of the power of ideas is sought in their relationship with sanctions which operate towards the same ends. Difficulties are found with existing accounts and an alternative hypothesis is offered based on conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is by no means an easy step to make the transition from the world of the trade union official to that of the academic researcher. That it was possible at all in this case was due to the generous way Professor John Eldridge opened the door to his help and that of my other supervisor, Peter Cressey. My thanks to both of them for their extraordinary tolerance, their encouragement and their scholarly advice. The result is not in any way their fault.

I would like to thank NUPE's Executive Council for agreeing to the necessary sabbatical leave to undertake the study, and officers, both full time and in three of its branches, in the union's Scottish Division for help in gaining access to the members who took part. I would prefer to thank all of them by name. It is in the nature of research of this kind that anonymity is unavoidable, if only to protect everyone from the embarrassment which mischief could so easily cause. That such a precaution is necessary is particularly sad in this case. Many of the participants, all of whom read one of the edited transcripts included here, wanted them to be seen as their collective statement. As one said, "I think this belongs to us". Thank you for lending it to me.

At the same time I would like to thank friends I have pestered, and who have given me valuable help and advice during the course of this research.

People who spend long hours at home churning out piles of paper seem to have established a tradition of thanking their spouses. I would merely like to apologise to mine for the number of times she has come home to food unimaginatively cooked - and, often, none at all. And one day I'll have to account to my daughter for the amount of television I let her watch after school.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION		(iii)
Note on the transcriptions of the discussions in Parts I, II, II		(ix)
Part I	PRINCIPLES OF CHEMISTRY	
Chapter I	Get to your work. Be on time.	2
Chapter II	You know your job	6
Chapter III	In my day you had to	11
Chapter IV	Casawuzzies	16
Chapter V	He must feel ashamed when's lift'n's wage	21
Chapter VI	I doubt the union could do anything	28
Chapter VII	We are the usses	35
Part II	ISLAND LAUNDRY	
Chapter I	Money, machines and progress	44
Chapter II	The place and the bonus	51
Chapter III	His job, our job	57
Chapter IV	Women's jobs, men's jobs	65
Chapter V	Respect, discipline and a ladder	73
Chapter VI	The union	81
Chapter VII	Re-inventing the union	91
Part III	VIEWPOINT	
Chapter I	New philosophy, old system	98
Chapter II	Power over, experience under	108
Chapter III	A sharp division	118
Chapter IV	The union	131
Chapter V	After a crisis	146
Appendix	The officers' response	155
Part IV	THE UNION	
Chapter I	Powerful ideas	172
Chapter II	Ideas of powerlessness	179
Chapter III	Power divorced	184
Chapter IV	Warwick revisited	190
Part V	SOCIALISM	
Chapter I	If I had my own place	198
Chapter II	We could all come in here and run this place	210
Part VI	RESEARCH	
Chapter I	Ideas and sanctions	219
Chapter II	Discussions in three workplaces	230
Chapter III	Ideas about ideas	243
Chapter IV	Crisis mechanism	252
Part VII	OVERCOMING SEPARATION	
Chapter I	Re-unifying the union	264
Chapter II	Reclaiming Labour	276
Chapter III	Regrounding research	285
NOTES		292
BIBLIOGRAPHY		302

Introduction

BODIES OF IDEAS, BODIES OF PEOPLE

This study was motivated by an intense desire to look for something which, in the event, it could not find.

The author had studied sociology as an undergraduate in the sixties and read Marx and even Braverman in the seventies. He was convinced that the Western industrial world could be seen, first and foremost as classes and that those classes emanated in a very direct way from relations of production. These were, to be sure, not Marx's production relations. The materialist conception of history had, since the eighteen sixties, yielded new creatures of the mind. The classes given by capitalist private property had been thickened by the intervention of bureaucracy and the relation of professional and client inside the process of production. Once in the engine room of capitalism these relations had acquired new vigour and were now joining private property in consuming the whole of the rest of society. The bourgeois revolution was being succeeded by a new one, propelled forward by its own new middle classes - one based on thrusting "new" small and medium business and the other based on the professions and the upper layers of bureaucracy and its university educated recruits. The effect of all this was that the limits of union activity were set by the invisible hand of class. Or so it appeared to the author! The opportunity given by a year's sabbatical leave meant it must be possible to now go out and find it. Of course it wouldn't be there in quite this form. All sorts of factors would intervene to stop workers seeing it this way. But a straightforward job of archaeology ought to unearth its inevitable proxies and transformations.

Once in the workplace, all this began to crumble away. And what was there was far more challenging than anything that could at all easily be disposed of as false consciousness. Here were living people who were not merely failing to see the world the author's way. They were in a whole different ball game.

However, the destruction of the author's own smug ideological baggage did not then open the way for the Sociology of the Workplace to slip into the vacuum thus caused. Why not? It would have been natural to turn for help to those whose professional activity, whose lifetime's work has been to study that vital bit of the social world that inhabits the workplace. Resistance came from what seemed to be the very nature of the author's own error. The starting point was too far from the ideas of the people involved in the study. And it seemed incapable of then moving on to a point at which the study could communicate back to them again afterwards. And if preconceptions about class were getting in the way of some kind of dialogue, how could Sociology, with a whole conceptual language all its own, possibly come to the rescue?

Here was the other strand of the author's approach - the pretentious assumption that such a study could be of some sort of benefit to those who took part. Part of the process of sobering up - aided by the penance of typing the transcripts with two fingers - was the realisation that this was not so. The study could only address problems which could themselves be identified within the bodies of ideas held by bodies of people. And the author felt in no position to better the workers' own ideas - their own strategies for dealing with the problems everyday life throws at them. What

twenty one people cleaning a laboratory building before dawn can do to survive such a job, they do already. So also with the laundry workers and those working in an Old Peoples Home who took part in the discussions reported here. The problems which, it seemed, could best be addressed were those which could already be encapsulated in trade unionism, socialism and, naturally enough, sociology. The nearest the author has been able to get to producing a piece of work capable of being part of a dialogue with the workers themselves is through the problems, the concepts, the special way of looking at work and the special relationship of workers encapsulated by the union. The attempt to do so through socialist ideas was an early (if fruit-bearing) casualty. And no such attempt was made through sociology. Undoubtedly more could have been done at the three workplaces. In other circumstances it would have been possible to engage the workers in further discussion about the implications of their ideas for the union and for socialism - and thus for them. There would then have been an opportunity to validate - or otherwise - the author's interpretation of their views. Many expressed a willingness to be involved in further discussion. But the author lacked both the time and the remit within the union in Scotland to undertake this further work. The written word is thus crystalised out sooner than would have been ideal.

In reaching this position, it has still not proved possible to compartmentalise sociology off from these other bodies of ideas and become absorbed by contemporary sociological problems. This is to some extent because the author has remained outside sociology for most of twenty years and could never hope to read thoroughly into all the debates relevant to even this one area of study. And, too, an intuitive mistrust must be admitted. This is born of the experience of recruiting University domestic workers into the union before graduating and then going on to work for the same trade union. That experience seemed to say that a study of society, which could not be accessible to society, would never come to have all the answers. Access to a very different University world seemed to illuminate sociology as just another form of above stairs life. This is an immensely depressing view. But it seems as well to admit the possibility that what follows is simply window-dressing for a gut feeling formed long before.

How is it right for a non-sociologist to view this field of study?

In the study of work, workers and the world of the workplace, what awaits the non-professional is a range of conceptual tools. He or she takes it on trust that these have been developed and honed over many years and countless studies. Their products are shared in Sociology Departments, journals and conferences. And as they are debated the discipline moves forward as a whole. The tools are also the language of sharing. The process of the production of sociology cannot take place outside this specialist framework. New departures are departures which have to take with it, if not the entire discipline, enough to become a distinctive strand within it, which be understood as such by all.

The 'tools' and 'products' metaphor is, like most metaphors, one-sided. The concepts are also part of the end result. As a student progresses into this shared world of ideas, he or she is told, by the already well-developed conceptual language what kind of world it is that sociology studies. In the workplace, in particular, the concepts of informal/formal, organisation, patterning, structuration, compliance/resistance, integration/

differentiation and so on, are no mere lens. They are also object. Didactically, it is almost as if the discipline upholds its conceptual language as a form of intellectual morality. To be a sociologist is to have been incorporated into a body of people and ideas in such a way as to expect to find that the world of the workplace looks a certain way by virtue of these, among many concepts. If in some respect it turns out not to, the consequence for sociology is innovation. The discipline can only absorb so much of it at once. It can only do so slowly through the media of journal, conference and seminar room. It can only do so within itself. There can be no question of nipping down to the workplace for a teabreak chat to try out a new idea which has cropped up in a journal. It is right that any field of study should develop through scholarly debate rather than wildness. But it also right for those not part of the world of sociology to be sceptical. Could it be that a specialist world of ideas which never reconnects with the non-specialist world of ideas, which forms part of its field of study, thereby lacks a certain intellectual discipline? How far is the specialist language of sociology a function of its existence as a closed social and intellectual system, sufficient unto itself?

To do justice to such a question would take a little more than fifteen months' sabbatical leave - if only because non-professionals lack the easy familiarity with the conceptual language which would provide the necessary appreciation of its nuances and its limitations. And in any case, what alternative solid ground would there be upon which to stand the basis of a critique? What other framework is free of moats and beams?

There were thus several reasons why this study attempts to avoid the use of sociological concepts wherever possible. There was a sense of distance from the language of those who took part, and a desire to keep that distance to the minimum necessary to tackle the problems identified by the author. And there was the author's own lack of familiarity with the language of sociology, reinforced by doubt and past disillusionment. His purpose has not therefore been to challenge sociology. It has been to set on one side a mountain of problems he could never have hoped to tackle, to try and keep the decks as clear as possible for those he could. Concepts not part of the everyday have been avoided except where debate has made it impossible.

The workplace has its own ideas, active in the minds of the people there. The conceptual tools of Sociology have to undertake a truly massive task of translation, of interpretation of one set of ideas in terms of another set. It is undeniable that however much is gained from this, something must also be lost. Even from a sociological standpoint, there must be some advantages in keeping the conversion of one world of ideas into another to a minimum. The intention from the start was that this study would deliberately try to avoid tools which imply part-worked material. The approach would not take it for granted that sociology had already penetrated into the reality out there. Nor would it take the risk of avoiding questions which might have been begged by the use of sociology's analytical language. This is not to say that it could have been done without the help and advice of sociologists. Without their help, no research would have taken place.

This 'bias' in the author's approach goes further. It distinguishes only a certain kind of understanding as being acceptable - that which is consistent with the revealed ideas of those who took part and, in principle therefore, verifiable by them. Such an understanding tries to recognise a

certain equality between the body of ideas of the body of people taking part and whatever interpretations the researcher takes away. The discipline imposed by the approach, the author believes, is important. It offers the prospect that people might, in a better resourced study, be treated less as research objects and more as co-authors.

What was done and what was its method? In ways which differed in each case, a regular time was arranged in three workplaces for all or some of the workers to discuss the same seven issues over seven weeks - with a tape recorder switched on. Different issues were then pursued over two to four further weeks. Edited transcripts were then prepared, one of them with a commentary by the author, amended and agreed with those who took part.

The presentation of this study sets out in the manner of its method. It begins, in Part I, with the transcript of discussions in one of three workplaces visited during the summer of 1987, in which the search for conceptual tools is laid bare as it actually took place. The group of twenty one people who took part in the discussions in this University Chemistry building was too large for anything but a very unusual kind of discussion. It was 'bitty'. The author's questions have been expanded into a commentary. Part I is therefore a not entirely satisfactory compromise between the need for the transcript to speak for itself and the author's analysis to be as clear as possible.

Parts II and III transcribe discussions in two other workplaces, a hospital laundry and an Old Peoples Home, without accompanying commentaries. In the Home, a discussion with the managers was recorded as well. This appears as an appendix, with superscript numbering to link their comments to those of the workforce.

Parts I, II and III can, if necessary, be used simply as a source of reference for the remaining parts.

Power is a word constantly used by participants in the discussions. A concept beset by dangers, the author's use simply attempts to follow its everyday usage in the transcripts. So does his use of the word "principle" - used by just one speaker in one discussion in the Chemistry Building. Part IV unashamedly places heavy reliance on these two words. Oddly enough this section does make reference to a concept borrowed directly from sociology. Bob Fryer, Andy Fairclough and Tom Manson introduced the concept of 'structure' into the language of that body of people and ideas through their research carried out in NUPE in 1974. Although their work is criticised here, great credit is due to them for breaking out of the world of sociological debate and addressing the framework of knowledge and understanding encapsulated by the world of the union. This study can do no less than follow in their footsteps, which is why its findings are presented in the way they are. It is essential to this study as a whole that on the subject of the union it should speak directly to the union itself, unencumbered by the interests and considerations of other bodies of ideas and people. Part IV is therefore offered here, not merely for its contents, but as an attempt to grasp them in a context of dialogue with persons who are not social scientists. It sets out by detailing a number of 'principles' identified in the transcripts and goes on to define their main characteristics. The three following chapters then set them in the context

of ideas about the social world in the three workplaces, ideas about the union, and then the work of Fryer, Fairclough and Manson.

Having adopted this position in relation to the union, it quickly became apparent to the author that there is another, more loosely constituted body of people and ideas, identified by the word socialism, which his interpretation of the transcripts addresses. It would have been possible, indeed a lot easier, to address socialism through a more sociological form of debate. The appearance of social relationships at work on the tapes are so sharply contrasted with those which inspired Marx's Capital that it would have been a pity not to seize the chance to ask why. But socialism is alive - the active expression of ideas of transformation. It could only be sensible to offer this part of the work in a form which directly addresses socialism in an active way. And because its practice, for most people, is cut off from its intellectual legacy in the work of Marx, the result, in Part V, attempts to expose these two prongs to each other. It involves locating in Marx's account of the rise of capitalism a valuable snapshot of a fictional small private workplace from one of the discussions. It then goes on to trace workplace relations in Capital Volume I which seem to foreshadow the three workplaces themselves, yet which also seem to fall outside Marx's own schema of capitalist private property. Part V then explores the remarkable separation between a modern socialism, still grounded in capitalist private property, and ideas of workers running the job found in three modern workplaces.

Part VI then seeks to communicate with the world of workplace research. There was a particular starting point for this study. It was not simply that sociological concepts and explanations were, for the reasons given, a source of worry. The author's reading of two studies involving Peter Armstrong and others seemed to suggest that there was something much more to workers' ideas than merely being different to sociological and other kinds of explanations of the world! Between the lines of the work of Armstrong and his colleagues seemed to creep the possibility that there were some ideas in the workplace with the power to determine behaviour. They quickly became the object of the present study. So Part VI looks, respectively, at the two studies which inspired its approach, the method and findings of the study, some grand theories which might help to explain them, and, finally, a home grown hypothesis. It seeks to explain why ideas about sanctions and other powerful ideas often seem to operate towards the same ends - both sets of ideas having the same effect upon conduct - although no direct relation between the two is apparent. The hypothesis offered - it can, on the basis of such a small slice of life, be no more - is that the two are related when opposing sets of sanctions come into conflict with each other. This view was formed on the basis of two such conflicts which are documented through the ideas of those who took part in the study. Without those ideas, as a means of 'access' to these conflicts, no such attempted explanation would have been regarded as acceptable.

Although three different frameworks of knowledge and understanding are addressed here, the author's thesis nevertheless proceeds through them in a series of consecutive steps. Perhaps one word of qualification is in order. Although Parts I, II and III are, first and foremost the "raw material" of the study, Part I contains a commentary. As this analysis, in its essentials, is summarised elsewhere, the thesis itself can be read from the

beginning of Part IV.

Finally, in order not to break the thread of exposition between Parts IV to VI, the concluding chapters of each of these three sections appear together in Part VI. Although each includes elements of prescription particular to its framework of knowledge, they also contain part of the analysis.

Is social research possible without contemporary sociological concepts and explanations? Indeed is it possible to tackle Marx without the concept of value? Both affronts are among those which have been committed here. But in approaching problems he believes the transcripts show to be important, the author wishes to make only the most modest claims to success in illuminating them.

12th December 1987.

Note on the transcription of the discussions in Parts I, II and III

Even in the central belt of Scotland it may not be easy to read the form of English which appears in these transcripts. The reason for this is obvious enough. Like the forms of English spoken by the great majority of English speakers, it is rarely written down.

Those who took part in the discussions were startled to read what they had said. One, from the workplace the author has called Island Laundry, said "I was sure I didna use all these 'y'kens' - y'ken?" But all three groups decided they wanted to keep the author's attempt at a written form of their speech. "This is how we are" said someone from the Chemistry Building.

The work of transcription raised many problems. In general, standard written English has been used to represent the sound of Scots English, except where this leads to inconsistencies. For example, so-called standard English speakers pronounce the vowel sounds in 'door' and 'floor' in the same way. Some Scots English speakers do not. Where this happens, floor has been rendered as 'flair', which, by comparison with the 'standard' English form, is how it sounds to the author. This example exaggerates the ease of making such judgements. The job requires the transcriber to become aware of the conventions of writing 'standard' English in a way which is quite unnecessary when writing it down automatically. Then there were significant individual variations in Scots English usage. The author, faced with a formidable mechanical task, was unprepared for these additional pitfalls. Consistency of judgement cannot be claimed.

A further complication should be mentioned. Points of emphasis, and statements particularly full of feeling, sometimes involved quite dramatic excursions into a 'broader' form of Scots English. An attempt has been made to capture these.

An alternative approach would have been to 'translate' the speech into the normally written form. Experiments only succeeded in reducing it to a blandness and implausibility in which dialogue, as a sharing of ideas, was destroyed. However, some concessions have had to be made in this direction in the editing. Untold numbers of 'y'kens' and other characteristics of the spoken word have been deleted to spare the reader from unnecessary impediments.

That the great majority of people cannot 'speak' in print without their language being either mutilated or appearing 'funny' is itself interesting. By comparison, normal written English is clearly very close to the spoken form used by the middle class. As the author noticed when transcribing a discussion with the officer-in-charge of Viewpoint Old Peoples Home, writing down this form of speech involves little more than breaking it up into sentences and deleting a few 'ums' and 'ers'.

Developing a written version of other forms of English speech requires no more than agreed ground rules. And if people from all over these islands can, with a little effort, understand each other, say, at union conferences, there seems no reason why we should not do so with a variety of written forms. Why should we tolerate the extra barrier which millions of children face by having to learn someone else's English in order to be able write?

PART I

PRINCIPLES OF CHEMISTRY

Part of a University laboratory complex, the Chemistry Building is big, old and cavernous. By nine o'clock in the morning it will be clean. A couple of hours earlier, it is full of the smell of disinfectant, the shine of wet floors and the ringing echoes of clanging galvanised bucket handles. Work began at six. By 7.25 Anne has carried out by far the most important of her supervisory duties. She has been out for a substantial order of fresh rolls and almost enough papers to start a newsagent's shop. In the cleaners' rest room she now lays out the tea things ready for each person, with a special consignment of jam here, a pile of change there and everything in its proper place. An enormous kettle, which looks as if it could have been brought back from the Crimean War, is coming to the boil. Sharp at half past, twenty one women pour in. They take their places, sitting on ancient wooden forms, either side of a single long, narrow table. It stretches fifteen feet from Anne at one end to Carol, the steward, at the other. Goodness knows how far back this goes. The longest survivor doesn't know. She's only been sitting down to the long table for twenty two years. And she started with less elbow room. There were twenty eight cleaners then.

These teabreaks are the setting for this series of tape-recorded discussions.

Contents:

Chapter I	Get to your work. Be on time.	page 2
Chapter II	You know your job.	6
Chapter III	In my day you had to	11
Chapter IV	Casawuzzies	16
Chapter V	He must feel ashamed when's lift'n's wage	21
Chapter VI	I doubt the union could do anything.	28
Chapter VII	We are the usses.	35

Note: Numbers in brackets on the right hand side of the page indicate the discussion (8) from which the preceding section has been drawn. A dash (-) on the left hand side indicates that a section of the discussion has been left out in order to shorten this document. Three dots (...) in the text indicate missing material. This was either inaudible on the tape or has been edited out to save space.

CHAPTER I

"GET TO YOUR WORK. BE ON TIME!"

"Worst part's getting up in the morning."

"the early start, isn't it."

"Yeah, you don't have much of a social life. You go to your bed late and you canna get up 'the mornin'."

laughter

"And you sleep in - "

laughter

" - and you get a row the next day."

more laughter

"No, really though, it's very unsociable hours."

Some get up as early as four o'clock.

"You definitely can't go out during the week. I mean if there's anything on at your clubs - a late night or anything like that - that's out. You canna have a drink. You go into a deep sleep!"

laughter

"It's not the first time somebody's sat up all night rather than sleep in in the morning."

"That's right. Well, I used to work in a club and I used to finish at twelve o'clock. And I sat up the whole night rather than sleep in. Because I knew if I'd away t'ma bed I would just - "

"If there's a good film on you miss it because you just fall asleep."

" - but we all enjoy our work."

(01)

Enjoy it or not, nobody is in any doubt why they do it.

"...because we need the money. We're no com'n out at five o'clock in the morn'n for pleasure. We're doing it for the money..."

(08)

Yet for many of the women, there is something about getting to work every morning which goes even beyond money. When some miss the bus in:

".....I've got a taxi - "

"That's right."

" - if you wait for the next bus, you're just far too late."

But wouldn't this eat into the pay for three hours' work?

"Ah well, it'll cost you two pound. That's just from Fallowfield.

That's quite close compared to some of the lasses...If you miss the bus first thing in the morning you've another half hour before you get another."

About half the women have, at one time or another, taken a taxi to avoid being late (although at least one of the others would not do so). The cost of the taxi far exceeds the half hour's pay they stand to lose. It is not the idea of losing money which is uppermost in most people's minds. So what is it? The answer became clear when the subject of winter weather came up - weather severe enough to stop the buses:

"If this was a nine o'clock start we wouldna be in this job. It would be all the young ones in it. You see we are determined to get to our work. The young ones would probably look out and see the snow

and say "Ah. No bother." We come out and make an attempt...."

And why don't the younger ones accept the same discipline?

"I think it's their age group. I think it's their age group because that's the way you were brought up. 'Get to your work. Be on time'."

"Yes, that's right. 'Be on time'."

(chorus:) "Yes."

"The only thing I do object to is we do - there's no many in here that stay off, no many, and we do make an attempt to come in - you get a row."

Anne (Supervisor): "That's wrong!"

"You get a row."

"You know what I mean, you get a row."

"You get a row. You get disciplined for coming in late."

Anne: "No, you're only...just wait a minute. No. Your thing here is this. You can either get it taken off you or you can work it. Unfortunayely you're twenty one hours, so there's no very much chance o'you work'n it."

"No. But I'm say'n you do get a row and everybody makes an attempt to get here."

Anne: "We know that. Now when you say a row, we never say, now, you should - we maybe say "Oh well...."(interruption). Say you slept in. Well, it's not a row. Put it another way. A row is a row." (01)

The reason for objecting to "getting a row" is important. The row challenges the fact that everyone is already "determined to get to our work."

But if the threat of a row or the threat of losing money do not speed them on their way, what consequences do they have in their minds when they can see they're going to be late?

"It just upsets you for the rest of the day - "

"Exactly."

" - that's all. That's all it does to you."

But why?

"It's just your age, I doubt."

"We don't like being late to our work....."

"And you're thinking of the other women that will have to do your work..."

"It's the principle...."

What do they feel about the women doing their work?

"Guilty."

"Guilt."

"You feel guilty."

"...it's just your age really....."

So what gets the Chemistry Building women onto that bus is the principle: "Get to your work - be on time". As an idea, it is has such a powerful effect that failing to put it into practice "just upsets you for the rest of the day".

This is not the end of the story. There is something else about this principle which gives it an even more powerful effect. It is shared by everybody who works at cleaning the Chemistry Building. It gives each person an obligation to "the other women that will have to do your

work" if you are late. And if you are, it will give you a sense of guilt._____

Finally, the principle distinguishes those who uphold it from those who don't. It distinguishes people who are determined to get to our work from others - the young for instance - who "would probably look at the snow and say 'Ah. No bother'."

Everybody is completely confident that everybody else "makes an attempt to get here." But, equally, anybody can fail:

"You do - everybody sleeps in. I mean it's quite a simple thing to sleep in. I mean everybody's done it at one time or another."

So how do the women feel when someone does come in late?

"Never bothers me."

"Doesn't bother me, no."

"Makes you glad to see them!"

laughter

"At least they are in."

"That's right."

So people are far from harsh with each other. But supposing they had someone who was persistently late? How would they feel about such a person?

"....wouldn't think much o' that."

"'course they wouldn't get away wi' it Anne!"

Anne: "They'd have a chance to work it if they can."

"We don't really have it in this building at all."

"(We would) get fed up."

Would that person know they were getting fed up?

"Aye."

"Aye."

Chorus: "Oh aye."

".....I'd tell them."

Here then is a principle, enforced by each person's conscience. If necessary, the community as a whole could try to enforce it on anyone persistently breaking it by letting them know they were getting fed up. The extent of this principle's effect on each person can be illustrated by an example. Once again the threat of discipline from Anne is nothing more than a source of humour.

"Well, Cathy was late this morning how did you feel about it Cathy?"

"Aye. How did you feel this morning?"

laughter

Cathy: "I was shattered as soon as I got in here - well trying to run on my poor foot."

"And actually, in actual fact she was only five minutes late.

Really, because she gets her bus at ten past five. She went out the door at quarter past five and saw the tail end of it going away. So this makes her awful late because it's all the way from Kingsmuir.

So by the time she hobbles down to the bus and waits for the bus coming - it doesn't come 'till, what, twenty to six - "

Cathy: "Twenty five to six, twenty five minutes - "
So what passed through her mind when she saw that bus disappearing in
the distance?

Cathy: "I felt like turning round and going back again!"

laughter

Cathy: "But I mean you make an effort to come in."

"You can Still make it."

"You've still got time."

Cathy: "Aye I can still make it. But y'are late."

Anne: "Now that you mention that Cathy, you've never had a row from
me of late have you?"

(chorus:) "Oh!"

laughter

"We did it to her Anne when she came up the stairs."

"Gi'er a row now!"

(08)

"Get to your work - be on time" is an idea which compels people to act.
It has transformed into a virtue what the women of the Chemistry
Building least want to do. Cathy may have "felt like going back. But
the principle that "you make the effort" overcame this momentary
weakness. The "worst part" of the job, its early start, has been turned
into something worth running for - and on a bad foot. "...the
principle" is a very powerful kind of idea indeed.

Perhaps all the women subscribed to this principle before they started
there. But, in a group of other people who all uphold it, its effect is
greatly strengthened. It becomes each person's obligation to everyone
else. Even an occasional lapse makes "you feel guilty". But it goes
beyond their completely united acceptance of this principle. It enables
them to say something about themselves by comparison with outsiders.
They are people who "make the effort" in a world full of others who
don't - and who would say "Nay Bother".

As we shall see in the next chapter, this is not the only principle at
work in the community of the Chemistry Building.

CHAPTER II

"YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR JOB IS"

"....the chap was working with ether... Katrina was standing right next to me and I don't know how she never konked out because it was really strong."

Among other hidden dangers are "organic gases":

"...we had a woman that worked here, in Cathy's job...I'll never forget as long as I live. She opened the room door and she walked in. And I had my back to her, opening a door on the opposite side. And I just turned round to say something and she just comes out backwards. And she says something came down on her head. So - mind you everybody was in the room and examining her and saying there were nothing the (matter) - but she never got over that. She says "There's something in that room." So we left the door open. But she never went back in that room for about three days. Whenever we went past it, we just opened the door and we hoped that whatever was in it would come out by the time we got back to it. But she never got over that. And then there was (the time) when we were all in the toilets washing mops. And the boy that got into that room in the morning didn't have a key. And he came along to ask for the key. So she went along wi' her key and she opened the door and she says the same thing happened to her again... She never got over that and she had to leave. She went to the doctor and everything. To me, I think she was earthed that day... There was a machine, you know, an engine that works inside the room. It could have been, perhaps the electricity of her... (It) came down on top o' her. It came down on her and she came out backwards... Her hairs were standing on end and she was pure white... A charge o' electricity - "

"Aye, aye."

They had got hold of the Professor:

"Aye, Craig. He went to the sick room for to check that she was all right. And he went into the room and checked it up. I remember one thing - about four weeks later there was air vents put into that room... There still was no treatment done to her. Because I believe she should have been taken right to the hospital, at that very moment, in case there had a been radiation or anything in that room after the weekend. But she wasna'. She was only sent home... They said there was nothing there."

Sometimes there are large warning notices on the laboratory doors:

"...with er LASERSs which you're not allowed to go in."

"Well you can't."

"Sometimes you have to go in-to them. But there's notices say, you know, "LASERS Do Not Enter" and that. But we've got to open one maybe to get a plug. And I just wonder sometimes. I mean what I'm trying to say is we don't know anything about that. One chap says if you go in that you'll frizzle up... I don't feel that we know enough about these things. I feel that we should know a wee bit more about them... We don't know anything about that sort of thing that we're working with."

"And we're opening doors to put..."

So, sometimes, even when health is very much at risk, the need to plug in a piece of cleaning equipment is felt to be more important than any official notice.

So much for notices. What about management? Should you always do what they tell you?

"Definitely not."

"No."

"No."

"No."

"Definitely not."

"Use your loaf..."

"...you could say "Well that room's all right. It can be done" And then Anne'll, say "Oh well, I'll have to see Mrs Parish" (Site Supervisor). Then Mrs Parish'll say "The rooms're not to get done." You say "I've been working in it, I know it can get done." That's the difference you see. You know because it's your job. Anne knows as well. But Anne disna know as well as me, because it's me that's doing it. And Anne's only saying to me "Oh well, its no supposed to be done. I'll see about it." So she goes higher up. And Mrs Watson says "No it's not to be done" But then you say to yourself "but I know it can be done - I've done it! "Because it's your job! See, that's the difference, you see you know what your job is - "

"What your job is".

" - Anne'll say "If you wash the floor the now -" I'll say "No, I'll do the windies first" "How? What are you going to do the windows for? Do the floor first." "Because I know how I work. And I know it'll work that way." And Anne'll say "Oh well, I'll just leave it to yourself." You see, that's the difference. If you can use your own discretion in how to do things you've been doing a long time, then you put your points over to your manager.

Were there any other views on that?

silence

Was it everybody's point of view?

"Yes."

"Aye."

"Yes."

"Aye."

So here is another principle - "you know what your job is." In governing the way you do your work, it takes precedence over other powerful ideas - over safety fears, over notices telling you to keep out of a particular room and over instructions from management.

In Chapter I we saw that the effectiveness of the principle "Get to your work - be on time" was greatly increased by being shared by everybody. They could, if necessary, try to enforce this principle by letting a persistent latecomer know their lateness made everyone else fed up. The same is true of the principle that "You know what your job is". The important example of Joan came up in one of the teabreak discussions:

"...about four or five year ago when they done the big cutbacks and they weren't replacing women. And they were wanting women to cover

up and add on overtime and things like that, which was wrong because I mean if you do overtime, somebody doing an hour's overtime on a three hour job. So that's the University getting the benefit of the doubt. But now, it's not been bad lately as regards replacing women when they leave."

Joan: "We're now doin' a two women's job. My partner retired and I've had it all to do mysel'."

silence

Joan: "It was a two women's job for all the years I've been here. Suddenly one leaves, they tell you it's only one woman's work...but I mean it was a two women's job."

"Aye."

Joan: "And you just canna suddenly say Oh well, you'll have to do it yourself after you've worked with a partner for years and years and years."

silence

"But then that's up to the individual and Joan was wrong in the first place to do it."

"Well her argument now is, instead of doing a big corridor every day ...just do it maybe twice a week. But you still have a week's work to do in three days."

"But at the same time I think she should have stuck out at the beginning..."

However, even more widespread cuts had been inflicted on the Chemistry Buliding:

Carol (the steward): "At one time we were told we would have to go down the stairs and cover two labs."

"My partner and I were told we had to go and cover it once a week."

"And each couple, you remember Carol? We went down and had to do the big labs because the women had left."

"And then the union came in and said no, we were not to do the big labs. And from then on we had people overtime and whatever on the jobs. That's how it first started..."

"...But it was the union stepped in..."

"...Joan never...she just...I know that she maybe doesn't do it as well as it should be done and nobody's complainin'."

Joan: "Done the best I can... you canna leave it."

"At the same time...I mean I got a partner up the stair and I wouldna like to find that she retired and said to me well you'll just have to carry on on you's own. I mean you just couldna do it."

silence

"...it's not being done properly."

silence

How had the union cracked the problem of the big labs?

Carol: "Just told them to leave it..."

What had they said to the University?

Carol: "...I mean they just sat down to it and said the women just weren't doing it and that was how it was... You see some just carry on doin' it and of course the University say "They can do it. We'll just carry on and see what they can do." At least on the ground we were able to do something."

"When you were expected to leave your own work...and when you get

back to you own work you had two or three days dirt. You were toiling, you really were. If you wanted to keep it up to the standard as it was" (02)

Joan was not so lucky. She faced the effect of the cuts on her own. And her failure to "stick it out at the beginning" earned her the disapproval of others. In the following week's discussion she struck back at the previous week's version of events:

"...about me do'n a two-women's job which they don't replace when you retire. Yet when I went.....directly to the union I was told she was do'n a three-women's job. So that's why I came out the union. That was that." (03)

The steward, referred to by Joan as "the union", who had only recently come to work in Chemistry from another building, did not accept this view. What ever the facts may have been, the importance of Joan's case is that it shows clearly the strength of ideas shared by everyone about what constituted one person's job. This is further underlined by comparing the position of those who have worked on the site for some time with that of new starters:

Carol: "We've got the same problems now right enough, because we usually replace them, but the only thing wrong is that some of the women [new starters] are getting a wee bit sick o' the jobs. They'll keep on for maybe a couple of month or so and decide they'll up and out. So it's just a continual turnover. Although we're not so bad here as they are in some places with the turnover."

Why didn't they stick it?

"Up i' the mornin'!"

Carol: "I think a lot of them are younger women. And the younger women have got kids anyway... I think also, through the years, with all the cutbacks and that, new people starting are getting a lot more work added onto them. You know, we've been here for years, we know what our job is."

"Aye."

"There's no way we get two rooms. Someone leaves and a person starts well, I mean...I could mention jobs in here that weren't people's jobs at one time and they now are their jobs. But the don't know any better because they're starting new. So, obviously, when they start they think "Oh my God I can't cover this one. It's too much."

They've just found it too much. As I say this building isn't so bad now because (of) all the extra jobs they...got overtime on. But there is still quite a few buildings that are... I've just heard about it. I don't know what happened to them..."

Here is the distinction between those who uphold and apply the principle that - "We know what our job is" - and new starters who can't because "they don't know any better." (02)

Finally, the importance of this principle is underlined by one person's strongly-felt attack on those who break it:

"Well, actually what I was wanting to talk about was last week. I was wanting to bring it up. So is it all right if I bring it up this week? It's not just this build'n, it's every build'n...have their regulars off every week, every fortnight. Now the women are covering some of that work... And we're coming in, and, say they're sick, they're gett'n paid for it. These women are covering the regulars all the time. And the women are really gett'n' frustration. And that's not just this build'n. It's every build'n... They're having a day off and we're doing their work... There's a lot of them not doing enough hours so that when they are off they don't get paid. So they didn't get paid. And you didn't get paid. So who gains? And that happens all the time.... On a 3 hour job they're not doing enough hours to be covered for sickness. So when they're off, you're covering thir job. They dinna get paid. You dinna get paid. So who's gaining? The work's getting done just the same. Maybe its no to the same standard but it's still getting done." (03)

"Know your job" is thus a principle which takes precedence over ideas of danger from radiation and chemicals, It takes precedence over ideas of obeying official notices and management instructions. It once provided the basis of unity in resisting cuts. It is one which, by expressing disapproval, the women of the Chemistry Building try to impose on anyone who might break it. It certainly places a heavy obligation on them not to take days off. And it is a principle which distinguishes those who uphold it from the "regulars" who fail to do so.

Chapter III

"IN MY DAY YOU HAD TO"

The principle "You know your job" had not abolished the principle of management authority. But management authority was honoured in the breach - management's breach. Authority had been eroded in a number of ways.

Eroded by managers themselves:

"...I mean to say take a for-instance. I've been working in that corridor under that ceiling. Now that is going to come down. Now Anne's been up... Mr Murdoch... Now all we need is one more big downpour. Now what, what authority has that manager got in no saying "Right, I'll come down..." ...They'll wait till there's an accident. Then the manager'll come out a' his wee nest and say "Oh well -

"She shouldn'a been in there in the first place..."

" - you see?"

"Aha."

"And that's the excuse... So it doesn't matter what Jean's said. It's gone up. But it's never gone any further - And stops. It stops in there."

"That's right."

"Now if she can't go in there and say "Right lets pull it down, we're going to sort it" you must wait till it's something else - "

"Yes - hurt us."

Anne: "Well, in other word, you go in to Mr Archer. He puts up a sheet - "

"That's right."

Anne: " - er to the Clerk o'Works. And it's him..."

"...someone's put holes in it for the water to go through. Now, all right, maybe it is plaster board. But I mean there's danger. Now I'm working under that. If the worst came to the worst there'd be someone to listen!"

Eroded by managers from below:

"I've never seen Mr Murdoch."

"I've never seen him."

"I have seen him but..."

Was he the first line manager?

"Aye."

"Yes."

Anne: "He's what we call the Service Manager."

"They say he's very, very nice. Jessie have you not met him?"

"Yes ..."

"They say he's very nice to speak to."

"...the kind of person'll listen to you."

"...instructions come from him which in fact they don't..."

Where did they think came from?"

"The middle one."

Was he above Mr Murdoch?

"No, no he's below him."

(laughter)

Eroded by managers from above;

"I say if they gi'anybody the authority, they should get the authority. But in here the authority overrules the authority. You know what I mean? There's always somebody higher up than probably the person you're saying something to, which is wrong because if you gi'anybody the authority it's up to them to use their own discretion and that. So authority over-rules authority."

"Aye."

"Aha."

"...I don't think they've got any recognition. I think if they've got the ability, first of all they can say something from higher up that can come back down and say that's to change. So they're not really bosses."

Eroded by young people from below:

Anne: "Well actually, to tell you the truth, in my day and age, you had to do what your manager tell'd you. In that day and age, you know, you had to do..."

Another: "You were frightened o'the police, you were frightened o'yer parents. But you, see there's nothing like that now. You're no frightened o'nothin' now. The bairns nowadays are frightened a nayb'dy."

"Oh no."

"Oh no."

"I dinna think the managers'll do anything today - and that's wrong."

"That's wrong."

"That's wrong."

"Yes that is."

Anne: "That's what I'm saying. In our era - "

"Yes, yes."

Anne: " - we were scared o'our parents... But your manager in these days was your manager. And whatever he said, went."

Pushyness, ambition - and initiative:

"Really, you have to be pushy."

"...how to get into management - I think it's just ambition."

"...it's if you know someone."

"...You ha'ta'be the pushy type."

"...it is na' brains!"

"But I think there's definite means in managers... For instance I knew this girl in a shoe shop in a Savacentre. One minute she was working, serving in the shoe shop. The next minute she was the manager - "

"So she just pushed her way in."

"- she's a manager now! She's a manager down there - the Savacentre!"

"And then there's another girl that worked in here as a cleaner."

And she's the head one in John Menzies now - in Kingsmuir. She was a cleaner in here! She's sort o' manager... Trudi...

Anne: "She'll get more money than the girls that are serving, that are working in there."

What was the explanation with her?

"Well..."

"She just must be..."

"One parent family...."

"Right enough that wee girl that's the manager now in that shoe shop - she just must be a good worker and a timekeeper, I would say, to get it."

"....o'course that is one o' the things."

"OH aye."

Anne: "Yer time must be capable - "

"That's right."

" - to be a manager."

But pushyness is not wholly to be frowned on:

Carol: "You've got to take the initiative yourself - because lets face it, at your wage now..."

"When you're young I'm talking about. With the kind of pace now you're far to late in life now. But if you're bringing up a family, well, push them. I mean dinna let them think that because they're no good, or this kind of thing, maybe that they canna get it. They'll only get it if they try for to get it."

Qualifications without working their way up:

Carol: "Mr Murdoch had never worked in a University when he took that job."

"No."

Carol: "As far as we're concerned he's a degree in engineering..."

-

".....you've had to work to be a manager when we were young..."

"They worked from bottom to top."

-

"You dinna need...qualifications for this..."

"No."

Carol: "We have different houses and there's house supervisors...in their twenties...that they went to college for that training - what was it, social sciences or something. They come right out o' college, go to Henderson Halls and they're in charge o' buildings after that. Maybe never worked, they've never worked here before, right enough. That's how we get - they come right out o' college and just went to these jobs."

(hubbub)

Anne: "The university sent us to college."

Joan: "If you wanted to go."

Anne: "Uf you wanted to go. Well, I went. And you learned quite a few things..."

-

"I mean you've got to do it in practice..."

"They're in here six months and they're chargehands and you're in

here, say, twenty year. Now they've never been a cleaner. And they're in here maybe six month and they're asked if they want the job as chargehand. They get the job. You're in here twenty year and they're telling you how to clean yer room! And you've cleaned it for twenty year!"

"...ridiculous..."

Anne: "...there's vacancies coming up on other jobs and they'll say to me "Ask if any o'your ladies wants to be a chargehand. Or ask any ladies who want to be a supervisor. Now maybe there's somebody sitting at this table who's only been here six months and they'll say "Yes put my name down" which, there again, is all wrong."

"Oh I think so."

"I think they should have so many years."

Anne: "Yes. Or do what they did before - put you through the college."

"Put you through the college and train from there, aye."

Anne: "And train from there."

"Aye. Because they all had to go to college in the old days."

"I mean (I) ask you. They tell you if they think you are qualified to become a chargehand or a supervisor."

"They should...train you up to be that - "

"That's right."

"- But I mean they don't do that in here. You can just walk in here and you can be three month in here."

"Nowadays they don't do that. They get the qualification from the university or college and they just walk into the job and you can't do anything about it."

Carol: "One or two of the students here - it's a joke - they've been cleaners!"

"Aye that's right enough."

Too many chiefs passing the buck:

Carol: "Too many in them jobs. More chiefs than indians."

-

Anne: "I mean you can go to a shop and you can say to them speak to the manager and the manager'll say well - you tell him yer grievance or whatever - and he'll say well I'll have to get Mr so-and-so..."

"Actually they've no got any authority at all"

Anne: "They're just passing you from one to the other."

".....pass the buck..."

Anne: I mean in here - "

"You're no..."

"Mrs Parish's got to..."

Jean: Mrs Parish's got to take it further. You take it to Mr Murdoch. It can go from Mr Murdoch to Mr Hamilton and that's just how it goes on. And I've never known Mr Hamilton or Mr Smith..."

Carol: "That's where the confusion comes in. When you get something from Mr Murdoch, you go to a meeting and you bring it up in front o' Mr Hamilton - Mr Hamilton doesn't know anything about it."

While it clearly mattered very much who was in charge, everyone denied applying for supervisory jobs:

"I mean there's jobs come up here like - supervisors' jobs and that. And we all just sit quiet when we're told (laughs) because we wouldna' take the responsibility."

"No."

"...too much responsibility"

"Too much responsibility."

What did responsibility mean?

"Well, you carry the can if anything goes wrong (laugh)."

"Well, say anything happens - say we do anything, like, now, for instance - like going into that room that maybe you're not supposed to go into. Well I mean Anne would probably get into bother for that. Widna ye Anne?"

"It goes - it comes to, management again - "

"And the other thing is if you've got a complaint, well, we take it to Anne, and Anne takes it further. And once it goes further, your argument's no with Anne. It's Anne is arguing with Mr Archer or something. So she's really left with the argument. You've only done the complaining. And that's responsibility..."

"Not only that, there's people, like, off and you're covering the job and sometimes you're no very happy and you've got to listen to all those grumbles and moans - "

"That's right."

" - and things like that. You know? I couldna take with all that - with the job."

"No never."

"I wouldna have it."

"No."

"I'm quite happy just to come in here and work."

(03)

Chapter IV

CASAWUZZIES

Like managers, professionals, too, tend to breach implied standards. Lawyers seem to break those governing behaviour, availability, charging fees and even appearance:

Anne: "Course I've got them every night and I just had an incident last night...I'm no jokin'ye. Someone came in and asked for him. Now he's a young lawyer. I'll no bother tell'n'ye what I think of him! ...but he is - well, when I say young, maybe in his thirties. And somebody came to the door for him. And I said "Well, just a moment, and I'll go up and tell him." So I knocked on the door. And there was no reply, no "come in" or no anything. So anyway in I went. And he's standing with his feet'n the chair and the phone here and the knee up. And he seed me and he looked up. I thought "Well, when'you goin'a say what you want?" But I waited. And I waited. And noth'n happened. So I gave a great big sigh. And he looked at me... And he says "Eh, bring 'em up, just bring 'em up" So I had to show the man where to go. But there was no please, no thankyou, no nothin'. Just "Bring them up"! And it's no ma, not my - "

"Job!"

Anne: " - job for to show the man where to go or anything else but he should've taken the er - for a thankyou, which, on the other hand, we've got a lot' a' elderly who, I call, gentlemen. But he is just..."

"That's right, the younger generation."

Anne: "Right."

"Yeah why all these appointments if you want to see anybody like that? It's all 'by appointment'. It's not sort of the next day. My husband's with a lawyer beacuse he's had an accident at his work. And he wants to see his lawyer - it's a union lawyer - to find out what's happenin' and he's had to wait three weeks before he can see'im. I mean this's got to be the first time he's seen 'im since he had his acccident - that's a year past March. I mean he's never seen his lawyer, which I think is terrible if a lawyer's fight'n a case for you... - "

"...Damages..."

" - you know what I mean?"

-

"...you can't get 'em on the phone. It's either a secretary or one yer answering calls - telephone answering machines - you just can't get anything at all out of them."

"Same if you're buying a house. they just sign their name on it. And look at the money they make out - "

"...the money..."

" - I mean it's not right really, is it?"

"No."

"I mean it's the largest fees when you're buying a house."

Joan: "My friends sold their's house and they got two and a half thousand extra. But they only got six hundred back because the lawyer's took the rest - "

"Ah they've got their big fees."

" - it's ridiculous."

"So it is."

"I mean they're depending on them a lot more than that to stop attackers and other reasons - and there they are."

"Why is it that its so expensive.....?"

Joan: "I don't know either."

Carol: "Because there's nobody else to do the job and they can more or less take what they want."

"I mean look what they charge for just sending a letter."

"Aha."

"Aye."

"...we should all ha' been lawyers."

(laughter)

"Then we'd be in the money." (laughter)

"I've never seen a poor lawyer."

"No no."

"They'll give you the impression that they are. But they're not."

"Oh aye."

Anne: "They're not poor but they're a poor payer."

"Oh aye."

Anne: "Poor payers."

"You go in some lawyers' offices you'd really think they'd two beans to rub together -"

"Mm."

"They're like casawuzzies."

laughter

"That's a rag store by the way."

laughter

Academics, like those working in the Chemistry Building, sometimes fell short on expected standards of appearance, behaviour - and even cleanliness:

"We got a doctor up in that lab and what did one of the girls who works in the lab there say about him?"

"We don't know about him."

"What did she say about'm?"

"He was a filthy sod!"

"Oh yes, she says he's a obnoxious man."

"She says...she can't work for him."

"You should see the colour'o' his coat. It's, it's filthy isn't it?"

"Really dirty."

"Green aye."

"He's got a new one now."

"And that one..."

laughter

Carol: "They don't have any time for the likes of us -"

"No."

"No."

"- I mean it takes some of them all their time to speak to you. I mean in this other building I was in, this man used to come in there with his nose up in the air and he'd never looked around if you go up to him."

"Oh I think you get a...."

"Excuse me I got a present from one!"

Laughter

"You're the only one!"

Anne: "...they're not all the same. I mean some ...a' will pass the time of day to you."

"I mean I met one at Savacentre one Sunday. He was behind me at 'twelve items or less' and he spoke to me and recognised me... you know? He's in the lab up there..."

"...there's always one"

"I think they vary from block to block."

Anne: But it's the same in everything though. You can get nice ones or you can get bad ones...everywhere."

Doctors, too, tend to slip up on the standards expected of them. And even under the NHS, the high cost of prescriptions now meant money was becoming a problem again:

"They'll give you a prescription and then tell you what it's for."

"They don't give you an examination very much I'll tell you that."

"I think there's a lot of lapsadaisy nowadays."

-

"I just don't think they tell you everything in laymen's language."

"Well Sharon I canna agree with that... I think they've got a freer, easy way of telling you - much kinder to you, more attentive I think now."

"....even doctors explain things, I mean, even my own doctor, the surgery doctor - "

"Yes. She's very good."

" - if you go up and she finds a complaint she'll explain it all exactly what's happened."

Carol: "In that certain practice Dr Sloan is the only one that'll sit'n talk to you really - "

"No! No!"

" - I mean if you go to Dr Forbes - all I ever get out o'him is "Aha Aha, mm, mm" - like that."

"Dr Alwyn..."

Anne: "Aye, he's good."

-

"There again you've to wait two or three days..."

"There's too many in a practice nowadays. You never see sort of the same doctor you know."

Jean Campbell: "That's all wrong that's group practice and I think it's all wrong."

"Aye." "You don't get a family doctor."

-

"I mean years ago I could phone my doctor in the mornin' and get an appointment an hour later. Now you've got to wait two or three days. And my husband's still going each week to the surgery. And each time he goes he sees a different doctor. Each one's doing something different to'm."

"That's right."

"Oh I agree with that."

"...ridiculous."

"That's daft."

-

"I much preferred the old way with our doctor - "

"Aye."

"Family Doctor."

" - if you had a complaint, well, if it bothered you, you went back to the same doctor. Now you see different doctors all the time."

"All the time."

"...wouldna know what the other one's doing."

"...time it. Yer visit's over. 15 minutes ye's allow n'it's over."

"Aye."

"This carry on this mornin'.....I mean my husband phoned one week - I told you - to see's doctor. Oh yeah, she won't be in 'till Friday."

"Friday!"

"Ye may be gett'n better b'then..."

" - but ye can see...another doctor. Right. So he goes and sees that doctor. Well then the next time he phones, it's a different doctor again.. I mean it's a wrong."

I still think the doctors were far more attentive years ago."

"Oh aye."

"We had a family doctor."

"Yes."

"...phoned right away."

-
"And how is is it you can go on if you can't get an appointment for two or three days? I mean you try telling your employer that. And what does he say to you? Cause by the time you've got in in two or three days yer killin'time."

"This is it."

"...Aye."

"Aye."

-
Anne: "But there again Betty you used to get a bill for the doctor. Now at least - "

"This is true they do go to the surgery for a prescription for codeine and things like that."

"Aye."

"Before you couldna get anything like that."

"Oh no. There's as few wouldna go near the surgery."

"Aye."

hubbub

-
".....you get two items on your prescription and that 's five pound."

"Aye."

"Aye."

"I mean there's a lot o'people just dinna have five pounds. So they'd rather just doctor themselves now."

-
Anne: "I think there's a lot o' waste in the health service now. The first time that I went to the doctor I got three prescriptions... 600...tablets."

Teachers tended to get the benefit of the doubt in the face of a collapse in proper standards of behaviour among children. But, in the

end, perhaps there was something in the idea that teachers' own standards were at fault:

"Eugh! They haven't got time for the kids either. Believe you me."
silence

"Of course mind you Hilda, on the other hand, I wouldna like to be a teacher - "

"No."

"Nor would I."

" - well not with the kids that's...nowadays."

"Well o'course that's just the kids that..."

Anne: "Ah but you're saying - I'll tell you this I feel sorry for half the teachers, maybe got a class a'thirty five. You see some o'them comin'out a' Gracemount at nights. And going int'the shops 'n that it's ridiculous. I wouldna like to teach..."

"...she's a'right but I mean she could be if she was maybe mix'n wi' the wrong crowd."

Joan: "I mean my daughter was a supply teacher. She's working at the moment but she's on supply work. She goes to schools that are short you know? So she's been at Powiskirk for the last six weeks a' the Tuesday and the Wednesday. Last night when she came in , Oh she shook her head. She's ten years since she taught. And she says their attitude is completely different from when she taught full time. She's got, I think, it's Primary Seven - tak'n'em ta gym - all tutt'n, no want'n ta do gym."

"Aye."

Mary: " - she says it's disgust'n the way they're cutt'n about - the attitude a'the kids a'that age. She says they'll hardly do a thing. She says they dinna appreciate anything. And...one was for the leather... You know she says it's horrible. She's not enjoying it one bit. And then she's maybe been to another school and it's completely different.

"The kids are no feared a'the teachers now."

"...(I was) up there see'n about my youngest laddie and I've seen the youngsters just gett'n up out the class and going to the shops and then walking back without any explanation - "

"...terrible."

" - I mean we would never, we would never move in the class never mind anything else."

"There's maybe something in that because Julie - there was a meeting in the staff room at one of the schools she was at and the Head Mistress was speak'n to them all about a collection for a teacher, or something, and Julie was amazed. They all started to talk to one another....never paid any attention to what she was say'n!"

"...nay discipline around these days..."

"...they don't get the belt nowadays."

"They're gett'n a lot of detention..."

(04)

CHAPTER V

"HE MUST FEEL ASHAMED WHEN HE'S LIFTING HIS WAGE"

Carol: Some of them say now that we're not low paid. We're, maybe, it's not so bad for us. But the men who're on the same grade as us - a man that's working for a family - it is low pay for them. I mean they're depending on that one wage to bring up a family. And I think the majority of the men, the younger men in it, they're on Family Income Supplement. Some of the men are in a higher grade and so have a higher rate of pay.

Carol: The other jobs that are more or less paid for the same kind of work come under contract cleaning and (are) privatised. We don't have a leg to stand on arguing for higher rates of pay. They are very poorly paid now. (Q1)

"Look what happened to me in Perkins, right, where I got this job. I was sitt'n in Perkins. And this woman was sitt'n next to me. And I ...says to her "Oh I wish I could get a job," I said, "I'm fed up." And she says "I hope you don't mind my say'n it, but I hope you don't get a job." I thought, what a thing to say! And I says "What's this?" "Because you've got a wedd'n ring on your finger and your husband's supposed to keep you."

brief silence

laughter

"Oh but she's not married actually. And the lassie behind the counter came in and she says "Well I'm a lot younger than Alice" she says, "and I have to work." She says "My husband couldna keep me going." And the day I got a job here I went in there and I says "By the way I got a job"."

Hilda: "Us bein' off the jobs wouldna di'it - take men off the dole - I mean men's nay want'n your jobs."

chorus: "No."

Hilda: "I mean this is a woman's job. And I think it must be awfully degrading for a married man to come in and do a job like this."

"Aye, for a married man."

Hilda: "A man should be out'n a factory or out'n the roads or an electrician or painter, anything. He shouldna be cleaning. It's a shame that a man's got to do that. And there has been married men in here, not in this build'n, but in the University, di'in' this kind o' job - "

Carol: "Still have them Hilda, on the night shift."

Hilda: "And it's a shame that they have to do that. It must be awfully degrading."

"I havena seen as many men hang'n out wash'n as I have lately."

"Aye."

"Aye."

"It's all changed now, it's the woman that goes to work and the man stays in the house and puts the bairns to the school."

"And put the wash'n out and get the dinners."

(8)

This extract from the eighth teabreak discussion was the fourth time the sharp distinction between men's jobs and women's jobs had been discussed. Not long before, a cleaner's husband had come to work alongside her in another building on the site:

Carol: "I mean for a man to bring up a family it's not a good job."
 "Is it no a sin that a man has to come in and do that kind a work?"
 Is it no a sin that a man has - "
 Carol: "Has to come in and do - "
 " - to do cleanin' work?"
 "Yes."
 "He must feel ashamed when he's lift'n's wage. I mean he's got to keep 'is hoose and 'is bairns or whatever it is he's - "
 "Aye."
 "Yes."
 "And he must be ashamed he's gett'n' the same as his wife. And his wife's all beside'm. Which happened the other month - "
 "Aye"
 " - ...degrading."
 "Because he's still got a family to keep. Still got rent to pay - "
 "Rent to pay."
 "Aye."
 " - I mean he was only doin about four hours. He canna be gett'n by a'that kind o'wage."
 Carol: "There's a whole shift at night - doin' night shift and it's men - in one building in the town. It's all men. Yeah. Plus they get a night shift allowance."
 "...finish up on that wage, they're better off in a bloody factory and let them get a good job."
 "Aye."
 "...too many closures..."

The man "ashamed he's getting the same as his wife" is in breach of the principle that "this is a woman's job". How ever clear it may be that 'a woman's job' cannot pay enough to support a family, this does not solve the moral dilemma faced by an unemployed husband:

"Just at this table alone how many men - how many a'yer men - have got a job?" [a few hands go up]
 "There y'are. All these people. That's the only men that are working...the rest have either been made redundant or they just canna get a job. Now that's bad. And that's, what, maybe twenty o'us at this table. It must be degradn' for a man to see's wife gae'n'out at five o'clock'the mornin'."
 "Aye."
 "There's a lot a men wouldna take a job like this."
 "No."
 "But then there is a lot that would take it for the sake of bein'out t'work."
 "Aye."
 "They'll have to."
 "...they've not come to that."
 "Mine wouldna."
 "Nor mine."
 "Mine wouldna."

So, if he takes a woman's job "he must feel ashamed when he's lift'n's wage". But if he sits at home "it must be degrad'n for a man to see's

wife gae'n'out at five o'clock'the mornin'." In practice there were plenty of men who'd tried anything to get work:

Anne: "Well I've just had a case like that last night. A man that was paid off and his wife works - not with me personally - but wi' ma firm. And she came personally last night to see if there was any work that he could get. Because he's tried everything else. And he can get nothing. And they're so desperate because they've got a family. He'll even come out at ten o'clock at night to help them out."

And another example:

Carol: "I'm just saying there's a chap next door to me and he canna get a job. He's a driver and everything. He works in the Sherrif's Court early morning and back in there at night again, just for the sake of getting - they got married a year ago - and that's the only job he can get."

There was no doubt where responsibility lay:

"Mrs Thatcher was say'n a the television last night that in 1977 "It must be very degrading for a man not to have a job - ""

"That's right."

"Aye."

"" - to protect his family. It must be terrible." That's what she said in 1977 - "

"Aye."

" - and there was only a million unemployed then."

"Aye."

"...Three million."

"There's nearer five million unemployed."

"Aye."

"...man who's the bread winner."

"That's what she said, "The breadwinner. It must be very degrading..."

The principle behind men's jobs and women's jobs is clear. A man's job should pay:

"...a livn' wage for a man to bring up a family on."

silence

"This is a woman's job."

"I mean when you first came to this job it was for a wee bit of extra money but now you're need'n'it..."

"You came in here at the beginning to pay the rent. And look at it now."

However, even when women's jobs were "for a wee bit of extra money" and men's jobs were for "a living wage", the distinction between them depended not only on a woman having a husband in a man's job. It also depended on him staying alive. Somebody mentioned:

"The widows."

"Taxed as a single person."

"...The government should give them mair."

"Aye."

Anne: "...and he got's pension - she got his pension for six months after he died. And at this moment she's paying fifty five pound back to the income tax..."

"That's terrible."

Anne: "Beacause she was getting her husband's pension for the first six months, she's got to pay that £55 back in tax. I think it's ridiculous."

"...just now my husband's working and I have the same code number as maybe you would have who are actually on their own with no husband, no nothing - "

"Aye."

" - I mean I don't think that's right. I think we should be allowed a little bit more if you're on your own...widows. A widow would just have the same code number as me - "

"That's true."

" - and I don't think that that's right."

"I've always said that."

"...they should leave their pension alane jist like us as if that was their wage and then - tax if they're to get at all taxed at all - but leave their pension."

"That's right."

"Aye."

So the principle distinguishing between men's and women's jobs remains unaffected by the awkward case of widows. The Government should solve the problem through taxation. However, some people did feel that there were some jobs where women should get the same as men and were often being cheated of it:

"Waiters and waitresses should be on equal money. Bar men and bar women... Their work is the same, they should be on exactly the same money - "

Carol: "That's true."

" - ...some women in the same job as a man and he's got another (forty) or fifty pound....in his wage - "

"And what kind a job is that that's employing him...?"

" - I mean this is pages in the paper where the woman is by any means the same as a man."

"Aye. You don't need to go into that. I mean you go into engineering and all things like that, ...very seldom that you'll see them in. Its only in the smaller jobs I think..."

Carol: "There's more women engineers coming up."

This does not necessarily contradict the principle of distinguishing between men's and women's jobs. It is simply that men need to spend more time doing them.

To summarise the position so far, we have two quite distinct kinds of ideas in conflict with eachother. On the one hand is the idea that unemployment is making more and more people increasingly dependent on the earnings of women. On the other we have the idea that, on principle, men should be able to work for a living wage while women work for an awful lot less. The world of men's jobs and women's jobs is

becoming less and less like the way it ought to be. So far we have heard nothing to suggest that the principle is weakening in any way. But it is, in fact, being undermined from another quarter altogether:

"...I think it...should be equal in a home. A man - it shouldn't be any sexual (distinction)...with women... That's my opinion."

Carol: "You get a lot a men that just, er..."

"Oh Aye."

"I know that."

"But I mean, you take it, a woman can be there 24 hours a day."

"Aye."

"Aye."

"Aye."

"A man can come home and just sit down."

"A man should be out doing a job. There should be a job available for them. And it's a shame that a man has to come and do this..."

"I think they should help you."

"Yes."

"Aye."

"If they're both in work..."

"...that's my opinion."

Anne: "Aye because y'r work'n'outside and y'r work'n'inside - y'r shopp'n and y'r cook'n'neveryth'n'."

"A woman's work's never done!"

laughter

"You're say'n that...wash'n'at eleven o'clock at night to get done for five o'clock i'the mornin'"

Should that be the case?

"No."

"No ."

"No it shouldna."

Anne: "...not long ago when you'd a said "Be in the house" and that was it. When a woman worked out long ago it was sort o'looked down on wasn't it?"

"Oh yes."

"Oh aye."

"That's right."

Anne: "Because a woman's place was in the home."

"Yes true."

Carol: "Nowadays the young ones have got the right idea..."

"They've got the right idea."

strong chorus: "Oh aye."

"At the same time I think if the men was gett'n' a liv'n wage - even the younger kids - they wouldn't gae oot unless they really had tae. If the men were getting a living wage they'd still be the same..."

(05)

"A woman's place was in the home" suggests a principle now swept away. Not everyone agreed this was what women really wanted. But perhaps the young ones were now sweeping even more away. Three weeks later it was discussed again. It is almost as though the world inhabited by younger women is so different that the same principles just do not apply:

"It's a different way of living altogether."
 "They dinna bother - they dinna let things worry them like what worried us."
 "We're mugs compared to what the young ones are now."
 "Oh aye."
 "I mean they've got the money....and all the other opportunities..."
 "They call us mugs for doing this. They willna do that."
 "We're idiots for doing this...but somebody's got to do it."
 "Somebody's got to do it."
 "It's just a different way of living."
 "That's right."
 "I mean they've got a different attitude to life now."
 Were they critical of it?
 "No, no. I just wish th'I'd been like that."
 chorus: "Aye."
 "They've got more freedom than we ever had. I'll tell you that."
 But were there some criticisms of them?
 "To a certain extent..."
 "Envy."
 "Envy."
 "I don't envy none of them. I want them to enjoy their life."
 "I believe in a man helping in the (home) - "
 chorus: "Oh aye."
 " - I don't think there should be such a thing as a man's job and a woman's job - "
 "No" (muted)
 " - Because the women do lots o'men's jobs."
 "Well lets face it, now there's mair men sitt'n in the house now than ever there was - "
 "Oh aye."
 " - It used to be old age pensioners sitting in the house, now it's young men... So actually things are starting to turn round now. It's the women going out and the men staying in the house."
 "...we helped the young a lot more than what our mothers and fathers helped us."
 "Aye" (several, but quietly)
 "You see they get more."
 "Yes."
 "If they ever get married, like they start off with more..."
 "Without having to work for a living."
 "But they've got everything they want."
 chorus: "Aye."
 "I mean they get suites o'furniture, washing machines, television - I mean they get all that as wedding presents now."
 "When I got mine I got a six tea set!" (laughs)
 "...sheets and blankets..."
 "I mean we never got anything electrical."
 "Oh no."
 "An iron"
 "Aye."
 "And it wasna'a steam iron!"

(08)

In the first two chapters, younger people appeared, briefly, only as outsiders. They would probably look out at the snow and say "Nay

Bother". They would probably try the job for a couple of months and, not really "knowing what our job is" be unable to cope and "up and out". But once the discussion turned to the "younger ones" themselves, it became clear that they were far from being inadequate outsiders. Very much the opposite. They had "the right ideas" and a firm belief that these women are "mugs" for getting up so early in the morning. The younger ones seemed almost to put the women who work in the Chemistry Building on the outside of a way of life they too would rather have had. Here, perhaps, is a part of the world which the principle of distinguishing between men's jobs and women's jobs cannot reach. (05)

CHAPTER VI

"I DOUBT THE UNION COULD DO ANYTHING"

"I don't think we know enough about the union. There's none of us even go to the union meetings so how can you - "

Carol: "That's true!"

" - really discuss the situation?"

"...when you get a rise it's the union that fights for your rise."

"mm."

"Aye."

Carol: "The meetings are only once every six weeks but there's none of the members want'n to - "

"Wonder why that is? Is it because it's not really all that interesting?"

Carol: "No it's because they get the information without going to the meetings. I should come back and when somebody says to me "What went on at the meeting?" I should just come back and say "Nothing. You should have been there"."

(two in unison:) "You should have been there."

Carol: "That's true. We used to get them but not so much now."

Anne: "I went to one of your meetings - when you couldn't swing a cat. If there was a dozen'n a half o'ye in y'were lucky."

Carol: "Well we used to have that small, that wee place...we had to take that because we were paying the AUEW for that room in Morrison Street, a great big room with about half a dozen folk in it. It wasna worth paying so we shifted it into George Square."

"Of course there's an awful lot of people what works at night."

"Maybe you'd be better off with a wee meeting, ye ken, in here, in the University."

Carol: "Well that's what they tried once, to have workplace meetings but the University don't believe in workplace meetings. They have them in the health service - "

"There was a union meeting here once... And, see, at nine o'clock the nine o'clock women got up and walked out. Half past nine the half past nine women got up and walked out. Ten o'clock the ten - there was only a handful left. And the woman said - I think it was you Carol - "

Carol: "Aye."

" - said "These women have got other jobs to go to"."

Carol: "No! Some of them said they'd got other jobs..."

"Do the miners not have a meeting during the - "

Carol: "No."

" - their meetings are no during the working - ?"

Carol: "They do in the hospitals as well - workplace meetings, they're allocated it once every so often."

"Yeah well they should be."

"It should be like that here."

.....

silence

If first hand knowledge of unions was limited, what views did they have of unions seen at a distance?

"Just that we don't take so much interest in unions."

"Aye"

"We just listen to what Carol's got to say, but other than that we dinna bother. Other than that they didn't do anything for us did they? Ask anyone up here. No...that's my opinion, we don't just take that much interest."

"Aye, you would probably go to the union if you had a problem."

"There's too few hours on this job to take an interest."

"Aye."

Carol: "NUPE is a part time union actually because the biggest majority - eighty per cent - of NUPE members are women. And they're part-time workers."

"Well that's the union my man's in"

Carol: "Aye but I mean...the biggest majority of the eighty per cent are part time workers."

"What I can't understand is that you pay into this union, no just this union, any union - "

"Aye."

" - for years and years and years and the minute that it's an official strike, you get nothing, nothing to keep you. My husband was in the NUM for 42 years and we never had one ha'p'ny from the union. My daughter works in the print work and she was only there about three years when they came on strike and she got £20 a week. She got the same - everybody got the same, £20 a week. I couldnay understand that. How could she get after thee years and her fayther no get after 42 years?"

"See you're speaking about the miners union, why do they - they're supposed to own the Murray Centre... With their money and all that, they're in Longmarket now, why have the union put all their money into that? As Jessie says, when our husbands was on strike, we could have done with that money."

"We could have done with something weekly to keep our families."

"There's none of us invested in that sort of thing."

Carol: "Our catering staff, the catering staff over in the refectory, about six or seven year ago, they were brought out on strike. They got £35 and they were off for a fortnight. They got paid from the union because it was the union that pulled them out. It was through some dispute or other in the catering and they pulled them right out."

"Aye."

Carol: "But I think that lasted about ten days, that strike of the catering staff. But every one of them came out, even to the supervisors over in the catering."

"Lets face it you don't really get a lot o'money anyway...after all these years. We don't really get a lot o'money do we? If we did qualify for it its not a big sum is it? It's not a wage."

"It helps."

"I mean it was an official strike in '74. We never got a halfpenny ...and yet our Fiona got, after three years in the place, £20 a week."

.....

"The officials all have their big cars to run about in, haven't they."

"I'm not sure they're union cars really."

"They all have the big cars."

"Given to them by the union."

"Aye."

"When they leave they have to give them back."

"They're still running about in them."

.....

"Some of the unions...they used to walk about the pits as if they were bosses. Well they were bosses - the henchmen."

"They helped us out when we had the shortage of women when we'd got the work to do downstairs etcetera and they helped us out then."

Carol: "Believe it or not girls it's coming again. There's going to be riots before the end of this year...the cleaning service is to make a saving of so many hundred pound, thousand pound or something."

"What, on cleaning stuff?"

Carol: "No, staff. Well, you'd better dig in."

"This is when we need the union behind us."

"Aye."

"This is it."

Carol: "The universities are to make so many millions of saving and the biggest amount of saving is to be on services - services side, which is the union side. Typical, as usual, start at the bottom of the tree instead of starting at the top."

"Aye."

"The unions have no got the clout now."

"They've no got the power now."

"Unless you get rid of Maggie Thatcher, then you might have a chance!"

Carol: "It's only their union laws you've got to abide by. That's how we had that ballot for the Executive."

"That's right."

Carol: "I don't know whether it will be a good thing or not. We'll just have to wait and see how it all works."

"You're voting for somebody away down in London. "You don't even ken them..."

"It's true."

"You'd be better off with somebody up here."

Carol: "Ah you got two up here. They're both in the health service - husband and wife team."

"Aye, I noticed that."

"Aye."

"That's right."

Carol: "And you've got Ina Love from Glasgow. She's been on the Executive for six years. So she's got on in an Ordinary seat."

.....

Did they ever consider themselves, sitting round that table, to be the union?

"No."

"No."

"No."

Carol: "If you're paying your money, you're the union."

"We are the union if we're paying our money, she says."

laughter

Carol "You've got a voice of your own."

.....

Carol: "How many of (you) read the paper, the NUPE journal? First

edition!"

Carol: "Many of you don't read the notices up there."

"No."

"No."

"But sometimes, Carol, they don't even affect us. It's something to do with down in England. That's what I canna understand - "

Carol: "The union journal goes through everything..."

"They have better wages down there in the cleaning than we do."

Carol: "No they don't. They get the same rate of pay as we do down in England."

"They dinna start till seven o'clock in the morn'n anyway!"

Carol: "Not in all the places... A few year ago down in Oxford when I was - when I was at Oxford University - when I was down there for a week, know what the cleaners were getting? Say that's about seven year ago. Fifty pence an hour! And we were over the pound at that time. Because they didn't realise they should be getting more. They thought it was an honour to work for Oxford University!"

chorus: "Oh!"

Carol: "They did. The union were nay'in there at the time. So we got it in. The rate of pay is the same as ours now. I mean the men working in there, when the professors went past they used to have to salute to them. And the women used to have to go down like that.

[gives slight bow]. That's true. That's how Victorian it was in Oxford University just recently."

hubbub

Carol: "That true Tom?"

"Imagine that - saluting the ones that are making a mess for you!"

(06)

On the whole, ideas about the union do not appear as shared principles. But why do the principles which appear in Chapters I and II, involving mutual support and freedom from supervision, find no echo in these views about the union? One reason for this is that the principles shared by the Chemistry Building cleaners concern the shared experience of work. The union is a source of little, if any, shared experience. The one principle they do share concerns the bit of the union closest to home. If you want to know about the union, you must go to meetings - and the meetings should be sufficiently accessible for you to do so. But they don't. And it is perhaps its remoteness which makes the union, as an idea, susceptible to being shaped at second hand. No doubt the scepticism of two of the women, based on their husbands' experience of the NUM, is important in this. When one of the others recalls that "they helped us out..." she has to compete with an imagery of NUM officials behaving like bosses and driving around in big union cars.

The union which had cracked the problem of the extra work in the big labs was 'they' and not 'us', even though the women's own refusal to do the work was essential to the outcome. Union meetings on site during working hours, certainly, sounded as if they might bring the union nearer. But for supporters and doubters alike, the union remained something from outside. To the extent that it was inside, it took the form of Carol, herself a comparative outsider. Perhaps her appearance as "the union" might even keep her that way. With long experience of the site, she had only worked in the Chemistry Building for a few months.

The union could not have had a more patient and good-humoured advocate. But no external persuasion could get the women who work in the Chemistry Building to see themselves as the union. And its other sense, as an external force, was flawed not only by what had been said about NUM officials, but by the allegation that it had lost its power. This was even more important in the following week's discussion about employers making cuts:

"They should start at the top."

"Aye cut the wages at the top."

"Aye they need a lot more of that than cutt'n hours."

"I don't know so much about cutting the wages but cut a lot of the supervision - of your bosses. I mean we dinna need so many bosses do we?"

"No."

"Too many chiefs and not enough indians."

Carol: "Better to have opened more factories here - and our own people work in them instead of getting in Japanese things."

"That's right."

Carol: "But it can be done. It's been done before, it can be doen again."

"Jobs for our ane."

"Not so many sweat shops, buying stuff out the sweat shops."

"There's a lot of provisions up here we've got - golden hand-shakes. And yet they can come back here part time and make just as much again eh?"

"Aye."

"Yeah that's all wrong too."

"That's right."

"Once they go, that should be it."

"There's no stopping that kind of thing."

silence

"There's not much you can do is there?"

"No."

"...start at the top of the tree."

"Aha."

"...anything you do won't make any difference."

"...if you get a golden handshake you shouldn't be getting high wages again..."

"...the decisions are made. Whatever they do decide to do at the top, that's it."

"Oh aye."

"...they do what they just want to do..."

"But why are they always starting at the bottom?"

"Aye."

"It's always the poor they start with isn't it?"

.....

"The Eastern Infirmary, that's an example of cutbacks. Filthy, absolutely filthy. There's nay cleaners...see the red bits in the lift. I mean dried up blood. It is, I think it's terrible..."

"If they cut the workforce...well the work just isn't going to get done. They can't expect it surely."

Supposing the University cut its cleaning budget and accepted that it would mean a lower standard?

"Last one in will be the first one out."

"Aye."

"I think people will just lose interest in the place, you know it willna get done right at all."

"Aha."

".....they'll no bother will they."

Carol: "If that's the standard of cleaning they want, that's the standard of cleaning they'll get. That's all you can do about it."

"That's what I'm saying."

"We're no machines, we're no scrubbing..."

.....

"...very many women will take two jobs just to keep our job."

"...in a way it'll end up an easier job, because there's no way we'll be scrubb'n, hoovr'n and gett'n everyth'n'else done."

"They can get rid of the machines as well and make some money!"

(laughs)

.....

"That'll make em a couple of pound!"

"I mean there's no way is anybody going to take on three or four rooms and do the work as it should be done - "

"No."

"No."

" - and sweat, I mean, for what?"

.....

Did they think they could do anything about it?

several: "no."

"Vote to go on strike."

"Go to your union."

"I doubt the union could do anything."

hubbub

"...and then the unions have a strike."

"...the union bosses would meet the top o'the tree..."

"Oh well we'd be as well without a union if the union canna fight for you any more."

Carol: "The last time I called them all out on strike it was pretty good, the majority. But I mean a dozen women turned up and the flipping night watchman opened the door and let them in. So I mean that was defeat'n the - I mean I was here for five o'clock that morning...that happened all over the complex."

"They're all right for individual cases - "

"Grievances."

" - grievance or something individual."

Carol: "You won't get the support for going on strike. People are too frightened for their jobs to strike. That's really what's wrong
"Course the power isn't there, the unions haven't got the same power as they had years ago."

Carol: "That's been taken away from them."

"I don't think I would stay if the work was divided that way..."

.....

"...far too much to do."

"Well you just wouldna have too much to do because you just wouldna do it. ...at the end of the day you'd probably find you'd got an easier job. You're covering more rooms but you're no scrubbing."

"Oh no."

"...polishing."

Where had the strength of the unions come from years ago?

"Well the people themselves."

"The workforce."

"But I mean there's a lot of unemployment now so there's no as many people in the unions now. And they've no got the money...either, because they're no gett'n the contributions."

silence

"I think they put the fright of them with the miners. And when you think the strike went on for one year and some of the men were reinstated and have still no been reinstated in the mines like. They've been reinstated by the government but no by the mines. And I think this is at the back of everybody's mind. You could come on strike and they can sack you. That's what they can do. They can just sack you now. And you see you've no got any rights. And she's took them all."

(two:) "She's took them all."

"She's took all the power away from the unions."

Carol: "Now you canna do anything without balloting people."

"That's wherethe miners went wrong. They should have had it there right at the beginning."

So had anybody got an answer to this?

"No."

"No."

"Nay answer. Just get rid of Mrs Thatcher."

chorus: "Doubt that very much" [General Election day]

"...go back to having the power that they used to have..."

"We'll know tomorrow morning."

"That's right."

.....

"...we're just the wee ones. We just do what we're told..." (07)

Even if union power had once come from the workforce, lack of power at the bottom today was the theme running through the discussion. The idea of getting the union behind you or the idea of going on strike carried less conviction than the idea that "she" had taken away the power of the unions. The idea of "union bosses" meeting "the top of the tree" seems to suggest neither an employer nor a union you can do much with. After reading Chapters I and II it is hard to imagine the Chemistry Building women taking any nonsense from either. But the prospect of these new cuts handed down by the top brass was enough to overwhelm any sense that they could be resisted. The mutual support seen in earlier discussions did not surface in the face of such odds.

CHAPTER VII

"WE'RE THE USSSES"

Chapters I and II showed the existence of a special kind of idea in the thinking of those who clean the Chemistry Building. Getting to work - and doing the job in your own way - are both matters of principle. There is complete agreement about them. Both are very powerful ideas. A useful measure of just how powerful they are is that they have more effect on these everyday activities than either fear of management or fear of losing money.

The first two chapters also showed how principles gave each person an obligation to everyone else. This greatly increased the effectiveness of the principles. People who break them risk putting somebody else at some disadvantage. And if they broke them consistently they would risk everybody else's disapproval.

The principles they share help them to do the two things they least want to do - get up in the morning and work. And the same principles draw a sharp distinction between older, more experienced people who put them into practice, and younger inexperienced people who are unable to do so.

Chapter III showed how working in the building was also governed by a principle which distinguished between men's and women's jobs. The distinction broke down when it came to thinking about younger women. It just didn't seem to apply to them. It was almost as though the women who work in the Chemistry Building were able to stand in the shoes of younger women "with the right idea" and see themselves as "mugs".

In Chapter IV, principle, in this sense, was virtually absent. The threat of cuts left the women disunited. Their unity of view about their work appeared to have no place here. Their refusal to accept two rooms in Chapter II seemed to have evaporated. Some, in fact, seemed resigned to the idea that three rooms, without scrubbing and polishing, was the answer to the problem.

Earlier chapters showed how principles distinguish between the women in the Chemistry Building who uphold them and outsiders who do not. Chapter V now considers whether this happens on a wider scale. Do they have a broader view of who 'we' are? Are there yet other people who are therefore 'them'? This chapter is based on the last teabreak discussion but one. The question it dealt with was "...if there is an 'us' and a 'them' in this world, who's 'us' and who's 'them'?"

"They've money!"

"They've got more money than what we've got."

"Money."

Hilda: "If you've got money you can fight things. If you havena got money you're just sort of sitting back. You've got to sit back. For instance I got my car smashed by a young laddie o'sixteen. So he hadnay any insurance, he hadnay any road tax and he hadnay any authority to be driving the car. But the owner of the car was sitt'n next to him and he was drunk. So he smashed my car up, smashed his ane car up, went to court. And we were told "Oh you've got a good case...you can fight it but you can't take blood out of a stone because he's not got any money, he's not got a job." That was it. Written off. Went to court and the laddie

got done for ninety pound. That's what's fine was. And he got six charges against him and he pleaded guilty to four. I said "Let me see the two that he pleaded not guilty to." And y'ken what they were? Runn'n away from the scene of the accident. And I says to the policeman "But you went for him!" I says "That's all wrong". And the other was driving without a licence. And the two he pleaded not guilty to, and he pleaded guilty to the four. So the judge was just interested in the four he'd pleaded guilty to... Now we went to a lawyer and the lawyer says "Oh you've a good case" he says, "The laddie's got no money, he's no got a job. Where are you going'a get the money?" He says "You'll no get money off'm." He says "It'll cost you as much to take him back to court wi'ye". I says, "You see if I had money it wouldna be the laddie would be there it would be the bloody Judge." - the Judge, because he should have been read'n what was in front i'im. But you see they're all in such a hurry. I wish you'd seen the Judge. It was time he was retired. That's the kind of thing that happens to people that have no got money. ...we're affeared of the law ever again..."

The principle separating us from them, implied here, is that money gets you justice. We are its victims. We are also victims of another principle separating us from them:

"...top brass are them."

silence

"It's not how clever y'are these days, it's who you know... you could be the best worker'n in the world."

"We're the usses."

Carol: "It's the same with the Universities, the ones at the top, they're the ones looking after themselves at the top. I mean if anything happens, if there's any cutbacks, it's us that get it."

"They should start at the top, with their wages."

Hilda: "You could cut a million with just half a dozen professors!"

"Aye well you could, cut a million, nae bother."

Carol: "Two professors Hilda, not half a dozen."

"We'll give them the benefit of the doubt there!"

People at the top of the University pass on the Government cuts to us simply to look after eachother. Were there other dividing lines to distinguish "us" and "them"?

Carol: "Aye Hadrian's Wall."

laughter

Hilda: "Poll tax aye, poll tax - there's a division there. The man sitt'n in the big mansion. It's supposed to be two hundred, it could be four hundred that he's going to pay for his taxes. The wee man at the gatehouse who lets the people in to see'im, he's got the same if he's got a wife. So he's got to pay the same as the man in the big house."

"That's only in Scotland."

"Trying it out on us!"

"That's the way of the world."

Who was "they" in that case?

"Government."

"...Thatcher..."

"Government."

"Aye."

"Comes to that if we were gett'n the jobs into Scotland - "

"There's nay jobs at all."

"There's nay jobs."

hubbub

"...factories taken down into England..."

"There's more than six hundred jobs gone in..."

"I know."

The unjust principle of the poll tax is visited on "the wee man in the gatehouse". But the community of "wee" people which emerges from this part of the discussion has nothing to do with gatehouses as opposed to mansions. It is Scotland. The difficulty with the national community - upon which Mrs Thatcher's Government is trying out the poll tax - is that it includes all the people in mansions who are going to do very nicely out of it. Could there be a community of "us" based on class rather than nation? I asked if there were still classes in this country:

(several:) "Yes."

"Definitely."

Hilda: "We've got an estate, the Buccleugh Estate on the road to Dalkeith. And it's a big - big gates, what we call Kings Gates, and at one time there must have been - the king must have gone through it - at some time. But it belongs to the er Duke of Buccleugh. And do you know, it's on a bad bend. And (the District) Council asked if they could take part o' that wall down so the road wouldna be so, like - "

"Like a blind corner."

"Aye there's been a lot of accidents there."

Hilda: "And he said no! He doesna even live here! He lives down there. And he said no. he doesn't even ken the traffic there. He comes up every now and again to see if everything's running all right. That's the kind of thing that's wrong. They own property in Scotland and they don't even belong here. I mean they didn't even stay - they only come up for maybe a weekend - wi' their fancy women!"

laughter

Hilda: "...he didna even buy that property, it was gifted t'im... If it was a wee hoose and a wee person in it, it'd get done."

"Aye, they wouldn't even ask'm, they'd just take it down."

Hilda: "...Lothian Council tried to ask him to take the wall down and put it back, to make the road - because there are a lot of accidents..."

Class in this case implies another principle - the power over the community which comes with ownership of land. Were there any other instances of classes?

Hilda: "Pop stars buying Scotland too aren't they? Now one time they were the same as ourselves but now they're gett'n mair than what a surgeon gets. Yet now they're going to buy, lets say, Scotland as well."

Carol: "They take their money out the country."

hubbub

"...money going out of the country. And that's what was in the papers during the election"

In Hilda's second example, pop stars appeared as people who were once us but have managed to evade the normal barriers to getting as much as a surgeon and owning property. The surgeon's money seemed to be quite proper. So 'class' did not define him as "them". It was the pop stars who were presumably "them" by breaking the proper rules of class.

These were the only examples of class. It was fairly clear that whatever class might mean, it was not a ready-made way of describing "them" and "us". It was the wrong word. In the end there didn't seem to be a right word.

"...too many people in Scotland as long as the Pakistanis are here."

"Aye, that's right. Getting rid o' the Pakistanis would be a point. Aye."
(inaudible amid hubbub of discussion)

"...I don't know, because down in Bradford there's no so many now...
...anyone buying a house there now."

It seems highly improbable that a sense of "us" could be created in Scotland out of the idea of making far worse misery for others on grounds of race. For whatever reason, this view did not seriously engage the interest of most of the Chemistry Building women.

Finally, what about the people deciding about cuts in the cleaning budget?

Carol: "It's the UGC [University Grants Committee] that determines what you've to save. And this year its to be a hundred and thirty one thousand saved on the manual staff."

What did anyone feel about the people taking that decision?

"Terrible."

"Well they don't know you personally. I don't think they know..."

"...a piece of paper."

"A week o' this work to these people would kill them. All they can do is sit'n chairs and make regulations."

Carol: "Has anybody ever seen a UGC member?"

"No."

Carol: "Well, there's not one o' them under sixty."

"This is all wrong..."

Carol: "...that Rhodes Boyson, he was..."

"...Mrs Thatcher..."

"...and yet the working class, er, retiring at sixty and sixty five."
hubbub

"...She's always on about women staying at home and watching the kids."

"What age is she?"

"Sixty one."

"...she says her husband's getting too old. I mean she doesna need the money."

"I think she'll last a bit now."

.....

"Anybody that's over sixty, sixty five should have to retire."

"So many of the Judges are... these Judges..."

Irene: "I've worked in another University, Teviott, and do you know there was women there, been there for thirty years, and they were in their late seventies and still working."

"They were in here and all."

hubbub

Irene: "And one of them...she had to sit on a chair because she can't walk."

laughter

Irene: "No. That's true."

"She could do the trade?"

Irene: "Aye, she could do the job. But even the time they worked - they worked frae morning to night Margaret. They hadna any set hours - you could see them there at eight o'clock at night. And that was the age o'them."

"...why Teviott allowed that...their rules..."

Anne: "Irene, that's for their circumstances."

hubbub

"...Older people have to work because they need the money - "

several: "Aye."

" - there's a lot of the, the upper class who dinna need the money but they're keeping their jobs for them just the same."

hubbub

Anne: "If they had pensions to live on then they wouldna need to work."

"Aye."

Anne: "And they wouldna be on the poverty line."

hubbub

"There's one in Kingsmuir with a shop she's a vulture... But she's a good age and if you go in their shop and you ask for potatoes and you say "I'm want'n to make chips, can you gi'me big ones" she'll say "Oh. They're all mixed up...." things like that."

"Oh she's a crab."

"A person who should be retired."

"Aye."

hubbub

Anne: "I've got one works beside me at night, she's seventy seven. And she could put many of the younger ones in the shade."

"Oh aye, agree wi'you there."

Anne: "...she could put many of the younger ones in the shade. She could put many of them to shame and she's seventy seven."

Irene: "You're talking about jobs, talking about people who canna get jobs...if they're allowed to work to that age, neither the wonder there's a lot of unemployment."

Anne: "But then Irene, who's want'n the job when she's finished wi'it?"

Irene: "There's always somebody..."

Anne: "No, not always."

(09)

Many people agree here with the principle that "everybody that's over sixty/sixty five should have to retire." Perhaps if such a provision became the law of the land it might catch the "upper class who dinna need the money", judges, UGC members and, eventually, the most detested Mrs Thatcher. But the small number of opponents of this view, point out that it would catch others too poor to retire. So the discussion failed to produce a clear distinction between 'us', "the working class retiring at sixty and sixty five", and 'them'. Retirement at 60/65 was not a principle everybody could share. That would only have been possible if it had involved "pensions to live on"

Even so, this was a principle which directly linked the women in the Chemistry Building with a wider 'we' in workplaces everywhere. Given good

pensions it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the over-60/65s (like those with golden handshakes off other jobs in an earlier discussion) could be excluded from work. Other distinctions between us and them - money, poll tax, landed property, people at the top looking after themselves - lacked the same clear-cut link to the world of work which the women experienced.

Various versions of "us" can, of course, be inferred. "We" don't have big money, don't have the power to flout the local Council, can't use official power to look after ourselves, don't have proper access to the law, lose out on poll tax, live in a "wee house", don't know the right people and, even if we're the "best worker in the world" it won't get us anywhere. But this must be something of an artificial exercise. If there is a single "we" which links them all, it has no name. Someone even invented one: "We are the usses".

When work at the Chemistry Building is the topic, it is obvious who "we" are. "We" are the ones doing the talking on the tapes! When it comes to a wider "we", where we are the same as a whole lot of other people out there, it needs a name. To think, to discuss, you have to have familiar words to use with confidence. The words were missing. Neither race nor nation provided "usses" that fitted. Class seemed not to provide an obvious answer either.

The question of who we are remained. Then the women who had taken part in the discussions read a draft of everything up to this point. In the final discussion, someone asked what I meant about the "usses". I said I had felt there was a sense in which all the different "we's" were a single "we".:

"Well, the "we" is the working people - "

"People, aye."

" - and the "them" is, them that's got the money and the bosses. The bosses and the folk have got money."
hubbub

Nationality hadn't explained who we are. Nor had race. One or two people had mentioned class. It hadn't been clear whether that fitted or not:

loud hubbub

"The working class and the upper class."

"The upper classes are the bosses and folk have got money."

"Oh ay, that's it."

Irene: "And the middle classes and class distinction - "

"Oh aye, aye."

Did most people feel class was the key?

"That's right."

chorus: "Oh aye."

"That's the key to the whole thing."

Carol: "Some of the bosses think they're in the upper class - "

"But they're no."

Carol: " - they're just working class."

"Because they treat us like - "

"Perhaps even they think they've got money in their pocket."

What was the difference?

Irene: "Because they've got better jobs."

Carol: "Lack of manners."

several: "Aye."

Carol: "I'll give you an instance last week. The man that's in charge of this building...says er "Where's your boss. Where's Mrs McDonald?" I says "She's not in today." "Well go and get me her deputy. I want her up in my office right away." Not a word of please or thank you. And he's a wee nipper kind of - I thought after what I could have said to him! ...just the way he spoke to you - "

"Way above you."

Carol: "Well he's really only trying to look down on you."

But what difference did it make whether they behaved well or badly? Did that alter their class position? Were they saying they weren't real bosses?

"Not on their manners."

Carol: "Well I mean they're just jumped up bosses..."

Hilda: "Well actually they were in the same class as us, surely they learned some manners like what we did."

Carol: "Yes. Exactly. But they forget once they get up to another position."

"We can get a woman here. And she gets promoted. And she goes completely different to us. She compares that she's in exactly the same as us. But because she's gone up a position she's away - she thinks she's that superior..."

hubbub

"I wouldna change!"

"...you do get them...you do."

hubbub

"They forget their selves."

"...a wee bit o'authority."

"Authority."

hubbub

What about the ones that weren't jumped up? Surely they were still people with easy access to the law, who've got money and all the rest?

Hilda: "They've got a bit o'education."

"Aye."

"You see your people that always had money and never just come into it..."

"...they've never had to work...they treat you as a human being."

"Treat you as equals."

"They're the people's got right money."

"Gentry! Never believe in the way they treat you."

"No, it's not true."

Apart from this note of dissent, there seemed to be little problem with people that always had money. At least as important as any principle distinguishing "us" from "them" is one which distinguishes the real upper classes from mere jumped up bosses. Manners.

But, in the end, the Chemistry Building reasserted itself as the key to understanding this:

Carol: "You should have been here last Monday, Tom. You would have got a good thing for your tape recorder - the letter we got from our boss about locking doors. Now in the letter he states that if doors are found to be continuously left open by cleaners, there will be disciplinary action taken which could lead to instant dismissal because theft is

going on in the university."

"And we went up there this morning and there was three rooms open."

hubbub

Carol: "I phoned him up ~~and his~~ excuse was that...and if they make sure the doors are blocked they won't be responsible for anything that's stolen...And we're coming in at six o'clock in the morning and the technicians and professors and everything have forgotten to lock their doors and they're lying open all night."

hubbub

Irene: "...there's one...that's been left open the last two mornings.

And yet we're the ones that's - "

"Getting the blame."

(10)

PART II

ISLAND LAUNDRY

Island Laundry is separated by a short stretch of tarmac from a large District General Hospital in the central belt of Scotland. In the summer of 1987, public expenditure cuts were closing down other hospital laundries. Island laundry was taking over their work. The consequences for everyone who worked there were dramatic. What follows is the result of a series of eight tape-recorded discussions with a small group of them. The basis upon which they were selected and invited to take part was their membership of the Joint Consultative Committee in the laundry - although this body turned out to be inactive at the time. Ann, Irene and Danny are stewards.

Contents:

Chapter	I	MONEY, MACHINES AND PROGRESS	page	44
Chapter	II	THE PLACE AND THE BONUS	page	51
Chapter	III	HIS JOB, OUR JOB	page	57
Chapter	IV	WOMEN'S JOBS, MEN'S JOBS	page	65
Chapter	V	RESPECT, DISCIPLINE AND A LADDER	page	73
Chapter	VI	THE UNION	page	81
Chapter	VII	RE-INVENTING THE UNION	page	91

Note: Numbers in brackets on the right hand side of the page indicate the discussion (4) from which the preceding section has been drawn. A dash (-) on the left hand side indicates that a section of the discussion has been left out in order to shorten this document. Three dots (...) in the text also indicates missing material. This was either inaudible on the tape or has been edited out in order to save space.

"Bill Knox's got three kids. How he can manage I don't know."

Irene: I think we're poorly paid, definitely poorly paid.

Stuart: When you think how some people have to go on - to get a decent wage.

Irene: Not many places have got forty hours a week. Very few.... That's scandalous -

Stuart: Many are about 30 or 35 hours.

Irene: - that's scandalous in this day and age really. And we're still on a forty hour week.

Danny: ...I have to work overtime on a Tuesday, Wednesday and a Saturday to get over a hundred.

Stuart: I've got a 56-hour week and making not much more than that.

Irene: That's right. Our wages are atrocious. Scandalous.

Stuart: If it wasn't for the bonus over there the wages wouldna be worth pick'n'up.

Joan: But I say at one time the Health Board was one of the best paid jobs going. I worked in the Island laundry twenty year ago and we were really well paid compared to all the other factories and that in the area. But now we are the worst paid. As the years go on it's getting worse....

TS: So you're saying that the value of the wages has gone down -

Joan: Definitely.

TS: - by comparison with the private sector?

Stuart: Oh yes.

Joan: It's a lot lower.

Stuart: Yes. I started here at 17. What I was gett'n then I thought - y'ken that was almost nine years ago - I thought the wages was good for being seventeen.

Joan: Seventeen - that was good for then.

Stuart: The change that's taken place in that space of time, to me, is very very little...

Irene: A married man with a couple of kids...the way it works out is atrocious, absolutely atrocious...scandalous.

TS: And you're saying that's with bonus?

Irene: mm aye. And we work damn hard for that bonus.

Stuart: ...I know myself even on the wage I'm earning now I know I probably couldna manage on what I'm getting with a wife and kids. I couldna.

Irene: ...if there is someone in there with a couple of kids and his wife not going out, that would be...impossible. ...Bill Knox...

Stuart: Bill Knox's got three kids. How he can manage I don't know. I don't know if his wife's working. But if she's not I don't know how he manages. Ian Brown...

Irene: Aye - one and one on the way.

silence

Stuart: What a position we're in.

TS: And this is comparing it with jobs you know?

Irene: Well, for instance bond workers - they're on £100 a week, that's no overtime or nothing....£100 basic a week.

Stuart: My brother, he's just a spark's labourer, he just follows around - he just carries a bag of tools...for the Electricity. He works a 38-

hour week... For me doing my two days overtime and a Saturday morning - I start at half past six in the morning and I work till ten o'clock on a Monday - and all I walk out with is four pound more than he does for a thirty eight hour week. He's just labouring. I mean that just doesn't make sense to me.

Irene: No.

Stuart: There's got to be something wrong there somewhere.

Irene: ...it can vary, what we come out with, because (of) the bonus system. We've really got to work to get that bonus. It's figures at the end of the day. If they're not up then you've just got a cut in the bonus...

Stuart:...you could absolutely hammer yourself stupid all week and get all your work done up there...I mean you're no gett'n anywhere from there and you've hammered yourself stupid all week. It's crazy.

"Their bottle went"

Irene: We want a decent wage for the work we do.

Stuart: That over there, it's a vital part of the hospital system, that laundry.

Irene: 'Course that is.

Stuart: I mean without that the hospital's going to ground to a halt.

Irene: And more so now that they've taken over the Central [hospital laundry work].

Stuart: But what the value of it is -

Danny: That's the thing I can't understand about it... I mean I'd be ready to strike like that [clicks fingers] because I ken I'd win.

Stuart: Strike for what?

Danny: Better pay.

Joan: We tried that. How long were we out there? About a week. They [the Health board] were just about on their knees and they all went back. They were using paper pyjamas, paper for changing the beds, the lot. And then half of them were want'n to go back....

Stuart: The Health Service dangle it in front of you, saying that they're going to get private contractors in, and everybody just - their bottle went.

Joan: They just gave in.

Irene: Oh they dangled the two nights overtime...

Stuart: I wouldn't say it was an impossibility.

Danny: No it's not an impossibility but it's very unlikely because they've tried that down South with domestics and that. And the sort of things that we've heard about it..they'd be frightened to get them in...

Stuart: They could get in Aye.

Joan: That's what they (say).

Stuart:... "if you don't want to do it we'll just give it to such and such a place".

TS: But you're saying they could. They've got the capacity in these private places to do it?

Stuart: Well I mean it would have to be split up.

Irene: Aye.

Stuart: There's no one place would handle what we do here.

Irene: There's total of about two hundred thousand pieces a week.

Stuart: No way. I mean they could split it up, so many hundred thousand

here and whatever.

Irene: But then...obviously that costs the Health Board more money because they'd have to pay more to get it done. Obviously the contractors are dearer than what we are here.

Danny: We charge 16p an article. Most charge 60 to 64 I think...

Stuart: ...they couldn't charge that the way that place works over there. I mean they could just say "Fair enough. We don't want to do it...you boys just havna got a job" And some firm....Whites, or whatever, they step in there, They lease the building, they bring in a whole new squad and away you go.

Joan: I doubt that. I very much doubt that.

Stuart: It's a threat...

Joan: Oh I know but that's only half of them'll fall for that.

Stuart: It is a way out.

Joan: I don't think that will ever happen.

Danny: Me, I think it's really the shop stewards' fault that the members haven't been educated in privatisation. I mean...they've got to be educated. We were supposed to be getting film shows about it last year and that didn't turn up...

Stuart: That falls at the door of the union. I'm sorry but that's where that one's belonging. The lack of education, that falls at the door of the union.

Irene: You're saying that but there's not so much about privatisation now. Because there's not much going on there now regards the laundry privatisation. But the minute they get -

Stuart: The threat's always there.

Irene: Aye...after...these protests over Luggiebank [Health Board HQ] the privatisation idea was sort of quietened down a bit. But...like you say, they should really have it all the time because they'll wait till there's another wee whisper, then they'll be on top of you again...

Stuart: They've got to go back so many years to tell you what happened there again and update the whole thing. Why don't keep updating you the whole time so you know exactly what's happening? Not just here, because the problem is not just here. It's nationwide.

Irene: Oh I ken down South there's quite a lot of places -

Stuart: Where it's done. It can quite easily happen here...the threat's always there...

-

TS: Have they been through this tendering process here? Have they done all that?

Irene: No...there's no been any tenders here.

Stuart: Parker himself actually tendered out for work didn't he?

Irene: Aye.

Stuart: He won. I mean that's the only reason that I think that place is still going you see. Because we can do it so cheaply. They're undercutting them. If it came to the crunch, I reckon, if it really came down to earth and they wanted to close that place, then there's nothing to stop them.

Irene: There's nothing to stop them.

Joan: You're talking about loss'n em and undercutting em. Do you remember that meeting - oh I can't remember - anyway he stood up there as bold as brass and says "And I've even managed to cut the hospital's bills by a penny per article." Now that was charming after they'd cut our bonus.

That's right he stood up there -

Danny: He'd made so many hundred thousand pound profit and he'd saved what, about £8,000 on our bonus.

(01)

"The finance is great. But it's nay good...if people canna breathe."

Stuart: The extra load's going to come in... They're getting deliveries the days they're supposed to no matter how little that may be. That's all that matters to him.

Ann: That's what I was going to say... It's the ones that's coming in that they've got to pay for... They are cash - they've got to pay for their washing to get done. ...he's only interested in all these new ones...that he's getting cash payment for. I mean the guy's financial thing is really great for his machinery, and for to buy this, that and the next thing. The finance is great. But it's nay good going on machinery if people canna breathe. I dinna ken how half o'them do those jobs.

Irene: Oh I know.

Ann: I mean I worked down the stair for, what, seven years. And, all right, it was a...good job, I enjoyed it and it's the same people all the time. Because if you proved your point - you could do the job, you were fast - you were on it. So the seven year I was on it, the other two women that I worked with at the back had been on it for twelve. ...it was that fast that if anybody was off, and someone were put on it, they'd say "Can't do it, can't do it!" - you know. But if you proved your point, that was you. I mean it took em four year for to shift me... And I went up the stairs. It's quieter, there's no as many machines, there's only about twelve lasses and it's great. If he says to me go back down there, I couldnay. It would beat me, because I couldn't work in that environment any mair. On your own, shut out - I mean I'm not much to go by - but being on a machine I just didna like it. I thought how can they sit here for eight hours a day? And I've done it for maybe two, two and a half, doing a bit of overtime. I just couldna handle it. I really couldna.

Irene: I think he's took too much on for the size of the laundry. I mean he didn't add on any more calenders and that's where all the work goes through - the majority of the work is the calenders. They're still using the same four calenders that we done our own work. Now we've got 50,000 pieces extra. And we're still using four calenders...

Ann: Their machines are either going to go on fire -

Irene: Oh aye.

Ann: - or they are going to get clapped out because they're no being maintained now - no way. They're no being cleaned enough. All that dust there, I mean I reckon there's going to be a fire there, I really do...

Ann: I mean you're no getting time to cool down now.

Irene: No, they're going to burn out.

Ann: They're old machines. All right Number Two is a new machine - only at the front. The middle bit is the old original calender. Right? The One and Three and Four have been there since the place was built.

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(02)

Stuart: ...the changes that have happened in there, it's incredible ...the machines have changed round. The job I do now used to be a three-man job. Now it's a one-man job... It's on the wash-machine - the big Voss washers. That's happened in every department in the past six or

seven years.

Danny: Yes, when I first used to work on checking there were four checkers. Now they're down to, what, two...

Stuart: ...the job itself, when I first started, it was great. There was enough people for all departments... Actually I used to enjoy coming to work.

(01)

"They're robots now you know"

Ann: We're all really happy there. I mean we've all been there for years (laughs).

Stuart: You see that's what we were talking about last time... You could not believe the changes that's happened in that place in the time I've been there. When I think back to what was there, when I first started, they used to love it.

TS: ...you were talking about all these problems and then you said the job itself is OK.

laughter

Stuart: The actual job I'm doing myself - I like the job - but it's the environment you've got to try and do it in. Especially over the past couple of years.

Ann: There are good people to work with. You know. I mean you have - well you've not so much now - you dinna have so many laughs or a wee bit carrying on that you used to.

Stuart: I get told off for talking to people!

ann: You're not allowed to talk and it's "Shift yourself" and crack, crack with the whip. But that's only downstairs. My chargehand is completely different. She's a year older than me. But it's a matter of "If I leave you, you'll get on with it" And they do. She gets more out of us than the older one, that's been there all the years I've been there - cracking the whip and shout'n and "Don't you talk, don't you do this and don't you do that". You know.

Stuart: You're going to school. Worse than school sometimes.

Irene: But the whole point o'how that's arising now is because all that work's coming in. He's putting -

Ann: pressure.

Joan: Aye.

Irene: - the pressure on the chargehands. That work's got to get out. So the pressure's coming from the chargehands too. Now you've time to lift your head and look at the clock or whatever, whereas before you had that wee bit of ease. That ease is away now. Because the pressure's on him - to get the chargehands - to get us - to get that work out.

Ann: I mean I suppose years ago - well we didna sort of care about it, we just came in and done our work. There wasna as much work. You just got on. But now you're into privatisation, you're into this, you're into that. So there's more pressure in these years compared to what there was then. And to earn a 25% bonus then - I mean you were only putting out about 90,000 a week (chuckles) whereas now they're talking about 170,000, 190,000 just to get thirty three and a third. Things change and the machinery's changed. There's less people on a machine than might have been there five years prior. There might have been seven people on that machine. Now there's two. They're robots now, you know. it's just

everything's changed.

(02)

"You canna stand in the way of progress"

Irene: As you say, the more we advance our technology the less people are working. And there's no way you'll stop that. Whether you approve it or disapprove it, you'll never stop that.

Stuart: If the union steps in and tries to save their jobs and they come back "You're standing in the way of progress" more or less. That's their argument.

Irene: This is one of the reasons unemployment's as high. I don't know how they solve that. I definitely don't know. I mean it's hard to say you disapprove of it. We're all for advancement really, y'ken. But then it's costing people their jobs, it's costing people their livelihood, y'ken? So I take account o' that fact. It's very, very difficult.

Stuart: It's hard to draw a line between the two.

Irene: Of course it is. Trying to think if I was a boss, if I had my own place, 'ken, and a machine was going to do the job the same as what two women would do it. Over the years that machine would pay itself over and over again. So I'd be thinking of my circumstances and I'd say "Well, these two will need to go." That's looking at it as a boss's point of view. If it's a workers' point of view I wouldn't want to go. I'd want my job. So - I'll never be a boss because I've got a workers' point of view. There's not a lot you can say on that you know.

Fiona: A lot o' people dinna really take much notice unless it's affecting them directly. You read it in the paper every day somewhere. It's a shame, but unless it's affecting you, you're never really going to think that much about it.

Irene: That's very true. But I mean what can you do about it even if you do... What can you do about it?

Fiona: Not a thing.

Irene: They've tried before haven't they? ...it never works, so they'll never stop it, never. But at the same time we must move on too. I mean ...nay point being a boss o' all this...small equipment and two dozen workers. And you could bring in machinery to do it with one dozen workers, y'ken? ...no boss is ever going to say "Well, I'm not bringing that machinery because I wouldn't like to pay them off". That just doesn't work that way. They bring in the machinery and pay them off anyway.

Stuart: When there's other firms in the same line of business bringing in the machinery, the one that's got the big labour force is very soon going to go out of business.

Irene: That's right.

Stuart:...you just canna stand in the way of progress.

Joan: I went for a job beside us. A cleaners. And he was all behind the times. He took me through. And all he had was an old wooden ironing board with an iron for to iron the clothes. One for coats... He was right behind the times. That's all there was behind him.

laughter

Joan: ...half past eight till half past five. Eighty pound a week. Half day Saturday.

Irene: Oh! No!

laughter

Stuart: That person's worse paid than we are.

laughter

TS: Was this recently?

Joan: Yeah. Just the other week there. He needed a hand... He's got somebody.

Caroline: ...standing ironing all day?

Joan: Aye.

Caroline: I'd a'loved that! Oh! Just an ordinary iron and an ordinary ironing board?

Joan: Aye. Just when I went behind -

Stuart: This is depressing.

Joan: - he was ironing a kilt!

laughter

Stuart: Then again you wonder how wee firms like that survive.

Fiona: There's shops like that where I stay -

Irene: Because the whole point is - and I mean really, it is - getting first class treatment, really. Because there's all this talk about the quality pressing and that. All hand done. That is first class. There's no machine really that can press it like you can press it yourself.

Joan: I was expecting one of those wee presses like we have up the stair...

Stuart: That's all right if there's a market for that kind of thing. But I mean there canna be much for that.

Irene: I wouldna think so on that.

silence

Stuart: That's what you get when you stay in a high class place! I suppose you can afford that kind of thing.

laughter.

(07)

"The last time it was all covered in dust and it went on fire"

Ann: ...I feel people are just robots now, they're not people. They're just, I don't know, arguing with each other, lacking facilities for to get the work out, it's hot. He says everything's on order but then at the end of the day they should have been on order months prior - for being here when the work started coming in.

Danny: It's like the right hand doesn't know what the left hand's supposed to be doing.

Stuart: What was his excuse for that? Last time I saw him he said they'd stepped up the closure. I mean...he's bound to have known well in advance that was coming.

Danny: That's right.

Stuart: That's not somebody just deciding "Oh we might as well close it three months early."

TS: When did the Central close?

Ann: It hasna closed.

Stuart: It's phasing out quicker than at first they expected it would

Danny: He said the redeployment of the staff up there worked a lot better than expected.

Irene: We had a lot o' them problems before the Central came in. They've no been solved so they've added to it.

Stuart: All they've done now is escalate them -

Irene: That's right.

Stuart: - existing problems, apart from the ones that's been added.

Irene: Really it's just a shambles.

Stuart: He's all right with his job over there at the management level. Getting the stuff taken in the door. Getting it done. And getting the work back out the door. The bit in between doesn't matter to him.

Irene: That's right. he doesn't care what happens to it.

Stuart: He doesn't care about the bit in between.

Irene: As long as it's gone out that door... Safety's a big problem in that place - a really big problem.

Ann: Congestion. That is a big problem. I would say that is the major problem.

-

Stuart: You've even got people working back-to-back. The place is getting that shortage of space.

Irene: If it's anything like the last time we had a fire alarm in there we'll have casualties out of trying to get over the bundles there.

Joan: Bags and that.

Stuart: I mean yesterday I nearly had a heave-to -

Danny: With the boxes...when they come in. You've got a guy separating sheets at the bottom of Calendar Number One. We bring in boxes and we've got to stack them there and we were running out of space. So I moved them up. Stuart wasn't happy. Bill wasn't happy. But my chargehand - well whatever you want to call Dave - he told us to move them further up. Because there wasn't any room across where I was stacking them. Now if you've got them all stacked two, three - if there's a fire up at Number Four...there's naye way you'll get out.

Stuart: You see we need boxes. When they get moved up, Bill and his work's got to move up a bit more.

Danny: I mean the next bloke -

Stuart: ...there's work stacked after that. So that's got to be moved and that's you hard up against another machine. So it's one solid barrier. Well, as he says, if anything happens there's nay way people're going to get out.

Danny: You've got, what, fifty or sixty people working downstairs now. You've got a space between the first (calender) and the barrier of boxes of about that [holds hands apart]. You try to get sixty people out there in a rush.

Stuart: ..you've got a fire exit right and a fire exit left. And the only way you can let out people working on Two Three and Four is right through where all that work is stacked.

Ann: That's if they can get through between the machinery, because the cages and the bags are lined up beside the machines which I feel bags shouldna be. There's sort of air vents isn't there on these machines? And I think the last time it was blocked up or it was all covered with dust and it went on fire - the engine went on fire - I mean all this work is at the sides of the machines...

Danny: He seems to think, as well, when he gets these big cages in there that's going to solve his problem. But it's not. It's just going to get -

Irene: That's right.

Stuart: They're just going to have cages lying about instead of boxes! laughter

Irene: It's a bigger thing to go over. As I say we even had that problem before the Central come in. And it's in now and it's ten times worse. But to my knowledge he's not done anything about it.

Ann: In actual fact you're talking about what, thirteen hospitals to yourself, right? Thirteen hospitals. So you've got all those boxes for that work. Then we started getting St Giles, Stuartstoun, Camberley, places like that. So they've now got to be bagged. So they're on a trolley. Fine. Till they're filled. And they go on a pile. And then you've got ...the Central, then you've got PCH, you know, it's just endless. I mean there must be about another thirteen hospitals.

Danny: We've still got the Central coming...that's what, 17,000 pieces? Somewhere there. That's coming down at the end of the month...

Joan: That's right. It's far too much.

Irene: He's never given us one minute in consideration when he took on all that work. He considered his self. And his theory "it could be done". But he doesna work in the laundry. He doesna work with the machines. He gets the complaints and he ignores them. He tells us, if we can think of a better idea, then he'll be glad to listen...

Ann: Well you go in with ideas and all. And I mean it just doesna work. And a lot of the time I'll say you havena done this, that and the next thing about about this problem. But you can never get hold of the guy because he's at the Central, he's at Blackbridge, he's here, there and everywhere. You know, he's took on far too much, he cjoan cope wi'it himself. He's forgetting mair than he's remembering. I mean he's just no got a clue what he's doing. The guy's going round in a circle. I feel quite sorry for him, really. But at the end of the day, he took it on. It's his bed, he can lie in it, you know...

Irene: I mean I think he's going to have a real problem in six months time if he doesn't solve some of it now. Because that place'll start getting run down. Really. And that's what's going to happen.

"Just ordinary housewives"

Stuart: He took the attitude "Oh, we'll start the back shift and the problem's solved". But it's just creating a problem for the day shift.

Irene: Because they're no interested Stuart. They're only there for four hours and the attitude is "Ah, pff". And they just put it anywhere they like. Now when he started off the one night till ten o'clock, fair enough. It's a long day frae' eight o'clock till ten o'clock. But they were only doing the one night a week. It was nay too bad. Right? he says "I'll do it for two weeks." But I says "It'll no solve it in two weeks." Now we're off that. And there's two chargehands - well, one chargehand and one woman's acting as a chargehand. The chargehand's off on holiday. One of them's to try and cope with all these people herself. Because there's thirty odd people now. And she can't put herself in more than one place. They're no interested. They've no got enough experience. They've no been trained or noth'n. And he stopped these people willing to do the one night for to show these people what to do. He thought after two weeks these people were going to be great. There's people that can adapt and people that canny. And I'd say out of thirty one there must be about two that can adapt and get on with their work.

TS: Where have they come from, or are they -

Irene: Well they are just housewives.

TS: They're new starters?

Irene: Aha.

Ann: These are just ordinary housewives looking for a job, a part-time job.

Irene: Now I thought, well, we've always been told the idea is the more you put out, the more bonus you get, right? So I had said to him the night before that they'd only done about 5,000 on the night. But that's not really compensating for the work he's brought in. He's brought in 50,000 pieces. He was thinking you could actually do 50,000 pieces, in the four nights! Obviously they're no going to do 20,000 pieces...

Stuart: It doesna even compensate for the number of staff that he has.

Irene: 'Course not, that's right. And...it didna seem to bother him. But I mean it's us that'll be affected. Because if this is all they're going to be producing, at the end of the day our bonus is going to be nothing, y'ken? So that is a problem.

(02)

"Now don't ask me how you work that out!"

TS: Are you saying your bonus has gone down?

Stuart: There's more work coming in.

Joan: That's what I can't understand.

Stuart: This is down to the extra staff coming in...

Irene: But it shouldn't work that way.

Stuart: It shouldn't work that way.

Irene: It shouldn't work like that. Say if we're short staffed - like for instance Stuart, doing that of three people. Say if I was to go to him and say "Look Mr Parker I should have another man on that job."

"That's no problem. But you know what'll happens when we employ someone else. Your bonus goes down."

Stuart: For the Time and Study people, when that job was studied, when the boy came back, he said it was a three man job. They said the job Ian

brown's on was a three man job. He's doing that himself!

Irene: ...if he brings anybody else in it's cutting your bonus because they're going to be included in our bonus...

Stuart: When I started it was me, Jim and John Walker. Then Jim was made up to foreman and that left me and John Walker. Then John Walker was taken away and put on another job and I was on it myself. It's been that way for the past five years.

Danny: I think at the moment we're eight or nine understaffed and that's how it stays up - the tewnty trhee per cent staying up.

TS: That's protected?

Stuart and Irene: That's protected to thirty one per cent...

Irene: I mean I was even unhappy about thirty one being offered...

Danny: Because we know what we can do - 33, 34, 35.

Stuart: Like I told you he was actually quoting Ray Kennedy at that time.

Irene: I was nay there.

Stuart: He was using Ray Kennedy's figures. Where Ray Kennedy got his figures from I don't know.

Irene: What does Ray Kennedy ken about the...laundry?

Stuart: Absolutely nothing.

Irene: To stand up there...and say "Oh you can do this, you can do that." They just dinna work in a laundry. We work in a laundry and they come and tell us -

Danny: I mean we know what happens here... I mean we were in Sandy Miller's office...when we had that argument...and...he showed us his pay slip. £135 a week...

Joan: And he's guaranteed that.

Stuart: Who?

Irene: Sandy Miller.

Stuart: Sandy Miller isn't a porter. Sandy's a car park attendant.

Danny: He gets £135 a week. I'm sure it was that.

Irene: He's guaranteed his 50 hours...because of having so much to do with the union line. I think that's right...

Danny: It's well over £100 or £120. And then he says that the porters are badly off. I mean, well, what do we walk out with, what, £78 a week?

Stuart: Let us have a bash.

Irene: But there's the domestics. They only got offered fifteen per cent - that's all they get, fifteen per cent. Now why is that when the porters can earn thirty three and a third? I mean the porters are not producing anything, neither is the domestics. So why do they get thirty three and a third? We can't even get thirty three and a third.

Danny: You used to at one time.

Irene: When I first come here -

Stuart: That's when the jobs were properly manned.

Irene: Yes, I got an interview and Mr Parker says "Your basic is such and such" - I can't remember - "and you'll be on 33 and a third bonus" and I thought that's fine...I thought if that stated you've got 33 and one third bonus I always thought that had to stay like that, whether they've been paying you too much or - you ken what I mean? I didn't think they were allowed to cut your wages. But obviously they are. And I don't know if that's the law or not but when I told my man he says "I've never heard that in my life" ...so who allowed them to cut our bonus?

Stuart: Do you want to know how the porters' bonus works?

Irene: They're getting a third!

Stuart: They've always got five of at the one time. They make sure someone's on holiday or something. Their bonus goes up because they're working short-handed. So they've worked it out between themselves. They always make sure there's four or five people off at any one time to keep their bonus at a certain level.

Danny: What they do - they don't all choose their holidays at the one time. They're saying "Right Joe Bloggs gets the first two weeks in May".

Stuart: That's right.

Stuart: ...they baffle you when they say there's these hours going into the bonus scheme and this person's hours debited to the scheme.

Joan: Aye.

Irene Oh I know.

Danny: We get that all the time.

Stuart: Know what I found out about three weeks ago that I didn't know? See when the buses break down? You don't have it taken out of the bonus. I don't know.

Irene: I don't know. And they're not producers.

Irene: I've been in trying to work the bonus out with him. It works out that every person -

Stuart: What you see up on that chart is the hours done, the overtime hours, the absentee and the total production. ...but how he arrives at these figures -

Irene: How it is, I think, ...everybody must do 65.85 per articles per hour. Now don't ask me how you work that out. But that's -

Danny: But that's what he says you've to turn out for 33 percent target.

Irene: If you can explain that you'll be better at it - but I can not follow it.

Stuart: So he's taking the total articles per week at the end of the day and then divide it by the number of people that are in the place at that time.

(01)

"But commonsense must tell them that they must win in the end"

Ann: If it's pillow slips, it's good, really good.

Irene: If it's blankets, it's no good.

Ann: They're just no a producing thing. If it's small stuff...baby gowns, all stuff like that, that is great, All small stuff.

Stuart: Our percentage is going to be flattened by sheets or blankets.

Ann: Well this is what it's going to be.

Stuart: That's you snookered right away. That's it knocked on the head.

Ann: I mean they're supposed to be doing a 'product mix'. Up to now the 'product mix' was supposed to be mair for the small and less big. It's the other way around now.

Irene: And then as you say, you still come back to the same problem. If he employs more staff to cope with it, we'll lose it out of our bonus. That was our problem originally.

Ann: I mean the bonus system is a lark. But at the same time we need it for our wages.

Joan: Aye.

Irene: Oh we need our bonus. But at the same time Ann, I've always wondered, if we had got no bonus then there's no way that man would get

the production out that he's getting now.

Ann: No way.

Irene: ...and obviously he'll come back and say, well, everybody's breathing down his neck because the work's no gone out. Because obviously I'm not sweating for a basic of £70 or £80, I'm bloody sure I'm not. So he's not getting the work out like he's getting it now. So everybody's on his back so he's going to have to say well I've just got to offer them something better. Or this work's just not going to go out.

Ann: You see we tried that once before and it was the one and only time the whole laundry agreed - for, what was it now? It was staying the bonus wasn't it? To throw it out or something and just go on the basic.

Irene: That's it.

Ann: And they all agreed. And he hovered round a few of them. And it just broke them up and "Oh no, we'd better no, I'll maybe lose me job". That was the one and only time we had them all together.

Stuart:....I totally agree wi'ye but you try and convince everybody over there o'that.

Ann: That's right

Irene: Well that's up to them if they want to break their necks for a few pittance. But I certainly wouldn't want to...

Ann: But...the ones that'll no stick by us are the ones that's no doing the work anyway.

Irene: I know.

Ann: Right? So loads o'them are, maybe, their man doesna work. So they're the breadwinner. So I mean they are afraid. And I can appreciate them being affeared.

Irene: But at the end of the day commonsense must tell them that they must win in the end. I would think so anyway. If he's no getting his production, everybody's down his neck.

(02)

"Sitting in the toilet you'll be paid. But shake'n up gowns you willna"

Danny: You see, what we call Lost Production Time, he takes - say one of the calenders goes off -

Stuart: It stays the same. ...It's cynical of the bosses.

Irene: Aye when a machine breaks down, obviously it's not producing so he gives us nothing for it because...he tells us maybe to go and fold blankets, right? So - well no blankets, just say we're shaking up gowns.

Joan: But if he gave us Waiting Time - now he could give us Waiting Time - you could say to us, "Right, the machine's off, sit'n the toilet". And you'd be paid for that! But not a person standing shake'n a gown up! Now where's the logic in that? ...but he will not pay you. If there's waiting time - say you've no work, and that machine's no work, and you're sitting in the toilet till there's work to be done, you'll be paid for that. But if you're..shak'n up gowns you willna be paid!

Danny: ...it's worth a third.

Irene: If you're off three quarters of an hour he just gives you a quarter of an hour.

Danny: That's your thirty three and a third.

(01)

"The buck starts on the flair and stops on the flair"

Stuart: I dinna think the management...take responsibility for anything that goes on over there...to keep that place going - apart from the fact the man's never there. I mean ultimately that should still be at his door. To coin a phrase, the buck stops there. But in his case it doesna. The buck starts on the flair and stops on the flair.

Joan : He leaves a lot to his chargehands.

Stuart: The chargehands more or less take the responsibility for keeping the place running. Even I to Irenel on your back-shift he's no in there. You're running about trying to keep two floors going. He comes in. He takes a look around. And he walks right back out again. he doesn't even stop to say "Is everything going on all right, have you any problems" or anything. He just walks walks in. The machines are still running. So he walks back out again.

Irene: I mean this is a new shift. So it's not something that's been running for years. It's just been set up.

Stuart: He should be there as long as that shift is being operational. He should be there to make sure it's running OK. I mean that's his responsibility to do it.

Katrina: Who's up in the checking room at night then, in charge?

Stuart: Nayb'dy.

Irene: Just the four girls.

Stuart: Well there's a whole department of inexperienced staff, without a supervisor.

Irene: And then just an instance... On Monday, he says "There's two new ladies starting tonight." He says "I'll be back, obviously, to see them at six o'clock". But he didna. So I had to sort of take over his job at six o'clock and get these two new ladies in and get them overalls and such this and such that.

Stuart: That's normal practice in there.

Irene: I mean in a way I was doing his job because he's the boss. He should be there, approaching newcomers y'ken rather than just me. He came in, certainly, about an hour and a half later but he wasna there when they were starting.

Stuart: As far as being the manager over there goes, he's picking up a wage for something somebody else is doing.

Irene: You know honestly I think he's took too much on.

Caroline: Aye that's like St Giles, that's meant to be out Wednesday and it's still lying in the van to get washed.

(03)

But this is the kind of daft thing we di' - to get rid of the problems"

Stuart: ...I canna get over how trivial some of the - well, they seem trivial when you think about it. But they mean something to the people affects. They could be solved in a matter of minutes but you'll no t him.

n: That's right.

Stuart: I mean look at when I fell over that cage trying to get to the emergency stop button on my machine. I couldna reach it you see. There s a fault on the machine. I couldn't reach the stop button because of

all these cages that were parked up. So I had to climb over them to hit this button. And what would it have taken when it was brought up at the JCC? Just some tape, some ordinary tape on the flair, so far away from the machine. So that they couldna put the cages past - which would allow me access to the machine. I mean how long would it take for somebody to stick the tape on the floor?

Ann: Agh - even if they gave you the tape to do yourself.

Stuart: I would do it myself. If they were going to give me the tape...

Ann: I mean it's no for us - we do as many jobs as he should be doing.

Danny: ...where we put them yesterday, all the big cages.

Stuart: Right. And I had to come back and tell you to move them because I couldna get to the machine.

Irene: That's the kind of thing. The same happened with the table I got for the blankets. Then girl obviously got more work so she needed another table. And I said to Mr Parker "could she have another table? there's one over there." I asked him about four times in three weeks. The table still never came. So I asked him "That table. Do you think I could go over mysel' and have a look at it?" I says "Well I could take one of the men over there and we could carry it over". "But the van's going over" Now the van's calling for the laundry here. I says "the van never lifted it the last time. But" I says, "Is it a problem for me to go over and get it back?" "No but the van'll lift it".

Ann: but you see that's jobs you shouldn't be doing anyway. But this is the kind of daft thing we dee - to get rid of some of the problems.

Irene: "Well if you're no going to do it, I am going to do it" sort of thing. Well I got it about two hours later that day. It took the van two hours to come from A to B because obviously it was waiting to be filled up. And I got the table eventually...

Caroline: That's like the guys that bring the work from the laundry over to here. Now we're lucky if we get two deliveries a day. We get one in the morning and one about four o'clock. But he's expecting us to get eight hospitals out in a matter of ten minutes. He says "Oh it'll only take you a couple of minutes." Now he's forgetting it's not forty sheets that they get - they get 350 some of them, all their draw sheets and all their nighties and everything. But we just dinna get the work. And he's expecting it to be out all at ten past eight in the morning.

Irene: There is no routine in the place

Stuart That's the kind of nonsense we've got to put up with

(02)

"Everybody sitting here's doing part of his job"

Stuart: He's still got all that extra lot coming in. And he's no stopped to think out a routine for how it's going to come in, get done and go back out again. Which to anybody is normal managerial matters. I mean you've got to stop and think how you can handle the stuff coming in and make sure it's going to go back out on time.

Katrina: Ah but by rights he should have made sure that they machines should have been in working order before he even thought of bringing that extra work in.

Stuart: How's that for managers - "We'll get all this extra work in, and this machine'll di'it". I mean that's all very good and well. But I mean that work came in six weeks before the machine did. That work's in there now and that machine, from what I can see, will no be operational for

— another couple of weeks yet.

Caroline: When the Central laundry comes in, there's going to be not enough room for it up there. So he's want'n us to unpack it in the corridor!

Stuart: So much for cooperation, isn't it.

Irene: But managers in general, I would think they should start at the very bottom....regardless of what their job is. Work their way up so when they are in a management position they know exactly what's going on. Instead of just going to college and university and walking into a place. I mean they don't know how it's run...

Stuart: He was an engineer before...

Irene: He wasna a laundry worker.

Katrina: He couldn'a been a qualified engineer, Stuart, because he says that he took off into a laundry manager at what, twenty, twenty one... Then he was something else befor he was an engineer. So he couldn'a be a fully qualified engineer.

Stuart: As far as I knew he was an engineer.

Irene: But I think they should start at the very bottom...generally they've no got a clue how anything happens. So I say the workers, we are still running it for them in a way because they don't know what's happening.

Stuart: I reckon anybody in this (room) right now kens mair about how ti di'it than the one who ended up wi'it does. I mean I reckon I could do his job but he couldna do mine.

Irene: That's true.

TS: And you are doing part of it?

Stuart: Well I am doing part of his job. Everybody sitting here's doing part of his job. I mean how often does he come over here?

Caroline: He's been over here about three times in a month. He only comes over when the hospitals are phoning us in. Administrators and people are phoning us in and saying we're no getting enough work out. But they're giving us hassle on the phone - we've no got the work because it's still lying over in the laundry.

Stuart: But part of this job's no to take hassle form anybody - that's his job.

Caroline: Well I've took enough because the lady from PCH kept phoning and phoning, saying we've no got enough of this, we've no got enough of that. "Oh well, I'm not taking any more of this. I'm putting you through to the boss". And then we put them through to him and within half an hour we had the work over. Well I went over to the laundry for - to say I shouldn't have to do that, he should have that all prepared, like, and over here for us to pack.....

Joan :he's come'n in say'n' this is more important than that. And we've got to stop what we're di'in' and pick through what he's want'n.

Caroline: And he expects us to pack about thirteen sheets - like the van's supposed to go about half past eight in the morning by the time it gets loaded. Now if we don't get the work over till five to four at night, there's no way we can pack for twelve hospitals in a matter of half an hour...

Irene: You see if we had another calender machine that the work goes through.

Stuart: Ha ha! Yes!

Irene: Then fine. But there's no way you'll solve that problem now.

Because...there's an awful lot of work on the floor now, to go through the calenders.

Stuart: It's all...greens and sheets and flat work that goes through the calendars. And the calendars canna handle what's coming down as is.

Katrina: Well look at the machines upstairs - they Vosses'll never handle that work. Cannay handle it there now. I mean things've been tipped out on the floor. You should see it across in that checking room - it's no real. You've got sheets. You've draw sheets. And white....

Stuart: I'm running one of those machines for ten hours a day myself. That's before we get into the back shift. I run it for ten hours in the day - ten hours a day and another four hours on the back-shift - fourteen hours a day.

Irene: Mm. And we still canna get through it.

Stuart: It still canna handle it.

Irene: And that's without counting this new washing machine on. So you put that on!

laughter

Stuart: I mean normal managerial practice would say "new machine, extra work, we'll get another calender." We hanna got an extra one. No. He's expecting the calenders to do it. And they canna cope with what they've got as it is.

Irene: And then there's not room for another calender. They should have really expanded in order to take all this stuff.

TS: So what you seem to be saying is that up to a point you yourselves are having to overcome some of his problems, but when you come up against that bottleneck of not having enough calender capacity, there's obviously nothing you can do about that.

Stuart: Yes. It's not even up to a point. It's ultimately we've got to take care of his problems.

Irene: Like, I don't know how many times I've went with some or other problem. And he's turned round to me and said to me "Well I'm open for all proposals. If you can think o' any other way it would work" he says, "tell me." Well now I'm not here to tell him!

laughter

Irene: Because there's no other way it'll work...

Stuart: Even if you do go to him and give it to him - he doesn't do anything about it!

Irene: Oh I know. You'll probably go and do it yourself and say, well, I've done that.

Stuart: You see it's got to the stage now that people are saying...we'll no bother him - they'll just go ahead and do it themselves anyway. And he comes out and takes the credit for it, you see. He says "Oh that's a good idea, I'm glad I thought of that", you know?

Caroline: He wants shot.

Irene: Aha.

laughter

Irene: Personally, myself, I think he's taken on far too much - just adding to the problems of this laundry now.

Katrina: That's the whole point - far too much.

Irene: And he's getting the rest of the Central work at the end of this month!

Caroline: He's expect'n us to pack it there - pack it in the corridor - and then wheel everything up to there to get packed and then we'll have to start all over again. No way.

Stuart: There was no pick-up for this hospital yesterday at all. There's three days' work lying over in our own hospital! There's three days' work lying over there that's never been picked up. They couldn't send an empty van over there to pick up the load because they didn't have an empty van. They're all lying there full of dirty linen.

Joan : There were only eleven boxes taken over there o'clean linen.

Stuart: You couldn't have had this hospital up the stair yesterday did you?

Katrina: No.

Stuart: No. It's still lying there yet. And there's still another three days lying there in the hospital itself. My brother says - I've got a brother over there - he says it's now become a health hazard. They have to keep moving it because the bags are heat'n up, where in the centre they're heat'n up and heat'n up. I mean you'd a'thought there'd be spontaneous combustion... They've got to keep putt'n em in a barrow and shov'n'em somewhere else to let them cool. Then they put them back again!

Caroline: ...these sewing machines coming in I was supposed to be on them a fortnight ago - none of them are working.

Stuart: They never ran yet?

Caroline: That one's away...that one doesn't work at all. That one, we had to take the front off that because all the wires were hanging inside...I threaded that one up the other day. And I just touched the needle-lift in it and it was away. It doesn't stop!

Joan : He said he was going to get it seen to when we brought it up at the JCC.

Caroline: That was a fortnight ago.

"If I was running it..."

Katrina: He got all that extra laundry in. He hadn't even the loading bay organised. The drivers didn't know whether they were coming or going.

Stuart: When he's took on this extra work - the first thing I would have done was to extend the load'n bay to handle it. It would have been the first thing I would have done.

Katrina: he needed to get all his machines set up and make sure they were working.

Stuart:extend the loading bay out to cope with the extra work, the extra vans he's now got. He's expecting the existing bay to handle that as well as inside the laundry the same problem of the existing space and machinery in there to handle the extra work.

Irene: But for a start Stuart the place is never in a routine. Like...I feel that it should be run. I mean if I was running it, I'd run it this way, right? That you would have say, for eight o'clock to ten o'clock, Royal comes down and this hospital... So that on every day you'd be getting that linen the minute it comes in. But it doesn't. It all just comes in all in one big -

Katrina: Well before it used to.

Irene: Aye. But it all just goes through as it comes in so...if he's wait'n on theatre trousers and that, he can't say "Oh well they'll be down at ten o'clock because ten o'clock's their time." There is just no time for them...so there's no routine. I mean if I was running it

there'd need to be a routine. I'd have to know exactly what time ...theatre tops go out every day or twice a week or whatever. And then if they're phoning at half nine, well you'll say it's ten o'clock when it comes through the machine. He couldn't tell you that. He doesn't know. Stuart: You see, for all the arguments and disagreements I had with Mr Murray when he was there, that's exactly how it ran when Murray was there.

Irene: That's how I would run it.

Stuart: He was the under-manager before here. How that man didn't get Parker's job I don't know.

Irene: Well that's how I would run it because it's so unorganised.

Joan : There used to be a certain type manager... No now. They haven't a clue.

"That's as far as it goes with us"

Irene:I don't get anywhere with him for the safety, the fire. I'm fed up telling the man...till I'm blue in the face. And his answer is "If you can solve the problem I'd be willing...."

Caroline: You should just say "Well I'll phone the fire station..."

Stuart: I'd been checking them last night. I could dig two fire extinguishers out. They'd piled work up against fire extinguishers. I had to dig them out and put them somewhere else. Fire exits are blocked.

TS: What about levels of management beyond the laundry manager?

Irene: That's as far as it goes with us. I don't know who it is...after that.

Stuart: Above him is the Chief Administrator across the road.

Irene: Oh I met him once.

Stuart: That's his boss.

Irene: I met him once when we went along to the Health Board.

Stuart: It's Gibson. No it's no Gibson.

Katrina: Is it no Wendy Norman?

Stuart: It's no Wendy Norman.

Irene: You know when we were at the health Board a few weeks ago?

Katrina: Actually she was over here yesterday.

Irene: It was this man. And he was introduced as Parker's boss.

Stuart: Wilson?

Irene: Can't tell you.

Katrina: He was at the Eastern Infirmary you know, the last I heard.

Irene: Course it's -

Stuart: He's from the ...

Irene: - The changeover.

Stuart: Mr Gibson and then it's a female - a woman above him. That's as far as he goes.

TS: And you've, not any of you had any contact with those people?

Chorus: No.

"The girls on the calender said "No more". And we stopped feed'n in"

Irene: ...they're working with someone on their tails. Every day and night they run out of boxes. Now that is a vital part of our work. If that machine (work)'s coming through the calender, it's folded and it's ready to go out to this box of clean linen. But you've no boxes to put it in, with the result that you're stacking it on floors. You're

stacking up problems. Then you may get about a dozen boxes. So you're rushing to put that in. So you drop out. At the same time you've other laundry coming. And then you've run out of boxes for that! So I mean that's just not on because it just happens day in and day out. They should just call it a halt and get up the stair and tell him what they want. Not what he wants, what the workers want. ...that we'd get his work, out a lot quicker. There'd be less aggravation between the girls for the simple reason they're all fight'n over the one box... Plus the fact that there's that much lying about that they canna move as fast as they should be moving, for the reason that they're stepping over boxes, running round cages to get a box on the belt. This is all time-consuming. It's all frustration. They should get the place organised and get it running. It's certainly not right. It's like a shambles to my point of view. It's a complete shambles.

Stuart: Just pull the plug on the thing. Just march in his office and tell him to take responsibility again. "It's up to you to get your act together and get something done." I mean the only way he's going to get his work done properly is if he can provide a reasonable working environment for the staff to work in.

Irene: And they've not got that. I mean that would drive me bonkers at the back of one of them machines, with all these cages, bags, you name it, it's at your back. I dinna work with one of the machines but I certainly wouldn't work amongst all that... There's been a long cry for boxes since I've been there but it's worse now because we're having more hospitals. And the girls do create a fuss virtually every night. But they've never stood to it. They've never said "Right. That's that". Then if they had'a he would have says "Well I couldna handle them all stop work. I'll have to make sure I've got them for you" But they dinna do that. You need a hundred per cent.

Joan : We stopped twice on Monday...our calender.

Stuart: This was with lack of boxes.

Joan : This was with the boxes. We were all of us fed up with putting the stuff on the floor. The girls on the calender said "No more." And we stopped feed'n in. Look at the hassle!

TS: So what happened then?

Joan : Well, we had Ann down. Ann went into the office. And we were just told to shake up the first time. But the second time, Betty [chareghand] was out'n that laundry van and brought in a pile of boxes for us!

Caroline: It usually gets to the stage where you've got double boxes just waiting!

Stuart: But that was never her responsibility.

Joan : No. But he must have said something to her after the first time because we were off from half eleven till dinner time, with no boxes. And he must have spoke to Betty. I said "Betty that's the girls stopped us again for boxes..." We were the only calender that stopped.

Irene: You need every one of them, you need every one of them.

Katrina: It can be done too - because we done it, up in the checking room, that time it was freezing cold, mind? And we just refused to work.

Irene: Aye.

Katrina: He just says "right -

Stuart: They shut the checking room.

Katrina: - shut down the checking room." Stood the whole laundry, ha-ha!

Stuart: He's got to be realistic, it's the heart of the laundry. I mean if that checking room stops, every other department stops. ...there was

day heating. The place was freezing. Within, what, two days there was a heating system. Within two days...! I mean you try and ~~tell the rest of~~ them that. They just...accept it.

Irene: ...I don't know what you got to try and do to get them to understand that.

Stuart: There's too many o'them in there quite happy standing there eight hours a day and just clobber you.

Irene: But the ones that are doing that, Stuart, are no the ones at the back fight'n for boxes...amongst all the rubbish at the back -

Stuart: These are the ones that are standing at a table or folding towels or something.

Irene: ...they're the ones that are - I don't know - maybe on a job in the corner that doesn't entail boxes or whatever, y'ken? But I mean the ones that won't do it with us are the ones that...are no working on them still. Oh he's gett'n away wi' murder.

Joan : Definitely is.

(03)

"A woman will work to a machine more than a man will"

Irene: I think now the whole place is one problem. It is. Before, we certainly accepted a lot and handled a lot. But it's too difficult now. It's far too difficult because he's wanting the impossible. And you just can't have that.

Ann: He can walk away. Like, I mean you go in in the morning. You're at your machine. And a woman's a woman. A woman will always work under most conditions, right?

Irene: I canna see that.

Ann: I mean a woman's a woman. She'll go down with a machine there, where a guy'll say "I'm now work'n that. Fix it" or whatever. But in there it's all women, all the time. So he's really gett'n what he's want'n.

Stuart: ...that's sexist....

Ann: No I dinna feel it. No I'm not being like that Stuart. Honestly it's -

Laughter from Joan.

Ann: Oh wait a minute. She'll stand and work at a machine, right? Now you called me the other week when the ceiling was coming (down) "I'm no stand'n..." So you turned it off. Right?

Stuart: Aha.

Ann: Now, on the calenders they'll just say "Move up a wee bit so the rest of the ceiling doesna come down." And the lasses will still work away.

Joan: That's true.

Ann: They will, right? But he can walk away from it. He can either go to his office or he can go to another wee meeting. But you're there all the time. So every single person over there is pressurised eight hours a day, every day of the week. And it's going to be there for a long time. I doubt very much that it'll ever get solved. It'll just be something which we'll probably just accept... And we'll just get on with it all week.

Irene: Personally, myself, I don't think we should accept that.

Ann: And I'm not being sexist by the way.

Irene: They shouldn't accept the laundry, today, the way it's run. They should not accept it. (02)

Ann: ...a woman, if she's working on a machine, she'll work to the machine - through faults, through anything.

Stuart: I'll be the first to -

Ann: But the guys'll say "Right, get that off. I'm no working it". But a woman will work to a machine more than a man will. It's just a woman's instinct to go in there I think. I think some o'the guys' attitudes are quite petty. Instead of being kind o'a major thing, it can be just a wee stupid thing. And they'll want it seen to right away. Whereas a woman'll say "Ah! We'll sort the problem ourselves," some o'them -

Stuart: I'll be the first to agree wi'ye. I wouldna put up with half the stuff the women put up with. I'll be the first to agree.

Ann: They just get on with it, all the time.

"Right ladies"

Irene: Do you think that's maybe because the boss is a man? If the boss was a woman do you think the women would, you know, do as much?

Ann: No, I don't think that's it.

Stuart: That could be classed as a sexist comment there Irene!

Irene: No. But really there's a lot of women'll talk to a woman boss rather than talk to a man boss.

Stuart: But there you're getting back to the old argument that Parker's never there, but then you've got Isa there all the time. You wouldn't take Isa as your boss if you got rid of Parker.

Ann: Well I think I'd more get rid of Parker than I'd get rid o' Isa.

Irene: Aye, mm.

Stuart: Oh and Isa's there, ken what I mean?

Irene: But I'm saying I think in general women would rather -

Stuart: You wouldna be a chargehand under Isa!

Irene: - talk to a woman boss. Over there the majority is women. So I think if there was a woman boss, they'd maybe complain a bit more. Maybe not accept as much. I don't know. And the men seem to approach him better than the women do. So I'll go for that and we might as well get a woman boss!

Ann: Ha! I think a woman boss'd be a lot harder than what he is.

Wima: Aye.

Stuart: This is true. That's if you bother with him of course.

Fiona: You'd think they'd be more ruthless than men when it comes to it.

Irene: Don't know, I've never had a woman boss.

Fiona: A woman doesna take as much (money) as what a man does...not nearly as much as what a man does.

Ann laughs

Stuart: ...you smoke it away there.

Ann: the guys have got mair freedom down there as well.

Stuart: Yup.

Joan: He's not as strict with the guys as what he is with the women. I dinna think so.

Fiona: He's not really strict with the women either really.

Joan: I don't know.

Ann: Well, he chases the work that the women's got to produce - especially the sheets.

Katrina: The length o'our smoke break. If we've been out in the toilet, and David's maybe away at the same time as us, he'll chase us. Ach, he'll come into the toilet and shout'n us: "Right ladies! Time!" But he'll never go down and get hold o'David or Danny or anybody.

Stuart: You notice what's happening when he comes in the canteen? If Mr Parker comes in the canteen, if we're a couple of minutes late in coming back, it's "Right ladies". And there's plenty o'guys sitt'n there as well.

chorus: Aye.

Irene: He'll have to rephrase that and say "Right everyone!"

Stuart: Right persons, or personnel or that sort o'thing.

Ann: ...all right, I mean, you can have a machine. And hes can wander, like, from A to B machine. Yes? When you're on your kind o'machines, you're based at the back. And that's you. Until such times as your toilet break. You're just folding all the time. Fold'n, putt'n in a pile, fold'n, putt'n in a pile...

Stuart: I'm the first to admit, mine in particular, I can make time for myself on that.

Ann: But they all can! Ian can make time. You've all got the jobs that you can get a bit o'time to yourselves. I'm not saying we dinna have a wee chatter or whatever. But -

"It's a difference of, what, two pound?"

Katrina: Plus, and all, you get that machine thingy because you work a machine. So that's how you get more money.

Stuart: That's been a long-standing argument between the men and the women and I agree with the women on that.

Ann: In the Whitley Council handbook it's got "a machinist" right? And...when I got onto Parker, he says "But no-one says what they are". We're on machines, we're machinists! It's a difference o'what, two pound? Is it about two pound?

Stuart: It's just over two pound.

Katrina: Ah, well, Parker argued that he wanted us to get the machine money when we were down on Vosses. That was before the guys were gett'n it...

Stuart: There's a perfect example. There's lasses on the Vosses at night - and during the day as well. And the guys...they're gett'n machine money. So why are the girls no gett'n it?

Joan: But he told us it had something to do with the grading or something.

Irene: That's true.

Ann: That's right.

Irene: ...the women do that at night.

Fiona: ...as soon as you touch the button on that machine and you work it, you're entitled to that money.

Stuart:...It's anything that's motorised. I mean look at the calenders, look at the moving parts of the calender!

Ann:...I think we should all fight for that

"We're on the same rate, near enough, as the men"

Stuart: I think all this big shouting about sexual equality and all this, I mean...the system will never allow it.

Ann:It will never change, it will never change.

TS: What stops it?

Stuart: The man stops it. The male ego if you like.

Ann: Who was the woman who went to the House of Commons...away, way back, years ago, I'll tell you - she was shout'n in the House of Commons and that was what it was about.

Caroline: Was it Women's Right to Work?

Ann: Could have been.

Joan:...that Nancy Astor?

Ann: Might have been.

Joan: I think she was the first woman to go into the House of Commons.

Ann: Aye. Maybe there's just no enough women with enough spunk for ti di that now.

Irene: Certainly women are a lot more ambitious now than ever they were. A lot o'them are taking men's jobs.

Katrina: Look at Janet Dale or Jean Henderson - they used to work the Washex up in the checking room. It was women that done that.

Irene: Well just look at your Prime Minister.

Katrina: Aye, just look at her!

laughter

Irene: Well there we are, I mean, before her it was all men.

Stuart: Well...we've got a Queen and a woman as Prime Minister.

Irene: Ah, but...it's because of her birth right. If she had had a brother she wouldna have been there anyway.

Stuart: No. But I mean the fact there, it is a Queen.

Fiona: She didn't have the choice.

Irene: She had no choice in the matter.

Ann: That's two to one, you're out now.

laughter

Katrina: Oh dear!

Stuart: The voices of the authority in this country is all female. I just thought I'd make the point, you know, why you the female doesna get equal rights if the voice of authority is female.

Fiona: But she doesna trust any other female, does she?

Stuart: Well, the Prime - she's got the right to pass laws - well, no...she's more or less got the last say.

Fiona: But then she's got the men behind her that's in her Party. So there's maybe influences behind her more than what there is her.

Ann: Dinna ken (if) half o'them are...

laughter

Ann: Well, they're still classed as men.

laughter

Irene: Well, just take your doctors, for instance. Years and years ago your GP was a man. ...really it's just a few years coming in that you'll find women GPs in the surgeries. Years ago, I can remember when I was fifteen, sixteen, there wasna a woman GP in our surgery. And now we have four. In the last eight year. ...so why was that? There again, men were dominating that profession. Why, does that mean women no were capable?

Fiona: I think it was because they didna think it was proper for a woman to go into that kind of profession.

Irene: I don't think it's proper that a man should! A woman should be able to chose a woman doctor, really.

Fiona: When you think of it, you know, like, the problems of Florence Nightingale. I mean look what it took for her for to get for herself.

Irene: But why?

Fiona: men are supposed to be the stronger sex and we're the weaker.

Irene: Well, that's no true.

Fiona: I ken that! (laughs)

laughter

TS: What about this breadwinner argument that Irene mentioned earlier?

Irene: Well, it was the man's place to go out and provide for his family. It was his wife's place to stay at home and bring up that family. But now that's all changed.

Stuart: But that was only a matter of tradition wasn't it?

TS: Has it all changed?

Irene: Oh definitely. Aye definitely. That's definitely changed.

Katrina: The man who stays at home at the moment!

Irene: Well it's the unemployment's turned that round. Aye, it's turned that round a lot. Because women can get a lot more jobs than what men

can, really...

Irene: ...I mean I know a couple now. She had a very good job. And her husband had a good job, but not as good as hers. She had a lot more money than him. And then she had a wee baby. So the husband gave up his work to watch the baby so she could go back to hers. She could earn twice as what he was. And a lot o' that goes on.

Ann: Well that's what Betty McLeod's - son does...

Irene: That's when women become the breadwinners.

TS: So all those arguments about men needing to earn more money, that's all blown away?

Irene: Oh I think so...you just take us for instance, in the laundry. I mean we're on the same rate, near enough, as the men.

silence

Ann: Well nay really because they get their - they're allowed their cleaning time, they're allowed their early morning starts. I mean I don't know what they get.

Irene: But I'm talking about the basic wage and bonus. And the women are the same as the men, our wage is the same.

Stuart: What's your job description in your contract?

Ann: Laundry Maid. Bob-a-job! ...Bob-a-job!

laughter

Stuart: So the only difference between what's your job description - like the woman's contract is to the man's. I mean it's just the title - Laundry Maid and Laundry Worker.

Ann: Actually I'm not sure if it's laundry worker - I think it's Laundry Maid though.

Joan: Laundry Maid is the one that I -

Ann: Aye

Stuart: And that's just a title. The job description's the same. So why should the rate be different?

Fiona: It might be the same rate.

Joan: What's the name of what you're on now then?

Stuart: Laundry Worker, well, Machine Operator now I would think...

Ann: Well we're seventy eight. Stuart'll be about eighty two or something, eh?

Stuart: What?

Ann: Basic.

Stuart: No.

Ann: You're no as high as that?

Stuart: Nowhere near as high.

Ann: You're £79 odd.

Stuart: £79 something. That's a joke man.

"Do they get past the legs?"

TS: Would you regard this place as being exceptional or do you think this degree of equality is now general?

Ann: I would say it was just the same really - most factories would be the same. Most factories will be better paid but they'll be the same.

Stuart: ...some jobs it's - women are preferable to men I would have thought. I mean if you and I were both to walk in, and we'd both got the same qualifications, and went into an office and applied for a job as a secretary. Who do you think would get it?

Fiona: That's like saying if you both went for an engineer's job.

Stuart: Exactly!

Fiona: So I mean that's just life.

Stuart: If both of us went'n a building site swinging a sledgehammer, who do you think would get it?

Ann: Me.

laughter

Ann: Although there's women that can di'it or men that can di -

Stuart: There is... But even if that man went for a job as a secretary.

And there was twenty one sitt'n there and he was far better qualified than that twenty one. I can guarantee one o'they women would get it...

Ann: Well a lot o'them are getting in because they've got Sex Discrimination now.

Joan: The nicest looking one.

Stuart: Probably. Probably the one with the best pair o'legs.

Joan: Aye.

laughter

Ann: Do they get past the legs? Anyway there's a few now there's Sex Discrimination. Similarly the lassie who went down for an engineer's job over there. And there was guys there too. She got the job.

Caroline: I've worked with guys who worked on sewing machines and...full time.

Maragaret: We've got them.

Caroline: There was a whole lot o'people come for interviews and out o'them two guys got selected...

-

"But that's not a ninety pound job"

TS: So is there a gradual trend towards equipment that needs less really heavy work? Is that what's happening in there?

Stuart: Now...yes. There's not so much -

Irene: So now we don't need the men at all!

laughter

Ann: You do need them for some things, don't you? I mean, around the place! ...you still need a man for -

Stuart: You still need us when something goes wrong.

Ann: No-o, no-o, I wouldna say that!

laughter

Stuart: Well, if I'm standing up at one of my machines and there's like nothing much happening -

Ann: Point taken...[machine] jams: "Stuart!"

Stuart:...right, you've got a jam in a calender: "Stuart!" You get something jammed in a 'jen-feed': "Stuart!"

Irene: Oh aye... All the time!

Ann: I suppose if Stuart or Ian or that wasna there at the time, you'd just go ahead anyway.

Fiona: ...when the lasses gets jams they say "I canna di that. Get Ian".

Ann: "Get Ian." Aye.

Fiona: "Ian, will you please do that. Ian I canna do that - I've even tried!" Ha ha! Just the fact that he's there! (laughs)

TS: Well how's that, why is that? Apart from the fact that it's always happened, why is that?

Irene: Well why should we struggle wi'it when there's a man there? (chuckles). Obviously he's more strength than we have. I mean that's obvious.

TS: And these are things that require strength?

Irene: Oh aye.

Stuart: Point One why there will never, ever be sexual equality.
silence

Irene: I would like to prove Parker and the rest. If I had my licence I would say I want to try for a driver's job.

Stuart: Why not? Gett'n back to certain jobs men and women can do, I mean any woman's just as capable of driving one of them lorries as any man. You've got women bus drivers.

Irene: ...they're pulling the wages of a man.

Stuart: (Could you do our jobs?)...which do you think you could do?

Irene: I don't know!

Ann: I suppose we could do it but it would take us longer.

Irene: And then that's money isn't it?

Stuart: I'm nat saying you canna do it. I'm just asking if you feel personally you could do it.

Ann: Well it would maybe take us a bit longer. By the time we've been to the toilet and powdered our noses and come back and started again.

laughter

Stuart: Fixed your hair and your shoes!

Irene: I don't know if I could pull them cages out of the vans.

Fiona: ...we can't...

Stuart: ...jobs that women do and jobs that men do? Because it's always been that way.

Caroline: It takes two guys to bring a cage in and then we've got to take it through. It's only the two-wheeled drive they move them with if they're packed with stuff.

Stuart: Do you think you could stand out there and push the full cages up that ramp?

Caroline: Aye because we've done it.

silence

Caroline: It takes two guys to bring the stuff over and then they'll just take everything off and leave it at the bottom and we sometimes bring it in for them...

Irene: ...there's no way I could see myself pulling cages into them vans. Don't think I could...and then again the men come in - we can only put them so far up in the cage, because they're heavy, the bags, right? ...then the men come up and they can pick them up, fill them up to the top. There's no way we could do that. There's no way on earth that we could do that.

Ann: Some of them are taller than us though.

Irene: ...I mean there's no way I could fill a cage with a bag of sheets, y'ken with bags of sheets the way they fill it.

Stuart: Take the Milner, the new batch washer, do you think you could do that?

Ann: Well that's just a matter of throwing the stuff on the belt, right? And then you just tap it in on the computer, right? And it forces it into a barrow.

Stuart: You've got to go in to load up the barrows first.

Ann: Aye, well so it's opening a bag and throwing the stuff in a barrow.

Fiona: ...at the top because there's a conveyor.

Irene: I could do that. I could do that job...

Stuart: A ninety pound bag every two minutes.

Irene: Ah but you're not throwing ninety pound in a oner you're just

doing -

Stuart: But you're still loading ninety pound.

Irene: Aye but no in a oner.

Stuart: You've got to empty one and doing a good ninety pound back in, coming back, taking that ninety pound out, doing the belt, going back and doing it all again.

Irene: No I'd be doing a wee part(?) at a time.

Fiona: But that's not a ninety pound job...

Stuart: I'm just asking would you do it?

Irene: Aye but I **would** do it - no I **wouldna** lift ninety pound.

Stuart: But...although you're no lifting it all at once, there's still ninety pound in that barrow...you've got to fill it just the same.

Katrina: Well we'll all hold on to Siberia!

laughter

"So basically you're saying they're all in it for the money"

Irene: I don't agree that doctors from the National Health Service should be allowed to go into private clinics and perform private work... If they want to be private, go private full time. They shouldn't be allowed to split their time between national health and private patients.

Caroline: That's like my dentist. He's not qualified to give you an injection to put you to sleep. They get doctors from the hospital and it's thirty pound a time they charge you... So he's maybe doing five or six patients - and there's all that money... I had to pay him thirty pound and he asked for the money first! ...he says he was really rushed for time. About six patients all waiting after me - thirty pound each... When I woke up he wisna there. He was away back to the hospital because he had to be in by ten o'clock.

Ann: So basically you're saying they're all in it for the money...

Irene: It boils down to money in that sense, y'ken really.

Caroline: That's a hundred and eighty odd pound an hour, he got. And then he's gone back to work there.

Irene: I mean he'll a' done it in his lunch hour or something so he's losing nothing.

Irene: Well I suppose our life is in their hands, really. And what kind of money do you put on life? You know, I think they're worth every penny...

Ann: Aye I know. But does that mean that they can go on and on and on and get rise after rise after rise after rise?

Irene: Oh no.

Ann: Because I mean are we going to give in because the professions are gett'n it?

Irene: They are, erm -

Ann: So we'd be dying anyway because we wouldna have enough money to feed ourselves.

Irene: They are entitled to it, because - definitely -

Fiona: The dinna get much money during their training. And the housemen and that are just cheap labour.

Irene: That's true, it takes them a long time, aye. They have to study a lot before they get where they are.

Ann: ...what do they get?

Irene: What does a doctor get?

Caroline: I would love to be a lawyer! The fact their bills are steep! laughter

Irene: They charge far too much for the work they do

Ann: Three year ago I was £465. And that was two phone calls and letter. That was awful. And that's not him di'n it - that's "Miss Jones, write a letter" or "Miss Jones, phone so-and-so..." I mean they are gett'n their money.

Irene: Oh aye. I mean Did you ever see a poor lawyer? Never.

Everything's money to them. The minute you knock on their door, that is money. And that's how you're treated.

Ann: Even if you go for a letter, maybe hav'n a hassle wi'somebody or

things like that, it's £15 a letter. I'm talking about eight year ago.

Irene: ...when my Dad died - we never, my mother never had money, we were just working people - but my Dad died sudden so there wisnae a will left. But...a lot of money due to him frae'is work...through pensions, superann', things like that, and my mother had to take it to court to get this money. So, with the result, she had to have a lawyer. But by the time the lawyer had taken his part off it - it's a lot of money he'd taken - he took out £600 off my Dad's money. Just for to go to court to get it...I thought that was scandalous. It's not as if he was getting thousands upon thousands of pounds. But he took £600. Now that shouldna be allowed, y'ken really. I thought that was terrible.

Ann: Well...they're getting about fifteen hundred when you sell and buy another...house. I mean that's why I'm hanging onto mine because I'm affeared to sell!

"Because of their position"

Irene: ...you don't see enough of your professional people when you are in hospital. I mean you'll get your operation and they'll come...at ten o'clock on their rounds saying "How are you?" Fine. "Oh..." That's the end of the story. After that the nurses take over. And that's scandalous I think, you know.

Ann: I think some times they could give you a bit more information.

Irene: I think so.

Ann: They treat you a wee bit like maybe you're imbeciles.

laughter

Ann: Just as though you're a number. Especially maybe the doctors... And when you ask a question "Oh you don't need to worry about that, we'll see to it," or whatever. They dinna let you know enough I think. I like to get talked through anything. And it gets rid of a bit of your anxiety if they say "Right I've got to do this injection" and you say right, fine. "Can you feel that?" Aye fine. "Right, we've got to do this, we've got to do that."

Irene: And I think it's the way that we've all been brought up towards doctors, that you have that inhibition to say "Look I want you to tell me what you're doing." I mean honestly I wouldna dream of saying that to a doctor. But we should. So whether it's just the position they're in, or we feel inferior to them, I don't know. But you just feel he's the expert, he's right. But they're no always right.

Katrina: I think you ought to have a go at it.

Irene: I know but I've never tried that. I don't know what results you'd get frae'it.

Katrina: I would talk to the doctor in the hospital if I wanted to know something. I wouldna hesitate to ask.

Ann: I think a lot o'it's inferior.

Irene: Because of their position.

Ann: Aye. But I mean there are people that can ask. I think it depends on what kind of person you are.

Irene: Well I dont know. Thinking of professional people in general I mean you must feel a bit inferior to a professional person, really. I mean we shouldna, but I think you do. Because you feel they've got that position, whatever it is, y'ken? Well I would say I do. I don't know about yous, but I think just because of their position you maybe feel a

bit inferior to them.

Caroline: I get that worked up when I get into the doctor, and then I come out thinking I shouldna said this and I shouldna said that. (04)

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"The way you were brought up"

Irene: I just felt that it all starts when you go to school. That's when you start dealing with professional people - your teacher and the headmaster. When we went to school there was no way you were allowed to question the teacher. And that's where it all (starts). Then as you come up, you're coming into (contact with) professional people, doctors, the family priest, whatever. So it's just that you are starting from the age of five upwards. They were professional people so...we felt we weren't allowed to question them. It just goes back to the way you were brought up.

Ann: And if you felt a sense of anger, (about) anything that's said, or something you didn't like, you just didn't say it. Because it wasn't fitting that you should answer back to, say, the priest or whoever. Although you might be wrong, it's just how they were -

Irene: But now kids are allowed to be a lot more open. They're allowed to question the teacher, question the headmaster. So the ones coming up now are certainly not feeling what I felt. But the whole thing was, I mean, you tried to question your teacher when I was at school and Oh my God, that was the end. You'd think you'd committed a murder. It just wasn't allowed. As I say it's allowed a lot more now.

Katrina: ... I was taught - the likes of the doctors - I would certainly ask them questions, ask what they were doing or anything like that. It didn't bother me.

Joan: ...the same as Irene. I was brought up the same way - to respect my elders!

Irene: ...I mean you might, as you go through, as you get older, feel you'd be able to say more than what you would have done. I don't know why. Maybe it's because you get a bit more knowledgeable. And you hear other people saying "Well I've just said this". And you say Oh well, could that be right? I'll try it when I feel that I've got a question. But that wasn't the answer then, definitely.

Ann: Yes I think it's like when you grow up...you've maybe a wee bit more to say. But the limit's still there. ...I saw the doctor with my Ma till I was sixteen because I just couldn't approach him and tell him what was wrong with me. I mean I could go now and...I can talk to him and approach the man. But I mean I wouldn't say I'm going into great detail. It's just the basics - roundabout, hurry up'n let me get out again! Y'ken? It's just when you get older you've got a wee bit more to say. But it's still to a limit. Because you've still got at the back o'your - well I'm supposed to respect this manny. (08)

"Keeping a bit of your respect"

Irene: I was quite happy with my two with their secondary education. Definitely. For the simple reason that the school there still kept to discipline. And I think if you lose the discipline in a school, you're losing out on it altogether.

Ann: ...we were not allowed in any classroom unless you had a uniform on.

Irene: In this school, when I was in it, the groundsmen had a lot o'grass and a lot o'pathways. And there was no fences at all on the grass. But they didna walk on that grass. I mean really and truly...I think if you lose the discipline...it just runs riot, because I've seen it at other schools. And I was quite happy that the teachers were that bit stricter than I'd seen at other schools. And I was thrilled with the education they went off with anyway. Definitely.

Fiona: I think that the teachers are feared o'the pupils now.

Irene: Not up the other one anyway.

Ann: It's all because times change. People change.

Fiona: There's wee kids now, look at the way they're spoken.

Irene: Oh they have a lot of freedom of speech in schools. They have their discussions which we never had. I mean maybe they can have a group discussion and say "We want to try this or this project". And you do get that, which we never had. So I think, if anything, they've advanced that bit, but then a lot of them have lost their discipline...

Ann: ...St Peter's was the school at one time, y'ken? It was run by nuns...but of course the year I left they took laddies on. So it's now a mixed school. But when it was all lassies, my God, you didna turn the wrong way....but you just got thumped.

Irene: St Gregory's School has got the highest grades for pupils.getting jobs.....

Caroline: I know.

Katrina: Well look at Paula's School, Harcourt High, -

Irene: That's went down too.

Maragret: Aye - right down the hill. You see when it first opened up it was a great school.

Fiona: Beautiful.

Katrina: And then all of a sudden the kids started just, you know -

(silence). The teachers failed....

Caroline: That's like Penny -

Katrina: Couldna control them.

Caroline: - when she's going in the morning she's no gett'n any lessons at all.

Irene: D'you mind (when)...the teachers were older? Do you wonder that it's because there's such a lot of younger teachers now? Like I heard it being said about Kingsfield there was a teacher about twenty six, seven, twenty eight. He was called by his first name by his pupils.

Caroline: That's right, that's what they all are now I think.

Irene: Aye. And that's wrong, that is definitely wrong, shouting to your teacher "Hey, Tam would ye gay here" or something like that...I mean you're losing everything there, just by that, y'ken. The teachers should have been kept as Mr so-and-so. And you're keeping a bit of your respect.

Ann: You see a lot of the respect, if you're looking at the professional side...should come from the home as well, Irene.

Irene: That's the parents to blame.

Ann: That's what I'm saying.

Irene: ...you talk about parents and professional people -

Ann: Time changes, people change. People dinna care a damn.

Irene: You wonder why Ann. I mean why should it change? I was brought up in the time that you respected every man figure, every woman figure that were about. I mean your next-door neighbour wasna called Isabel, it was Mrs Wright or whatever her hame is, ken? So...teachers were respecting,

policemen was a respecting. Even - you talk about professional people - the priest, the Father at the church, right?

Ann: God, aye.

(04)

Irene: There's discipline and discipline, right? The discipline I had was far stricter than the discipline my own kids have got. You've still got to keep that respect. I mean if...in all honesty you're bringing up kids - or they go to school - if you let them run riot, you've got to call a halt somewhere. At the same time you've not got to be too strict. And that's exactly what my two had at their school. There was discipline, which I liked. But at the same time they had their bit of freedom of speech...that I never had... They have a say in how the school canteen's run, the school newspaper, things like that. We never got that. I mean the school was run by the professionals. End of story. There was no way we could say, well, we think you could have a tuck shop or whatever. That we would never have heard of. The kids have that now. So there is discipline and discipline. You do need discipline, definitely. I mean if you just let them run it the way they want to run it, or speak to you the way they want to speak to you, it would just be hopeless. I think so anyway.

"Talking up for themselves more"

Katrina: No I think, well, years ago, well, I mean, my Mum and Dad used to - my father's gone on "You'll be in" at a certain time. And -

Joan: You had to be.

Katrina: You had to be in.

Caroline: You respect them for that.

Katrina: But nowadays I mean the teenagers can go out and they're turning round telling you "I'm going to a disco". And they're coming in at two and three o'clock in the morning, 'ken? I mean in my days I wasna allowed to come in at that time of the morning. "ten o'clock"! Ten o'clock during the week or half past eleven at a weekend.

Ann: ...if I was at a disco my parents were sitt'n in the car when I came out!

Irene: I wasna allowed to but I done it!

Ann: He still does it! Even if I go out he'll phone me and say "Where are you going, I'll pick you up." (laughs)

Katrina: Nowadays they get more freedom than...I ever got.

TS: Right, so there's more freedom. But just to go back to this problem of dealing with professionals, like doctors, do you think that today's kids...are going to find it easier to deal with those people?

Irene: definitely.

Ann: Aye, I think so aye. But I think some of them will no have that wee bit of respect in them towards who they're talking to.

Irene, Katrina, Joan: No.

Ann: I think that has just died.

TS: Should they have it?

Ann: Why shouldn't they? "...don't come to see me, I'll probably see you" and "What's wrong wi' me?" Y'ken? I mean you go in and say well "I've got this, that and the next thing, what do you think's wrong with me?" Or whatever.

Irene: I mean you dinna walk in and say "Oh you're hopeless, I'm going to get another doctor..." (laughs) you know?

TS: Even if you think it.

Irene: No you can think what you like but saying it's another ...

Katrina: Nowadays kids'll talk, 'ken, to the likes of doctors...

Ann: Sometimes I rather like it when they mean what they say.

Katrina:...I think they talk more - they talk up for themselves more nowadays than what we did.

Irene: Oh aye, mm.

Katrina: My daughter, she was only a teenager and she used to go away down to the doctor hersel' and tell him this and that and the next thing, 'Ken, where I wouldna, not at her age.

"There's always going to be them up there and these people down here"

Ann: Well everybody in their own job. I bet they couldn't do my job - like I couldna do their job.

Ann: That's right. I mean I suppose you could say we are equals to them - or they are professionals to us.

Stuart: No way, no way do I feel inferior -

Irene: Oh no.

Stuart: - to people in higher places. I think my function here is every bit as important as theirs over there, or anybody else's for that matter.

Irene: We think that as this place has got to be run -

Stuart: I mean not everybody's got to have status. I mean there's got to be them and there's got to be them, sort of thing. There's always going to be them up there and these people down here.

Ann: Just like the pay rise up here and us down here!

laughter

Irene: And we're the ones who arena feeling inferior!

laughter

Stuart:...I dinna feel inferior, any way inferior, to anybody else.

TS: Is there such a thing as class still in this country?

Ann: Class?

Stuart: Class distinction.

Magaret: Aye, "middle class".

Irene: Definitely.

Stuart: very much so I would say.

Ann: No I mean you do notice that. If you go to a certain shop - just say it's winter time - and they're in a fur coat, they treat her better than if you come from your work maybe. But you can rest assured that I'm paying by cash and they're paying by something or other.

Caroline: A cheque.

Ann: A cheque book on an overdraft. But they do make out that they're up there and you're down there. I mean people like that dinna bother me, in shops and that, I just tell them what I feel like... But there is that middle class thing...

Irene: They're the ones that think they're snobs.

Ann: That's right.

Irene: A real snob is the nicest person you could meet. They're the ones that think they're snobs.

Ann: I mean I could get snobby and all if I felt like it. I can be a lady when I'm out as well. But I mean er it's no part of my everyday. I'm just - normal working people. So I dinna need to put on airs and graces. There are other ones that come out and do "How now brown cow".

No doubt I could do that too but I dinna need to. I dinna need to impress anybody. I'm my own person.

TS: You say there are a lot of people who think they're snobs.

Ann: They like to think they are.

Irene: The worst kind.

laughter

Ann: Signing a cheque for three pound eighty nine or something!

TS: But there are real snobs as well? Who are they?

Irene: They are the ones **with** the money... The ones in between think they've got money. Or they're trying to impress other people that they've got money. And they've got nothing. They're the ones that...

Ann: Oh aye. I mean you do get a certain bunch who've bought their house or something. And I mean it is nice. And you feel Oh Christ I'd better not have a smoke or something like that. But what you've got your own is cash. What they've got is up to the hilt. But nobody knows about that. All you see is what they've got, y'ken? So there are people that like to think they have got it. And they've no really. I mean they're sailing into trouble.

"So we'll always be down here. If you're in a profession, well, fine"

TS: Is the gap between the people who've got money and the people who haven't, is that getting wider or do you think it's getting narrower?

Irene: It's getting wider. Because your Government means the rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer. And it's definitely getting wider.

Ann: Put that way, aye. But it's not as though we're even going to go up the scale for to get anywhere like any of those.

Irene: No.

Ann: Somebody who earns maybe a hundred and fifty quid a week...we'd love to work for something like that. So I mean we'll always be the bottom of the scale all the time. Or whatever you've got, if you've got niceties, you'll have to work for them all the time.

Irene: I mean they have that bit more than us but they pay the same for their messages, the same for their bus fares, the same as what we pay, so obviously their money must be a lot more than us.

Ann: Well in a way more money'll teach you how to go for messages, when they say "A quarter of cheese."

Irene: Aye, they scrimp on the food.

Stuart: ...the whole basis of class distinctions is money.

Irene: Well that's what it's all about. Money.

Ann: And it's no really any good. It's nice to have a little, let's face it. We all like a wee bit little just for to live. But it's no that good. A lot of it just causes a lot of unhappiness.

Irene: I've never had that much to cause unhappiness.

laughter

Ann: Well neither have I Irene. I mean all that I've got, I mean I've bought I've worked hard for. So's Andy worked. Things before that was my Ma and Dad. Y'ken? I mean whatever I'll want I'll need to work for it. I'll never get it handed to me.

Irene: No. You see that's where your professional people come in again. They get paid a lot more than us.

laughter

Irene: Which they do. And they're no working as hard as us either

(laughs).

Ann: No I mean they've only got somebody else - just like the lawyers have. It's all "bla, bla, right Miss Jones, do this, do that." It's Miss Jones on the ninety pound a week that's di'in'. They are just sitting back, because they've got initials or whatever behind them. But...fine if they're going to charge somebody who buys a forty or a fifty thousand pound house... But for a first time buyer, like my own sixteen and a half or something...it's bloody shocking. For two phone calls and a letter, you know? So really they're probably screwing the ones wi'money but they're screwing the ones without either. So we're never really going to get on, if you ken what I mean. Because every little luxury we get, you've got to really pay for it. Or if you sell and buy again, you're talking about two thousand pound. You're just - it's getting difficult - it's getting dearer and dearer and dearer to do anything. So we'll always be down here. If you're in a profession, well, fine.

Irene: You see our wage rises dinna cover things like that. Theirs does. As Ann is saying everything you pay for now is a lot dearer. But everybody tries to think about it so obviously we must be getting poorer, to that extent.

TS: Can this be overcome?

Irene: If it could I don't know how!

laughter

Ann: I dinna think it'll ever ever change. It's been the same from the start of the - your Romans, your Kings, your peasants.

Stuart: ...it's hopeless to try to get rid of class distinction and you'll never do that.

Ann: That's what I'm saying.

TS: Why not?

Ann: It will always be here. Because there's always -

Stuart: It always has been. There always has been a ladder. There always will be.

silence

Stuart: They people at the bottom of the ladder, the ones above them, there's no way they're going to let the people at the bottom climb any higher.

Ann: I mean how many people who's at the bottom of the ladder, right, who have maybe an idea, or a business venture, or something, who've scraped all their days and they've now got a wee business running and it ends up a wee mine? Right? How many really do you hear about that make it to the top? Right? So it's only one in a - phw - who really climb the ladder without working really hard or stealing for it or - ?

Irene: I think that's the profession that I would do.. - a crook...and fly away to Spain and that!

laughter

Stuart: Watch her..!

Ann: No. But there'll always be this - up and down. It's been that way from the very start - and things just dinna change - for centuries and centuries.

TS: Do you agree with that?

Katrina: I agree with all of that.

(08)

"I still don't know what that means"

Fiona: I think you've got to be sort o'really interested in it.

Irene: I would like to do mair but I feel - I've only been in it a year, right? And I mean I've enjoyed it. I have enjoyed it. I don't know - you're no taught enough. Because...they have monthly meetings, right? So I went to my first monthly meeting...and I reckon there were about twenty or thirty people. And I never knew anybody. Well, I knew Ann, because Ann took me to this meeting. And then he started talking about the minutes of the meeting previous. So I was completely lost. And that was wrong. He should have says "Well, we've a few new shop stewards, bla bla bla and this is what we are going to do now". I mean I didn't even know that the meetings were every month and what they were all about. I can still go to a monthly meeting and still be lost because they could be talking about something that happened earlier last year. Now that is wrong. That is completely wrong. We had a training course for shop stewards. But that was in the January and I took over in the September. So these three months were completely wasted. ...I thought "There's no way I'm going to get the hang o'this because I just don't know what all this is about." Really what I thought I was going into was to learn, ah, that you're a shop steward, and this is what your workers' rights are, and how you would approach management if they didna get their rights. But it just doesna work like that. They had to do it the complicated way and have you show up at a monthly meeting before I had a clue what was going on. Still, our training course, that was very very good. It still didna teach me enough. I mean there could be a lot of problems in there and people will say to me "Well am I's in my right not to do that job?" and all that. "Am I's in my right saying I'm not doing that until that's fixed?" or whatever. I don't know. So who teaches you that? I don't know. But I'm definitely interested in it. And I do like it.

Joan: I dinna think they have enough meetings for their workers.

Irene: No they don't that.

Joan: I mean they have meetings for theirselves but they dinna seem to keep their workers -

Irene: Up to date. Aye that's very true. Because in the year I've been there I've only conducted one meeting. And that is bad. That is bad when you're representing a place like that and there's so many changes. That is bad. I don't know why. Because you are entitled to a ten minute meeting or, what, a fifteen minute meeting a week for your members? You are entitled to that...so I don't know why it's never brought forward or why they don't have it... Sorry, I'm entitled to a ten minute meeting with the rest of my stewards - that's what I mean. And we never have had that - to discuss if there's any problems and things like that.

Fiona: It was meant to be every Friday, at one time.

Irene: Oh, I don't know.

Fiona: It's meant to start for every Friday but we never ever had it. There was always a date for it but then something else came up.

Katrina: What happened to the other meetings, the GC - ?

Fiona: The JCC

Irene: The JCC.

Katrina: We never had one of they meetings.

Irene: I don't know why.

Joan: And Health and Safety as well.

Irene: I was going to give you the one reason. Because he [Parker, the laundry manager] doesn't know where he is.

Fiona: Same with the Health and Safety...

Katrina: Used to be Bert Marshall.

Stuart: Bert Marshall? He's now the... Health and Safety Officer as well, yes.

Irene: He's COHSE.

Stuart: That explains a lot in itself.

Joan: And he's got about five or six members!

laughter

Irene: But the union in general, as I say, when I joined, they never said to me "This is Sandy Miller...and this is what he does". I still don't know what that means. Ray Kennedy, again, he's higher than Sandy. So I don't know what he is, y'know what I mean? So really you're just given your job and that's the end of the story. You've really just got to sort o'follow suit. I think they should really tell you who is serving you, and their boss too, further up, further up, so that you know exactly who you're dealing with if you have a problem. It doesn't happen that way though. It doesn't happen. You're just appointed to the job and that is it.

Irene: As I say I'm still trying to find out what I'm meant to do and what the rights are. But I find that in dealing with the union, through Mr Parker, he's fair. He is. He's extremely fair with us as stewards. He gives us a lot of leeway. He very seldom objects to the meetings that we have to go to or courses that we have to go to. He's very fair... Whether he's got to do that I don't know. Irene: Well that's about all I know about the union.

"They had a Labour MP from London... What the hell was he doing there?"

Stuart: As far as I can see once you get above step two - as far as NUPE goes anyway - I don't know if I'm just being naive - they're too interested in politics to bother with anything else.

Irene: That is it - politics.

Stuart: ...NUPE doesn't serve as a Union. To me it's too politically motivated. I mean...it should be 'NUPE stroke Labour Party'.

Irene: Oh aye yes it's definitely. But you see I don't know enough about it but I don't know, I think you need your politicians in your union. So they tell me! Right. That's why we put so much money into the Political Fund, right? Because we need an MP to speak for our rights in the House of Commons.

Stuart: Yeah but you've got that right as a public citizen.

Irene: I know. But we can't get that far. They take it that far for us. So they tell me. I don't know about politics. But they say that's why you need politicians in the unions. Because you need a representative to speak for you.

Joan: It's supposed to be something to do with your rise. They're supposed to help you get a rise.

Stuart: Look at that meeting we had over there in the Log Cabin. The meeting over there we were called to was supposed to be to discuss the wage rise and everything. And it turned into a political rally.

Irene: It was just a wee bit...

Stuart: If I could have clambered over the bodies I would have got up and walked out.

Joan: For our votes.

Stuart: (Three MPs) were there, ...they had a Labour MP from London there. What the hell was he doing there?

Joan: Aye.

Stuart: What did he have to di'wi'that meet'n when it was supposed to be about -

Irene: In a way that was a con.

Stuart: Well the union shouldn't have done that.

Irene: Aye that was a con because they says it was to do with the wage rise. But it was the week before the Election so...

Stuart: They were handing out Labour carrier bags and badges and - God! So that's one, well, the only thing I've got against NUPE as a union.

Irene: But I don't know how much they need politicians in the unions. I don't know that. It's away above us.

Stuart: Or how much the politicians need the unions...

-
"In one respect I think you need the higher up lads"

Stuart: Look back at other shop stewards. Namely when Nicky Brown was a shop steward - look at him.

Several: mm.

Stuart: I mean every time he spoke out for what he thought was right in there, y'ken as a union representative, he got slapped down for it. I mean he even got slapped down for getting Ray Kennedy in there. Because his sole interest was confined to that workspace environment he was working in, trying to better it. And if it didna jibe with the system he got slapped down for it. I mean that's what being a shop steward's all about. It's what it should be all about.

-
Stuart: And when Nicky Brown tried to have his say that's why he was got rid'i'. And there's nayb'dy going to tell me Nicky was'n'i'got rid'i'.

Katrina: Because Nicky was good.

Stuart: He was.

Irene: Aye.

Fiona: Especially the letters...did you see that letter he gave to the rest of us? He got to Parker. He was going to be fined or six months imprisonment if they didna do something! Was it three months or something?

Katrina: A month or something, yeah.

TS: Was this something to do with health and safety?

Katrina, Stuart: Aye.

laughter

Irene: In one respect I think you need they higher up lads because I had an argument with him for months and months about the state of that place... It was a fire hazard, it was a safety hazard. I mean every other day I was in there saying "Look they bags need shifted bla, bla, bla." And as I say they...were not, until we spoke to Ray Kennedy and he says "This is terrible. You'd better get something done." And there was a meeting called last Tuesday. But I was called off my holidays to go to it. And that's what it was about. The mess of the place. Obviously things are going to start moving now because Parker was there with his boss. And Ray Kennedy was there with Sandy Miller. So things are going

to start moving now but it took him to do that...because it involved Parker's boss. His boss was quite angry and says "Well, you'd better get this done." We needed the men because they wouldn't listen to us.

Stuart: You, as a shop steward, and working in that environment, should have had the right - if you weren't getting satisfaction from Parker - to go over his head to his boss.

Katrina: Parker doesn't like that.

Irene: Don't know. You see that's the thing about it, dinna ken or not. Nayb'd'y tells you. I mean I don't know if I have the right to go to Parker's boss or -

Stuart: How can you work in the system if you don't know how the system works?

Irene: If they're no going to tell me, nayb'dy teaches you.

Stuart: That's what I'm saying. You canna be expected to work in it.

Irene: Nayb'dy says "This is what you can do as a shop steward." You're never told that. You only learn the basic things about it, about - I'm trying to think about what happened on that course.

"They asked you to do a one-day strike. But what use was that?"

Irene: some places need the help and support of other trade unions, when there's a crisis at their place of work. You do need something. You definitely do.

Irene: Aye.

Joan: Likes o'when there's strikes and things like that.

Irene: The Caterpillar factory was just like that. That really needed the support y'ken. But that was another thing. I'm just going back to the union. ...we had a monthly meeting on that... "Vote to give the men our support." Which we agreed. So everybody was to ask the workers for money. So we done that. And then there was a bus arranged for to take us through to the Caterpillar factory. And, as we thought, we were going to hand over this money. It gets there. There's a group o'eight or nine o'us. Erm, we had our money but nayb'dy else had money. So I mean we felt we weren't going to hand over the money if nobody else had any money. And they men at the Caterpillar factory, they gave us a tour of the whole building and a meeting and that, telling us what was what. And then we got back... Now surely we should have been a lot stronger than that... We collected our money two or three weeks running. And then in the end Ann still had all this money. So we just sent it away. Because Ray Kennedy hadna got in touch. We didna ken if we'd got to put all the money together or what. So we just sent it off. Well I mean that was the end o'it. And it was still going on... If we were going to support it we should have been doing it every week. ...I think they paid out seventy or eighty pound for the bloody bus! We was riding around on a bus! We should just have put that money and sent it in to them. So I mean they should have really carried that right through...

Stuart: I think that's true about a lot o'the unions.

Irene: Is it? well, that's not how I would run it.

Stuart: Well I mean, y'ken, the lack of communication -

Irene: Oh aye.

Stuart: - between the shop floor and the boys up here with the power. Dinna get me wrong, without the union we would get stomped all over. They are a sort of essential thing in the place of work. But I think personally I dinna feel, maybe, they do enough for the so-called wee

shower - we are the boys who work... But who are they shout'n at? Who are they shout'n for? I dinna feel they're shout'n for us.

silence

Stuart: That's from personal experience o' the union in there. But I mean you see it'n the news all the time. There's all different unions shout'n for different things and that. And places still shut down and people still get put out o' jobs.

Irene: That's true.

Stuart: So I mean -

Joan: They helped me when I had to go to the union. They got me a lawyer and fought the case.

Irene: Aye you see in that respect that's another good thing.

Joan: I wouldna have got anything otherwise.

Fiona: What happened?

Joan: The bit came off the machine and hit me in the ankle. I was off for five and a half weeks.

TS: You got compensation?

Joan: I got full wages and er - I dinna ken if they settled out of court or what - but I got a hundred pound from them.

Katrina: Aye they're fight'n Carol's case'n all aren't they?

Joan: Aye. And Julie Smith and all.

Irene: her case is settled.

Joan: OH yes that's right.

silence:

Stuart: ...the other big thing that affects...the Health Services is the privatisation aspect. I mean if the unions are so sure of themselves, and they're sort o' saying "We are all for the working people", how can they let things like that happen? It shouldna happen. I mean these industries, like steel, coal, specially, they've allowed all these pits to shut down, when there's still about twenty or thirty years' life left in they pits. So I canna understand how things like that happen.

TS: Does that mean you've got it in your mind that they've got more power than they actually exercise - that the unions have really got more power?

Stuart: Yeah. I do feel that. I do. I feel that they're too misdirecting this power to line their own pockets to worry about what happens down below.

TS: How could they use that power in the way that you're suggesting to stop pit closures, stop privatisation?

Stuart: Well the Government's more or less attacking the working people. On behalf of the working people the unions attack the Government back. If the Government hits you over the head with a club it's nay good slapping them back with a feather.

TS: So if you were going to hit them back with a club what would that look like?

Stuart: I mean if they hit you, you hit back.

Irene: mm.

Stuart: I mean they use whatever power they've got at their disposal.

TS: What sort of power?

Stuart: I just feel that they could have done more. More than was done, with steel and the foundries and the pits and all the privatisation that's going on in the health service...

Fiona: They asked you to do a one day strike. But what use was that? You do a one day strike one day, the next day it's forgotten.

Stuart: That's one thing we will not agree. I don't care what anybody says. A one day strike accomplishes absolutely nothing.

Irene: Nothing.

Stuart: You know what they say, oh but it's for us, it's for a show o'power and so on, for solidarity and all the rest of it. We know that stuff. ...if they go out on strike...if they want to make a point, go on strike. Just pull it all out. Go on strike. ...mucking around with one day strikes - even I wouldn't do it. If they were to say to me "Right we're running a one day strike", I wouldn't stay back. I would go to my work. If they were to say to me "Right we're going on strike till this is settled" then I would go.

Katrina: You dinna get anywhere with a one day strike.

"But you know, in the end, you would win, really Stuart"

Joan: The union had us out a week, about a week.

Katrina: Aye.

Joan: We did, we had them on their knees.

Stuart: Did, aye.

Joan: We had them just about on their knees, but we were not getting the support behind us. They all wanted to go back.

Irene: How do you get their support...?

Stuart: When I was stood up by that gate in the pelting snow with that banner in my hand at eight o'clock every morning.

Joan: Aye. In the freezing cold.

Stuart: I went out because someone says "It's not a one day, we're going to stay out till we get some satisfaction"...and that's what it's all about.

Katrina: The likes o'now, coming out on strike in the laundry, it would hit them. Because you've got all the hospitals. I mean half o'them in there are your own workers turning against you. So what's the point then?

Fiona: They won't di'it Katrina.

Katrina: No that's what I'm saying. It's all the ones -

Stuart: That's true enough. It's all the ones that complain. In yet if you were to turn round and say "All right we're going out on strike - "

Joan: For a week...

Stuart: "For as long as it takes."

Fiona: It's getting too near the holidays.

Irene: You see years ago the unions were a lot stronger. I can remember years ago when they had a lot o'power. But not a lot now.

Stuart: Because the Government's crippled them. And the unions have stood by and let it happen.

Irene: Aye, let that happen, aye.

Stuart: I don't know whether it suited their purpose to let that happen up to a certain point. I mean obviously they're not going to stand by and let them crush them totally.

Irene: I still say that's what happened to the miners, y'ken, really ...for some reason it wasna as strong as it should have been. And it's a true saying 'United you stand, divided you fall' and you always fall if you're divided.

Stuart: 'Course you will.

Irene: Usually, in all strikes that I can always mind, years ago, if you got a strike, it went right through. I mean you didna have the so-called

blacklegs trooping back in and things like that, which you have now. That is maybe...why...the unions, they don't have the same power as they had.

Katrina: Well it happened in there Irene. I mean half o'the workers were out...it was pointless... I mean we didna gain anything...with the rest o'them going in to their work.

Irene: That's crazy, what the hell are they doing in a union?

Joan: Pointless coming out.

Irene: I know. But some's worth fighting for and you fight for them.

Katrina: As you know, in the end -

Stuart: We had a go. The satisfaction of...trying to do something.

Irene: But you know, really, in the end you would win really Stuart.

Katrina: You would, aye.

Irene: Because I've seen all the laundry and I mean they would make a loss.

Stuart: You take that in there, when there's a Monday holiday, right? If you're off on a Friday...that's like Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday... that's four days, right? And the hospitals are literally crying out for their work. So you imagine if -

Katrina: We were out for a week.

Stuart: ...If for some reason we had to go on strike for wages or whatever and we went out there for to totally, totally shut the place down -

Irene: It would be a disaster.

Stuart: It would. They would have to give in...

Irene: ...I don't know. I've never been in a place like this - where so many wouldna come out...

Katrina: Only once I've ever ever seen everybody...standing by together... Mind they ended up having to take a vote'n it.

Fiona: Was that when they were want'n'i' bring something in?

Katrina: Aye.

Joan: I think it was -

Irene: Oh aye.

Fiona: From Central or something.

Katrina: Aye. Aye. And we didna originally want it. And that was the only time...

Irene: That was wrong: I was away on holiday there. It should never have happened. He took a vote and it was voted against. Twenty eight to twenty seven, something like that. Then they asked for a recount and it worked out twenty nine to them. Now really that's scandalous -

Katrina: ...we won. I mean it's ridiculous...

Irene: ...I couldn't believe it. I says "Oh dinna tell me any mair."...

Stuart: That was giving the 'yesses' an opportunity to niggle through the 'noes' to change their mind.

Irene: Aye...how could that possibly happen?

Fiona: Most of the time it's because we havena got...

Stuart: You see if we had a union representative their to...

Irene: That was Sandy Miller again asked for that recount...

Stuart: The man's a Convener. He should have known better.

Irene: That should never have happened.

Katrina: It should never have happened.

Stuart: That's where I feel let down by the union - for something like that to happen.

Joan: I did - I was flaming that time.

"I don't know if I have the right"

Irene: ...it was being discussed a protection of bonus, right? I thought we were going to have our say on that. But when it came to it, the ones above us agreed to thirty one per cent. Now I would never have agreed to 31% because I wanted more...for the work that we knew was going to come.

Katrina: But we never had any say in that. I was quite surprised.

Irene: It came from Ray Kennedy and Sandy Miller.

Katrina: Sandy Miller.

Irene: Now that shouldna be. They're nay working in that place. They thought this was the best deal. I thought it was a poor deal.

Stuart: Then it suited them not to knock it up.

Irene: Aye. Now I thought that was wrong -

Katrina: I mean they didna even ask.

Stuart:...they're still pick'n up their wage at the end of the week.

Irene: For four weeks prior to this meeting we'd been earning thirty three and a thirty four per cent bonus. But we knew it would have been impossible to earn anything near that when we were training - and everything coming in. So we are on a 31% bonus whereas I think we put up wi'a lot y'ken?. But as I say we were never asked...and...I mean it must have been all discussed before Ann and I went in the office. And I thought that was bad. Now I don't know if you had the right to object to Ray Kennedy and Sandy Miller for doing that. I don't know. that's where lack o'knowledge o'the union comes in. I don't know if we had the right to say "We were no happy wi'that, you shouldn't have done that." I don't know about that.

Katrina: I think the workers would have been able to talk up if somebody'd turned round and said "Oh just hold on a minute. We're no happy with that." Then they would have had to come to some other question.

Stuart: ...He's walked in and said "He offered us 31%, we thought it was a good deal so we accepted it..."

Katrina: Right. And we just accepted it.

Stuart: NUPE's got nay right ti'di'that.

Irene: I mean I was horrified, I really was.

Fiona: I say they should have spoke over with the shop stewards.

Irene: I mean I was expecting -

Stuart: They should have spoke over with the shop stewards and the shop stewards should have came back t'the shop flair and discussed it t'the workers - and then went back - if it was acceptable or not.

Irene: Aye. Because I mean I really was disappointed, y'ken I was very disappointed about that.

Stuart: Well, like anything else...challenge them to do something with it.

Irene: Well that's it. I don't know where my rights would be. I don't know if I had the right to say to they two: "Come here you. We're nay want'n that for our members." I don't know, baccuse they had discussed bit with management and, well, in a way I thought they're sort o'our boss o'the union. And I thought, well, they tell us "That's right", y'ken. So we must accept it.

Stuart: Well as a shop steward you're given that right to speak up.

Irene: mm.

Fiona: It's just that you're there as our representative in the laundry. You ken more about it than what they do because -

Irene: We had discussed it prior to that - no a great deal - but he knew we earned a lot more than thirty three and a third, y'ken. He knew we were looking for a lot more than that...

Stuart: He was saying it with sort o'contempt, like he'd done us a favour.

Irene: mm. Honestly he did that y'ken.

silence

Irene: So I mean how can they negotiate something o'that nature instead of us. I mean we're the workers, we're doing it, we work in the place...how can they represent us when they dinna work there?

Stuart: Well, I mean even Ray Kennedy doing that - can you see Ray Kennedy working, wi's house out here or something? Then how has he got the right to make any decisions on that?

Fiona: All he does is come and walk about up there.

Stuart: I mean even Sandy Miller when it comes to it -

Katrina: ...he might find out for himself...

Stuart: I mean the man's a Car Park attendant, what does he know what goes on over there?

Irene: But then he can stand up proudly and boast that he can get's porters thirty three and a third every week... I mean he's got the audacentral to stand up and tell us to accept thirty one!

Fiona:...The shop stewards are there so that they can take back what the workers have said.

Irene: But I still find it hard that they two people in particular - Ray Kennedy and Sandy Miller, they're the only two that I've been associated with in the union - how they can come into our building and Parker can put a proposition to them and they can say "That's fine, I'll tell the workers." Now, How can they do that when they dinna even work in the place? They don't know the running of the place and they don't know exactly how hard we work. So how can they say "Right that's feasible," y'ken "That's good. I'll tell them that"? I mean how can they do that? I mean by rights they should come to us and asy to us "Look this is bla, bla, bla" and "Do you think this is OK?" or "Do you no think it's enough?" or "Do you think it's too much?" or whatever. I mean...no management's going to give you too much to start with... But I mean how they can come in - walk in, have a meeting, walk out to the stewards and then say "I've got you" - that's how they say it to you - "I've got you thirty one per cent protected bonus."...

Katrina: Well look at Lanark. They're on a thirty three.

Irene: I tried to find out what they were on.

Katrina: Ha, ha! Well I found out! (laughs)

Irene...and I says "What's Lanark?" And no anybody would tell me.

Katrina: Well they're on thirty three as far as I know. And we got mair work than what they got.

Irene: That's right. They only got about eleven thousand pieces or something?

Katrina: Aye. Ten or eleven thousand pieces. We got fifty. We had worked. And yet look what they got. Thirty three.

Stuart: And if the union say they are all for the working man, how can they allow something like that to happen?

Katrina: There's another laundry though, out Stirling way, where...they get thirty four, thirty five per cent... Now how's that? Dinna how their bonus is worked . They get mair than us.

Irene: I know I'm embarrassed to say it to Sandy Miller and Ray Kennedy, y'ken. If I've got the right to say "No. You've got to come through me to do this." Y'ken I know us stewards have got very little right - well, I don't know about stewards in general - I mean we can solve a problem. But regards protection of bonus and everything else, we have very little say in it.

Irene: ...say just for instance I was in the office with Sandy Miller, bla, bla, bla. And we were having a discussion, right? And he was coming up to tell the members this is what we did. And I sorely disagreed with him. Now I couldna possibly sit at that table with him and him stand up and say "This is the best deal" if I totally disagreed wi'im. So what would I be able to do? Would I be allowed to say "Now look... I dinna agree with that"? What would be my rights then?

Fiona: You're still allowed to gi'your opinion.

Katrina: Aye. Like you could put your opinion and what you think.

Irene: Well, I don't know. I thought my job is just to convey what management's offered. And I canna voice an opinion on that one way or another... If I came up and I says "Management says thirty per cent for so many months" I can't say to yous "I think that's a scandalous - " ...it would cause a riot, cause a riot. Because I feel many a time things that has been arranged I definitely don't agree with. But then when you have somebody above like Ray Kennedy agreeing to it, I don't know if I've got the right to sit at the table with him and just sit and say nothing which I normally do because if I stand up and say "Well I dinna agree with this" y'ken, I'm a shop steward, aren't I?

Stuart: That's like saying being a shop steward takes away you freedom o'speech.

Irene: No. It doesna in that sense. What I feel is, I'm just conveying what management's offered. Then it's up to you, you see, y'ken?

Fiona: He does it. ...he'll say "Management's offered us this, that and the next thing. But I think - " I mean he tells you what he thinks.

Irene: But I really don't know what my position is. I really don't know if I can - I really dinna ken. I would need to discuss that with Sandy Miller. But I think probably he would twist it the other way round.

Stuart: Too much o'that goes on within the union.

Irene: You see I've got to depend on him generally because I dinna ken a lot about it and he - that man knows a lot. Well I think he knows a lot, right? So what he tells me - I just go by what he tells me. I mean who am I to say "That's no right?" That must be Union rule y'ken? I don't know. I just don't know.

Stuart: Are you, as a shop steward, bound to agree with everything the union puts forward?

Irene: I dinna ken. It doesna say anything about that in the -

Katrina: Well I dinna think that's right -

Irene: But if he agrees wi'management.

Fiona: Well it shouldna be up to him.

Katrina: Well It shouldna be up to him.

(06)

"Our members were a hundred per cent behind us"

Irene: ...the time that the Central was shutting quicker than it should have shut...we had a meeting. And I felt, well, there's no way I'm taking their work off them. I mean they need their jobs, right? But they had written to us by earlier saying that they were quite happy that the place was shutting down quicker...

TS: That was a letter from the workforce was it?

Irene: Aha. But mind you a lot o'people in the laundry, when they knew the Central was shutting, never approached me and says "Well what's happening to their workers? That is their job."...

TS: So how did you find out what was happening...you got this letter, was that the first you'd heard?

Irene: No, we were having a meeting in the office with Mr Parker and Sandy Miller. And it was Mr Parker that said the Central was shutting. And Sandy Miller says well "I'll have to speak to the members up there," He says, "because after all that is their job. And It shouldna be shutting. And I hope you understand that we need a letter of confirmation saying that they accept it's shutting and that they're quite happy that it's shutting". So we got that letter and it says that they were happy.

TS: Suposing they hadn't been?

Irene: Well we wouldna take their laundry... They wouldna accept it either. It's not the first time they've refused the Central laundry.

Stuart: And that's principle.

Irene: If their machine's off or whatever - I mean it's not the first time they've refused to take it... I think one - was it a dispute?

Stuart: Some kind of dispute up there. And Parker tried to get the work brought in to us.

Irene: He does do that aye.

Stuart: ...they contacted the shop steward at the time, contacted us and told us the situation, and asked if, 'ken, we would back them by refusing to handle the laundry. Which we did.

Irene: Aye. We've done that twice. It's awful this, he meant it. He's taping it!

laughter

Stuart: All the things there have taken place.

chorus: Oh aye.

Irene: Gi'us a higher bonus!

TS: Well how did that get sorted out between you and the union members in there then?

Irene: Our members were a hundred percent behind us, there was no -

TS: Did you have a meeting or did the word just get round?

Stuart: We had a meeting.

Irene: Aha.

Stuart: The motion was put forward and we had a show o'hands. I think just about everybody agreed to that.

chorus: Aye.

Irene: I mean that would be crazy to take their work if they were having a dispute. It's like us, if we have a dispute, I wouldna have expected the Central to say "Oh bring it all up here". We wouldna get anywhere wi'our dispute. Because management would be getting his work done. But

however, it soon settled didn't it?

Fiona: But he tried to sneak some in though.

Irene: Oh aye,

Stuart: He brought a van round on a Saturday morning - backed it in... and opened the door and all that, when we all came in on the Saturday morning. He says "Off-load that one." So the boys were getting into it - "Oh that's Central" - put it back in, shut the door, drove it into the car park and just left it!

TS: Just like that.

Stuart: Just like that.

Irene: And that's scandalous isn't it

Stuart: And in the end I think he got in it himself and took it back up the Central and off-loaded it.

TS: How do you think the people who refused to handle it...how did they feel about it, do you know?

Irene: ...I would think they'd feel quite pleased with what they'd done. Yes, proud, which they had every right to feel. I mean they are their fellow-workers just the same. And if you're going to do their work you're ending up wi'nothing, y'ken. I mean, as I say, the situation could be reversed. It could have been reversed any day for us. So I mean we're going to need their backing.

(06)

"I think the porters would back us if ever we really needed them"

Katrina: I just get information from my man!

laughter

Katrina....just from working over there.

laughter

Katrina: He's a porter - he's the shop steward for them over there.

Caroline: That's interesting information!

Katrina: Seemingly they're clamping down over there as well.

Stuart: Aye. That's what I was hearing.

Katrina: That Wendy Norman is going mental with them...

Stuart: My brother's a chargehand porter over there and he was saying that. That's how I found out about the laundry lying about over there, because he got the backlash o'it. That's his responsibility to see that goes out. They're having to move it to make sure it doesn't catch fire - which it has done before.

Katrina: And it's right above the Maternity.

Stuart: The Maternity's right above it.

Katrina: They've got the Fire Inspector or something over there, haven't they? And they reckon it's all because Nicky got onto them and told them.

Maragaret: ...it's all foul linen, the bags that are lying.

Stuart: It's nylon bags. You know how easily nylon catches fire.

Irene: That's true.

Katrina: The whole place'll be up.

Irene: And it was reported that there were nothing done about it.

(03)

Irene: We are quite isolated...we are isolated.

Stuart: We hardly have any contact with them. The only contact we have with them over there is with the porters in the linen room. Like when the stuff there at the hospital itself is going backward and forward.

That's the only contact we have with them over there.

Irene: But I mean on the other hand we are actually on our own y'ken

Stuart; But we are actually recognised as part of the hospital.

Irene: No I don't think so ...for some reason...

Katrina: The porters certainly back themselves! (laughs). But we have nothing to di'with them really do we...?

Stuart: Except when we have a dispute with them over the comings and goings of the linen room. If they dinna get a van over in time for issuing the linen or something like that...

silence

Stuart: It's strange when you think about it, you know.

Irene: It's because actually they are away. They actually work in the hospital. We don't work in the hospital... I suppose the porters have a good relationship with domestics, auxilliary nurses. They come across them every day.

Stuart: They're working beside them every day, aye.

Irene: We don't. We are just, as Stuart says, ...at the backdoor sort of thing of the hospital.

silence

Stuart: You would think, from a union point of view, you would try to have mair o'a contact between department and department. Especially when you look at the size of the workforce in there, as opposed to the porters' size of the workforce.

Irene: Well the only time I meet porters is at the monthly meeting. And nine times out of ten the porters are nay there.

Stuart: Well what do you think?

Irene: That's right, aye.

Stuart: If the porters have got a problem and they're looking for backing or something -

Irene: We should be involved in it.

Stuart: Y'ken we could always go in the laundry looking for support or something like that.

Irene: I've never done that, no, no.

silence

Irene: You really are quite isolated. Definitely.

silence

Irene: But then you couldna have porters and domestics and auxiliaries coming in for their laundry and that. I mean you just couldna work that way. That's the only way you could sort o'get to know them if they were to come over - if they came over for certain laundries, if they had to come in for certain linens and that. But it just doesna run like that. So that's why you never see them...because our paths never cross.

Stuart: ...there's no give and take, like with us getting word o'what's happening in the hospital ...and they find out what's happening over here sort of thing. These means we have in there... somebody from the press room, somebody from the calender room and somebody from the machines - finding out what's happening in all different departments and all that.

Irene: Aye,

Stuart: I mean there's nothing like that.

Irene: No. I don't know. D'you think it would help?

Stuart: It wouldnae harm.

Irene: Would you like to tell the porters all our problems?

laughter

Stuart: No but just that sort of thing where you ken, if you had to, you could rely on their support for something.

Irene: That's right, aye, that is true.

Stuart: But like you say, you never come across any so you dinna ken.

Irene: You never come in contact with any.

Stuart: You don't know what their feelings are about any kind of problem or anything.

Irene: I mean I was sitting next to Katrina's husband at a meeting. And we were introducing ourselves and he said what his name was and he was a porter. I mean I'd never seen him in my life.

Stuart: Oh well you couldna'a'kissed'm
laughter

Katrina: He'd get smacked then.
laughter

Irene: No I think there will always be the laundry as a laundry -

Stuart: outcasts.

Irene: - all alone. Do you think we get the recognition that we should get? I sometimes feel that "Oh it's the laundry!" y'ken. In other words the laundry is the lowest job in the hospital. ...that's the feeling I get.

Caroline: Some of the nurses think we still stand and iron their dresses and that! They believe each bundle gets washed separate. And a lot of them are surprised when they walk round and see it's all machines. Because they actually think you can just pick up their bundle because they're want'n it washed! Or they're want'n it there and then - and (you can) go and wash it! Because there's one of them - I'd love to ring her neck, ha-ha. She's a pain - she sends it out the one day and she's phoning up about it the next day!

Irene: She must think then we're waiting for her little bag to come in.

Caroline: Aye. It's marked "Wanted urgently".

Stuart: Harry Maguire was like that the first time he walked over there with the machines going on.

Irene: What's that?

Stuart: I mean he must have thought, y'ken, washing machines. He must have thought laundrettes. You come in, turn on, you lift up the lid, throw the washing in and...

laughter

Stuart: He's walked in, he's walked past one of the tumbler driers, one of the big laundry driers, the Vosses, and he says "What the hell are they?" I mean they're totally ignorant o'what goes on over there.

TS: Who's this guy?

Stuart: Harry Maguire, what's he, shop steward? Branch Secretary or something.

Irene: But we do have a few people for their laundry over, being shown round, nurses and that...y'ken.

Joan: ...quite a few.

Fiona: There was some in this morning.

Katrina: This morning aye

Stuart: I had them on the Vosses for about an hour.

Katrina: Dinna ken.

Irene: It's maybe just to show them that - how we - y'ken the lowest of the lowest working life!

Caroline: It's certainly the lowest...upstair.

Katrina: Dinna ken about that!

Irene: But I don't know if - as Stuart says - if we really had a dispute, if we could depend on the porters, because we dinna associate with them that much.

Stuart: Well I have actually heard that being said. From...that last dispute we had in there, you know. And it was a case o' Sandy Miller must have been over and told them what was happening over here. Fine. And what was his name? In there, what's his name? Davis, Peter Davis?

Irene: Don't know.

Stuart: Something or other. He's turned round and he says "Ach" he says "It's only - it's just the laundry. Dinna worry about it." And that was it. End of story.

Katrina: Ah but Peter, Peter Davis's an arse! If you'll excuse the language!

laughter

Stuart: - there's no community spirit, you know? We're all employed by the same people. We're all, really, we're all part of the same work-force.

Irene: That's it.

Stuart: There shouldna be splits like that.

Katrina: Well I think -

Stuart: When you have splits like that - and something really big happens -

Irene: Oh I know.

Stuart: - and you have splits like that, you have no chance whatsoever.

Irene: Oh no, no.

Fiona: And they ken and all. If they've got something to ask the laundry we have got -

Stuart: That's what kills me. That's what really annoys me. If they've got a dispute, we're the first people they come to.

Fiona: Because the majority of the porters do come into this laundry.

Katrina: Well I think the porters -

Stuart: ...of any single department in the hospital itself, that is the biggest force.

Irene: Well I think we are.

Stuart: If you're counting heads that is the biggest force.

TS: Do you mean that other departments have come to you for -

Stuart: Yes

TS: - for assistance? Can you give us an example of that?

Irene:...not in my time.

Stuart: When they were going to privatise the domestics, remember?

Irene: That must have been before I came.

Stuart: They were going to bring in private contractors, private contract cleaners to -

Katrina: Was that the catering side?

Stuart: The catering side as well.

Katrina: the catering side, aye. I remember that.

Stuart: And the first people, the first department they came to was us.

TS: How did they do that? Did the shop steward come over or - ?

Stuart: That was Sandy Miller come over.

Katrina: Aye, Sandy Miller.

Fiona: Aye

Stuart: He told us what was happening and saying, ken, "We'll let you know what's happening". And right away - he says "So make sure you're hands are up" - everybody's hands went up to back them. We'd di'it...for

them, and yet when it comes ti'us, there's nay -

Katrina: I dinna ken, Stuart.

Joan: They did the miners.

Katrina: I think the porters would back us up if ever we really needed them. I think most o'them would.

Stuart: I'd argue with that.

Katrina: I mean look at the times they come out on strike for different things - for domestics and catering.

Stuart: Aye, but they've been directly involved in it as well.

Katrina: But they didna have to, no really. I mean they didna have to come out for the rest of the catering side and domestics and that - I mean they still could have carried on. But they came out on strike just the same.

Stuart: But only out of fear their department was next on the list.

Katrina: Well no, no. That time it wasna...

Stuart: Remember Sandy Miller had a list o'departments they were considering putting out to tender.

Katrina: Well that's what was happening to us.

Stuart: I know, we were on the list as well.

Katrina:...Any of us would get backed up by the rest o'them - them porters and that.

Stuart: Well, not from my past experience, we wouldna.

Irene: Maybe no, they might think they... they'd get better laundry there!

laughter

Katrina: Well if they didna I would just ring his neck!
laughter

(07)

PART III

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint is an Old Peoples Home next to a noisy main road in central Scotland. Opened in 1986, it is part of the current attempt by local authorities to break with a tradition of caring for elderly people in institutions. Rapid growth in the population over 75 has forced the pace of change. Most people who need the practical help of health and social services in their old age now get it at home. But where this is impossible, the idea of the institution has been modified. As it happens, most of the residents of Viewpoint have moved from a much larger institution, Iron House, together with the staff who care for them. In their new Home they live in one of six 'flats', each housing eight elderly people. This design, and the official doctrine which accompanies it, have had profound implications for the people who work there. What follows is the result of a series tape-recorded discussions with all sections of the staff. Largely because a course for the care staff was running at the same time, the group which took part changed from week to week. As it turned out, this only made the discussions more interesting. Dennis was the steward at the outset, Eleanor took over just before the final discussion.

Contents:

Chapter	I	NEW PHILOSOPHY, OLD SYSTEM	page	98
Chapter	II	POWER OVER, EXPERIENCE UNDER	page	108
Chapter	III	A SHARP DIVISION	page	118
Chapter	IV	THE UNION	page	131
Chapter	V	AFTER A CRISIS	page	146
Appendix		THE OFFICERS' RESPONSE	page	155

Note: It had not been the intention to include the management of the Home, the officers. However, since their reactions to the transcripts of the discussions had a direct impact on the views of the staff, a discussion was recorded with them and has been included as an Appendix. Where the officers make comments on the views of the rest of the staff, the relevant section of the Appendix is indicated by numbers in brackets in the main body of the text (EG⁽¹²⁾).

Numbers in brackets on the right hand side of the page indicate the discussion (numbered 1 to 10) from which the preceding section has been drawn. A dash (-) on the left hand side indicates that a section of the discussion has been left out in order to shorten this document. Three dots (...) in the text also indicates missing material. This was either inaudible on the tape or has been edited out in order to save space.

"Enthusiastic"

Eleanor (part-time Care Assistant): I think it's a great place. I've only been here for, what, nearly three months now. I'm really enjoying it... They give you a lot of freedom to do your work. They're not breathing down your neck all the time. Much better than where I was for ten years. There was no trust...

TS: That was in a hospital?

Eleanor: Yes.

Betty (Care Assistant): Oh we've a lot of freedom here.

Bill (Care Assistant): It makes a difference.....I've been used to "You go and do that".⁽¹⁾

Bill: ...unfortunately I went to sea when I was 15. And the Captain's word was law. I mean there was no argument. If he said "Do that!" That was it. Anyway if you answered back you got fined two days wages... It was as simple as that you know... In here I find they have been helpful. They talk about courses. They talk about training. Other places I've worked in they don't give you any idea. You just go out there and watch what they're telling you. And that's it. Here at least they tell you what's wrong with them. And why they're on tablets and why they're in that condition...

Betty: Aye, that's because we ask for it though.

(03)

Bill: ...I consider this to be a good home compared to some of them I've been in...this Group Living seems to be a far better idea.

Betty: The only good thing I think about the group living idea is that, as a member of staff, you're in a flat on our own. So you don't really have to work with any other staff on that shift. And I prefer that.

Jenny (Care Assistant): I've enjoyed working with other staff.

Fiona (Care Assistant): Yeah I did as well... I've worked at Iron House Keswick (one of the sections of Iron House) - that was just an open section. Two or three of you worked together and I felt the residents opened up more. If the two care assistants are having a lark about, the residents will join in. But it's a bit difficult to try and have a lark about on your own! You can do it yourself, but you can't get that atmosphere that there was at Keswick.⁽²⁾ It's not here at all. In other respects it's really good. Material things, it's good. You know, the building's better. Better facilities. But the atmosphere isn't there, I don't think.

Bill: It's probably the same in all Homes... If you get a fairly happy Home where all the staff are happy...it comes off on the residents. If you get a bad Home where it's strict disciplinarian, you know, it shows up in the staff and in the residents as well. ...in a happy Home, people in there are more responsive.

Peter (Care Assistant): ...well, one certain supervisor at Keswick, ...we had the supervisor on our back an awful lot. And here I think you've got more discretion - we can use our own discretion here.

Fiona: There is more independence here.

Graeme (Cook): Yeah, I find in the kitchen there's days when I never ever see many officers, the kitchen being at the back of the

building. They dinna go prowling about looking to see what you're up to, check'n-up'n-us. ...I worked up at Parkstone which has sixty residents, where it wasn't the group living. But I preferred it up there with the actual serving of the food. Because it was one dining hall. And it was the chefs, the cooks who served up the meals. Whereas I find to get the meals ready on time, with the trolley system, I have to put things on half an hour before they're due to go out... I don't like that very much - because things have tended to dry out and shrivel.

Anna (Domestic): ...you do what you're expected to do, you know what I mean? It's domestic work. We just feel that we could have a lot more to do with the residents.⁽³⁾ You're in there working and they're talking to you. And they're saying "will you go and get this for me" and "Will you go and get that for me" and "we need a cup of tea." But you can't do anything like that now.

Jessie (Domestic): We used to do it beforehand at at Iron House.

Anna: But it's all different now. We're sort of segregated, you know what I mean? Even when they're in bed ill, you know what I mean? We canna be in the same place all the time. Because you've got four flats, eight rooms to look after plus maybe baths and everything else. (But) I think if somebody's ill in bed, and you're in that room and they want a cup of tea, I think you should be able to go and gi'them a wee cup of tea. But it's not allowed to you.

Fiona Even a chat.

Anna: You can't do that either you know.

Sarah (Care Assistant): Someone was invited to have a cup of tea - from the residents. Now the woman had finished her work and she was invited by a resident to have a cup of tea and chat. And someone came in and told her she was not allowed to do that.⁽⁴⁾ You know, this is meant to be the resident's home, to do what she likes. Yet a supervisor comes along and says "No you're not allowed to do that". So it's taking away a resident's right of choice.

Peter: It flies in the face of group living, doesn't it?

Sarah: That's right. It does. In yet that domestic...when we were short of Care Staff, she was running the flat up the stairs and doing everything for the residents.

Paula (Domestic): See that night there was a fire there, and there was just nayb'dy in, nayb'dy in the kitchen, we had to give them a hand. (01)

Dennis (Care Assistant, Steward): I'll say one thing. They've tried to take away the institutionalisation from the Homes. And they're putting it back in in another way... They have these philosophies that are in all the new Homes now. There's a big book. In some of the Homes you actually get to read these things, you know! It's this whole exaggerated theory on the change in society. And how you're supposed to help the residents become as independent as possible. We just stand back and watch them doing for themselves. And they get everything they want. ...and by jove you're not doing your job if they don't get it! So when we go in, you know, we're enthusiastic. And we go to the office on residents' rights... They say "No". And it seems like the system only applies in theory. As long as they can use it to their advantage. But when...we're trying to do this and they're saying "No", it's back to manual work again, you know. ...they can change it any time they want. And it's back to the old system of things. It just goes back to the same

institution thing. At the end of the day...it's still back to the Home thing.

"The institution thing"

Provision books

Kate: These provisions books - we're left responsible in our jobs to take decisions for the residents - but they can't trust us...to get the provisions books signed!

Dennis: ...you give them it and all they do is they look at it and they sign it. And it's a whole complete waste of time. ...we've to run about looking for them until we've got them - eventually. They wouldn't back down over a wee book. I mean we were sitting here trying to define systems of work with them. They were agreeing to this, agreeing to that... But when it came to something that they knew was wrong - they knew they were making fools of themselves in front of everybody - but they still wouldn't back down. They had to sign these books. And every time people went down and complained and asked them to sign it out, "No". And they said it was because, what was it? Some flats would overstock. And it depends. ...we have one resident, ex-army, who likes salmon every day for days 'n' end!

Kate: That's right. And the annoying bit was that at the very beginning, at the first meeting, we were told that we were to order whatever the resident wanted... And we did exactly that. And I still don't think we were being all that extravagant. We only asked them what they wanted and they got what they wanted. But then we were told that they'd overspent and we had to get this book signed and everything. As if it was our fault. It was only as if we were stupid and we'd been overspend'n' ourselves. But we'd been told to do that...⁽⁵⁾

Teachers and children

Dennis: It's like going back to school again...we've got to send the book through from the flat for the residents. You've got to go to the teacher, the officer in charge, and "S'cuse me will you correct this for me?"

Graeme: Well since I've been here - I started in January there - they've give us, every three month, a budget report to see if the kitchen has overspent. And I've just got one, about three or four weeks ago, for January, February, March. And I've got a "Very good" for my budget control (laughs).

laughter

Shirley (Care Assistant): You got a VG!

Graeme: I got a VG for budget control, because we were under budget, for the first three months of this year.

Shirley: Try for the record next time!

laughter

Too much noise round the forum

Shirley: ...this is supposed to be a social job, socialising with the residents. And at one point we were told there was too much noise round the forum... So you weren't to sort of go there in the evening. And that was the only place where the residents could socialise together.

TS: This is the area down in the middle of the Home is it?

Shirley: Yes. But there was too much noise going on so it was recommended that they stay in the flats.⁽⁶⁾

Short staffing

Kate: Staffing used to be a problem but, over the past month or so, it's been resolved.

Dennis: ...in some ways it was like the job was totally domesticated. It's the institution thing. It wasna supposed to be like that at all. You know, it's got this idea that you can sit down and do all sorts of things with residents. But you've got to go downstairs with the trolley, upstairs with the trolley. Sometimes you've got to go up and down like a yo-yo. It was even worse, sometimes, if you had high infection in the flat... If you've three residents in their beds and you're trying to take care of the meals and things like that downstairs. And you've to come upstairs as well... That's things like bathing and all that sort of thing. I think it's absolutely crazy.

Bathing paranoia.

Dennis: For ages this crazy paranoia over residents getting baths... I was saying, you know "Whenever you want a bath, get it"... But the staff come in the door here and it was like their whole job here was to bath! ...they were doing about twenty baths. ...they were checking up in the book to see if you had done your baths! Just like the provisions thing... But you were saying on the one hand the residents have got their rights. The residents get a bath. But on the other hand they (the officers) decide whether the resident gets a bath or not..."

Shirley: I know that happened...but I've not come across it.

Kate: Aye it's certainly gone by the wayside.

Dennis: We only had that problem because...I think it was the old institutional thing "OK What do Care Assistants do? They bath, they wash...and they shave" And they (the officers) had all this down (in print. ed.). And that was about authority you know. And it was really bad. Because she was coming in and, Christ, it was like the world had ended if you hadna done a bath... You'd go home and you were still thinking about the bath you hadna done!⁽⁷⁾

Finding themselves a wee role

Dennis: They knew Paul (temporary porter) played the guitar when he came in the Home. And that's a great asset ..but it's only when it suits. It depends who's on. I think some, as well, in the office have got this thing about authority... Because...I think a lot of the work has been taken away from them now, because the Care Staff are doing it. They just sit in the office. They...used to be...running about daft and doing this that and the next thing. And shouting back and all the bit of it. You can't do it in a place like this. It's foreign to the philosophy. Everybody's doing the work. Everybody's muck'n in. And you've got this person sitting in the office saying "Well, what do I do?" So they go out and they say "Oh I'll have to do something." So they find themselves a wee role to play. And they start dictating to everybody under the sun, you know, just shout'n and bawl'n. And people are walking about. Oh I really do hate to see that. So she goes off and another one comes on and it's totally different.

(03)

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"There's a barrier put up isn't there? We're not treated as equals"

Paul: I'm temporary here. So many things I see...I can't actually say direct...because...as soon as I start complaining about anything I see as wrong, I'm going to get the boot... Namely, I see a difference between the Care Staff and the Domestic Staff in here.

Fiona: There's a barrier put up isn't there? We're not treated as equals. I mean there's - quite a big barrier between us.

Paul: Which...there shouldn't be really.

Fiona: No I don't think there should. I mean we're all as good as one another. It shouldn't be there at all.

Paul: ...we should be all together.

Fiona: Yes.

Bill: Well, I was onto Mrs Curtis this morning. And her idea was that...you didn't need discussion of the residents with the domestics. And yet the domestics can tell you that so-and-so's incontinent or whatever... She seems to think that as you're Care Staff you shouldn't say anything to domestics or anything like that...

Anna: We're the underdogs.

laughs

Anna: In other words the domestics are not allowed to mix with the care staff.

Peter: I think if the domestics have their work done, and they've spare time, and they sit down and socialise with the residents, they'll get a row for that. In yet they're asked to come in and do lots of overtime and help in social events. It's really unfair you know. They just shouldn't be arguing.

Bill: Quite a number of them, I know, when I've got called out for social events, when they couldn't get care staff, they've been on their own...

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Paul: I was told the day I started temporary by Mrs Curtis "You have nothing to do with the residents." That's what I was told. "Your job's a porter." And I said "Oh well that's good enough". In yet I've seen times when the other officer in charge will come up to me and say "Listen do you think you could bath this person for me?" And then you say "I'm only a porter" and she'll say "That's OK, I'm telling you." So you've one competing with the other, you see. You don't actually know whether to say "Yes I'll do it", or not do it. It's a funny situation to be in. (01)

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"Whether it was right or wrong, that was the way I was to do it"

Paul: It's crazy. You don't really know where you stand. I feel it would be much better if they told me where I stood. I've seen a third line officer, she says to me... "If you feel you've done all your work, go in with the residents and have a sing-song." Right, so I took my guitar in...one of the sections with the residents. And we had a laugh and that. Then I got called in the office. And one of the officers in charge...she says "You've done nothing for an hour" you see. And I said "Oh, I was socialising with the residents there." She says "That's not your job. You're here to get on with your work." I say fair enough. I handed in my keys and walked out...early... So I'm expecting to see the officer in charge some time today, to get a bollocking... So I think it

depends who actually is in charge. There tends to be a different atmosphere when one of the staff's on - senior staff - who's all right, y'ken? ...and there's a sort of relaxed atmosphere. And other times you get one of them officers on and everybody tends to be hiding away as soon as you see them coming. It's crazy...⁽⁸⁾ (02)

Anna: I came up against this a while ago...with one of the officers... I disagreed with her on something and I was taken into the office. And I was told by the officer in charge that if she told me to do it that way, whether it was right or wrong, that was the way I was to do it. Which I didnay agree with. Because I still think that the way I was doing it was right, for me.

Bill: ...she says "I am the Assistant Officer in Charge and you must realise that I am always...

TS: ...that's elsewhere, that's in other Homes?

Bill: That's right...I must give her her dues as assistant officer in charge...

Anna: Hm, hm, whether we do or not! That's what I was told.

Graeme: You're saying that, Anna, when I first started here I was told by the officer in charge that one other officer, she named her, if she tells you "Order more food", or "do this in the kitchen" or "do that with your menus", I was just to ignore it! I wasnay to do it!

laughter

Graeme: So you're told that thing and I was told this about another officer!

Anna: Yeah, it's probably the same officer!

laughter

TS: But that's here?

Anna: That's here, yes.

Graeme: Yes.

TS: Well how do you resolve that?

Graeme: Well it's extreemly fortunate she has nay -

laughter

Graeme: There hasnay been the opportunity to say I'm not doing it!

laughter

Betty: Would you though?

Graeme: I don't know what I would. I don't know. I'd probably take a note of it and go back and consult the officer first.

laughter

Bill: You'll find a lot of this is that even your senior management don't know (what's going on). They'll take an officer's word before they'll take a Care Staff's word, you know.

Anna: Yeah, yeah, I agree wi'you.

Bill: You've got to start going through procedure. Oh even in the brewery was the same, all the way up, to the directors on the Board before we got it resolved. He said "You're quite right" you know. I say to myself, she's got it all worked out with the...APOs...so that in all cases she's right.⁽⁹⁾

Anna: I agree wi'you.

TS: What's an APO? Sorry.

Bill: Assitant Principal Officer...

Graeme: You have to go through quite a lot of channels sometimes -

Betty: Aye.

Graeme: - to have something resolved. You know, as Bill's saying, two

steps up from the Officer in Charge to the APO, then the Assitant Director, or whatever, comes next, before something actually gets resolved. That can take a while.

TS: Have you had experience of doing that?

Graeme: No I haven't. No.

TS: But you've known it done?

Graeme and Betty: Yes.

Bill: I've had experience of doing it, you know, going through channels ... I think what you find is that if you're trying to get something personal resolved, you know, you have a...problem trying to get in touch with Personnel. And I found this in the brewery. Can you find them?
laughter

Bill: You wondered what their job was if they didn't want to know you. I was a shop steward. And all the men with personal problems - he said "We'll have to see if we can get them a shift somewhere else where their personalities will fit in better." You never got anywhere. You just didn't ...you wonder what was their jobs, when you couldn't see them.

TS: ...can I ask you if you should always do what management tell you?

Betty: Oh no.

Anna: No.

TS: Anyone like to say more about that?

Anna: Well in my case I've had to really. I mean I have to. Whatever this officer tells me, I've got to do it, whether I think it's right or wrong. I still have to do that the way I've been told.

Betty: Management tend to go by the book and watch policy...⁽¹⁰⁾ When you're dealing with people you can't stick to what's written in a book. And policy. Not when it comes to handling them. It's only to save themselves because they have the overall responsibility, should anything go wrong and happen.

Bill: I think everyone's got a different way of working, you know. Somebody'll say to a resident "You go and do that" and they'll do it...⁽¹¹⁾ I'll say "Come on, you know what you want to do,"...at the same time...you canna stick to a rigid policy...

TS: If you were given an instruction that you felt minded not to implement, how would you go about dealing with that?

Betty: Just wouldn't do it.

Norma: I wouldn't do it. No.

Betty: Because I'd be able to justify it.

"We've always got a way round things, you know"

TS: Now does that mean that domestics are in a different situation in some way? You were saying that you've really got no choice but to do whatever management tell you?

Anna: Well, if the Officer in Charge tells you that you've to do it in the way this Third Officer tells you, whether you're right or wrong. That was as much as what she said. She wants it done that way. I do it the way she wants it, not the way I think it should be done. Or the way I think it would be better done that way. I have to do it the way she tells me to do it... It wasn't even discussed, you know what I mean? To me it should have been discussed with the three of us. But I didn't get that chance at all. I was just told.

Bill: ..."OK", you say."You can rave all day." But just to save all the

arguments...what you'll have to do then is talk to everybody else... Go to the union...

TS: Have you done that here? Has that situation arisen, where you've found that everybody has disagreed, you know, with a particular line of policy or a particular instruction and you've involved the union?

Bill: I don't think we have really. We've had a...few individual people just feel "OK, I won't do that..."

TS: There was an example of...a standing instruction, as I understand it, to carry out regular baths, yes? ...how did you move from a situation where you were under instructions to do all this bathing, to a more relaxed scenario? How did that come about?

Bill: Well in all the Homes I've been in you know, the old matron-type: "Everybody in here's going to be cleaned and scrubbed and shaved and dressed and - ". So anybody coming in from outside would say "Oh what a smart old man". And instead of that man being an individual, saying "I don't want a shave this morning" - well, what do you do with a resident? Do you drag'm off towards the bathroom? "It's your bath turn today now!" laughter

Betty: Ah but that does happen.

Bill: That's what I'm saying.

Betty: You have to remind management (in places like Iron House) that you are dealing with people that have choices. And so we don't force them physically into doing anything. And apart from that...if the person's confused, what you do is mark them off in the book as clean and bathed. And as long as they see there's a tick there, they won't question it!

laughter

Betty: You know what I mean? So management know there's no point'n push'n it. We've always got a way round things, you know.

TS: ...is that because of the way this Home has been designed... the fact that you've got these flats? Or would you still say that in a conventional Old Peoples Home?

Betty: I'd say it anywhere, in any situation, I really think I would.

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"We ran the place ourselves"

Betty: I was just going to say it must be really awfully frustrating. Because I know, if I was management, and I was in the office and I had all these directives to the staff, "Now you don't do this and you don't do that and you don't do this." And I'd know they were doing it, it would really nip my head all the time. Because you wouldn't be able to keep a check on them. It must be awful. They must think "I'm wasting my time here", you know?

TS: Well, what about that? I mean how important is the management function in a place like this? -

Betty: Oh it's important.

TS: As important as your job?

Betty: Och aye, everybody's important. We're all equally as important.

TS: And managers as well?

Betty: Yes.

TS: Would anybody else like to say anything about that? Are managers, in terms of what they do by comparison with what you do, are they more important than you, or, or equal or what?

(someone): Just the same I would say.

Anna: No I dinna think so... As Betty says a wee while ago, we could all come in here and run this place. If they didna turn up it would still go.

Betty: To a certain extent.

Anna: And then, I suppose there would always be somebody else at Oak Hall (Social Work Department HQ) would step in, wouldn't they, to do the wee bit paperwork or whatever they do, you know? This could be run without them.

Bill: I once came under a scheme like that in the brewery... They tried to create more jobs for the boys... There was nine of us on the night shift. There were no managers, no foremen, nothing. We ran the place ourselves, you know. Then management decides "Oh it won't do." It's been like that for years! ...so when I was made redundant from the brewery...we had a Manager, an Under-manager, a Night-shift Manager, a Night-shift Production Manager, a Night-shift Production Co-ordinator and three foremen. There was still only nine men in the place.

laughter

TS: And there had previously been a period where you had just run it yourselves?

Bill: For years and years and years...

Anna: That's something like here Bill, isn't it? I'm no being funny, but ther's four o'yous, say one in each flat, looking after residents. And we've got, what, four officers, five? Shortly, five officers.

Management.⁽¹²⁾ There's only, what, how many residents? forty eight or something - and us.

TS: Now you're saying it would run itself. And you're saying "to a certain extent"

Betty: To a certain point, yes. Couple of days maybe.

Anna: Maybe till there's a crisis or something like that. But I think we're all quite sensible. We could -

Betty: I actually did suggest that we had role-play for a few days - management to swap positions. They weren't all that keen actually! I'd be the Officer in Charge of course!

laughter

Graeme: Wouldn't last past lunchtime.

TS: Why not - because you couldn't do theirs or they couldn't do yours?

Graeme: I don't think they could do my job.

Betty: No, true.

Graeme: I suppose... they could get by but they couldn't turn out the meals we turn out, I would think.

Norma: Saying that, but we couldn't do their job.

Graeme: Ah, well - ah!

TS: Why not?

Anna: Well, maybe an exception of Enid Curtis, because she has a lot mair to contend with. But the likes of what Anne does or Molly and that. But the drugs I think is one of the biggest isn't it? Administering the drugs is one of the biggest jobs they have in there? And then writing the reports. I mean if you have a wee bit, well, whatever training they've had, ...I think you could do it as well. I mean they've not got 'O' grades or anything like that...

Betty: Yes but there is a difference between carrying out different parts of the job by reading a card. And then it's a different thing to know the job and know what they're doing. I mean you could do the drugs because you could read the bottle. At the same time you still wouldna

know what you were doing or what you were giving. So there is a big difference.

Anna: Well do...the likes of Molly and Anne know what they're doing?

Betty: Well they've got the experience.

Anna: That's right, that's what I'm talking about. But they didn't have any special training, did they?

Betty: I don't think you need special training for the drugs. I don't think you need it.

Bill: I found that, you know, the difference in here with the training. When I was in the brewery, a lot of men were coming to me. They'd missed their opportunity for learning. They had to leave school at 15. I had to leave at 15 to help support my family. But the whole idea of this trade is that if you want to learn more, get me trained, and it will be far better. You get pushed into jobs that you don't want, that people don't want - they don't want the jobs. I mean you're getting trained in here, which is the big difference. I'm still learning things in here. I mean in the brewery, OK, although I was in charge of men...who wanted to learn more, who wanted to become administration or go into something else, you know, they'd just lost their opportunity. At least they give you an opportunity in here.

TS: Anyone else want to come in on this?

Katherine (Care Assistant, just came in): What are you discussing?

Betty: You're keeping very quiet Carol.

Katherine: OK What were you discussing?

TS: We're basically discussing people's views of management.

Betty: I think they've got a crap job. Because if they don't get anything right we slag them off. And when if they give us some direction, and we still think they're wrong, we dinna carry it out.

Norma: Come on, I mean it's thankless.

TS: What is the substance of the job then? I mean you mentioned paperwork. You mentioned dealing with crises.

Betty: They run it like a business or like a factory I think. You know, make sure everything's going on and on and on. I think that's the main (thing). And sometimes they justify their salaries. No, really! Sometimes they sit on the back-shift making out name tags for the drug trolley, do you know what I mean? So sometimes they come out the office and tell you to do something. Or they come up and catch you smoking. And that's them bringing their management role back again.

Anna: Yes.

TS: Yes I'm only curious about this because, listening last week to what people were saying about the care job in here, I was wondering really what the management role was. What's left in a Home that's organised like this?

Betty: Responsibility.

TS: Carrying the can if something goes wrong?

Betty: Which is a lot to carry wi'us lot!

laughter

(03)

"I suppose you have to give them their place"

Shirley: I think...the problem is that none of them have actually got any more training than the Care Staff. Apart from Enid none of them have got any social work training. So they don't really know any more than we do... (13)

Graeme: Yes, they should have the CSS before they even get the job, I think. Although a few of them have got nursing training. But it's not just here, it's other Homes as well. They take a few that have just got nurse training which I dinna think is right.

Dennis: ...and remember, they were nursing a long time ago... (02)

Dennis: Well there's people in theory...who've got all the qualification and... read all the books and things but...they don't show practical ability. I mean they can sit and pass all the exams of the day. And tell you all the different...drugs to use. But in practice they've never been involved in the cases themselves. So when you're dealing with them, and...aware of the difference, you don't feel that you support them. You don't really support what they say of how to go about it. Because you can see the mistakes. You see it in here...where people are supposed to have medical experience or else know various things about drugs and when they're to be taken... And they're making the mistake of...playing doctors and nurses to patients... Because they've got the set speech and see themselves as professionals. (14) They surmise that they can go to a resident and they can tell "Ah, it's this, that and the next thing". But you know fine well yourself that...unless the resident is taken into hospital, it'll not make any difference. We've got to put up with somebody who's in authority, with a professional attitude, that says "This is what is wrong with the resident". We accept that. And a couple of days later you might find out the resident is in hospital as a result...

Betty: I think sometimes professionals have difficulty - they're always playing a role, like what Dennis says. It's even in here. Management or even social workers. They carry out everything as a social worker. Like they're not a person. And that gets muddled up... Through their experience and qualifications, they sometimes think that everything has to be high-powered. When in actual fact everything should be basic. They can't see it for knowledge, you know what I mean?

Dennis: We had experience of that last week when an officer in charge blew their top, ...very unprofessional. And we're supposed to respect that person being in office. I mean we can be pulled up for things that we do wrong... We're supposed to follow a policy in the way we conduct ourselves towards the residents. But these people, you look up to these people. And you think, well, they should know better than us. Because they're in that position and they've been given that authority. And when you see them totally destroying that professional ability in front of residents and everybody else, you say "What the hell are they doing?" In the office I approached somebody on it. The answer I got was that they didn't know that you weren't supposed to do things like this in front of residents. Which is total nonsense. Because it was a sort o'thing where the residents had woken up. Ten o'clock the morning, they're having

their tea. They're sort of relaxed. Just sitt'n in the flat. And this person came in the flat and totally destroyed the atmosphere, you know, shout'n'n'bawl'n all over the place. And all the staff on in the morning - there was quite a good staff on - everyone was sort of at ease. By ten o'clock she was on her high horse. It changed the atmosphere throughout the Home. The staff were depressed. She had all them up in arms. She had the residents up in arms as well. And...as I said before, I don't respect somebody...in authority if I feel that they're not the person for that job, and I can do the job better. (If) other people do the job better, then I dinna respect their authority. Because I don't see it as good... A couple of days after it, the same sort of thing. She was on her high horse again. If we do something like that we'd get hauled right over the coals for it. Probably get our marching orders for it! ⁽¹⁵⁾ I mean we're up against somebody that's in authority that's supposed to be a professional. It seems as if they get away wi'it, you know. Any of the officers, they can give reasons for it. And it's accepted... Yet we have to put up wi'it. ...the last thing we want...when we come in to do our work is to be under any stress. ...you might have problems of your own at home. When you come to work, it's coping with people's behaviour. Anybody is supposed to adopt a professional attitude. ...in a situation like this, if you've got an argument with someone, take it into a wee room. And you deal wi'it there. But you don't deal with it in public. And of all the people to know that, they should know it in the office. ...since I first came here, the first people to do all the things that we're not supposed to do's been in the office. And we're expected to see them as professionals.

Betty: You see the other side, as well, is that if you have this assumption that they're professionals, or should be professional, then you put these high standards on them - that they should live up to in your eyes. And when they don't it seems so much worse. It's like the other side of the coin of what I was saying. Sometimes they are very unprofessional. And they're letting themselves, as a person, come out more than they should... So it works both ways, you know. Usually at the wrong time (laughs).

silence

Dennis: ...as I say there are people, that because of their status, they are termed as professionals. And we are termed as manual workers. So anybody coming in here, a professional, as far as they're concerned, is that person in the office...

TS: Is that everybody's point of view, that the people who work in the office you would regard as professionals?

Shirley: No.

Betty: No.

Annette: No.

Someone else: No.

Anna: I would regard them as.

Shirley: I would regard them as professionals if they had professional training. But few of them have got professional training. In fact it's just probably old shop - made up because they're new people in charge.

TS: You would regard them as professionals, Anna?

Anna: Well yes. I suppose you have to give them their place, you know what I mean? But it's like what I was talking about... The very same situation, with that very same person, what I was told in the office. It was the same thing. She was wrong, I thought. But, as far as it went,

she was right. Whatever she said was to be right - was to be so. Same situation.

Betty: You say they have to be given their place. But they do have to be given their place in as much as they're the seniors, rather than -

Anna: Professionals.

Betty: Professionals. Because there are some Care Assistants in here that have been on more courses than some of the Seniors. So that might make them more professional - attitude-wise and in practice.

Anna: That's right.

Betty: I mean they hold a senior position, not a professional position.

Dennis: No. That's what I'm saying. I don't see them as being professional. I'm just saying that they have that professional status.

Betty: Oh aye.

Dennis: They have that status. I don't see them as professionals. I think probably one or two I do. But they have that status, you know. They're supposed to earn the respect of that.

TS: When you say "supposed to", where does that come from? Because I think you were saying something about this...before... Were you saying something about it being a matter of how you were brought up?

Anna: That's right. That's like...respect. It's the way you're brought up, to respect er these people. You know what I mean?

Dennis: Our superiors.

Anna: That's right. They are. But what's happened to Dennis happened to me. ...you canna gi' that person the same respect. Because she doesn't show any respect to you. Or any respect for your feelings whatsoever. Where you're full o'resentment right away, as soon as she does tell you to do something. You resent the fact right away. It creates a bad atmosphere, it does.

Dennis: Aye.

Betty: But quite often it's more a personality clash in a lot o'cases...

Dennis: ...I've never ever seen it...and there was absolutely no cause for it. No cause. Other than she canna handle sleep-ins. But nobody encouraged it.

Kate (Care Assistant): So had you respect (for) her, as a professional, before you saw her like that?

Dennis: No. I didn't. ...I've seen an officer and I waited for her to tap on the door and say "Excuse me this that and the next thing".

...because the same thing happened before in the Blue Flat. ...one of the residents had a serious bruise on her chest where she had banged herself. It was Fiona and me in the flat. She'd had an accident and Fiona and Annette, I think, had helped her up. I didn't know that she'd had an accident. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Betty: Oh I know, that's right, aye.

Dennis: ... Fiona told me what had happened... I was on night shift. And as I said before, it's the Care Assistants, we feel responsible. Because we're the person that's there at that time. ⁽¹⁷⁾ So the resident's in bed. And I says "There's something wrong here". She was bleeding from the nose. And this officer in charge had come in wi' (makes tapping noise) taps her on the back, and on the sides, like this... ⁽¹⁸⁾

Betty: That's right.

Dennis: I couldn't believe it. And... the officer in charge phoned me at home and says she's been taken into hospital! And I says to her at the time "Listen it might be an internal injury." I says "How can you tell by tapping somebody's back...that somebody's any kind of injury?" And

that was it...

Betty: You see...two of the Seniors, one Senior in Residential Care and one Senior in Day Care, are nurses. And quite often they're called upon to sort of bring out their nursing side in the Home. And that really interferes with what is actually happening. Because the staff do know when somebody's not right, or they're a bit off. ⁽¹⁹⁾ I mean the fault lies with Enid Curtis. ...she goes to these two and says "Well what do you think?" And they're not paid to make any medical decisions. And they let their medical knowledge get in the way...of seeing the person as the person. But they see it as a patient who seems all right, as far as health is concerned, you know? And that causes problems.

Dennis: That's right. We had that two weeks ago. When Betty McKay...

Anna: That's right, wi' her neck.

Dennis: She'd had a sore neck. In fact I think it was you saying to me wasn't it?

Anna: Aye, she'd got something wrong wi'her.

Dennis: And I was saying to Shirley. And Shirley says maybe that could be she's been having a stroke. Clotting in the neck was it? And funnily enough, all the time I saw that, I thought maybe she has.

Dennis: ...and they (other staff) said it was just that she'd choked and she'd done all sorts of things. ...she was in the chair like that [hangs head]. The woman was in a really bad state. Plus she was coming off her drugs and we didn't even know that either.

Anna: That's right. I came in and told you about it didn't I?

Dennis: Aye.

Anna: Because I knew there was something wrong wi'her that morning.

Dennis: ...it was about five or six days she was in a really bad state...

Anna: I had told you already, Betty, when I'd come for you two days previous to that?

Betty: Aye. You see the thing is when I worked in the flat and seen her that day I had said it was a withdrawal symptom from the Halaperidol. But because they knew I wasna a trained nurse that was ignored, you know?

Anna: That's right.

Betty: So you can have as much medical knowledge or not.

TS: But you were right?

Betty: Aha.

Anna: Well I went to Betty because she's quite knowledgeable. ...because I had been to that same officer and she says she was OK. But I didn't think that was right. And that's why I came and asked you to come down didn't I? And have a look at her. And that's exactly what Betty told me. ⁽²⁰⁾

Shirley: I find it quite frightening, the fact that some of the officers in here are left to make a decision for the residents. Like Pearl had a stroke that night. She left her sitt'n'n a chair the whole night.

Shirley: The supervisor thought she'd be more comfortable sitting there than going into hospital.

Shirley: They took her the next day. It's as if it's a case that she wants to leave it for the next officer. As if she doesn't want to take the decision.

Betty: That's right.

Shirley: And when she went to hospital, she was stuck in the position that she'd sat in the chair - even her neck. She'd been hanging out the chair. And she'd stuck that way. (21)

Betty: You see, I think, what most of us realise here, is that three of the senior management, feel very insecure in their position. And I think they use their position wrongly to assert their authority. Rather than doing it with Mrs Curtis on the management side. It tends to come out on the staff, you know. Just to remind us who they are. And the position they're in. It's misplaced. And I think it's... their own fears and insecurities. Not that I'm making excuses for them...

Shirley: But when it's other people's lives at stake.

Betty: Aye.

Anna: Oh aye.

Dennis: Aye.

(07)

"They're out of touch with reality, really, especially doctors"

Anna: They hold a professional position, but you dinna always agree with what you see happen, you know what I mean? For instance, there was a lady ill, really ill the other day. She is very ill. And the doctor came in. But she didn't seem very much bothered, to me anyway. She's a professional. She's a doctor. I thought she was quite angry actually - being called in. That's the impression I got.

Bill: I -

Anna: I was going to say, Bill, I'm only the domestic on that flat but I noticed it.

Bill: That's right. Mrs....

Anna: Aye, that's right.

Helen (Kitchen Domestic): You shouldn't say "I'm only a domestic."

Anna: Well, you know what I mean? I noticed it.

Bill: Oh I noticed it. "Be ill by appointment" This is the modern thing that's happening now.

Anna: And that woman is really literally dying.

Bill: All the doctors' surgeries have gone over to appointments you know. You're ill on a Monday. The first appointment's Wednesday afternoon.

TS: Was it you got the Doctor called in?

Bill: No. I was in. And it was the Care Officers come round and...said she's to be called out, late in the afternoon.

Anna: ...this woman was really ill, wasn't she? She couldn't even stand up. She was so shaking. She was so out of breath. You were frightened to leave her, eh? All you could think of was the doctor. She's never one to complain this woman. Is she? She never complains or moans. ...she was upset because she thought she was upsetting everybody else. Don't know what that doctor'd do for her. She could sense it right away off her.

TS: You think she would have done? She'd have known the doctor wasn't too pleased?

Anna: I'm sure she would sense it. I'm sure she would do.

Helen: But then that's just that one doctor's attitude...

Anna: But she's a professional.

Helen: That doesna mean anything - profession just doesna mean that.

Bill: ...her appointments is ten o'clock in the morning. If you're going to be ill, you've got to be ill before ten o'clock in the morning.

Shirley: I feel that too many professionals come from the middle class. And they're out of touch with reality, especially doctors.

Bill: Here here.

Shirley: It would be better if more of them came from a working class background. That's the professions.

Annette: If you want a doctor these days, you've got to call him before ten o'clock. I mean he might not take ill till about eleven o'clock, as Bill says. "Oh why didn't you call before ten o'clock?"

Helen: Ah, but the doctors don't say that, that's the receptionists.

Shirley: But half the social workers are middle class, who like to think they understand the working class's problems.

Anna: That's right, that's right

Bill: Albert was away yesterday. He was ill. Kept on making an appointment. They kept on just fob'n'im off. So he was rushed away about three weeks ago... Every time he came in front of the doctor...

Anna: Take a few tablets. Aye take the prescription and you'll be all right in a couple of weeks. (04)

"They had all these old bids. And I was just an ordinary person"

Betty: I think in seven years I've come across three good social workers for the elderly.

Dennis: There's only one I've seen.

Betty: ...Oh they are shocking.

Shirley: I respect most people - well at least the professions - and I think they've got a lot of knowledge and they're intelligent. I know they are really intelligent and I respect them that - if they're good at their job. But, for instance, our officers, I wouldna respect them.

Sometimes I feel awkward toward the professionals because they're so knowledgeable. But then our officers, I dinna feel awkward with them.

TS: ...you said...one of the problems with professionals was that they tended to come from middle class backgrounds and were out of touch...

Shirley: It's really just the social workers I've met...don't really understand the root of the problems. They just go by book.

Dennis: An awful lot o'it's theory and they go out to the big wide world after two or three years on a social work course. And they have placements for six weeks...in that artificial situation, usually...in an institution. And that's it... I think there was only two on our course that had come frae'housing schemes. The rest had come from the Islands and Highlands. And they were all of middle class or upper class backgrounds... They're getting the status for it. But the work's...just bits'n'pieces of paper. The person's not there any more. It's a piece of paper. Because I've seen it. Likè when you go to the Special Schools... And you get this...this file on this person before you've even seen them. And...you don't give them a second chance... What you write down in your report is totally biased. When it comes to it, there are no second chances. It's like a ball off a bat... This person could sit there and you could talk your heart out and will nay understand a thing you're saying. Because they've never experienced any kind of poverty... or deprivation or anything like that. So...they've never any insight into real family experiences of wee kids, kids who've been battered. And if you come from that background, they'd be more aware of what's going

-on, more able to deal with the person.

Anna: That's right.

Betty: ...I still think for a lot of social workers, the training that they get, a lot of it is to have to learn Acts, like the Mental Health Act, and this Act, and the rest of it. And it's all quite academic. ... especially overworked social workers might have a case load of sixty and they work forty hours a week. ...I think of people like my Mum and she's like that. She'll say "Christ I've done it all. And I've seen it all. I should be a social worker." And when she was a Home Help, looking after two old dears, she'd say "He'd be better off in a Home." Do you know what I mean? Because it would make her feel better, that they were safe, which is a totally unprofessional view. Do you know what I mean...?.

Dennis: It's blown out o'proportion for people have to have...all these qualifications now, to be able to do this sort of thing. Before then, there were people able to do the same jobs, the same work. Priests were doing it for centuries, without qualifications, without having a bit of paper saying that you can do that. There were people going out and helping people and doing all sorts of things.

Betty: But things must have been going wrong if so much training's come about for everybody.

Anna: What Dennis means, it's all paperwork. ...you go in. You sit through school and all these exams. You become a social worker. You haven't a clue what happens in somebody's hoose next door. You don't know what's happening.

Shirley: And institutions...

Betty: But they'll have to get that through experience and they need the academic side of the training to go along with the experience as they go through.

Annette: Half of these social workers have got the training. How many of them do actually carry out the training, when you hear of all the kids like the last case where the child died in the house? If they'd done this job properly that kiddy could have been saved. What do you think Betty?

Betty: Yes but the papers couldn't have printed the three thousand cases that go right. I mean lets face it, it's only when something goes wrong, it's absolutely sensationalised.

Anna: There's a lot goes wrong in social work that you never even hear about.

Betty: Yes but that's because human beings are doing the job.

Anna: I've been seeing it with families - through my own family, through my sister's family. I've experienced social worker after social worker. And I've experienced it with Bob's son in it, as you know. I kept him for a year and I had to work with the Social Work department. And they didn't have a clue, honestly.

Shirley: I don't think you realise how difficult it is working with a social worker.

Anna: I used to go to his house, I used to go to meetings.

Shirley: Unless you have, personally. Not just with clients either, who're involved with someone else. But if you have personally been involved -

Anna: That's right, which I have been.

Shirley: - you don't realise how patronising and -

Anna: They're only doing a job frae', what, nine till five. And they don't care, when that comes to their time. They forget that this problem exists. Only till they come into this meeting, they lift a paper, and they read it off a paper, what's happening. And every panel meeting I had with that laddie - and I'm talking about for a year with social workers - ...I never had the same social worker twice. It was all different people. And all that they knew was what they were reading. Shirley: They should have been listening.

Anna: But I could tell them - that's right. It was the laddie's life, y'know what I mean? But they dinna listen to what you're telling them. They make the decisions, although you're trying to tell them. I'm telling them what I thought was best. Because I had experienced it. But it doesna matter what you think. They di' what they think was right. Only because they think you're too clever. They had all these old bids and I was just an ordinary person, you know what I mean?

"Uppity, uppity"

Betty: ...you need academic training and the experience to do something well. And...although we are classed as manual workers, we do try to do a professional job... A lot of us have got quite a lot o'experience. But having said that, for years and years and years, most of us, since we came into the job, have screamed for training. And that was to make us better at the job.

Shirley: Oh that's right. It's no an academic job at all.

Dennis: ...it's fair enough having the core cases. But at the same time there should be an element of understanding, of practical experience involved.

Betty: Oh aye.

Shirley: And, to be able to do it, you need both.

Dennis: Aye. It just seems that the middle classes and the upper classes have had more opportunity to get the qualifications - to get them that status - than working class people.

Anna: I mean, saying that about social workers, a lot of them get used as well. You know what I mean? They get used. There's one person in here uses a social worker doesn't she?

Betty: There was a social worker killed not so long ago.

Anna: ...they do get used because they just dinna seem to looking through the same (spectacles) what we do. Because, you know, you're down to earth with them. Like we know so-and-so's making a complete fool of the social worker. But because he doesna come or she doesna come frae' the same sort o' background as we come frae', they don't know that. That's what I'm trying to point out.

Dennis: Aye. You're...street wise...

Anna: Aye. I mean this one social worker that Alec had for instance. I'm say'n they should be over thirty - he must have been slightly younger than me. And Alec had been going to school for six months and hadn't missed a day since I took'm, right? Now we went on holiday, 's Dad and I, and he went to stay wi's Mum. Now where we were on holiday, he got into trouble again. Because she didna have the jurisdiction over him that I had. And, you know, that social worker, I couldna get through to that social worker that it was his Mum that couldna chastise'm. Now they knew all that. But he wouldna admit that. You know what he told me? That Alec had started to kip school for? Because we didna send him a postcard! Now

I swear before God, that is what that social worker told us. That is why Alec started to kip school. It was nothing to di wi's mother lett'n'm away wi'it. You know what I mean? It was a postcard! Now that's one encounter wi'a social worker. Only one. It's just sheer stupidity. Really stupid. And he's talking down to me, I mean he's uppity uppity!

"I said, look, I must be living in another world compared to this"

Dennis: I was telling you about these...videos at college on child cruelty and things like this. And we had to identify with the problems. We had this one on Easterhouse, where I came frae'. It was funny because I was in the class. And it was all to do with the gangs and things. And they people were living in houses and treated as family. And I think it was the last thing they'd seen as kids. Easterhouse, the state of the place and about evictions and things like that. And then it was the sort of day/night time thing when the gangs were out in the streets, where everybody was in the streets. And people couldna understand why they were out'n the streets. And these people, the majority...were social workers. And they couldna believe that these things really existed.

Anna: That's right.

Betty: You see I find it hard to believe because I've never lived in it.

Susan: And yet you say you're nay middle class. Imagine what the middle class feel like!

Dennis: Aye.

Betty: That's what I'm saying, you don't have to come frae'a class not to know. Two years ago I went to North cross and I was coming back on the bus. And I could not believe my eyes. And I really thought, fifteen minutes from North cross, the people looked different. And I went on the bus and I went past Collarhouse. I didna know these places existed. I mean, really, you know they're there. But to actually see it! And I said to Katherine, I said "Look, I must be living in another world compared to this." And I couldn't believe it. I mean these people looked like they should have been there, with the surroundings. They just had that look.

Anna: That's right.

Betty: Absolutely horrified.

Anna: You'll find a job for social workers up there! They're all under social workers!

Dennis: I mean they made us sit and watch this video. And they showed exactly what was going on. The showed you the muggers and the skinheads and things like that. It was a normal culture to me, being brought up like that, you know? And I was shocked that everybody starts to go "Cor.", "My," "Oh my God!"

laughter

Dennis: Really. We had a role-play after it. And we had to give people jobs. You know, like parties for the bosses and parties for the people who come for the jobs. And I had this guy from Skye. And I was giving him a job as a milkman, in Easterhouse -

laughter

Dennis: ...I said to him "Right...now, you're six o'clock in the morning, you're going for your milk rounds. You're going into this close. And you see these couple of guys in here wait'n up six o'clock'n the morn'n. And they're wait'n fae'ye."

laughter

Dennis: I've seen things like this! I've seen people steal the milk floats.

laughter

Anna: Oh dear!

Dennis: So I said to'm "Well...your milk float's a'missing. What do you do?" "Well, I'll go and phone the police." So I says "But where are you going to phone the police fri? I mean the polis station's miles away and they don't have these wee boxes all over the place, like". I says "Where are you going to phone the...police from?" "Oh I'll go to somebody's house." I says "But in that environment... if you go to the door and say "I'm going to phone the police" - they won't let you in."

laughter

Dennis: So I said to him "At night time" I says "you're gett'n mugged."

laughter

Dennis: I says "Well I'm sorry we'll have to get somebody else for this job."

laughter

Shirley: They've already decided to work as social workers. And yet that's who they're going to be dealing with. And they dinna even realise that exists.

Dennis: It's amazing, amazing...these people who're sitt'n there, they havena got a clue, never had experience. They didna know what it was like. And the shock... I think it must have been like watching Africa or somewhere like that. And they're expected at the end of the day to go into somebody's house and deal with their problems.

Anna: I think it depends on your experience with people as well Dennis. I've watched a whole family completely ruined, completely wrecked. Even to this day these kids are wrecked because'i'one social worker. Because she thought she was right. She was the only one that thought she was right. I mean all the family round about knew she was wrong. But she thought she was right and she was doing the best thing for these kids. Their lives were absolutely ruined. One's in Schotts at this very minute. Just through social work, through a social worker, a young lassie.

(07)

Chapter III

A SHARP DIVISION

"Brought up ti'really struggle and do without a lot i'things"

TS: Is there such a thing as class?

ie: No. The working class make classes.

Jenny: I'm interested in what the middle class is.

Kate: Well, I don't know what class is.

Bill: Well, the working class try to become the middle class, buying their own house and living in a better area. I mean -

Betty: Well that's the majority of the people in this country then.

Kate: Yeah. Because you could start a mortgage.

Bill: - ...when you leave school, you know, folk get married and they move out of Fallowfield and move into a better area. And they don't associate themselves - they don't come back and talk to people out of their past life.

Anna: because everybody tries to better themselves. I think that's what it means then isn't it?

Bill: No -

Anna: If you've been brought up in a rough area. And you've been brought up ti'really struggle, right? And I have, believe you me. To really struggle and do without a lot i'things. You try to better yourself and give your kids a lot mair than what you ever had . Because you had nothing and you try to make it better for them. And that's your aim in life.

Bill: The thing is you dinna go back to talk to the people that you knew.

Anna: Well, you try to better yourself away from that area you were brought up in. You dinna want to go back to that area. You want to make yourself better away from that area. That's the reason.

silence

Betty: But that doesn't make you middle class.

Anna: Well, it isn't middle class but you try to better yourself.

Kate: If you start off as a working class -

Anna: I mean I was brought up in the Perth road, right? Hooks, crooks, everything, right? Now I didna want my kids brought up like that.

Kate: No.

Anna: Do you know what I mean? So I moved on. You try to get to a better class of people. To try and make yourself better class. That's where the class distincion comes from.

Jenny: You see I think it was a very naive statement that the middle class have no idea - I don't know what middle class is, I'm just using this - have no idea of kiddies and families, children battering. I mean these problems of children-battering, alcoholism, senile dementia, all these problems are not exclusive to the working class people. In fact they affect everybody. No it's not a class system at all.

Anna: No, no but -

Betty: It's like, it's like people who try to be martyrs to the cause. "Well I'm working class and they're middle class." You've made that class, not the higher classes. It's a typical union way o'talking to people. You know, "You are the working class."

[Editor's note: Everyone had read a transcript of an earlier discussion, of which the last three sections of Chapter II are extracts.]

Jenny: The whole paper rang of working class having no understanding.

Just fighting everybody else. Not having any understanding of social workers, doctors, everybody.

Anna: Well maybe it looks like that Jenny -

Jenny: That's how it read to me in the paper.

Anna: Aye. Well...likes o' my point o' view really - o' social workers and everything. And I've had a lot o' experience o' social workers, right?

Jenny: So have I, Anna, so have I.

Anna: Since I was so high, OK? Also with my kids and everything, I've had a lot to do with them. And I've never been pleased with any of them, Jenny, to tell you the truth. I've had nothing but hassle with them. Now to me, a good social worker would make somebody coming from that area that they're going to have to work with. Like if you come from a right high up-bringing and you're brought up with all the wee poshies at school. Do you know what I'm trying to say, right?

Jenny: Money doesn't talk about problems.

Anna: Well I'm not talking about money. And then you want to become a social worker, right? Now, surely what would make a better social worker is somebody that knows what they're going into. If you've been brought up in that area, if you've been brought up wi' that hooks and crooks and whatever, you know? Oh aye.

Betty: That's what I'm say'n, the best policemen would be ex-crooks!

Anna: Maybe I'm a bit older than yous. I don't know. Maybe as you get older you learn a lot mair, I think. Oh aye.

Betty: If you lived at home and your husband was an alcoholic. And you had seven kids and five were in care and three were fire-raisers. And your uncle came and sexually abused your children. You would have so much stress at home, you couldn't possibly go out and do a social worker's job. Because you'd have so much stress at home you couldna cope with the stress a job like that would entail.

Jenny: I didn't come from a housing scheme. And my parents weren't well off. But they were all right. But to say that I have no understanding of problems, or other people, their problems -

Anna: But nobody ever said that Jenny -

Jenny: Well it comes across like that to me.

Anna: What we're saying is Jenny, how can a young lassie, because she ...she wants to be a social worker. She goes to school, to college, passes a few exams, has a few weeks' training. And then she's sent out to deal with child abuse or anything else. It cannae work that way.

Katherine: Why can't it?

Anna: Because they dinna ken what they're going into Katherine.

Jenny: How do you know they don't know what they're going into?

Anna: Because I've taken social workers, I know.

Jenny: Don't say that. I've had dealings with them since I was fourteen. I've seen the good. I've seen the bad side. I know there's bad social workers. But I've also seen the good side of social workers.

Betty: So have I.

Jenny: I've seen what they do do.

Anna: That's good. Well my opinion was I've never come across a good social worker.

Dennis: Aye.

Anna: So I can only speak from my experience.

Jenny: Aye. I was just putting my experience.

Anna: What I put in here [transcript of earlier discussion], this was my experience o' social workers. I've never, never had anything good

wi'social workers.

Betty: The thing is, as well, if you're too experienced in a hard life to do social work, then your sympathies are going to lie in the wrong place. And it's going to interfere. You've got to be sort of -

Jenny: Detached.

Betty: Detached. If you let your emotions ride over you when you're dealing with a case, because you've lived through it, then that's going to interfere with the job you're doing.

TS: When you used the analogy of policemen and criminals, now I mean OK there are two worlds, yes? The world of policemen and the world of criminals. What are the two worlds when you come to think about social workers on the one hand and their clients on the other? What are those two worlds? I mean you were saying it's not the class system. Is it the class system? Are those what those two worlds are?

Betty: No.

TS: Is there such a thing as class?

Kate: No.

Dennis: I think it's wrong to say that because, as I think Anna's saying, this report...is based on people's opinions and feelings...involved in the discussions. But it is not to say that it's generalising on everybody else's feelings. They're talking about experiences. And what they've seen in their own lives. And the thing is, there are, no matter how you say it, distinctions. Betty's just said well does that make a good policeman...(out of) a good criminal. Well, you've already made a distinction by saying that. Because is there just a wee world where all criminals live? And just a bundle of policemen left?

Betty: No but I'm saying a criminal would have more experience than somebody aged eighteen joining the police force, who after six months would have to go out on the beat. So if you want people who've lived through it all and have done it all -

Dennis: Yeah.

Betty: - then just go to Schotts Prison and let them all out and put them in uniform.

Dennis: But like -

Betty: They'll have all the experience o'crime that they need.

Jenny: That was an answer to people from housing estates being able to understand their problems.

Dennis: Well they do understand the problems of living in housing schemes -

Kate: We're not denying that. We were not saying...

Dennis: Well we're not disputing - we're not saying, because you've come from that certain background that, you know, you willna. What we're saying is that the practical experience of living in that environment is a bonus.

Betty: Yes, but class was brought up.

"People at the bottom who feel that they deserve what they get"

Dennis: Yeah and class distinction is all very true. You can't deny that there are many different class distinctions. There's the people who are unemployed, OK? Now they obviously do see themselves as inferior to people who are working class because they people have jobs, right? Now the people who have jobs see them as better off than people who're

unemployed, OK? Now you've got working class people with middle class aspirations. They're the people that's already been described, right? They're the people that have come frae'a scheme. They forget where they belong. They get themselves a home... OK there are people can afford to buy themselves a house because of what's created for them. But they don't forget their background. But there are people who put themselves on a pedestal now. They say "Well look, I've paid for that and I've got this." They have middle class values after that. And then there's the middle class people who have. I mean you can't change it. It is there. Kate: But what about the other way round, Dennis? What happenes if you come from a middle class background. You come from a well-off background and then you face the big wide world yourself. You can't afford to buy your own house. Does that make you still middle class?

Dennis: I mean the majority of people who are coming from that type of background are not totally on their own... If they're struggling -

Kate: No, no.

Dennis: - you're not telling me that their parents are going to let them down on it?

Kate: I mean maybe their parents aren't around any more. There can be so many different situations.

Dennis: The thing is, somebody who's on their own, coming from a scheme, who's on a type o'wage, or no wage, right? They're going to have a far harder experience in the world on their own than somebody who does have a monopoly at the back of them. Because they can go to that monopoly. They can still depend on that monopoly. It's there. Money doesn't make things right. It increases the problems.

Bill: You see all these great architects who built all the housing schemes. They don't ever live in them.

Anna: They dinna live in the housing schemes, that's right. So they don't know people's needs exactly.

Bill: You know.

Betty: I make decisions for residents in this home and dinna live in it. Same difference.

Bill: And the people who walk home, we are all right. We've got shops and pubs and everything underneath us. You go to North cross or Fallowfield and there are no shops and one pub.

Anna: I lived in North crosss, aye.

Bill: They are great big housing schemes with no amenities, no facilities for them. They've got trouble.

Anna: I mean I've moved frae'North cross ti' where we are now only because of what I was living beside. That's the truth. I was living beside drug addicts, drunks - they werena working. I was the only one on the whole stair that worked. I mean I admit I moved away frae'it and I wouldna like to go back to it. And I think I'm better then them because I've tried to make myself better. Because I'm living beside a better class i'people than what I was living beside.

Bill: But not everybody can do that.

Anna: Oh I know that.

Dennis: Aye but I mean -

Bill: Isn't that the whole point?

Anna: It's up to the individual, Bill. Some people are quite happy to live in that environment. Aren't they? Whatever you do to help people.

Bill: You come up against authority. I'm doing that now. A girl who's coming up against authority because she's staying in a house that keeps

being broken into. Because everybody round about her are all hooks and crooks she's wanting to move. And authority - just "Oh, you're in there, you live in that house." They've got to make themselves homeless...

Anna: Bill, I dinna earn a lot o'money and neither does Bob, right? I mean at my age I shouldna be even working full time. I would like to be working part-time, how it should be. Because I've worked all my life, right? But I'm working full time. It's killing me because...(of) trying to get somewhere out of what I was living in.

Bill: If you go into a shop and you say you come from Fallowfield, right? And I say I come frae' Kingsburn. Who's going to get the job?

Anna: That's right.

Annette: It all depends who they are Bill.

Bill: It does?

Annette: Yes exactly.

Dennis: If you're unemployed, maybe you've worked for years before, but you've no got a job, right? Now the thing is there are people who do feel they are not prepared to go out and do jobs. Where they're no going to earn enough to keep their kids. And they would rather get it off the state because it's going to give them more. There is a defence of that. But there is also people who have that thing in them where they want to work. Working class values. It's never changed. It's always been there. It's the people at the bottom who feel that they deserve what they get ...it's always been there and you canna change it. ...they've worked, they've struggled for it all their lives. They've to feed this, do that and the next thing. And when they get it, they appreciate it. And they know the value o'it. They don't see people who are in a class other than that as appreciating the value of that. Because they've never had to struggle for it. They got it. It was there for them. They could get that.

silence

"Class is union talk. To keep those that work in their place"

Dennis: I think the experience of problems is different. Everybody's got problems. Everybody's got difficulties in their life. Still it comes back to class distinction. People in the working class see their problems as different frae' middle class. And the middle class see their problems as different. When they're in that structure, they can afford to go to private places or get things done that they want. They can have their car, their house and all sorts of things like that. Working class people see that they can't afford that sort of thing. So there is a distinction. It's there.

TS: You look unhappy about that.

Jenny: I was just thinking that I still don't know what this middle class is. When I asked, one of the people said to me that was in the discussion "Well it's people that can afford not to work", who don't have to work. So I said "Well, why would they want to be a social worker anyway?" And somebody else said there was a status symbol in being a social worker.

Kate: Yeah.

Jenny: But what's the status symbol in being a social worker? They're spat on. They're cut up to pieces. I mean there's no status in being a social worker.

Dennis: It's not the job, it's not the work. It's that there are types

of family where...members of the family were brought up to be different things. Ireland's probably a good example - where somebody in the family would probably be a Priest. He would be a Priest from the age of twelve! It was cut out for him. Somebody in the family would be in the army. These things became status. They are structures. And social workers, their job, the amount of money paid for the job, is a status. It's good to see, in the family, "Oh I'm in that. I'm in this sort of job. And I'm a social worker." Social worker is also a status thing. Because we put status on it. The way we were talking about it just now, we are putting status on it.

Kate: So bringing class back into it, can you get somebody from a working class background going into it for status? Or is it only folk from a middle class background?

Dennis: No. The thing is the majority of people who go into social work are not from -

Anna: The working class.

Dennis: Working class backgrounds. They are not. They are academic class. Academic class is a class where you have that choice. You've got more chance, if you're middle class or whatever, to be financed, to get into Universities and all sorts of things -

Anna: That's right.

Dennis: To afford these things.

Kate: Is that not a bit of an insult to the working class though? Because that's saying the working classes aren't capable of becoming academics.

Dennis: No it's not saying that they're not capable.

Betty: Class is union talk to keep those that work in their place -

Bill: It's because the opportunity -

Betty: - to justify it.

Dennis: No it's not, it's a question of -

Betty: That's what it is.

Kate: Sorry Dennis, it's what?

Dennis: It's a question of opportunity.

Kate: Oh I see. So if you come from a working class background you -

Bill: If you go to Halsbury School, or somewhere like that, what chance have you got of being a bricky? What chance have you of being a joiner or a bricky? You know, because you can talk and you'll come out...

Kate: You might not take advantage of your education. Doesn't matter what class you come from.

Jenny: That's right.

Kate: If you go to a private school it's up to that individual kid whether it takes advantage of their education or not.

Jenny: Aha. That's right.

Bill: There's people can work within High School -

Kate: I know a dustman that went to Padua School, which is a fee-paying school. He's a dustman now.

Bill: I know -

Kate: Because he wants to be. Because he didn't take advantage of his education.

Bill: I know a lot of people who's dropped out and dinna want to be -

Kate: So they can be droppies.

Bill: I mean that's the other side of it...

"Like living in a prison. A big high wall. Big gates. You're locked in"

Bill: I mean that's the other side of it. There are good opportunities for the people who go to High School and that. To leave school at fifteen. To help you go in a firm. But when I left school I had to leave. That's the difference with choice.

Kate: But that's a different issue really.

Dennis: Not really. The thing is that if he's saying that he had to go and support his family. Now if his family were able to support him, he wouldn't have to do that. Working class people usually do have to do things like that. You see they've got their families. The first thing they do is, once you're at that age, "Get a job. Get whatever you can but get a job."

Anna: That's right.

Dennis: And support the family.

Kate: I mean I agree with that -

Dennis: And they've got to be that certainly. They've obviously had to be. There was miners and there was women, pregnant women and kids down mines to support -

Katherine: I think you're going back to the -

Betty: The blackmail of emotionalism.

Katherine: - nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties. I mean...you keep on bringing this class thing -

Betty: Folk keep their bairns at school now.

Katherine: - no matter what class you come from, whether you'd be at a private school, a comprehensive or whatever - everybody has the opportunity now to go to higher education, whatever it may be, University. Everybody has that opportunity now to do that. I mean they might not want to do it. ...as Bill says, he's brought up the example of Halsbury School. Y'ken, it's up to that individual. Maybe his parents are putting him through because they have the money to put'm to that school for a good education. But he might not want that. He might just want to go and be a bricky or a joiner, whatever it may be.

Jenny: Who's to say that a lot o' the people with money now are not back from -

Anna: Very rare.

Jenny: - working class roots?

chorus: That's right

Jenny: They could have started from housing schemes. They could well be getting on to better themselves -

Anna: That's right. But that's exactly what I've said Jenny. Bettering theirselves. Of course. Exactly what I'm doing, right?

Jenny: But how can you turn round and slag them when you don't know where they're from?

Anna: You're saying "When they come from a working class family". But they've bettered theirselves. That's what I'm talking about!

Jenny: But you don't know who these individuals are, how can you slag them?

Anna: You're on about why people are keeping kids at school. What did you mean by that Betty?

Betty: No. Like Bill was saying about how kids would have to leave school at fourteen, fifteen - years ago. To help support the family.

chorus: That's true.

Betty: Nowadays that doesn't apply. You're trying to keep your kids at school because there's no a job for them to go to.

Anna: That's right. If they're at school they're no getting into trouble.

Betty: Aye. So I mean that doesn't apply any more.

Kate: But even now I mean there's people walking out of University, College, whatever with degrees and they still can't get a job.

Anna: That's right.

Annette: That's true. But I mean some of them have just got to take a job, you know, any job. Because I've known a few to go. They've never - they've not been able to get the job that they've wanted. They've had to take anything.

Kate: As Jenny's saying, the people that are sending their kids to fee paying schools, they might have come from - a little money or whatever it may be. ...and you want the best for your kids.

Anna: That's right, bettering theirselves.

Kate: So why are these people getting criticised? I mean if you've got the money and you want to give your children a good education, why not send them to these schools?

silence

Katherine: I mean you're not going to start talking against all their money for sending them to so-and-so school. I mean that's terrible. I mean they're doing the best what they think for their kids. Whether the children want to go or not. I mean they might be quite happy to go to the local comprehensive school. I mean you don't know.

TS: When you say everybody's got that opportunity now, what would you see the consequences being of ending up without any educational qualifications? And not having the money behind you which some people have mentioned?

Bill: That's why life is impossible for five million people.

Betty: Get a job with Lambeth Council.

TS: No, seriously.

Anna: We're just so lucky because we have jobs. That's - it's as simple as that.

Bill: There are three million unemployed and five million people living on the poverty line.

Anna: That's right.

Bill: Nobody here can say their kids are no bright. You know.

Anna: Oh no. That's where the brightest kids come from.

Bill: ...but they've no got the opportunities.

silence

Bill: If you're living at the side of... (?) you dinna have it.

Anna: As I say... a better class of people...

Jenny: It's not whether you've got money at the back of you, it's your own personal - I'm quite sure it's -

Anna: I mean when I talk to the people sitting out there and "Where do you come frae' before this job?" I dinna say them I'm frae' North cross. I dinna want them to ken I lived in North cross. I say "Oh I lived in the town". That's all I say.

silence

Anna: Because I hated it. It was a shame to live in what I was living beside, I assure you. And I had nay choice because I never had money to get out o'it, Jenny.

Jenny: I've never had money.

Anna: Where am I to live with ~~my two~~ kids for that time? Because I had nay anywhere else. And they knew I had nay anywhere else. So they put me there. Do you know what I mean? I had nay choice. I had to go there or walk the streets. It was as simple as that.

Bill: That's what I was trying to get across. When people say you want a house in The town. And they say well you can have Collarhouse or Fallowfield or somewhere like that. Why should these be deprived areas?

Kate: I know.

Bill: Why should **they** be deprived areas?

Anna: Because they've always been Bill. It will always be the same.

Bill: look at Grange Close, which was a bad name, nobody wanted to live there -

Anna: Look what they've done now.

Bill: It was taken by private developers, now everybody wants to live in it.

Dennis: You have to have a certain amount of points to get it.

Anna: The place (is) like living in a goal isn't it? ...you walked in, it was like living in a prison, in they blocks. Because you've got a big high wall. You've got big gates. You're locked in.

Bill: All these places should have ameneties. They havena got them. And the Council isn't going to gi'ye them.

Anna: That's right.

Bill: If it's a case of staying in the centre of The town -

Anna: I'm sorry but I have to go because...

TS: ...some people are using the word class to describe that situation that you can't get out of. Those of you that don't say that's class, how do you see it? What is it if it isn't class? Is there some other way of looking at it?

Betty: Circumstance.

Kate: I'd have said events. It's your own personal ambition -

"I come from Collarhouse" "Well I don't want to know you"

Betty: I used to live in Birmingham. And some of the areas we lived in, Oh, if you didn't live in them, people used to think it it's absolutely pits. "Oh. We wouldn't dare walk through there." And they were really dead, deadly places. I've done it, d'you know, so -

TS: But you're talking about the individual aren't you, still, you see. Surely what Anna was describing something that's actually out there. I mean she was describing it as like prison. Now I mean that's not the individual is it? That's outside the individual. I think the word that she and Dennis used to describe that is class. Now if it isn't that, what is it if it isn't that?

silence

TS: Is it real?

Betty: You see I think -

Kate: Yes it's real.

Betty: - well I suppose it's real. But if you carry a chip on your shoulder, you'll always call it class. And I think that's what this boils down to. It's a chip on your shoulder. And it's being a martyr to it.

TS: Well then it doesn't sound as if it is real, it's just in your imagination then.

silence

Bill: ...I stay in Prestonpans. And folk say "We are a class of people and along there there is not a better better class of people", you see. In certain areas where you go, everybody's stepping up a class. If you move from Prestonpans, like if you go and move further out ...you'll soon have a better class of people. If you go to Long Niddry, they're upper middle class. I mean just ask anybody in the street what they think of Bellstoun. Well, it's Bank Managers and Doctors and whatever, you know? No, really, that's the way they think. I know they all play golf on Sundays and they don't have the same atmosphere, the same things to do, you know.

Dennis: If there wasna class distinction there wouldna be Council houses and there wouldna be schemes.

Bill: You can take it as being that you go -

Betty: The majority of people have got mortgages -

Kate: Yes.

Betty: - on their Council houses now.

Dennis: No. The majority of people don't have them on their Council houses. They don't.

Betty: Sixty per cent of this country have their mortgages.

Dennis: And that forty per cent...can't.

Annette: That's all right if you've got your own door handy. But not if you're up the stairs...

Betty: But there's a few folk sitting here that have got mortgages.

Dennis: Aye, I know.

hoots

Betty: So you're middle class Jenny.

Jenny: Oh?

Betty: You must be middle class.

Kate: Dennis has got a mortgage!

Jenny: Dennis has got a mortgage!

Betty: That's what I'm saying. A mortgage is nothing.

Kate: ...middle class.

Betty: A mortgage is cheaper than rent half the landlords are asking. Circumstance. It's nothing to do with class. I say Bon Accord. Then he goes "That's really posh."

Kate: The way you use "posh." I mean it's -

TS: When you say it hasn't got anything to do with class, what has class got to do with? What is class to you? If it isn't about mortgages what is it about?

Betty: Well I just never think a thing in classes. Class is a word that is used by union speakers.

TS: Right. So when you said -

Betty: It's a union thing for people to fight against management, to be anti-establishment. I think this is when class gets dragged in.

"Remember your poor roots". I mean it's pathetic. I mean all these people who want to live back in the thirties.

TS: So it's harking back. there's nothing real there. It's basically down to the individual?

Kate: No -

Betty: No, the reality's there -

Jenny: There's something real there. It involves a lot of people not being able to see further.

Betty: You know, it's a bit like "I vote SNP because my Dad does".

TS: So it is an individual thing. Where people think they're up against

prison bars as Anna said, is that their imagination?

Betty: No.

Jenny: It's just not being able to see further than that.

Betty: That's right.

Jenny: Or not having the understanding of anything further than that.

TS: So the problem is to do with them and how they see it? I think you are coming back to that, really, aren't you? You're saying this is something in the individual imagination rather than being real, yes?

Jenny: Yes!

Betty: Aye. A lot of it's inbred in you, just -
silence

TS: It's in the eye of the beholder rather than a reality.

Betty: No there is a reality as well. I don't deny there's people living in poverty. But then you take somebody like Anna, who says she's moved to this area because she feels that it's a better class of people she's living beside. And yet she's talking about middle class and social workers. I mean how is she slagg'n off the neighbours she's just left? they must be just absolute nonentities. I mean I just didn't look at things like that - people and where they live.

TS: Is it possible that they might all want to get out as well if they could.

Kate: Not all of them. No.

Bill: Oh everybody wants a better lifestyle! You know, when you're down to material things everybody wants a video and phone and colour telly and whatever.

Betty: Oh crap.

Bill: You're just aware that you're always - if they give a person a job and they go out with the money, they'll spend it. They'll buy things. You know. If you win two hundred pound, it's immediately spent. Because you're thinking you're going on holiday. You're going to buy yourself a new outfit - you're going to buy you something. And it's spent. Once you start going the other way, when you havena got any money, you start feeling depressed. You're down and everybody's against you. Your environment...like I say, you come frae Fallowfield, and you canna get a job and you're willing to work. And you're tramping about the streets looking for a job. And they say "Where do you come frae?" "Fallowfield". They immediately think that you're a crook or you don't pay your rent, or something like that, when you're living up there in the first place. Because that's the type of name that it's got. You must be deprived, don't pay your rent or a crook or something wrong wi'you and that's why you're up there.

TS: I would have thought that's something which is outside the individual who lives there, isn't it?

Kate: Aha.

TS: If Bill is right then that means that that identity of Fallowfield is in their eyes. It's not just in the eyes of the people that are living there is it? It's in the eye of people who don't live there. And it's prejudicing them against them. That's what you're saying isn't it? Now doesn't that go beyond...the mind of the person who lives in Fallowfield? I mean I'm quite interested to know what you think it is. These two (Anna and Dennis) came up with a word for it. They came up with the word class to describe it, right? Now you shot that down in flames and said it was union talk.

Betty laughs.

TS: You did! If it isn't class what is it?

silence

TS: Because it sounds to me like a very real barrier. Anna described it as like prison bars.

silence

TS: Do you dismiss that?

Kate: No.

silence.

Betty: I just can't get to grips with people thinking - like Anna was saying "I don't tell my neighbours I used to live at North cross." I mean I just dinna see how she sees her neighbours now living in a better area. How they're going to look at her because she used to live in Westerhills. I mean are they suddenly going to ostracise her from the scheme?

Bill: But that's what I'm trying to say about walking out on your background. People will move on, try and block out their background. As though they didn't go to school with you. Because they're now living in a higher area. And they don't introduce you as somebody they went to school with.

Betty: Well that says more about what you think of yourself than the other person.

Bill: Like as Anna says, she moved out and when people say "Where do you come from?" She doesn't say "I used to stay in North cross, I used to stay in Fallowfield". Because...inside their mind that's a bad area. If you say to somebody "I come from Collarhouse", they immediately think "Well I don't want to know you".

"The women all walked about with rollers on, and corned beef legs"

Betty: Well, I tell you, I know a couple of folk who live at Cold Harbour. If you say to them "Where do you live?" they say "North cross" because they don't want people to think that they're posh. And they've got a mortgage and a nice house.

Bill: Well that's right but that's the other way!

Betty: Well, yes but they must have the same feeling about themselves and what it means to have a mortgage rather than who they're telling it to - it's how they're feeling about themselves. It's stupid.

Bill: You try and give yourself that wee bit of address, you know. That's where they change the name of some streets in different parts of the country, where people who used to stay in that particular -

Dennis: Oh that's right. They did that in Acre Park over there. They didn't want to get classed with Acre Park so they asked for it to be changed to Homestall Road. And they got it changed! Because the houses round at Homestall, they're all owned houses. They're all bought houses. But at the side of it, right at the end of the road there's a scheme!. And they wanted it changed. ...so they must have been assumed to be associating with the scheme.

Bill: Pilton. They didn't want Downs to be called Downs any more. They want it "Lord Ponsonby's Place" or something like that. ...Pilton had a bad name. So when Wimpy and what(ever) were doing it over they wanted to change all the names of the streets. So people would want to come back and live there. And the Council refused! It saved taking the name off correspondence and things like that...

TS: North cross was the place that you mentioned in an earlier

discussion, where you expressed astonishment at the place, yes?

Betty: That's right.

TS: What did that astonishment consist of?

Betty: Well, I'd never been actually through North cross. I'd only passed by it by car. And to actually go through it, it was - because I imagined all these tower blocks, you see. And when I went through it, there was all these tower blocks! Although I was brought up in flats. I've always lived in tower blocks. I think it was because I had a preconceived idea of what it would be like. And I think I probably looked at it not clearly. Because when I saw the people it was this sort of image that the women all walked about with rollers on and corned beef legs. Like Billy Connolly talks about. And that was the image I got when I went through. But it was really dowdy. Mind that time we were on the bus, eh? (to Katherine) And people were at bus stops. And like everybody was glum. Probably reflecting their surroundings, I don't know. But I already had an idea. And to be honest, going through it was better to look at than areas I've lived in myself, you know? I mean I think when you live in certain areas, you don't notice the walls and the graffiti. It's the people you know and what there is to do. Whereas -

Kate: It is community spirit.

Jenny: It's the people.

Betty: That's right it's the people, aye.

(09)

"Lets face it, if you've got money, you're going to vote Tory"

Shirley: I think, now, everybody feels sorry for those that are out of work. But I mean you're just looking out for yourself, looking out for number one. Well, it happens that often...you dinna have much o'a reaction.

Graeme: That's how the Tories voted in the South of England. You know. Thinking o'themselves.

Betty: Get lost!

Graeme: It is. "Fuck Scotland, lets look after ourselves!"

Betty: I'm not going to get drawn into that.
laughter

Shirley: There's the Scottish Nationalist representative!

Graeme: Nothing wrong with the Scottish Nationalists.

Betty: They're no big enough that's all.

Graeme: But I think the Governmemnt's let certain industries decline too much. Like the steel trade and ship building where there's going to be none left at all. That's a bad thing for them to have done. I mean I know there's jobs gone from every walk o'life. But some of them have gone a bit too far. But they proved where they done that thing with the Japanese. About their trade restrictions. By the Japanese. When they don't let other countries trade as much in their country as we let them. They made a stance on that, which was a good thing to do. But whether that'll help our exports or not we'll have to wait and see.

TS: ...were you saying...you inevitably put number one first? Or that's what other people are doing?

Shirley: Well, before, when you had unemployment in the war years etcetera, I mean people rallied round and tried to help and do things. But now you're really just thankful you've got a job yourself. We all feel sorry for those that are out of work. But really, you've got to look after yourself.

Betty: When there's cutbacks and everything, because it's a Tory Government everybody says "Ah, Tories." But if it was a Labour Government - there are still those that believe that's the working man's party - they're not as uptight about it...

Eleanor: But does it really matter who gets into power? Because if it's going to be axed, it gets axed just the same, doesn't it, really?

Betty: Yeah, but I think the way you react to it, maybe depends who you support.

Shirley: But then that's because the Tories have cut back on what they're going to benefit from. People that have got money are benefitting from that...

Betty: So why do people vote Tory that have no got money?

Shirley: Aye, but really -
laughter

Shirley: Have they really thought about it, what they've voted? The poll tax for example?

TS: You say they're all the same?

Eleanor: I think so. If the steel works is going to cut back, that will get cut back. That's it. Loss of jobs. If the hospitals are going private, they'll go private... It isn't up to us that's going to save

it, I mean it's up to the Government. It's the Governemnt that's ruined any chance whatever. It doesn't matter what me and you and other people say...

silence

TS: ...well, does everybody agree with that?

Graeme: No I don't. Because see what happened at the hospital at Polmuir. Is it Polmuir Hospital? They were planning on shutt'n that one down. And they got up a petition. I think it's that the hospital sent it to The town and it saved it. I think that, I'm not too sure.

Eleanor: Aye, certain parts o'it closed.

Graeme: Aye, but they were want'n to shut the whole thing down.

Eleanor: Same at Joseph Lister as well. They tried to shut that service down.

Graeme: Aye, they tried to shut that as well.

Eleanor: Maruwood Hospital's (still there) now.

Jessie (Domestic): It's an extension of the Infirmary now. Yet they were going to close it before.

silence

Katherine: People can put up petitions and show their anger and that. But I mean if it has got to be closed they'll close it.

Graeme: Is it no up to the Council how much they give to each hospital? Do they not get a budget from the Government? And they're supposed to split it up between them?

TS: What, the local health authorities you mean?

Graeme: Yes. So they're no really -

Jessie: That's Maggie's strong point. She says Scotland...doesn't use its share sensibly.

Graeme: Saying we squander it.

silence

TS: How much of this is a Scotland/England problem and how much of it is the sort of problem that Shirley was talking about? You were talking about the sort of people who benefit from a Tory Government.

Graeme: Well it's not so much Scotland/England. It's more North/South. It's happening in the North of England as well - just over the border. And as everybody knows, as you go further down, it's not as bad. So I'd say it's South/North rather than England/Scotland. I think so anyway.

Lilly: I mean there's as many people in Scotland who's got money as there is in England who's got money.

Graeme: Oh aye they're in Scotland as well.

Katherine: Lets face it though, if you've got money and you're going to benefit from it -

Shirley: Your're going to vote for it.

Katherine: - you're going to vote for Tory aren't you? I mean I know I would.

Eleanor: 'Course you would.

Katherine: I mean it's the same as if...you're needing an operation and you are in BUPA. I'm damned sure you're no going to wait on a two-year waiting list to get an operation, are you? You're going to go to a private hospital. Anybody would. You're no going to suffer for the sake o'your politics.

Eleanor: Surely.

Graeme: Ask Dennis Healey about that!

laughter

Graeme: His wife had it.

TS: Well...supposing the Regional Council decided it was going to start putting pressure on staff hours in Old Peoples Homes...?

Shirley: If you wanted them to recognise that they disagreed, you'd need everybody to protest. And there's no everybody that thinks the same way. I doubt that they would listen just to the one Home. It would take all the Homes.

silence

TS: Is there contact between all the Homes?

silence

Shirley: Don't know.

Betty (quietly): The union.

silence

(06)

"We were in the AEIOU or something"

Helen: We love it Dennis

laughter

long silence

Helen: I think we have to have a union really. Definitely. That's it!

laughter

Helen:...you'd be back to what Maggie Thatcher's trying to do the now. And she's winning.

Annette: Aye.

someone: She is.

Dennis: You get a lot of protection through the union that you wouldn't get if you didn't have it. You could get like too many of these people in the private sector. They can tell you when to go if they don't want you... If you had any grievances then you wouldn't have anybody to go to. You wouldn't have anybody to defend you either... Because that's got lawyers. It's got a body to protect you and things like that.

Annette: That's right.

Dennis: You see management would have full control over you.

Annette: I think they should have a union in all areas...like hotels and that. They don't have unions.

Dennis: I can't remember if you're in the union.

Kate: I'm not.

Helen: Guilty!

Kate: Katherine isn't.

Dennis: Katherine is.

Kate: She isn't.

Dennis: Aye she's in.

Kate: Is she?

Dennis: Aye. ...there's two people in the office...that's no in.

Helen: You see your union is only as good as the person who's representing you. ...in a Union you can be paying your money all the time, which I was. And anything happens, anybody comes down. That's no much good. See what I mean?

TS: That's something that's happened to you?

Helen: No, no never happened to me. But I used to work in Marywood Hospital. And then, when they closed it and all that, then there was a

time when they needed a union down'i'explain what was going to happen.

Graeme: Aye, that happened to me as well on my last job. We wanted the union in. They would say that they were coming down and then they never turned up. It was the guy that's a Councillor - Maxwell - when he was in the union. I dunno if he's still in it now is he?

Dennis: Don't know.

Graeme: He's not. When he was in the union, y'ken, we used to phone him up. He says "Oh we'll come down and sort it all out."

Helen: And they dinna appear.

Graeme: He never appeared.

Annette: I know that happened to me, one time years and years ago. I just went along to them and I got it sorted out... What was it..? Was it a 'T', 'T' something?

Nancy (Assistant Cook): Transport and General Workers?

Annette: Yes.

Helen: I think I've been in all the unions. When you get another job, "Were you in a union before?" It's easier to say no than go through all the unions that you were ever in!

laughter

Helen: So it is. Because I worked for Ferranti's - we were in the AEIOU or something.

laughter

Helen: And then I worked somewhere else and the Transport and General Workers. And NUPE comes up every now and again, I know that!

TS: Do you want to say a bit more about Deaconess Hospital?

Helen: Well would you be interested about that? Because, well they were just going to close it down. So everybody's panicking. And they gave us all forms to fill in. "Where do you want to work?" Choices of hospitals. No that you were actually picking a hospital. But it was a case of if anything just came up. And we went after it. I think they'd give priority to you. And really it was all hearsay. What this one said and what the other one said. And anyways as it ended up, it never closed. It closed as the Deaconess Hospital but the Royal Infirmary have taken it over as decanting patients. You know, while their ane place is being done up. But you see some staff got shifted. And the only staff that got kept on was the catering staff. But the domestic staff, they were cleared out and shoved to the Royal. Which they all hated. And then the nurses that were put to the Royal ended up coming back to the Deaconess with their patients! So they're back in.

TS And are you saying you were trying to get union help at that stage?

Helen: Ah, aye, "What's your union man doing?" And all this kind of thing. And he never - Well you see what they did, they started clearing off jobs. And this incident, in particular, was two night shift women that served in the canteen. And to be honest wi'you, thy were only taking the likes o'thirty pence a night in money. And I dinna really ken how the job was ever kept going for so long. I mean, there's nayb'dy could run it with that. That's what the money was - thirty pence. Well I don't know if that was because the meals were that cheap!

laughter

Helen: But like tatties and that were only five pence and everything. And maybe only two nurses came in.

laughter

Graeme: And they bought six tatties.

Helen: Just buy a plate o'chips.

laughter

Helen: See what I mean? So there was ~~nay~~ need for their jobs really. You see they were scream'n when they were gett'n told that their job was obsolete. And that's when the union came down. So they gave them day jobs and that. They weren't happy because they were on night shift... And the union had to fight for them. And it was awfully difficult for the union man that did appear. He seems to be quite famous because I seen'm on telly, this wee guy. But I don't think he's got the gift o'the gab. He was fight'n for two women, they were on the night shift, alternate nights, right? And there was only one job. But so he was fight'n for jobs for the two of them. It was a shame for him as well. That one got it and the other one didn't, you see? And that's - no very nice. That isn't really. So I dinna ken. The union wasn't very good at that time. But that only depends on who's representing you, I'm quite sure o'it.

Annette: I think this kind of thing, like having the union at the back of you if you're unfairly dismissed. You know, getting a representative. Because I was in a place where I was unfairly dismissed... I worked for Gardeners Merchant. We didn't have a union. They'd never heard of them! So...I had to go and get my own representative. Mind you I won the case. I probably would have won it if I had a union. I got my own representative from the Citizens Rights Office. I won my case and I got some compensation.

Helen: Maybe that's a good way to make money, Annette!

"I must have squirted it up the way...and it really blinded me"

Dennis: Tell us more! That's another good thing about the union as well. That you are protected.... I did something on union policy when I was at College. But I think there was a lot of things that management got away wi'. Because they know so little about it... And I found here there was a big neglect in filling in accident forms. It was totally ignored. I had a woman last week... She banged her head on one of they doors, the wee doors here [high cupboards]. I put a memo in to report these doors. And that's another thing - I mean a bad point about the union. I put a memo in about they doors, to get the safety officer down here to check them. And they've still not been checked. I've still not had any word back from them. So what I was trying to do was to get everybody that had had an accident with the doors to fill in an accident form. Residents included. Everybody. And I discovered that...they were failing to get people...accident forms. And this woman had an accident and I asked her "Did you get an accident form?" She says "No she didn't give me one." I went down to the office with her and got one. And then they recorded it.

Annette: Was that June? She didn't half give herself a crack didn't she?

Dennis: Aye. I've been taking a copy of the accident forms when it happens... So I keep an eye on it. The thing is, if we brought up all accidents with these doors then I've got enough accident forms to present to them. So we've got a case that something should be done. Before, they were ignored. It was just like going in the office and saying "Somebody banged their head - " "Ah, well...it was just an accident." It was nothing! It was just off the cuff. Now, the more I've learned about it, I know to make sure the accident forms do go in. Because even the residents should be entitled to claim - if they have an accident - against something like that...⁽²²⁾

I was saying, at the union meeting yesterday, to the domestics, that I

hadn't known that people could stand and...management could say anything to you. And get away with it. And you're the one that's walking out the door with shakes and everything. You're the one that's suffering from all the stress. Because somebody's shout'n'n bawl'n at you. You see? So what do you do? What do you say? But if they realise they do have a union representative in the place to do something, then they can go and get something done about it. Before, they didn't seem to have any protection. Nayb'dy knew enough about the union or knew enough o'what they were supposed to do. In fact I never knew enough either. But the more I did, I realised that you could claim it off these people. The balance was unfair. They've done something where before they didn't. (They'd been) getting away with it. But if anybody has an accident, get down to it with a claim. When I was at the union meeting I seen how many people have got claims you never think exist. The amount of people who've got those claims through the union, taking them to court, it's unbelievable. Yet you wouldn't think if you had an accident...like Annette did.

Annette: Yes. Cynthia Knox.

Dennis: Annette Watt. She was off her work. And I'd said to her "Did you get an accident form put in?" "No." I said she should have got one done there. It wasn't till she came back which was two weeks later. And it had knocked her dizzy.

Annette: She should have filled in the accident form more or less straight away.

Dennis: She should. Management are supposed to - as soon as any accident happens they are supposed to give you an accident form.

Annette: Yeah I know. Because one time when I was in the laundry, do you remember Liz... I was pouring the disinfectant into the water to wash the floor. And I must have squirted it up the way. It went in me eye.

Liz (Assistant Cook): Oh I remember that.

Annette: ...it went in my eye and it really blinded me. And I couldn't see and I said "Wash it out with water Annette". She said "I'll take you along to the office". I went along and Enid said "Oh I haven't got an accident form now," she said. "But I'll get you one". About a couple of days after that I think, she got me one.

Dennis: Aye, I mind that Bioforce stuff.

Annette: Aye I think it was that, actually.

Dennis: There was a lot o'people wi'excema. It was irritation on their hands. I went to the office and I says "Look there's an awful lot of people in here wi'erm irritations on their hands." I says "Have you checked the disinfectant and that?" "Och, it's just excema." So I said "How come so many people have the same thing?" And I got this letter through from Oak Park saying that they had withdrawn fri'all the Homes, Bioforce. Because that was what was caus'n it.

Annette: That's what was causing it."

Dennis: Aye. And we were still using it. And people were still walking about with this burning on their hands, aye.

Kate: Here?

Annette: Aye.

Dennis: Oh aye. So I had to go and get it all removed. Frae'all the flats. And they were still using it... During the week Anna was cleaning the toilets out and she had a bottle in her hand!

Shirley: There's been a bottle in the Blue Flat for a month.

Dennis: It's all supposed to be uplifted because it was causing

infections. And Hilda had it as well.

Annette: Aye, because Hilda's got the habit of putting her hand here (rubs neck).

Dennis: Aye and that was ages after it. If we'd known at the time...you could have got a claim for that... They'd been using it for ages and they didn't know a thing. And then they got this letter from the Health and Safety saying it was to be withdrawn. (29)

They've got that much bloody debt"

Liz: What happens in unions when they say you've got to go on strike and we dinna want to go out on strike? There was a strike in the Region about four year ago right? And we were all supposed to come out on strike. But we didna want to come out on strike.

Dennis: ...everybody I think is entitled to their individual views. But ...if everybody ignores it, if somebody is fighting for something and everybody says "Oh well I'm not going to do that" then obviously the Government, or whoever's involved, whatever body, is going to say "Ah well they're no interested," you know. "There's no that many people." So what they do? It's just psychology. They just let them whittle down and you get nowhere. But if everybody fights -

Graeme: Well that's what happened to the miners. the miners eventually split up with that.

Helen: Aye, but you see it's not really that people nowadays are going to get a chance to think. You can all have your feelings. And say that you agree, "OK we'll go on strike because we're no putting up with that". But what they've done now is they've got everybody to take on as much debt as they can, right? "Buy now and you pay later." So folk have mair interest in their standing orders in the bank than...in principles. And they ken that if they go on strike...and they canna pay the standing orders, they're standing all right - outside! Because they can lose everything. And that's why people really dinna go on strike now. It's no, well, I think, it's no because they dinna believe in strike. It's because they've got that much bloody debt.

Dennis: I think people that were fighting in the twenties and thirties, in the miners' strikes, were aware that...the rich were getting richer and the poor were really poor. So people did have a cause. And they knew that as a body the only way to get something was to fight. But...there's no real fight in people now. Because there's too much bribery. The Government says "Take £2,000 just take your name off that union list." And people will do it for the £2,000.

helen: If they offered me £2,000 Dennis I'd do it the noo!
laughter

Graeme: Bye-bye NUPE!

Helen: Oh I ken what you're meaning, I know that. But I still think, genuinely, I think it's to do with money... They've all got cars. They've booked holidays abroad. They're no going to lose their deposits and that. And they're putt'n up wi' things and shutt'n their mooth.

Liz: But you're on about holidays! Just day-to-day, on the wages, financially, you canna always afford to go on strike.

Dennis: I know, aye. The other thing is that the Government's got a big hold over everybody. It's unemployment. Everybody knows. I mean you're in a job. There's hundreds of people out there. And they can say well "If you don't want your job, go." Which is really one of the most

important reasons why people should be in a union. To protect yourself against that. But then again, being in a job, it doesn't mean to say you've got to...put up wi'what somebody says up there.

Helen: The reason I'm putt'n up with things is because I need the money. Years ago I used to be able to say "Ah, I'm no going back." And I used to pack jobs in. And I used to get a job the next day. No fantastic jobs. But y'ken -

Annette: You could do that then.

Helen: - if you're maybe working in a glue factory one night. You were wrapping biscuits in a factory the next night. It was as simple as that. I didn't think twice about pack'n a job in then, Dennis, but I couldna di'it now. I mean actually I couldna afford to di'it.

Jenny: That's quite true...my flat mate went out on strike in the Civil Service. And she says the ones that were for the strike were young people...with no debts... And the majority of them were desperately against it. Because they just couldna afford it. They've got in a lot of debt and a lot of poverty -

Helen: That's right.

Jenny: - (they) were the ones with families, with children. These are the ones with the high principles. They're young as he says. But it's the ones with the money to go with them that counts.

Helen: That's right. That's why Maggie Thatcher's allowing us to buy a house now, right? No deposit. Pay later. Everything like that. Young people are buying houses where they should maybe be with their Ma.
silence

Helen: Like me!

laughter

Graeme: I'll come and live wi'ye.

Helen: Aye.

laughter

Helen: And I think that's got a lot to do with it. Definitely.

Dennis: Aye, well for heaven sakes, I think at the moment that's right.

- (08)

"Playing psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist, drug therapist"

Paul: ...my wages are terrible... If I was on the road I'd probably just walk out.

Anna: Yes, it's no good wages if you don't have weekend work. It's as simple as that.

Paul: you see overtime is very seldom. I've had it once. That was last Wednesday night. ...I mean if they're short, I'll work for them just the same as the care staff.

Betty: I think the work we do here with the elderly's the same work that people do in child care. We do a lot of written work - profiles and care plans and things like that, preadmission visits. But we're only recognised as manual workers, whereas we do a Care Officer job. And while the wage isn't that bad, when you consider what Child Care Officers get, then, you know, it's a bit of a sore point.

-
TS: We've had this comparison between care staff and care officers in Childrens Homes... What about the domestic side, the money there? How do you feel that compares with other jobs...?

Anna: Well, it's quite well paid I think as wages go in this (area).

TS: Only by comparison?

Anna: Yeah.

Jessie: It's better than in the hospital...

Anna: It's one of the higher rates round here... (01)

Dennis: This man who's carrying on with the Care Assistants [author of a Regional Council Manpower Services report] and that, you know? Their attitude is that we're just manual workers, right? And, especially in this Home, we've put a lot of work into this place. A lot of what these people, sitt'n in their high chairs up there, don't even realise we're doing. There's alot of stress involved in this job. And sometimes there's no stress, when you're sitt'n about with the cases you're concerned with, doing noth'n. But that's no the case all the time. And as far as this Report maintains, we're just doing a job like putt'n somebody's clothes on. As far as they're concerned that's the most important thing. It's no the most important thing. It's no the most important thing to us. It's no the most important thing to the residents.

Shirley: True.

Dennis: And the thing is, in a lot o'ways, we're doing a far more professional job than they're doing in the office. Far more professional. We're far more involved. We're far more aware. This is 1980s. The system of work is totally different from what it was years ago. It might have been, fair enough, years ago, a case where you put somebody's clothes on and just sit them in a corner. And that's it. Fair enough. Now it's totally different. Now you're far more involved in everything going on in the flats. Because it's that close that you canna help being involved in it. You're playing psychologist, social worker psychiatrist and drug therapist. Everything under the sun. You're playing so many roles...

Helen: What you're trying to say, Dennis, is you're a Mummy.

Dennis: A what?

Helen: Just like the mother of a family.

Dennis: Yeah. You are doing that but it's not recognised. We're doing nursing when we shouldn't be doing nursing. We're not getting paid to do nursing. But the Government plays on that. You see if we went on strike in the morning, and all the Care Assistants walked outside that door and stood out there, they would play on is their emotions.

someone: Aye.

Dennis: You know, they would say "How can these people be so cruel as to leave these people sitt'n in there?" But at the same time they're producing a report saying, look, "You people are just Care Assistants." So it's used when they want. And the only way we would get, or hope to get somewhere, is if we've got a body ready to represent us. And to realise the potential that's going into this Home. And to remember that it's the people at the bottom line. It's the residents, first. Because as somebody was saying yesterday, they're paying for this place. They are paying to live in a place like this. So if we had a strike. And we wanted something done about the Manpower Services Report. It isna just a case that we're doing it for ourselves, or money. We're doing it for the residents as well. Because if they give us what we want, we can do more for the residents.

...years ago I believe that the miners did have a real reason - going back when people were taking their kids down mines and things like that.

Helen: Oh aye.

Dennis: They really suffered. And you got paid a pittance from some rich guy. Nowadays, I feel - I might get attacked here -

helen: No, no.

Dennis: - but I feel that the biggest capitalists in the country are the miners. Because they've got so much money. And they're striking for more all the time. It's unbelievable.

Helen: You see the last strike Dennis was nothing to do with money. The last strike was because they were selling their jobs, right? And you were getting offered twenty, thirty thousand to sell your job. Come out the pit after you've been there thirty years. Money does talk. Now what the argument was, the young ones were say'n they're selling their jobs for the next generation. And you see normally it is for a rise. And so the miners have got a rise. So they're all happy and they're all on strike. But this time it was nay. Plus, never before, if one miner out the crowd decides to go t'their work, never would you get a police escort. They would have stepped out the house and two hard men would a'says "Get back in" one way or another. And that would have been it. But you see it was like an army. And it was just like a fight against the other (army)... It was nothing ti'di'wi'a rise.

Dennis: Oh no, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that they have got so much money now. You know, like Care Assistants are the bottom of the rung now. We are one of the lowest paid. I mean look at all the people that are out on jobs now, right? And the amount of money they're making from the jobs. And we can step out the door and say "Tell us what you're getting for your jobs. You've got nine ti'five and you get that for your job. What do you do?" "Sit down and type at a desk."

Helen: I know.

Dennis: All on bits of paper. And you'd think the job's hard. They work nine ti'five! We work in shifts. We've hardly got a social life. Look at all the money! Sometimes you're feared to go out at night in case you come in in the morning and you're no up for your work. But it's one of the few jobs left that's got shifts. It's one of the jobs where you should get paid more for it. But it is becoming more professional than it was before. It's not just a case where it was just manual work. Where people could say "Ah well, just Care Assistants". ...sometimes I think that maybe the union's negelecting it as well. People aren't exactly seeing what's going on in Homes. They're not seeing what we're putting in. As far as they're concerned all they've got on the scales is "Care Assistants" and that's it.

"It's easy for you to say to domestics "Don't do it""

Dennis: But it's the same for anything. I mean the amount of work the domestics are taking on. The risks they're taking as well. That's another thing. As a shop steward...I try to tell people this. ...and they go away and do it. And if you try to represent people, you expect them to back you. No to turn against you and go into the office and say "Och well I'll just di'it". I mean, Rose nearly blew herself up three times.

Nancy: Ah with that thing. Aye.

Dennis: And I told them to leave it till they got somebody in to check the electricity. They didna di'it. They went away and they just went "Aye." It seems that if management smile at you, you say "Ah well she's in a good mood today, I'll just di'it." But it shouldn't be the case. It

shouldn't be sort of beck and call like that. Because they're only paid to move the hoover from one place to another. They're no paid ti'fix it. Or to take the risk o'ruining their own lives over it.

Shirley: But you should have approached the supervisor over it.

Dennis: I did. I did do.

Helen: I thought it was arranged there was going to be a note shoved on that...

Dennis: It was done. It was done. But the thing was...they went and used it.

Annette: That's daft.

Dennis: And every day. It was three times it happened. It blew all the switches in the Green Flat. They still used it. And they found there was too much water in it. And just imagine if that too much water had got a wee bit further. They wouldna be standing there any more. But they wouldna've had a claim or nothing. They couldna claim, because then I would've been responsible. And I said "Look I've told them and I've told management." And management could turn round and say "Well I told them not to use it". They'd have got nothing... If they say to you "Oh well, the hoover's fixed". So you go and use the hoover and it blows up. Then you've got a claim...

Shirley: But if the supervisor asked them to do it would they no have a claim?

Dennis: Aye. Oh aye...

Helen: Aye but you can have a wee bit commonsense and all. Like if the hoover thing's no working right, and you ken it, ...it doesna need a union to tell you that you'd better no use it.

Dennis: Well I mean the two o'them are still using it.

Shirley: Because the supervisor asked them.

Dennis: Eh?

Shirley: Because the supervisor asked them.

Dennis: And I said to them when I went in the office "Look" I says "they canna use that machine - "

Shirley: It's easy for you to say to domestics "Don't do it - "

Dennis: But Molly told them not to use it as well.

Shirley: Well I was told that they were asked to shampoo the carpets.

Dennis: Aye. They were asked to shampoo the carpets. But Molly told them not to use it because it had blown up just after it.

Shirley: Then how were they going to shampoo the carpet?

Dennis: No they didna need to shampoo the carpet. Everything's broken and they canna use the machinery. You canna do your work unless... -

Shirley: Then how did Rose nearly electrocute herself three times then?

Dennis: Because she went and used it when she was told not to use it.

Shirley: It's just that when she used it that time, I was there, and she told me she'd been asked to do it.

Dennis: She had been asked to hoover the carpets. Kenny had fixed the electricity the day she was hoovr'n right? So she was using it again. And it happened. And I said "Look don't use it" And I went to see Molly and she says "Yes, don't bother use'n'it." What happened? Molly was in the office and she went out and she used it again. I says "That's it. Leave it till'n electrician comes in." ...she'd been told again, three times. But the thing is at any time they could have blown themselves up. And the lot with it.

"The big guys that have got all the say...didn't give them a vote"

TS: Who do you normally consider the union to be?

helen: You're supposed to be the union yourself. You are the union. Everybody that's in it. But it doesn't work out that way. You maybe pay it every week but you're not really in the union... That's how it's supposed to be but I don't think that's how it works.

TS: Well when you say it doesn't work like that, how does it work?

Helen: Well like that carry-on with the hoover and everything. Because they're probably a'feared to say we're no more using it...

TS: Well who do you regard the union as in practice then? I mean is it the officials who work in the office? Or is it Dennis as your shop steward? Or who is the union in practice? Do you sometimes consider the union to be you?

Shirley: No. If it was anything to do with the union, I'd probably see Dennis.

Helen: I would see Dennis as well. But at the same time, when you're talking about the miners' union and that. You're talking about, like, say Arthur Scargill and all these guys. But you're seeing all the time that somebody must be pulling his strings. And he gives that union a bad impression. That everybody in the Miners are all in, what do you call that there? Like communists sort o'thing. But I don't believe they're all like that... And all the miners that leave the pit, they're all glad to leave. And they're very proud if their sons dinna go in the pit. ...they're glad their families dinna work in the pit. And it's all the big guys that have got all the say, I think. Because that Miners' Union didn't give them a vote. Because they knew that their members would have all voted to go back by the time it finished. Is that right? So the people who are the union in that case weren't the union at that time.

"There's no very many Richard Bransons. He's only one out o'millions"

Dennis: The unions are the kind o'QCs for the people employed. And the government's the judges and prosecutors for the people in management. That's what the union does for people who've got problems. And fight their cases against the prosecution.

TS: Helen said earlier on that the Government was winning...

Dennis: I think they are.

Annette: Oh aye.

Dennis: I see that because they've got so many sweeties to gi'ti'people to get them away fr'unions. I think...people are passive now. They're talking about loads o'excuses not to be in the union. I mean there's fear o'hold'n onto a job. If you've got a job you've got to hold onto that. But, you know, so many people out there are going to give... as much as possible. If it's a case of somebody's threatening your lifestyle. If the Government say to you "Now look, we're going to privatise this sector. You've got a choice," you know. "There's no room for unions." I'm sure most people would accept that rather than go for redundancy. Because as far as they can see it means that their job's going to go on and on and on. And that they're getting paid. If they get redundancy that means they're getting a handful and that's the finish. And there's no way you're going to be coming back.

Helen: But then they've also got all this crap about how, if you canna get a job, you can start up on your own. And my husband works for hisself! Which I dinna feel is right... Because, like, folk'll phone y'up and say they canna get hold of him. "Is he on his dinner hour?" And

I can honestly say he hasna had a dinner hour in five years. I mean dinner hour doesna come into it. And that's how she wants you to work. She wants you to be toiling. And you're working...you're no earning. they want that so. He doesna employ anyb'dy because he canna afford to. If he did then I wouldna need to work, right?. But he canna guarantee's money. I've got guaranteed money every week as far as I'm working here. But he hasna. And that's worse. Because he's no making millions or anything. He's working all the time.

TS: OK so you've both described in different ways what the Government is trying to do. Can they be stopped? Is there an answer to it?

Helen: I dinna think so.

Dennis: Was it in 1972 the miners overthrew the Government, was it?

Helen: Ah but that was Ted Heath. You see he was nay as strong a personality.

Graeme: Ah that was the three day week.

Helen: The three day week was great.

laughter

Helen: You see at the time my husband worked for Ferranti's. And they loved it. They put it forward. Could they do a three day week? Because they were doing twelve hour-shifts three days a week. And that was bombed right out. That would have been excellent. Three twelve-hour shifts and they still got it in. Ferranti's never lost any time or anything. Three days they could put their electric on and two days they never. But it was three twelve hour shifts. Eight till eight. So Ferranti's never lost a halfpenny. And everybody was happy because they had four days off every week. It was in that case. It didnay apply. But it would maybe apply if you were running a chip shop and you couldna put your electric on. So you could really lose a lot on that.

Dennis: If there was a national strike. And everybody, all the unions, were well organised and in communication with eachother. And everybody throughout downed their tools. Then it would cost the Government enough to change the Government.

Helen: You see you always get somebody gaining on a strike. When it was the miners' strike, remember when your lights were cut off every four hours, our paraffin man was making a bomb.

laughter

Helen: He wis. And he was di'in double runs and everything. He was really making a bomb. And the shops that sold paraffin, they were making a bomb.

laughter

Helen: It doesna matter what - if you have an accident, somebody that makes all the bandages makes a bomb. Somebody makes something out of it all the time. And maybe that's all planned. Maybe Maggie Thatcher had a paraffin factory.

laughter

Dennis: Maybe everybody was going to the chapel for the first time in ages...steal'n the candles.

Helen: They were coming round to the door selling them actually.

Dennis: Oh aye. My Mum made a lot o'money during that time as well.

Liz: Ah there you are.

Dennis: She did it during the bread strike. She baked her own bread at the door!

Helen: You see...it did help some people you see. And like when the posties were on strike, which was sixteen years ago. The reason that I

know is that I was in the hospital and I never got any get well cards.
laughter

Helen: But the catalogues started with their ane vans instead of doing it all through the post... Was it something arrow?

Annette: Yeah: White Arrow.

Helen: Well, they had their own vans...

Annette: ...they've got different vans for different firms but it's White Arrow that I -

Helen: That's right. So that was all started then...

Annette: They may have started then but they're falling down the hill now.

Shirley: I can't understand why, because you must have the best catalogue!

Annette: Oh aye, oh aye...

laughter

Annette: I'm talking about the White Arrow. I sent for a parcel in March and a parcel in April and th two of them I never received...

laughter

Helen: Maybe the arrow went past your door then.

laughter

Helen: We'll have to have another strike then!

Annette: I'll have to bring the union into it!

Dennis: There's a load of opportunities for privatising. But at the end of the day, it's no the people that are starting the businesses that get the money. It's the Government. You see they've subsidised the business for so long that you get...

Helen: You see that's a fallacy as well. Because my man did work for himself and he started off wi's - y'ken when you leave your work and you get a couple o'week's wages, three weeks holiday money or something? That's what he started with. Now they're coming up with this wee forty pound a week. But there's always clauses to it. It's no way you could start a Home if you're a Care Assistant. But there is clauses. And it used to be that if you were unemployed for a year then you got a thousand pound.

Helen: Well you... had to have a thousand pound -

Annette: A thousand pound to lay down.

Helen: But forty pound a week -

Annette: To help you get it off the ground.

Helen: Aye.

Annette: I mean, who's going to have - unemployed - a thousand pound? They're not going to go the bank because there's no guarantee that they can pay that back.

Helen: The bank wouldna entertain them.

Annette: Well this is it. Unless they've got money at the back of them in the bank.

Helen: And you see there's no very many Richard Bransons. He maybe made himself a lot o'money. But he's only one out o'millions, y'ken what I mean? It's no like that. You dinna ken which is the worst o'it.

Dennis: Well they certainly conned the backside off of young people.

Annette: Oh yes.

Helen: And what with feeling that you're supposed to be grateful because you've got a job -

Dennis: Aye.

Helen: You're to be grateful if you get offered overtime.

"He was only getting £25 a week. What's that for a young man?"

Annette: They don't do nothing for the young ones. I mean it's not fair. I've got a son that's unemployed. And my daughter was unemployed for about four years until recently. They don't do nothing for the young ones at all.

Dennis: No. They really con them. Because when you think of it, when you were sixteen, everybody had a job.

Annette: Exactly.

Dennis: When you looked at the unemployment figures, it was people who were unemployed and didn't have jobs. And now they've capitalised on it and invented all these wee schemes so they've cut down -

Helen: That's right so there's no unemployment.

Dennis: Aye

Helen: There's a lot of folk, Dennis, that don't pay a big stamp. Like me though. If I packed my job in I wouldna be unemployed although in my eyes I would be unemployed, but in the Government('s) I wouldna be on that.

Annette: They do con the young because I mean they've got this YTS scheme. My son was on it. And when he was on it - that's only a matter of three years ago - he was only getting twenty five pounds a week. What's that for a young man? And that was doing a hard day's graft. Sometimes he started at eight o'clock in the morning and sometimes he wouldna come in till about eight o'clock at night. for twenty five pounds a week.

Dennis: Oh it's terrible. It's just slave labour. But you see Hitler was the first person to invent all these things. He had the Hitler youth. He had them tearing up streets and doing all sorts of things. And I think that's almost exactly what they've got.

Shirley: They don't even have the choice. If you're sixteen you have to go to YTS.

Graeme: If you dinna go, you dinna get any money off them at all.

Annette: That's right. This is what they're doing. If you refuse to go on the YTS now I mean they strike you off Unemployment Benefit.

Dennis: So when it comes to unemployment figures, they're maintaining that it's declining.

Shirley: And many of the jobs you could go for before, it's all changed to YTS...

(08)

"I wouldn't want those responsibilities in my position"

The staff at Viewpoint read a draft of the previous chapters and met to make a small number of corrections and changes. By that time the officer staff had read it too. Their reaction to it had been one of indignation. They felt it contained untruths which would be damaging to them if they were published. Material differences mainly centred whether ill patients had or had not had sufficiently prompt medical attention. One care assistant wanted some of his comments deleted. Another wanted hers to remain, but later changed her mind. "I'm sorry Tom, I want it all taken out. There's no knowing where this could end up." The previous chapters therefore appear without these comments. Provided one particular phrase was deleted, the officers agreed to record a discussion about what they had read (see Appendix I). The rest of the staff, in turn, then read the transcript of this discussion. Finally, four care staff and one domestic met to discuss what the officers had said. Did they agree with the officers that only they could exercise responsibility, say, for calling a doctor?

Kate: Yes.

Peter: With regard to the doctor I do, yeah. I mean the buck's got to stop somewhere. And as far as I'm concerned, it stops with the duty officers. It's their decision. So I agree with it in that sense.

Kate: It's our responsibility to report to them if we think they're in need of a doctor. It's their responsibility to listen to what we've said.

Peter: I think it's important that somebody's seen to be responsible...to avoid confusion. We'd get the blame if we didn't go and report something like that. We're responsible in that sense. But for the decision whether to get a doctor, it's really up to the senior staff.

TS: And you see this as being about...where the buck stops?

Peter: Yeah. I think when you're in that position, obviously mistakes are made. And they will be. You know, it's part of their job, the responsibilities they take on. I really think for someone in their position the responsibility should be clear you know, regards things like that. And it's important that responsibilities are detailed, that they're seen as being responsible for that. So I agree with what it says.

Bill: It's funny really - I'm talking about another Home again - where there was a care assistant at half past ten at night, writes in the report saying that somebody was sick and had diarrhoea, and got a row for not telling them. And yet the same care assistant went to the office and said "Mrs So-and-so's ill." And she goes "Dinna bother me, there's nothing much wrong with her." So, you canna win. Some Practitioners will give you a row because it's two o'clock in the afternoon... and "She's been ill all day. You've no come and tell me." I've had that put on me...

Peter: You've got a row for taking your responsibility seriously...

Bill: I'm not talking about here.

Peter: I know.

Bill: If you're working in a flat, in here, and somebody's complaining about a headache, you usually give them some tablets... If you've people

been going backwards and forwards to the toilet all morning then they (the officers)'ll give you something for it, some diarrhoea stuff.... There is a difference with that. Because you're actually telling them that they're ill. I mean you're handing over the responsibility to them. "I've told them. If they don't do nothing they know" ye ken.

Kate: I've been here just over five months. And any time I've had anything wrong with the residents, I've gone straight to the office... And they've come practically right away and examined the resident and ...sent for the doctor.

Bill: She was talking about the Agreement, you know. At sea, it doesn't matter what job you do. I went to sea. And I was a chef. If they wanted the hatches battened down and the Captain saw you, I couldn't say "Well, I'm a Cook". The Captain's word was law and you had to do it. And when I came ashore to work... they said "Oh no, no, that's a joiner's job, that's a plumber's job." I found it very restrictive - to suddenly find out you couldn't do - you know, it took a couple of men to do it, it wasn't your job. It's not your job to change a battery in a fork truck. It's an electrician's job. In yet the only thing the electrician'll do is stand there and watch you changing the battery. He just has to be there. It's a thing that is tied down. You are very restricted in the work you do here or what you do anywhere else. Because you're all complying to rules and Agreements.

Peter: I think you've got to do.

Kate: Yes.

Peter: Like if you see the line of responsibility. If someone wasn't too well. And you thought "Right, I'm going to take the decision, I'm not going to call the doctor." If they died of a stroke half an hour later, you'd be up to your neck. Responsibility is really important... It's got to be defined.

Bill: Ah well, the attitude of some people is that "I've told them that they're ill." You don't hear again. "But I've told them. I've told them that she's had a fall and she's ill. It's up to them to call the doctor."

Peter: That's right. That's what we've been saying. That's their responsibility, you know. And it's important.

TS: Yes. So once you've done that, you would expect them to be much more actively involved, in a practical sense, with that individual, would you?

Peter: Certainly I would rely on their...decision, unless I disagreed with it. Then I'd say again, you know, if I really felt there was something wrong. But yeah, I'd expect that a senior, when they're told there's something wrong, they should get along there - and they do - and size up the situation and act on it. And if I disagree, I'll say. Certainly.

TS: But what are you (to Bill) saying? Are you saying it's not good enough just to say "So-and-so's ill" and leave it at that?

Bill: Yeah. ...I've had experience o'going round, say, when a lady's had a fall, you know. And she's said "Oh she's a ninety two year old woman - she's just shaken up."

Peter: But where is this Bill? I think we've got to really keep it to in here you know.

Bill: No!

Peter: Well it's in here the report's about.

Bill: No. I'm explaining that it's somewhere else, I'm not talking about

in here.

Kate: So it's happened, that you've reported something - ?

Bill: I've reported something and they've done nothing about it. And the night shift has come in and the lady's had to go to hospital wi'a broken femur.

Peter: In here?

Bill: No.

Peter: Oh sorry.

Bill: No. I mean you're talking of different aspects of work. You're talking about the care staff constrained by the Regional Agreement on manual workers, on the amount of responsibility they can have. And what they're saying in here is that "I am an officer in charge, assistant officer in charge. And I am responsible." I'm saying I've come up against assistant officers in charge who are supposed to be in a position of responsibility. And I've told them. And they've done nothing. In yet I have been concerned about it.

Peter; Ah well that's right you know. It shows they were in the wrong. You fulfilled your responsibility. And it happened. In here so far it's been good. Things have been acted upon.

Bill: Oh aye. It doesna stop me feeling concerned, you know. Because I've reported it and they did nothing.

Kate: Just because of your past experience. It's being anxious.

TS: So there's probably pretty close agreement between most of the staff and the officers on that point - about responsibility?

Bill: Oh I mean there is a vast degree of difference in here. Because, like I say, you just need to go in and say to them "Somebody's ill", something like that. They come straight away.

TS: ...are you reasonably satisfied that that is the best way to provide that care - that you've got somebody in the office who takes responsibility for decisions about, say, whether to call the doctor, while you provide the practical care in the flats? Is that division ideal?

Bill: You can talk about hospitals being the same. A nurse goes to the doctor. The nurse does all the practical work, taking their temperature, checking the charts and all that - and writes it all down. The doctor comes along and has a look at it. He's the next step up the line. If the nurse is concerned that the blood pressure's too low, then she tells the doctor. She doesna do anything about it, she tells the doctor. The doctor does something about it.

Kate: Any time in here that a resident's needed care from a doctor, what's always happened is that the office staff have always recognised that. If any time I felt they needed a doctor and nothing was done about it, then I'd go on at them. But it never has happened.

TS: It's never had to happen here?

Kate: Well not to me.

TS: They acknowledge, in that discussion there, that they do rely on you, because you're the people on the spot, and you are therefore the only people who can notice changes in the medical condition of a resident.

Bill: Well if you're working in the flat every day, you can quickly see who's ill - where there's changes, you know. You give them a bath every week and you check their weight. You can turn round and say "Your weight's dropped four pounds." You're concerned because he's not been eating, or never had no breakfast for three or four days. And you do

check up. You keep a constant check on them you know. You do write in the report "Never had breakfast or lunch". And the office maybe say "But they've got quite a lot of weight on them anyway. It doesn't matter if they didn't eat breakfast." And there again you say someone else has lost weight and you're concerned they're losing weight.

TS: One of the points made at one of the earlier discussions was that there was this feeling that it wasn't necessarily the case that the officers have got, say, more training than some of the care staff. I think the word professional was used - it wasn't necessarily the case that they were more professional than some of the care staff. So if that's so, what really is the difference between you deciding that a doctor should be called and them deciding that the doctor should be called?

Peter: I think it's in the terms of our contract you know. And I think it's really important that seniors have responsibility and those responsibilities should be recognised. If responsibilities like that are just thrown open to everybody, there wouldn't be any recognition of a senior's position. You could run the Home completely with care assistants. I think you've got to give them recognition. And as a care assistant I don't expect to take the blame for a mistake that should be made by a senior. Getting back to the illness thing, as long as I report it I feel I've done enough, unless I disagree with their decision. Then I'd go back and, as far as I could, try and convince them. I just think it's really important to recognise the different responsibilities we've got you know.

TS: Yes. You're saying that their position would be called to question if in fact you were taking those decisions. And you said that, you know, you might as well run the Home with care staff as do that. Supposing you weren't handicapped by the differences between their conditions of employment and your conditions of employment, would you...still want to see a distinction between seniors and care staff?

Peter: I think so. I don't want their responsibilities as long as I'm a care assistant. I think, like discipline, as well, if I disagree with somebody I'd tell them. I couldn't take any disciplinary action and I wouldn't want to. I wouldn't want those responsibilities in my position. I'd love to be up-graded and then have those responsibilities. Until then I don't want them.

TS: Ah, that's a point that also came up in the discussion with them really. I think you're probably agreeing with what they're saying as well - that responsibility is something that is restricted to promotion, rather than something that anybody could think of as being devolved downwards. Do you want to say anything about that - that it's not possible to think about responsibility in a place like this... without getting promotion. Is that right?

Peter: I think it probably is. Yeah I mean my responsibilities are quite clear to me. They've been explained and a lot of them are commonsense. And it's like any other job, when you get upgraded you expect your job description to hopefully change. You get more responsibility. It's not something I would expect.

TS: Is that the way it should be?

Kate: Yes.

Bill: Well I mean a lot of people would like to further themselves, you know. But then it would mean taking on the responsibilities which senior staff have got, on discipline, on drugs, on everything that they do. A

lot of people are not prepared to do that. They want to be friends with the people they've got.

TS: The residents you mean?

Bill: No. The other care staff. If you become a boss, you can't remain friends of them people. Because if you come to a disagreement, well you're going to have to discipline them. You probably did it yourselves! But the responsibility lies with you - you must discipline them.

Peter: If by any chance I was ever offered - it wouldna happen without training - but if I was offered an upgrading here, I'd be afraid to take it. With all your responsibilities, especially towards the care staff, disciplining, you know. I'd be afraid of having to discipline friends. And they'd probably find it hard to see me in that status.

TS: Do you think they'd need disciplining?

Peter: Not on the whole I wouldn't say, no

Kate: No.

Peter: And I would find it hard to discipline them on some of the things senior staff now would discipline them on - like smoking in the flat. Because I'm in the care staff's position just now and I smoke, you know? So if I was up-graded I'd probably disagree with some of the things which I think any member of the care staff would.

Bill: I had an experience in the brewery where a fork truck driver was up-graded. And a right 'B' he's turned out to be, because he's got made up to a foreman. And they had to give him that responsibility. And he wasna mates with anybody any more. Because he was saying you can't do this, you can't do that. And everybody says he used to be a nice chap, you know. He just had to take that responsibility. Everybody denounced him for taking that. Somebody's going to do it. Somebody has to...

Kate: ...we said in our report about the management haven't been trained. ...but they've got a very difficult job. Because they're paid for the responsibility. They're aware of the difficulties. And they're aware that there's care staff that could do their job just as well. And I'm sure that they must find it very hard. And I think they do their job to the best of their ability - and on the whole do it well.

Bill: It's like a pecking order isn't it? If you go back to Desmond Morris's The Human Zoo, he talks about the pecking order that you have. You know, nobody says in here that you can't wear a blue coat. So all the senior staff wear a blue coat. Yet if the next day I come in wearing a blue coat, they'll change to a white coat! So there'll be some status difference. Nobody says you can't do it. But you do have that certain authority - that the boss has a big desk, or a barrier in front of a big desk... If you study the barriers that they can put up, to say "I am above you", ...to make sure that you know that they are above you. And therefore that anything you do, you do with their authority. If they disagree with you, it's more likely that they're always going to be right and you're going to be wrong, no matter if you know in your mind if you're right. I mean Julie already said that. What we actually said was that if I am right, I think I'm right, I'll just ignore them anyway. I'll go out of my way to say "Yes, I've done that." Find a way round it.

"These are only my domestics"

TS: Well can I ask you about the other distinction which came out in this discussion? Now Enid Curtis seems to me to draw quite a sharp

dividing line between cleaning and caring. And she says at one point in there that ~~she's~~ looking for cleaners when she's looking for domestics. Now is that distinction one that you would agree with as well?

Peter: I personally don't agree with that. Again, there have got to be certain distinctions. The carers have got to be seen to be the people who're caring. You know, you can get residents who try to monopolise, make them a cup of tea or "Sit down and talk to me" for so many hours. And then your domestic's job won't be getting done. I think there is quite a sharp distinction in here. You know, what was said before, all about domestics are all totally in the wrong if they've sat down for a minute when there's work to be done. It's only a personal thing, I don't think I'd make such a sharp distinction as that. I don't think I'd let a domestic do a care assistant's role, but certainly I'd try to encourage them towards the residents, to see them as friends.

Hilda: If I'd wanted to be a care assistant I'd have applied for a care assistant's job.

Kate: The thing is, Enid also says that if there aren't any care staff about, and there's a woman in a bed who's not well, and a domestic's passing by, and the woman wants a cup of tea, then the domestic is allowed to go and make her a cup of tea and sit and talk.

Bill: The care staff don't make that great distinction... They're friendly. You don't go about in a pecking order saying 'Look you are a domestic and I am a care staff'. The office have made a bigger divide. They say "These are my care staff. And these are only my domestics." People who are on the floor don't make a big cap, you know. You don't turn round and say "It's my job to look after them. And you're just there to clean." If a domestic does something, you appreciate them doing it. You know, you're saying "If they want a glass of water, give them a glass of water." Because you are not there. You're maybe giving somebody a bath or something. You don't turn round and just say "Look. You're just here to clean up, it's my job to give them a glass of water."

Kate: That's right.

Bill: That can come into some jobs, you know. If you start all that, you're going to have rows all the time.

Eleanor: It's teamwork, isn't it Bill? I think it's a great team in here. We all work together and get on with one another.

Hilda: We all get on.

Eleanor: Yes. The care staff and the domestics get on well.

Bill: You have to work together. It's only a small unit. Surely everybody has to work together to achieve the aim of the unit.

Eleanor: It's good here.

Bill: Rather than saying "You're a laundry maid. You stay in the laundry..." I suppose if they got up somebody who was very authoritarian. And they turned round and pressed the point "You are care staff. You are nothing to do with the domestics. And make sure you...don't talk to them and don't do anything more than tell them when you want something done," it would create a very bad atmosphere.

silence

TS (to Hilda): But do you think some of the things you do as part of your work - do you think of them as caring things or do you just think of yourself as a cleaner, full stop?

Hilda: Well, a cleaner. The rest are all care staff or -

Kate: You do do caring things.

Eleanor: Yes she does.

Kate: You're caring in your attitude towards the residents -

Hilda: Oh aye.

Kate: - when you're talking to them or you're cleaning or whatever.

Hilda: Yeah.

Kate: And that's the way it should be.

Eleanor: Even when you're in the laundry, Hilda and you're doing Pam's bra or something like that. She's a resident who becomes very upset and agitated when you take her clothes away, because she thinks she's not going to get them back. And you know, Hilda puts things through. And you get them back right away and it saves the resident being any more upset than she is. So she is really caring.

Peter: I think first and foremost the domestic's job is to keep the place clean. But I think there has been a bit of confusion. Because there have been times when domestics have been asked, expected, to help out, at special events and things like this. From what I've been told by domestics, there have been times when they've had some free time and sat down and had a chat with a resident maybe with a tea. And they were given a row. I don't see that as intruding excessively on the care assistant's role, you know. I think maybe the domestics are left a wee bit confused...

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"He's left. And we're going to bear the brunt of what he said."

TS: Now, when you read...the views that Enid Curtis puts forward...how big would you say the differences are between her and you?

Bill: Well a lot of people made out that they didn't want to carry on. Because I didn't agree with what everybody said in our discussions.

TS: Of course.

Bill: So everybody has a different viewpoint. But I'm quite happy working here. I enjoy working here. I can see light at the end of the tunnel because I'm going to achieve something. I worked for nine years in a brewery. ...I could do everybody's job... But there was no job satisfaction. In here there's a great deal of job satisfaction. Because they're helping you all the way. ...they explain everything. They explain simple things like the drugs. ...you've got a clearer understanding if somebody's taken ill, through the side effects of the drugs. In other Homes they won't tell you. And when you come across somebody that's come back from hospital and they've been taken off their drug, they're shaking and you wonder what's wrong with them. They say "Oh they've been taken off that drug. That's what's wrong with them." And you think there's something else wrong with them, you know. I think in here they're going out of their way to try and help you when you want to move on. A lot of people feel they could do better themselves, and they're given an opportunity to do that in here. When you want to progress further and further and further up the line and become an administrator or go into social work, or go into the care officers, at least they give you a chance to do it. ⁽²⁴⁾

Peter: I think this report has been quite useful. Even by the tone of the discussion today. It's so much different from our report. It's certainly made the seniors seem more human to me.

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Bill: We're in a caring position and they're in a caring position. And you're all out to achieve the same ends - that the old people in here

are needing looked after. They can't go back into the community. They're in here. And you're going to do your best for them. You're going to look after them. OK everybody in here's going to die because of their age. But hopefully they aren't going to die when I'm here, you know. I'm going to keep them alive and happy as long as possible...

TS: ...to what would you attribute the upset that there was, once the officers had read the transcript of your discussions? Why do you think there was that tremendous unhappiness?

Peter: I think it was probably caused by lack of understanding, due to the fact that we're not seniors and they're not care assistants. You know, until I read this I didn't understand their fears. And maybe they can't get to understand our frustrations. I think it was just a misunderstanding. They didn't understand how each other were feeling and each other's position. That's how I saw it.

TS: ...although it's an unusual and long-winded way of doing it, given that they've now seen what you thought and you've now seen what they thought, how do you rate the atmosphere between you and them now?

Bill: If the thing is going to be dragged up again. If, in a year's time, I make a mistake, and I plead all innocence, you know, "I didn't really know about that mistake," "Look a year ago you said - ". They're going to drag it up again, I think this is what a lot of staff, who are not here now, are afraid of. That they've put something down that's been seen in black and white. A few months later they're going to get dragged over the coals for something they've said.

Kate: I don't really agree with that. I think that the seniors are only really concerned about allegations that were made. And the rest of it, I think they can accept.

Peter: I think things have really calmed down maybe. A wee bit of defensiveness on both sides, really, because of the allegation you know. But maybe we understand each other that bit better. I hope so anyway.

Kate: And I've not actually sensed any atmosphere.

TS: Right. well now, how about the allegations? How do any of you see the allegations?

Peter: The main one about the woman in the Green Flat, I don't really know, you know, because -

TS: Just a moment, this was the one about the person who sat -

Peter: sat up all night. Because I've read the seniors' account of that. And I've spoken to the care assistants involved. And they still sort of clash, you know, so I don't know - I've never worked in the flat - I don't know who to believe, you know.

TS: Anyone else want to say anything?

Bill: I always thought this was a happy Home, with a good atmosphere in the Home. Well, when all these allegations came out, you know, you think it has turned into a bad place, where they're always going to be at each other's throats... Not everybody agreed with what was said. But they're going to fall back on everybody. Because somebody says something. You know, Andy the Porter says something. And he's left. And we're going to bear the brunt of what he's said - and he's not here - because he's said something about Mrs Liefner, or he's said something about one of the officers in charge.

TS: Yes, I see, you mean even though it's quite clear in the report who said what, you're saying that people who didn't say things are going to get saddled with whatever somebody else said.

Bill: That's right. You find that anyway. If you take the case that you get a shop steward who's out on strike with the miners. And he stands up there and says "All my men are backing me up". And he gets put across as a red bloody communist, then the thirty thousand who're outside the gates are all red bloody communists. And he don't put across these men's views, and it's only what that man said. And if the one man happened to go back to work, then you don't hear about the thirty thousand who were outside the gate. You hear about the views of the one man that's gone back to work. And that can get put across, you know, that that one man is right and these thirty thousand are wrong. Yeah. So the way it comes out is that the person who said it's left the work. But all the care assistants and all the domestics staff said that and feel that! And I think that's what's caused the bad atmosphere, you know, that Mrs Curtis feels that she was trying to do a job in here and achieve something. And yet that one man has destroyed everything she was trying to do, everything she's tried to build up. If somebody puts something wrong across and it gets taken as being that, then that's going to turn out that that's the way everybody feels. I think that's the type of thing that upsets senior management. I mean they put a great deal of stress on "Was the doctor called and was the doctor not called...?" And suddenly it's blown up that there's going to be a big row about it and they're going to have trouble about it, you know. When it probably could have been resolved very quietly. But because everybody read about it and everybody's seen about it, suddenly that's the focal point.

Peter: I feel really good about - you know, as I say I've read the report, and I feel I understand the seniors more. I hope it'll continue that way. Because in the past we've had staff meetings where staff could bring up things like that. But I think they haven't, you know. So I just hope it'll be a bit more willing, you know. The seniors have got to do a lot of listening. And staff meetings are the place to bring up complaints - not necessarily that there will be a lot of complaints. It's been quite useful in bringing about a better understanding on both sides. Let's hope that it will continue.

Kate: The thing that made me unhappy was the fact that it was based on just complaints. It painted a black picture. And it wasn't. It was very biased. It wasn't clear. Because a lot of good goes on in this Home. I just felt that it turned into a sort of meeting which was used to voice your grievances. And I didn't realise that's what it was going to be.

TS: Sure.

Kate: And that annoyed me.

TS: Right. So do you feel that where, for instance, ...if you go back to the very first discussion we had, where I was asking about the good points and the bad points about the job, that the bad points came through but the good points didn't?

Bill: Yeah. I thought that. ...everybody seemed to jump on the bad points and not on what a good place it is to work in, the things they do for you. All that came out was all the bad things, you know, and people were not happy. And this is why everybody was no going to come back to meetings. They're turning round and saying "I want this scrubbed out and that scrubbed out". You know, maybe they didn't mean it to come across that way. But when they see it down that these are all the bad points, you know, as though...they're no really happy working here... (10)

Appendix

OFFICERS' RESPONSE

The numbers in the left hand margin are the same as the numbers in brackets which appear in the text of the preceding chapters (EG²¹). They therefore identify officers' specific comments on the discussions.

TS: Now one of the points the care staff make is that...they feel a sense of "freedom to get on with their work," as one of them put it. Clearly, as perhaps we all do, they appreciate that aspect of the work that is free of supervision and relies on their initiative and sense of responsibility. Would you like to say anything about that? Because you're describing...a new way of looking at the residents. And it obviously does coincide with something that the staff want as well.

Enid (Officer in charge): Of course it does, I don't feel that there's any real difference of opinion between the seniors and the care staff on the care of the residents. We all have a single philosophy, because I think most people who stay in this work stay in it because they feel, ideologically, that they have something to contribute. Where I feel that a certain emphasis has been put on the responsibility and independence of the care staff, the emphasis has been exaggerated and overlaid. They are not unsupervised. They are very closely supervised - I would say with a great deal of tact by Molly (Deputy Officer in charge) and me. But occasionally there may be a clash of personality, harking back to Iron House where people have felt that the old supervisory feeling has crept on them. And now this is probably a misconception on their part, I feel. Because our team has been working together for a year and has felt that we understand the way that we have agreed with the care staff to work. But occasionally, because, I suppose, that - I'm trying to be tactful - that my supervision is very unobtrusive, and because I have a position that is established, with everyone, it is very easy for me to go and blink an eye, and they'll know exactly how I feel. "Oh, it's her, we'd better do it right. She's told us well enough how it should be." With anyone else that they've known from Iron House, they think "Well, I knew them before, and I'm not that convinced of the authority." And I feel that that is just something we have to grow through. It is not unique to here. It's one of the questions of redeployment. It's one of the questions of changing roles.

TS: So you see an old style of relationship between the care staff and the officers having been transplanted do you?

Enid: I would say in some instances. And people - my colleagues will correct me if I'm wrong - I'm not saying that it is anyone's fault. I am saying that if you have spent seven to ten years working with people in one place. And you are take up and given three days to become part of the senior team, to call yourself something else, you're asking the impossible of someone to change so much their method of working. Because they just haven't had long enough to learn it.

TS: Are you talking about people who've gone from being care staff to becoming officers, or are you talking about - ?

Enid: I'm talking in the main about Asssitant Supervisors becoming Assistant Officers in Charge. They have very much more responsibilty here...

TS: You mention the fact that it's possible for somebody to feel a bit alone. I notice that some of the care staff did actually mention that at least in the more traditional Homes, they were working with each other more. Now is being isolated in these flats a problem do you think? How do you see that?

TS: Well I see it as a lonely way of working for a person who is used to working in a team. They don't meet with their team other than in tea breaks or at handovers or general get-togethers, when two flats might get together. So, yes I do feel for them, that they have to have a lot of inner resources to cope with the load that's put upon them. And many of them, in Supervision, ask for help "How do we cope alone?" And some people want ideas for "What can we do with the residents to relieve the boredom?" So we make suggestions. But it's a matter of discussion. Our suggestions are usually no better than their own. It's just a question of encouraging and saying "Shall we play dominoes, or shall we play cards or scrabble?" And we discuss that. That's a way of coping. Or it's simply a matter of them realising that "My goodness I can't stay alone with these people for eight hours". And one or two people have left because of that. definitely one person, who didn't say that was the reason she left, I know she was feeling it. She tried every way she could to cope with it. But in the end she left. I always emphasise at interview now, that they will be alone a lot of the day.

Enid: ...there is a point in here where the domestics and the care staff feel there have been differences made between them, which I feel have been artificially emphasised... One domestic had a lot to say about feeling that she was not considered a valuable part of the caring staff. And we met - Anne (Assistant Officer in charge) and I, Anne, who has responsibility for the domestic side of the work - we met with the domestic staff on several occasions, to help them to understand that what we had done with the care staff had been a programmed plan of training, right from the very beginning, and that we had not trained domestic staff to do care work. We had a particular view of them, which was that they are valuable in helping us maintain health in here. And that was their role. And I felt that most of them understood it, and didn't want any more than that, because they had been hospital domestics, most of the employed. And we were so pleased to get them applying. They were good at their jobs. So they came in willingly to do domestic work. We did bring with a lady from Iron House - one of them - the other doesn't feel strongly about it - who had been a Home Help. And in my opinion, and as I've said to her, and as it has been recorded, that the change from being a Home Help to doing purely domestic, has been very apparent to her, and causes her distress on occasions. Because she is a caring person and she feels she could do a care role. I've said to her "If you wish to apply for a Care Assistant's job, that is your prerogative." And I've also said to her "If you want to go back to being a Home Help, that is your prerogative." But what I need in here is a cleaner. And I've read the Domestic job description out to them. They all said they understood and agreed with it. Now she still feels a grievance. That's coming out in here. But I'm afraid I can do no other than keep saying to her "I'm sorry, it's up to you to apply for a different job."

Molly: I think this is a problem that she has with her role in here, that is different to her role in Iron House, where, at times when there

were staffing shortages, she was not employed, but took it upon herself to help, as a care assistant. And to get away from that is what she's finding difficult.

TS: ... a caring person who is a domestic can only think about caring in terms of getting a care staff job? Is this a...case of the rigidity of the system making things more difficult than they might be? Have you got a view on that?

Enid: Yes, I do have a view on that, because in Fife, where I visited a new Home, when we were investigating systems of running, they don't employ a differential. They have domestic and care staff role in one. So therefore one person works in a flat, cleans it, she does everything domestic in it and also is a member of the care staff. Because of the frailty of our clients, I don't think that would work here. We would need two people in those roles in each flat, because our clients need such a lot of help. So one person wouldn't be able to clean the flat and look after the residents. But, the relative fitness of the people living in the Home in Fife, they were able to do that. There's just a difference of the amounts of frail dependent people coming into Part IV in (this Region). That's all.

TS: Well there was quite a widespread feeling, both among domestics and care staff...that if it's a domestic who is within earshot at the time, and somebody wants a cup of tea or whatever, that the system should perhaps be flexible enough to allow domestics to perform those kinds of caring tasks. How do you feel about that?

Enid: I think they already do. And I've never known a domestic not give a glass of juice or make a cup of tea actually. And they've not been in any trouble for that whatsoever. Apart from the fact that one or two members of the care staff have been aggrieved that a domestic has seen fit to take over a caring role in a flat. And there have been words between domestic and care staff on that very matter.

Enid: It's written that someone was invited to have a cup of tea by the residents - and a woman that had finished her work. That wasn't true. That isn't true. She was invited to have a cup of tea by a resident. But it was ten o'clock in the morning. I know it was ten o'clock in the morning, because I went up to check my own bedroom. I hadn't made my bed yet. And I was astonished to see her sitting down and having a cup of tea. And I said "What are you doing?" "Well, I was invited to have a cup of tea." And I said "Well, I'm afraid that's not on," quietly. And I asked her to come to the office. And I said, "Since you are only here for four hours in the morning, and all the residents like you very much" - she's very popular - "they'll all invite you to have a cup of tea, every five minutes. They feel sorry for you doing your work and it's now tea-time. It's ten o'clock now. At half past nine you went for your tea-break." We let them away for twenty minutes, which is more than they're allowed by the Region. And there she was, back on duty, and sitting having a cup of tea instead of cleaning. Four hours just isn't long enough to do the work that she's supposed to do anyway. So she said that she understood that. And this is wrong. If someone had finished their work and was sitting down to a cup of tea, well and good. But this was at ten o'clock. She had only started at eight.

TS: But leaving the who-said-what-to-whom-and-when of that particular case aside, you think the system is flexible enough to allow some caring activity by the domestics?

Molly: Well it depends what it is. We have had an incident where a domestic took a resident to the toilet, who should have been taken in a wheelchair, because she wasn't really mobile, left her on the toilet, and then she was found lying on the floor. So that a domestic, who doesn't sit in on the handover, might not know all of the relevant information about the residents in that flat. So accidents could happen.

Enid: There is some anxiety even about the cup of tea, because, they might put sugar in it and the person might be diabetic. And that would not be known to them. They might give them a biscuit, when they're not supposed to be eating biscuits. There is a difficulty. There is a difficulty.

Anne: Also, domestics are cleaning toilets, you know, and they've a blue overall on, and then they go into then kitchen to make tea, to give somebody a cup of tea and a biscuit. And I don't think it's on really.

Enid: We have tried to discourage it. Obviously if somebody is lying ill in bed, and there's no-one within earshot, and they're crying out for a glass of water, it's obvious that anybody would give them a glass of water. I mean everyone in here is humanitarian and cares. I've always used the example that if somebody falls on the floor, I have to use whatever manpower is available to pick the person up. It doesn't matter - we would never leave somebody lying on the floor. It could be the gardener, that he would help. So the whole atmosphere in the place, is, we hope, not so compartmentalised that people can't feel for each other. But there has to be some care exercised.

Enid: They made a very large point out of provision books. The provision book was a piece of responsibility that I decided to give to them. ...and also there's a very slight feeling there that residents were to chose their food. And by saying that we had to sign them, the residents could no longer chose their provisions. That isn't so. The list of food that goes through, that we sign, is almost exactly the same as it was before we signed it. All we're doing is checking it. Because there was a build-up of food in the flats. I have a responsibility placed on me to ensure that people don't get the feeling that things are lax. I am responsible for the budget. It's a very petty responsibility in a way. But there it is, I have to count out the tins of salmon. It's part of my job to stock take. It's my responsibility. And therefore I can't have a loose issuing of food. I have to know who's ordering what, when, and be able to go round and check the cupboards.

TS: And 'loose' ordering of food would be if the care staff took responsibility for it?

Enid: I wouldn't say that. But I am saying that we picked up on over-ordering of various things. We don't know why they were over-ordered, whether one person thought they needed them and hadn't noticed that they'd built up a stock already, or whether they thought they were helping the residents by being very indulgent, I don't know. there may have been a feeling of anxiety that the residents wouldn't get what they wanted. But the instructions were that the residents were always to get what they wanted. And it's worked beautifully. We've never gone over budget, as Stuart has so cleverly pointed out. The way we have organised the food budgetting has been excellent. It's remarkable, because it's cut down on the amount of checking that they do in other Homes - which is utterly ridiculous. And yet the whole thing has fallen beautifully into place. Nobody's abused it. The menus are good. They're enjoying

their food. I think it's a very trivial point.

Enid: ...saying that they were asked to go from the forum area because of noise is totally untrue. None of us can recall such an incident. We don't know why anyone said that. At one stage, one of the radio cassettes came out of the flats and was put out into the forum, so that during the day people might enjoy some music. But the residents were sitting more and more in their own flats and their own living rooms and the music wasn't being used by anyone. So we put the music centre back into the flat. And that was all, at that time.

Molly: The only time, I think, that people have been moved from the forum, was one particular gentleman, whose behaviour is anti-social. And that can't take place in a public area.

Enid: he exposes himself and he touches ladies.

TS: When I came and saw you the other day, you mentioned that there was one stage where you tried to encourage the residents to think of the individual flats as home -

Enid: When we first moved here, in spite of the education that we'd had about how it would be, it was very difficult for both residents and staff to understand that we no longer had a central sitting room, that the forum area was to be used for gatherings. But it wasn't the only sitting area. And it was very difficult for people to recognise even where they lived. It took weeks and months till they knew which flat belonged to them. So in order to help the residents, we said let's try and make life in their living room as interesting, as cosy, with as many possibilities of social life and making a cup of tea for themselves and so on - all the possibilities that there are of living in your own home brought back to them. Because they didn't have that in Iron House. And if they were to continue to sit out there, they'd never learn it again. This was just part of reorientation back into normal living. And that's what we had agreed. And at any time that the residents want to gather there, they do. Nobody says anything. They never said anything in the beginning, except that "Try to make your flats as pleasant as possible, so that they know where they live." And that was explained to the care staff. And they have not said that in this report. But that was explained to them. It's recorded somewhere.

Molly: It was also explained to the residents at residents' meetings - identifying the flat as their home, and that that was their sitting room...

Enid: The bathing I don't have anything to say about. I accept that. All the Care Staff, in Supervision and otherwise, had explained by me, and through me to the seniors, that if someone doesn't want a bath, nobody puts them in water. They can choose their method of - having a wash down, or be encouraged to hold the flannel and wash themselves. I know I had a girl, who's now left, who was very keen on a resident washing themselves down because she felt it was taking away responsibility from an old lady who could perfectly well manage, with a flannel, to wash herself down. And that was encouraged. It was also explained to the care staff that not all things are black and white, that some residents come to us because they are judged in need of care. Let us say their social worker has lifted them out of the isolation of their home where they have no longer self-cared. I have known people have had to be cut out of chairs. They are stuck to chairs because all their bodily wastes have been

passed into that chair and they are stuck there. And they have been taken to hospital and cleaned up and their skin got better, and then judged fit for Part IV. We cannot say they don't chose to have a bath, because they will immediately revert to the condition they were in before. They have to be helped or encouraged to remain healthy. Because it is our job to help them to remain healthy. We're not in the business of bullying anyone into baths. But we are in the business of keeping people healthy. And that's the only reason why an amount of bathing or an amount of washing goes on, not because we want 'spick and tidy little gentlemen sat out in rows.' That's not what we're in business about at all.

Molly: It varies very much with the individual. I mean some people need a wash, we could bath some others.

Enid: We have people with skin conditions.

Molly: That's right. And you need regular baths until the condition clears up -

Enid: Also, to be totally frank and honest, scabies and lice are not unknown in residential institutions. And the staff will catch them just as quickly as the residents. So it's in everybody's interests to inspect at least as regularly as we can.

TS: Now why do you think care staff themselves wouldn't - do you feel they wouldn't share these objectives that you're describing?

Enid: I feel most would. But I feel in some cases, the qualification between what they would see as the person's right to live in the way they wish, comes up against what they would call institutional rules. Now we are a Social Work run institution, with an obligation placed upon us, as our responsibility, to care for the health and wellbeing of the resident. And that doesn't mean that I can let him decline into some kind of damaged skin condition. I am responsible. If I can't cope with it, I would call the doctor in. And it's my responsibility and I can't abdicate it.

Monica (Assistant Officer in charge): I mean we have two residents at the moment, under doctor's orders, who must have a daily bath.

TS: But I don't think that was the argument, was it? The question was really whether it was the care assistant's responsibility to keep an eye on that, or whether it's part of your responsibility to make sure that there's a kind of routine.

Enid: There is an element of supervision, simply because of, as you would call it, as you said before, operator error. We can go between shifts. Somebody could have omitted to check up that somebody needed a bath. And I can go round and smell. I mean people can laugh at me for the nose that I have. But I work on my nose more than anything else. And if something smells, it's not right. Nobody wants to smell. Nobody wants to be offensive to anyone else. And if it smells, something needs to be done about it. And that's all. I trust the care staff as I trust everybody. But I still have responsibility to check. Otherwise I wouldn't be here.

Enid: The porter who had a lot to say, and was temporary. I don't know if you are going to leave his views in. They are distorted. He was not told that he could have nothing to do with the residents. When he came to me, his reference was, from the Home he'd left, "He's a very good porter, but he wants to be a care assistant." I told him that that was - at interview - I think we both interviewed him, maybe not -

Molly: No.

Enid: Maybe I interviewed him on my own. Anyway, I'm stating that what I said to him was "Your reference says that you want to be a care assistant. I can only offer you a porter's job. And a porter means that you will look after the building. And you will do the gardening. There will be very few instances where I will need you to care for a resident. Almost never. Do you understand that? Because you won't be happy if you don't understand that." And he said he understood that. Now I know that he felt that he was a good, caring person and would make a good care assistant if other people would give him the chance. And that's what I feel he's saying here.

Molly: I think his role in his previous place was a little bit blurred, because he did work there as a care assistant when they were short-staffed and a porter the rest of the time.

Enid: But we didn't let him do that, so -

TS: Why was that?

Enid: We didn't need him for that. We had enough care assistants.

TS: So it is because you have a slightly more generous level of care staffing that you don't have the problem of using domestics and others, porters, in a caring capacity, is that right?

Enid: I would say so. Because I stretch to the full my leeway with the department to employ overtime and temps. In fact there may be instances when my superiors find fault with me. And I'm willing to have that recorded. When I have needed overtime, I have taken overtime, and taken the responsibility for that.

TS: In general, would you prefer to use temps than, ask, say domestics to step in?

Enid: Yes.

TS: And that's simply really because you can get temporary staff who've done care work.

Enid: That's right. I would not take in anyone who hadn't had experience in the past in care work. But I can get people, as a rule.

Enid: The business about the APO always backing the senior staff is ridiculous. The APO will come in and listen to anybody. That's his responsibility. I just don't think that's necessary to say that.

Enid: "Management tends to go by the book and watch policy." That's true. It's my job. I cannot break rules. I have to keep in front of me the responsibility of my job and the rules I must work within, and the rules other people have to obey, all the time. I believe I do my job properly by doing that.

Enid: It says here "Somebody says to a resident "You go and do that" and they'll do it." On no occasion, on no occasion do I feel that any senior has ever said to a resident "You go and do that." Our total philosophy is "What do you want to do?"

Enid: A domestic says "There's four or five officers here. And only four of you." That isn't true. There's usually only one of us on a shift, where we supervise up to six care staff, six domestics and look after the health and well-being of forty eight residents - just one of us. And it could be one of us for twenty five hours. We can come on, having taken over at two o'clock, and we're not relieved again till three

o'clock the next day. One of us with total responsibility. We can be got up in the night at any time. It's a heavy responsibility.

TS: And you're saying that's a responsibility that could never be exercised by care staff? Or could be under certain circumstances - or what?

Enid: Well, it certainly could be if somebody was able to fit the role and permission was sought for so-and-so to become an Assistant Officer, whether temporarily or whether full time. It has happened. It happens in the Region that people are made up. There has to be the circumstances. Or people go for promotion. And that's happened many times. There are constraints. It is true in these days of unemployment that the Region often get highly qualified applicants for jobs, so that the promotion of care staff is not as easy as it used to be. But it still happens. Now there's a mention made here about a special training for giving out drugs, and the kind of medical care that is given. The level of care of the residents in a Part IV Home - Part III in England - in a residential care Home, is described by the department as the kind of care that someone would be given by their relatives in their own home. The management responsibility, of course, is over and above that - that we are responsible for an institution, and that we are responsible for the management of staff. But the level of care is not medical - upon us. The level of care upon us is of a caring family person. It is the equivalent of what a daughter might give. And that has been explained to me many times.

Molly: So that if somebody was needing medical care, they would move from here to a hospital situation.

Enid: Totally. And that is why we call the doctor at all times. It is a happy accident that some people have nursing training. And I say happy because they then, I think, can feel easier in their mind that they can recognise a condition, where the rest of us feel that we're over-reacting. But I will say that in some ways it's a built-in safety barrier - that because we know the limits of our lack of expertise, we immediately call the doctor. Because we keep saying "But we're just amateurs, we're just amateurs." And when I lined up the surgery, to come and be our doctors here, I was invited to a group meeting, their coffee time, to speak to the group of doctors. And I explained that none of us is a nurse, that all of us to some degree have social work training, and that we will be relying on them, totally, for the medical care of the residents. And did they want that level, knowing that they were going to get into, not a nursing home situation, but a Part IV situation? They were happy to accept that. And they are very, very supportive, very supportive.

TS: And this ties in with what we were discussing before, where you're saying that care which takes place in Part IV is equivalent to care at home, in the family. So that if we go back to this question about a member of the care staff feeling that a doctor should be called, for you, that would be quite automatic. That is it, isn't it? That is somebody, as it were, at home, responsible for looking after a relative.

Enid: That's right.

TS: Yes.

Enid: You will judge, that's your mother not feeling good, and you will call the doctor.

TS: But you trust the care staff to take that decision.

Enid: I trust them to report to us, yes, every instance. And we'll go

back to the flat with them and look at what they say and we would, yes, then call the doctor. And the only reason we go back to look is because we have to use the words. We have to say we've seen so-and-so, they're in their bed, or unable to walk, or their leg is swollen. And we can use the description that we have just seen. It's not because we're checking it out. It's in order to get the words right, to tell the receptionists what's wrong with the person.

TS: One of the things that some of the care staff did mention was that they felt that there are some care staff who've had every bit as much training as some of the officers. ...if you've got care staff who are as well trained as officers are, if not better, is the dividing line between the two one which should be that sharp?

Enid: I would say, in all fairness, no. But I still have to speak within the constraints of of employment agreements in what I'm allowed to do. I am not allowed to give responsibility to someone who is not made up to Assistant Officer level. However, it is the departmental view that, should there be an emergency, they're all off sick, or I had three off sick, and I couldn't get the BNA nurses in, that I could look amongst my care staff for somebody sufficiently responsible to be able to be made up. And I am allowed to do that, with the permission of the Principle Officer.

TS: Right, I appreciate that what you're saying is that where you've got a member of the care staff who you feel has reached a point where they have the ability and experience to take maximum responsibility for the people they're caring for, it's only possible for you to think about that in terms of promotion.

Enid: Yes, yes.

TS: Now if it were not for that, ...is this ideally the best way to do it - that it's only possible for somebody who gets to be very good at the job to think in terms of getting more responsibility by promotion, rather than just getting more responsibility, full stop?

Enid: I think you're constrained, not by our view of the world, or our view of things, but possibly by people's expectation of salary and reward.

TS: Yes.

Enid: You can't expect someone to do something for which they aren't paid. We are very well paid for the responsibility we take. And if anything - as everyone knows - if anything has to be justified or has to be judged, or taken care of, we're paid to do that. That's the Region's response to us. "You are paid." How could I possibly ask someone to take such responsibility when they aren't paid? But even if they are interested in it, they have no reward.

TS: Were you going to say something about that?

Molly: Well, I was agreeing with what Enid was saying. I think the financial aspect is very important. We couldn't expect the care staff to take forward extra responsibility without some remuneration, extra remuneration.

TS: Do you think that the fact that you do have this fairly rigid grading structure, with quite big differentials, really - is that something which, how can I put it, is that an artificial thing from outside the Home which actually creates conflict and differences between those two groups?

Enid: It is in a way, a very traditional picture of how residential

care, hospital care and all other institutional care has been seen. And obviously people have noticed that in mental handicap hostels, and in Children's Homes, that regrading exercises have taken place and people have become Residential Care Officers, as it were, through the ranks. And this seems to work extremely well. Why it has not been addressed in Homes for the Elderly, I don't know. I know it's been looked at several times. But I'm not party to the discussions.

TS: You see one of the reasons I ask that is that everybody contributes to the picture of how the grading structure works and how responsibility is distributed, don't they? It's not just in the minds of the officers any more than it's just in the minds of the care staff. But some of them seem to feel that an officer or a manager is somebody to whom you, as a non-manager, ought to have respect. Now, how do you see that? Is that perhaps part of this tradition that you're talking about, which perhaps gets in the way?

Enid: In my opinion it's a traditional view which people have of society. It doesn't take place solely in here. It is everywhere. You must respect the doctor. You must respect the teacher and you must respect the dentist. Because they are professionals. But what happens if they're fools? One might easily encounter a fool anywhere. So that I tend only to respect where I feel I can judge respect is owed. And that's me. I respect everyone for being a human being. And respect the care staff, as I respect the seniors, as I respect the domestics - everyone. I respect the cook for his delightful attitude in the kitchen, his happy-go-lucky way, the fact that you get on with him so easily. He does his work well and he's a delight to have in the place. That's the kind of respect I have for people. As I understand the care staff's traditional view of respect - that they feel that managers wish of them - is, in a way, their own view of the world, rather than anything that we expect of them. I don't go looking for respect. I just want people to do their work.

Enid: Dennis has said here "They make the mistake of playing doctors and nurses to the patients." We don't do that. Because none of us are doctors and nurses. And we're so aware of our ignorance. And the people that are nurses have said "I'm not employed as a nurse. I'm not going to use my nursing ability. I will behave as a residential care officer. That's what I am. And if the staff have that view, then it's wrong."

Enid: All this business about how "we would get our marching orders" if they've shouted at anybody, "hauled across the coals" and so on, is absolute, as I would call it, emotional response. There's no such thing as people getting marching orders as Regional employees. I have to tell you that working for the Region is just about the most secure job you can have in Britain today, working as a Regional employee. There's almost nothing that can get you dismissed. Your job is extremely secure. And that's where I take issue with your summing up at the end. There is nobody who's in danger of losing jobs. The Region are very protective of their employees. They're very, very good employers, in fact.

TS: Yes, now I think you may have misunderstood me there. What I'm suggesting is that people may well judge their response - and I'm raising this as a question really - people may judge their response to management at work according to their market situation. Now that doesn't mean to say that the individual manager is any more or less likely to

sack that person. But it is a sense of what happens to you if you are out in the labour market, rather than in your present employment. And I'm suggesting that there is a difference between skilled people and unskilled people in that respect. And in that sense unskilled people are more vulnerable.

Enid: They are vulnerable in the market place. That doesn't come out in here, In here it sounds as though they are vulnerable because the Region can easily employ many more domestics.

TS: It could, yes.

Enid: There is no way within the terms of their employment and the agreements the region have with the unions, that anybody can be dismissed for any kind of - less than very, very serious offence. And then almost never.

TS: Well that's obviously a valid point of view. It's surely equally valid for somebody to feel, shall we say, less likely to argue back with management, believing that they are more vulnerable in that sense. That sense of vulnerability comes through, surely just as valid as the view that your putting to me now.

Enid: But without a shred of evidence. There is no evidence of anyone being treated unjustly by the Regional Council. I'm not here to defend the Regional Council. I'm just here to set my absolute understanding, and the experience that I've had. Because very often, justifiable disciplinary proceedings have been taken and yet the Region has leaned over backwards to be more than fair, more than fair. And people remain in employment with warnings when, as you say, in the market place, they would not still have their jobs. Everyone knows that. At least everyone I know knows it. And the Region is not an employer who is quick to reaction - extremely easy-going employer in fact. More so than anywhere I've ever encountered.

TS: One of the other aspects of the thing which comes through from what the care staff have said is...that they feel they haven't known what other people have known about the condition of the person - or a decision that's been taken about how that case is going to be handled. Is that imperfect handover? Or is it perhaps that people have gone off duty at times when there isn't a handover? How do you think that could come about? Because that's an honest kind of misunderstanding isn't it?

Enid: There is always a handover. There is the possibility that someone has 'taken their hour back'. They work a thirty-nine hour week, and may go off before the handover.

Molly: The shift system as well

Anne: Yes.

Enid: The shift system is difficult as well. They could go away for four days. And then it's their responsibility to come back and catch up on the news. We always say to them "Read up your Cardex, read up your book, will we fill you in?" There is always a human element, that somebody will slip back into their work and not know what went before. Yes, I do feel that there could be, with the shift system.

TS: But you're saying that the system for making sure that people know everything that needs to be known is sound. It's 'operator error' that's the explanation.

Molly: Yes. Because all events are recorded on the Cardex. So anybody returning who wants to find something out only has to read the Cardex. It is in there.

Enid: And since they have responsibility, in a flat, for eight people, they - the system is built in, that they do go to the Cardex and read up what's been happening. And fill each other in - they have a diary in the flat where one care assistant's views of what's gone on is read by the other. They work two in a flat as a rule. So that we built the systems in. Obviously, there may be, as you call it, operator error.

TS: So does that mean, then, that really, despite what you're saying about the responsibility of the officer for taking the decision or picking up the phone or whatever, that wherecare staff... did have that feeling, as the person on the spot, that a doctor should be called, you would honour that view?

Enid: Of course we would.

Molly: Yes.

Enid: Absolutely.

Molly: They are the person on the spot and the person who can make the judgement of any change that occurs in the resident. And we would respect that.

Enid: This happened valuably just a few weeks ago. Somebody had a heart attack. The care assistant recognised it immediately and came running and said "So-and-so's had a heart attack." And we had the ambulance here in five minutes. We didn't hesitate. It does often happen that a care assistant will say someone's on the floor and has broken a leg. And they've made the decision that somebody has a leg broken. And I've sent them to hospital always. I never question. Because I don't consider that there's any need to question. The only person who'll shout at me is the hospital or the doctor. And I don't care about that. So I'm labelled as over-anxious. It doesn't matter. And many times the person's come back totally uninjured. But everyone has over-reacted and worried about her. And it does no harm to check an old person out if his bones are brittle anyway. And we've never been shouted at. We always send for an ambulance, always. That's why we are so hurt that someone can say we let anybody lie in pain, or didn't call the doctor. Because it's utterly untrue.

Molly: Yes.

Enid: I have to say that when we record something about a resident only getting a couple of Panadol's and laying in agony for two days, it is totally untrue. My recording is such that the lady recorded by a care assistant as having slipped in the bathroom in the middle of the morning and by the evening the doctor was called. So I don't see that it serves anybody to leave that like that. And I don't know what you intend to do about that. That's somebody's view of it, but it's not true. And it's very harmful. So is that going to be taken out?

TS: You mean are they going to unsay it?

Enid: Or are you going to say that this is what they said, but the actual truth, as recorded on the unit, is, and I can tell you what's recorded on the unit in my cardex - the doctor can be called in to verify the records. And in the care staff book as they wrote it themselves. So how do you intend to put those in?

TS: I'm not going to publish anything without anybody's permission. And it's very far from necessarily being the case that one word of this material would end up being published. That's the position. But if you're asking me the question, can I get those people to unsay the

things which you don't think are true, I don't think I can do that.

Enid: I haven't said that. I have said that since the fact is not true, even though they've said it, you add to that, it's our request that the correct version of events is put in to the document.

TS: Yes.

Enid: That does not stand alone.

TS: Right.

Enid: Because we find that very offensive.

TS: I notice that some of them feel that...they are the people who are on their own with this little group of residents. I think some of them feel that they are in a better position than officers to know about the personal and individual needs of those residents. ...how do you see that in a Home like this? Because that's rather different to a traditional Home, where the officers would have perhaps more direct knowledge of the residents, than perhaps you do here?

Enid: I wouldn't say that's absolutely so. When I worked at Iron House, we had a very extensive handover, much longer than we have here, and the care staff were encouraged and wrote far more in their care staff report book than they write here. Every minutia of their key-working group. We have a key working system of course, which does enable them to get to know their people very well. Now, what a good officer, or a well trained officer must be able to do - whether they do it with any success or not, but it's part of our job - sift out someone's perceptions of somebody else and understand what's being said. Someone may have a perception that somebody is very unhappy about something. And it's up to us to understand why - why somebody's feeling this about somebody else - and to take it through to its logical conclusion, which is how we can help the resident. We do rely on clues from the care staff. We don't rely on diagnoses from the care staff, any more than we can diagnose anything. We can only take a social work perspective - if we're trained for that. ...we take every single word of a report from the care staff and listen to it and examine it and discuss it with them, because we label them Key Worker. Why would we label them key worker if we weren't going to listen? We're well aware that we're not in the flats, seeing what's going on. However, once it is communicated to us, it is our responsibility to go through and judge the level of intervention necessary.

TS: Now do you think it should be? If you've got a member of the care staff who is experienced and is good at the job, do you think it should be an officer's responsibility simply because they're an officer rather than a members of the care staff, to take that decision, say, about whether to call the doctor?

Enid: It has to be because that responsibility is placed with us by our employment, our employers. We may not devolve that responsibility.

TS: Right. I understand that, yes. But now supposing it wasn't? Leaving that aside, apart from your contractual responsibilities and their contractual responsibilities, are there other reasons perhaps why it should be done that way, rather than, in cases where, as I say, you've got an experienced care assistant? Why should the officer be the person who takes that decision?

Enid: To run a Home, again, you cannot run anything by committee alone. There has to be a chairman of the committee. And if you have a committee meeting, you have to say "With respect, through the Chair." So in my

opinion - it is only my opinion - nothing can run by committee alone.
You have to have one person who will make the phone call.

TS: But there are only two of you, in this case, aren't there?

Enid: Two of us?

TS: Well, there's you the officer and you the care assistant. If you've got somebody who the care assistant feels, for instance, the doctor should be called - it might be the other way round, they might think it unnecessary -

Enid: It would almost not occur. Although there have been people who have said it has occurred, and that is not true. It does not occur. If someone says "So-and-so is ill and needs the doctor," the doctor will be called. Because that's the rule I've made in here. And there is no reason to even to question that. There have been three cases in which care staff have named names and said this wasn't done and that wasn't done. But I have been to the recording and I utterly refute those instances.-

Enid: ...in the case of Betty Smith. The doctor was called, in fact three times, though they say a doctor wasn't called for days. It's all in the cardex. It all goes back to several months ago. We need the correct version put in. A domestic's view of the scene is necessarily coloured by the fact that she's in and out of the flat and how does she know what was going on? Apart from having a look round a doorway? How can a domestic's view be a true view of what went on?

Molly: She doesn't have access to all the information.

Enid: No, she has no access to information.

With Pearl Lesley, when they said that she sat up all night, Janet was on duty and may come in on that, but I understand that the doctor was called to the lady with the stroke, that she wanted to sit like that. It was the doctor's opinion that she would be put into the hospital in the morning and how was she to be made most comfortable?

Anne: Her own GP, Dr Stewart, visited the next morning. But this lady, when she came in to us, in her bedroom she didn't go into bed, she just sat on the end of her bed.

Molly: She actually chose to sit up on that occasion. She said she felt more comfortable in that position. So a member of the night staff sat with her -

Anne: All night.

TS: Well now a number of the care staff yesterday did say that they found out quite recently that it was the case that she wanted to sit up all night. And when somebody said this yesterday, someone else said "Well, even if she had wanted to be sitting up all night, she shouldn't have been allowed to." How about that?

Anne: Well, can I say I said to the doctor who I was calling "This lady," the way she was, "she doesn't go into bed." And I said "We're going to put you to bed." She said "I don't want to go to bed." I said to the doctor "What do we do?" He said "If you can make her comfortable, put her feet up, put a blanket round her, she's fine." A care assistant sat with her the whole night. They said she even asked for the commode. She was a very clean lady. And she even asked for her commode. And her doctor called in the next morning. In fact it wasn't till half past one that they were able to get her a bed. Because I think you came on duty Molly as she was just going out in an ambulance.

Monica: I was in at half seven that morning.

Anne: So it's all lies.

TS: Well now my impression, listening to the account which you've read, is that people were enormously concerned. The care staff were enormously concerned about that case. Now clearly their concern was uninformed, wasn't it?

Anne: They didn't ask.

TS: They didn't ask. Right.

Molly: It was recorded in the care book, that it was this lady's choice to sit up all night, that she was consulted and so they obviously...

TS: They just failed to read the book, you're saying?

Molly: They didn't read the book. So it's a human error. And the information not being passed on.

Anne: We had a handover at seven o'clock in the morning with the morning staff and the night staff. And the person who was going into that flat was given all the information, what had happened the night before.

Monica: And about eight o'clock that morning two care staff and a domestic put Pearl into bed. She was crying out... But that was without asking us, saying anything to us they just went ahead and -

Anne: And we took the doctor's advice. I asked. And the doctor said "Do you want her moved now? Or," he said, "I don't know when I'll get her a bed". And this was at twelve o'clock at night. And I thought, well, poor woman, she's going to be lying around an Out Patients' place somewhere, you know. And he said...to leave her in the unit... I mean if we'd moved her to a ward, but she was comfortable. And the doctor was quite happy to leave her with us.

Enid: And it's a very strange view that they would take, that it was unfair of us to keep her there that night, in view of the fact that they mostly always feel that the residents can be cared for on the unit and get quite upset when they're moved to hospital. And I know that the night staff cared for her well that night. And I know that the doctor was in and would have given instructions. So it's really a very, very distorted view people have of that night. It's very distorted and very unusual that they would say such a thing.

To move on to the design of the kitchen cupboards and the accident forms and so on, all our staff knew about accident forms. They filled them in on Keswick.. They filled them in on Nancy Watt. Dennis saying that he was the only one who knew about accidents - it's an absolute load of rubbish. Well I've got stacks of them that I brought with me from Iron House - all the ones that were filled in. People did knock their heads on those kitchen cupboards and they still do. And I complained to the architect. And I'm agreed, as everybody is, that sliding doors would have been better. And I've told the architect that. He said "The only trouble with sliding doors is that they don't stand up to wear in the way that the opening doors do." And that's the only reason why they are like that. with Margaret Ward hitting her head, she was offered an accident form immediately. And then I interviewed her when she came back to work. And she was so embarrassed by the whole affair that she wanted it dropped. She wouldn't pursue it. I would have pursued it to the end. Because I know those cupboard doors are hazardous. And I'm very happy for that to be pursued. But Margaret wanted the whole thing dropped.

And with Biforce ordering, that's on our schedules to clean toilets. We

didn't know that anybody was going to be harmed by it. And as soon as it was reported to the Region that people were harmed by it, it was withdrawn by the Region. That's all.

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Enid: ... if they feel that we are pleased with the way that they are coping with their work, and enjoying or taking part in the life of the Home, and they feel encouraged, and I feel that they go on to bigger and better and better things, there's no limit to what people can achieve. I have no view on their limits. I feel they can be stretched to absolutely anything.

PART IV

THE UNION

The interpretation of the transcripts which make up Parts I, II and III is presented in the form of a report to the union. The stimulus to undertake the study came from within the body of ideas and people which comprises all who work for the strengthening of the union as a form of practice. For it to have validity within the world of social research it must, therefore, be capable of crossing the boundary between these two worlds and addressing the framework of knowledge and understanding from which it came. This cannot be done by handing over some watered-down afterthought. The heart of the matter must be just as accessible to the union as to the academic reader.

Chapter I looks at a number of ideas which were shown by the discussions in Parts I, II and III to have a powerful effect on those who took part. Chapter II places these ideas in the context of views which emerged about the powerless position of the participants in the world as a whole. Chapter III shows how ideas about the union, far from compensating for its members' powerlessness, actually reflect that same powerlessness in the union itself. The power of the union seems to belong at the 'top'. It has become separated from its source - the combined power of union members. Chapter IV reviews an earlier piece of research carried out in the Union fourteen years earlier and which identified the same problem. The failure of subsequent changes in the 'structure' of the union to overcome it makes it important to take the earlier research into account in tackling it afresh.

Contents:

Chapter	I	POWERFUL IDEAS	page	172
Chapter	II	IDEAS OF POWERLESSNESS	page	179
Chapter	III	POWER DIVORCED	page	184
Chapter	IV	WARWICK REVISITED	page	190

Chapter I

POWERFUL IDEAS

In the very first workplace discussion in this study (Part I Chapter I) an idea was expressed which seemed to explain why everybody made the effort to get there by 6.00 am every day:

"...that's the way you were brought up. 'Get to your work. Be on time.'"

"Yes, that's right. 'Be on time.'"

This was met with a chorus of approval. In a later discussion in the same workplace, someone put it like this:

"It's the principle."

It is hard to think of any more appropriate word for for the idea of doing something right. Principles need no supporting argument or explanation. They are reason enough in themselves. They simply prescribe how people should behave. That is what makes them powerful ideas.

This Chapter identifies a number of principles from the discussions in Parts I, II and III. They are not large in number. But some of them are important enough to affect a very big slice of life. So, because they are ideas, they also affect the way people think about life. They were the linch-pins of the discussions in which they were expressed.

Key Principles

1. A strongly-held principle in the Chemistry Building, then, was that of getting to work in time. Now it is obviously the case that employers have a whole battery of sanctions to apply to workers who lie in bed in the morning. They can give them a humiliating row. They can stop their money. And sooner or later they can sack them. Exemplary punishments dished out now and again might get everyone staggering unwillingly in to work. But these women do not come in hanging their heads in misery. They come with determination - and a sense of having made the effort. We can therefore conclude that management is almost entirely relieved of the need to force them to do anything as horrible as getting up at 4.00 am. The principle, "Get to your work, be on time" operates in the minds of the workers themselves to achieve the same end, but with a lot less fuss and bother for the employer. And although the Chemistry Building is just one small workplace, it is quite inconceivable that its twenty one cleaners could have invented this principle. They brought it with them when they came to work there - "it's the way you were brought up".

2. Management is similarly relieved of the need to police the work. So strongly do the workers subscribe to the principle "You know what your job is," that supervision is regarded largely as a nuisance. This principle is felt to be more important than obedience to the supervisor anyway:

...you could say "Well that room's all right. It can be done" And then Anne (Supervisor)'ll, say "Oh well, I'll have to see Mrs Parish" (Site Supervisor). Then Mrs Parish'll say "The rooms're not

to get done." You say "I've been working in it, I know it can get done." That's the difference you see. You know because it's your job. Anne knows as well. But Anne disna know as well as me, because it's me that's doing it. And Anne's only saying to me "Oh well, its no supposed to be done. I'll see about it." So she goes higher up. And Mrs Watson says "No it's not to be done" But then you say to yourself "But I know it can be done - I've done it! "Because it's your job! See, that's the difference, you see you know what your job is. Anne'll say "If you wash the floor the now -" I'll say "No, I'll do the windies first" "How? What are you going to do the windows for? Do the floor first." Because I know how I work. And I know it'll work that way. And Anne'll say "Oh well, I'll just leave it to yourself." You see, that's the difference. If you can use your own discretion in how to do things you've been doing a long time, then you put your points over to your manager. (p.7)

If this principle seemed to compel people to work, it could also protect them from extra work, as the steward explained:

...through the years, with all the cutbacks and that, new people starting are getting a lot more work added onto them. You know, we've been here for years, we know what our job is. (p.9)

3. "This is a women's job" asserts that it cannot be done by a man who has to "keep's hoose and's bairns". Unemployment among the workers' husbands leads them to assert the principle all the more strongly. Few, if any husbands, would do such work - unlike the man whose wife worked in another building on the site:

Is it no a sin that a man has to come in and do that kind a work? Is it no a sin that a man has to do cleanin' work? He must feel ashamed when he's lift'n's wage. I mean he's got to keep 'is hoose and 'is bairns or whatever it is... And he must be ashamed he's gett'n' the same as his wife. And his wife's all beside'm. Which happened the other month - ...degrading. Because he's still got a family to keep. Still got rent to pay. I mean he was only doin about four hours. He canna be gett'n by a'that kind o'wage. (To) finish up on that wage, they're better off in a bloody factory and let them get a good job. (p.22)

By implication, the employer has no difficulty getting women to do a job few men would touch.

4. At Island Laundry the massive increase in throughput meant the workers were constantly having to improvise, just to be able to do their jobs. But the improvisations they adopted were part of management's job. And the manager just wasn't in enough places at once to do it. Even so, the workers felt strongly that they shouldn't be doing his work. And he was roundly condemned for taking on more than he could organise. Although the principle of separating workers' work from management's work was called into play by the increase in throughput, the workers themselves clearly could not have invented it. It could only have been brought to bear on the problem, with so little argument, because it was already established in everybody's minds. So firmly rooted was the

distinction between the two kinds of work that it was only possible to think about the best means of organising the laundry by stepping into the shoes of the manager. "If I was running it, I would..." In the short run this principle protects the workers from having to do more valuable work than they are being paid for. But, arguably, in the long run, it helps to make sure that what they do at work is rigidly limited. Their contracts of employment define them as people who load, sort and pack. The principle of not doing management's job can only contribute to keeping them that way.

5. Some of those who took part in the discussions at both Island Laundry and Viewpoint felt that professionals were people you ought to be able to respect:

I respect most people - well, at least, the professions - and I think they've got a lot of knowledge and they're intelligent. I know they are really intelligent and I respect them that - if they're good at their job. But, for instance, our officers, I wouldn't respect them. Sometimes I feel awkward toward the professionals because they're so knowledgeable. But then our officers, I don't feel awkward with them. (Viewpoint p.113)

At Island Laundry there was also a feeling of being inhibited, held back in dealing with doctors:

I think it's the way that we've all been brought up towards doctors, that you have that inhibition to say "Look I want you to tell me what you're doing." I mean honestly I wouldn't dream of saying that to a doctor. But we should. So whether it's just the position they're in, or we feel inferior to them, I don't know. But you just feel he's the expert, he's right. But they're not always right. (p.74)

Because today's children are less strictly brought up, they will probably find it a lot easier to deal with professionals like doctors. But, unfortunately, they will tend to lack that little bit of respect:

I heard it being said about Kingsfield there was a teacher about twenty six, seven, twenty eight. He was called by his first name by his pupils. And that's wrong, that is definitely wrong, shouting to your teacher "Hey, Tam would ye gay here" or something like that...I mean you're losing everything there, just by that, y'ken. The teachers should have been kept as Mr so-and-so. And you're keeping a bit of your respect. (Island Laundry p.76)

Here is an instance in which some of those who took part in the discussions clearly acknowledged that their behaviour was directly influenced by a principle - that of giving respect to professionals.

6. At Viewpoint, in the earlier discussions, a principle emerged straight from the official philosophy which the Regional Council had, through its training officer, attempted to instill in the workforce - recognition of the rights of residents. It is not hard to see why it should be so important. Most people had worked at Iron House, from where

the residents had also come. Iron House had been a world of rigid rules and centralised management control over residents and staff alike. But the new philosophy for Viewpoint stressed the rights of the residents to as much independence as the institution could concede. Dennis, at that time the steward, was one of the very few members of the care staff who had never worked at Iron House. He seized vigorously on 'residents rights' as a source of argument against a number of attempts by the officers to encroach upon the responsibilities of the care staff for the welfare of the residents in the six new flats. These encroachments clearly reduced the freedom of the staff to do their work - a particular advantage claimed for the Home by Eleanor, previously a hospital nurse. However, one of the responsibilities retained centrally, by the officers, was the decision whether to call the doctor to a resident. It was when the officers read the transcript of the discussion in which three such decisions were strongly criticised that something of a crisis developed. Two of the four care staff who took part in the discussion after this crisis put forward a further important principle. Responsibility for such things should belong with management. And, in the absence of promotion, they didn't want it. Officers should get proper recognition - recognition which depended on them having responsibility, and not the care staff.

What appears to have happened at Viewpoint is this. When the major issue which confronted the staff was one of breaking with the traditions of Iron House, the principle of residents rights, and the staff's responsibility for respecting them, came to the fore. As soon as the issue became one of management indignation at having its competence called to question, the principle which came to the fore was one which acknowledged the central responsibility of management. The workforce was, in the event, unable to sustain assertions of its own sense of responsibility. Those who had voiced them, for the moment at least, demoralised. A principle based on a new fangled theory from the Social Work Department proved less than the equal of one which located responsibility in its traditional place - with management.

Characteristics of Principles

In these various cases, then, principles get you to work on time, get you working without the need for constant supervision, tolerate work which cannot pay a living wage, lead you to leave the organisation of work to managers, make you feel obliged to give respect to professionals and acknowledge management's responsibility for crucial decisions about elderly residents whom, in practice, you care for.

It is now possible to list a number of characteristics which these principles share:-

(i) They are unlikely to have been invented in the workplace. In some form or other, they must already have existed in the minds of the people working there.

(ii) This does not mean that particular circumstances are unimportant. These principles were all brought to bear on problems thrown up by the conditions which applied in each of them at the time. In the Chemistry

building, getting up as early as 4.00 am was a problem which never went away; cuts had been introduced not long before and husbands had become unemployed. In Island Laundry, the workforce was faced with the chaotic consequences of another laundry's closure. At Viewpoint, the staff were faced, first, with the consequences of moving from a very different working environment and, later, with a crisis in their relationship with management. Each of these different circumstances evoked a principle which prescribed how everyone should behave. It is clear that a substantial proportion of people present supported each of these principles. It was never the intention of the study to try to measure it, but in some cases, widespread support can be confirmed, either by affirmation or by the context of the discussion.

(iii) However, for principles to be able to work in this way, they must be derived from a common store of principles which most people already share. Good evidence for this is that the principles referred to needed little or no supporting argument. As ideas, they spoke for themselves. Nobody needed to enter into the complexity of debating why any of them constituted the most appropriate course of action. Sometimes they were taken for granted and needed no spelling out at all. It is the existence of a shared world of principles, upon which people can draw as the need arises, which gives these discussions significance far beyond the three workplaces.

(iv) Even so, this does not mean that these particular principles can be thought of as universal rules. All that can be seen is their use in a particular place at a particular time by a particular group of people. They may well be an application of more universal rules. But, if so, this evidence does not reveal what they are. Alternatively their particular form may be as universal as they get.

(v) Although these principles compelled people to take certain action - or expect it from other people - this does not mean they always adhered to them in practice. At the Chemistry Building, people occasionally slept in. At Island Laundry, the principle of keeping management's and workers' work separate was being breached all round. But, like rules, it is in the nature of principles that they are sometimes broken. In fact, at Island Laundry, it was breaches of the principle of not doing management's work which led the senior steward to remind everyone else of its existence.

(vi) Nor is it necessarily the case that everyone involved in these discussions always agreed on the application of a particular principle. A very heated discussion, in which two principles were in direct conflict with each other, took place at Viewpoint - a workplace which appeared to have more divided views than the other two. One person on each side of the argument took the lead in expounding views which implied a set of principles. The one boiled down to the power of the individual to overcome adverse circumstances without undue difficulty. The other stressed the struggle and sacrifice needed to overcome the injustice, prejudice and class distinction which impedes such efforts. Clearly there is no possibility of achieving unity on that issue. These two sets of principles appeared to be derived from two opposing political ideologies.

(vii) So principles can deeply divide people. At the same time they promote the cohesion of those who subscribe to them. And, conversely, where there is general acceptance of a principle, it may be strengthened by the reactions of everybody else to possible infringements. As the commentary to part I shows, both processes were at work in the Chemistry Building.

The imprint of power

It can be argued that each of these principles gives those who adhere to them immediate advantages. It is not difficult to imagine what life would be like for the Chemistry building workers without the principles they espouse. Constant aggravation from management would probably make the job a misery. Getting in on time as a matter of principle shields the workers from the sanctions which would otherwise threaten them. Equally, it is possible to imagine the consequences for the workers at Island Laundry of failing to draw a principled line between their work and the manager's. As one says, "he's getting paid for work somebody else is doing." To the extent that this principle is effective in practice, it protects them from being ripped off.

But in the long run, it can also be argued that these principles confer very substantial disadvantages. The women in the Chemistry Building are condemned to a wage packet unacceptable to a man. And, to earn this very modest reward, they must get up as early as 4.00 am every day regardless of its effect on health or social life. Not challenging what should be management's work at Island Laundry ensures that laundry workers' knowledge and potential organisational skills can never be realised at work. The only part of a human being required for the job is the rather small bit that can perform crude manual tasks which, among their disadvantages, attract very modest wages. Equally, at Viewpoint, the people actually doing the work of caring for a small group of eight residents in a flat - where management can rarely reach, and so lacks intimate knowledge - do not have responsibility for the most sensitive decisions which have to be taken about them. As at Island Laundry, a clear barrier is maintained around an activity attracting only modest wages. In each case it is not some threat of sanctions which brings this about. They remain, for the most part, unused. The result is achieved by virtue of ideas in the minds of each individual person - principles to which they subscribe. It is thus very simple to see the imprint of power in the thinking of those who took part in the discussions.

One possible response to this view is that principles are mere window dressing. Real power, it might be argued, exists in the form of sanctions which threaten any worker who steps out of line. But principles are not mere anything and their power is no less real than any other kind. One way of thinking about the power of these ideas is to consider what would happen in their absence. What if employers had to actively cajole more than a small minority of workers into turning up on time? What if managers had to fight for control over the organisation of work and apply constant supervision to the workforce? And what if the status of doctors relied solely on their efficacy, the world would be a very different place. They might still be able to go about their daily business, but with enormous difficulty and embroiled in incessant

conflict. Indeed it is arguable that it is only because, most of the time, most people act on principle that sanctions against a small minority are actually workable.

The principles examined in this chapter, then, while perhaps providing immediate protection from any threat of sanctions or other adverse consequences, in the long run keep people in their place. They serve to suppress wages. They explain why a woman cleaner should have less of a job than a man. They explain why competent laundry workers should have less of a job than a manager who "doesna ken where he is". And they explain why care staff, who do all the work of caring, should have less of a job than officers who don't. They place a higher value on the work of others - of managers and professionals.

These principles, while defining and enforcing a certain position in the world, tell us little about the nature of that world as a whole. The next chapter explores the wider view of the world revealed by the discussions in each of the three workplaces. The principles described in this chapter must be placed in their proper context - powerful ideas in a realm of ideas.

"Care assistants are the bottom of the rung now."
(Steward at Viewpoint p.140)

Anyone reading Parts I, II and III has an advantage over everybody who took part in the discussions. They would have found it very hard to notice how much turned on any particular statement of principle. Yet, looking at the transcripts afterwards, it is easy enough to see the importance of the examples discussed in the last chapter.

This chapter does something else which is much easier to do with hindsight. It takes what people said, often from separate discussions, and assembles them together to provide a view of their position in the world as a whole. Does this piece of hindsight keep faith with those who took part? The answer to this can partly be found in the nature of any discussion between people. Discussion is a process of sharing. It is only possible at all because of what is already shared. At its simplest this means a common language where each participant assumes everyone else is using that language to convey identical meanings. These discussions were between people who all knew each other well and therefore used language in exactly the same way - except for the researcher whose misunderstandings, as a result, were many. But there is much more to it than this. What is contributed by one person at one moment builds on what has been shared before. Sense is built up of a succession of shared ideas, each taking much from what has already been said - and often taking it for granted. Sometimes the course of a whole discussion can be shaped by a reference to a shared principle. So although we cannot be absolutely certain that every idea is fully shared by everyone, the drift of the conversation provides at least an indication of what they do share. But in this chapter, the overall view obtained from each of the transcripts involves taking what people said at different times in different discussions and weaving it together, with all the dangers of taking words out of their context. One way to judge its validity is to do so from the picture which emerges. If that picture is muddled and full of contradictions it is inconceivable that it should be a fair representation of a view which those taking part really would have shared. As it happens, what emerges is remarkably consistent. Even so, it is important to bear in mind that there is an element of artificiality, of interpretation, in drawing it out. An advantage of providing the transcripts from which it has been derived enables the reader to judge the reasonableness of the summary the author has made.

Chemistry Building (Part I):

Managers are people who should have authority. They tend not to have it, because, for instance, they won't deal with a safety risk until someone gets hurt, or they get undermined by more junior managers below them, or they get over-ruled from above, or they lack experience on the job (Chapter III). Professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, are people you ought to be able to get hold of when you need them. And they ought to take the time to listen and explain things to you. They should observe proper standards of dress, manners, and fees. Although these are

not spelt out, it is clear that these standards tend to be broken with a vengeance by lawyers. And one of the research scientists working in the Chemistry Building falls down for sticking his nose up in the air and ignoring mere cleaners. Another had such filthy clothing he was described as obnoxious (Chapter IV). The human world has a definite top and bottom in which manners play an important part. At the top, you have to distinguish between the real upper classes - the bosses and people who have always had money and education - and the jumped up bosses, who were once in the same class as us, and think they're in the upper class. It is by their lack of manners that you can often identify them. They tend to be people who get a little bit of authority and forget themselves. Pop stars, too, were once the same as us, now get more than a surgeon (Chapter VII).

People at the top are looking after themselves too. Like the University top brass when there are cutbacks. It's the workers that suffer and there's not a lot anyone can do about it, apart from getting rid of Mrs Thatcher (Chapter VI). Or like the Duke of Buccleugh, who wouldn't let the Council straighten a dangerous corner on his land. We, the people at the bottom, are the ones without money, the working class. And being without money brings serious consequences - such as not having full access to the courts (Chapter VII). Those who work in the Chemistry Building itself, according to their steward, "don't have a leg to stand on arguing for higher rates of pay" because the rates paid by private cleaning contractors are so low (Chapter V). Movement upwards into management takes ambition, pushyness, rather than brains. It ought to involve experience rather than training. The supervisor thought it required ability and training too! But "we can get a woman here, and she gets promoted. And she goes completely different to us... because she's gone up a position, she's away. She thinks she's that superior." But, on the other hand, you should push your own family and not let them think they're no good (Chapter III).

If money at the top and lack of money at the bottom are resented - and there is little more than a hint that this is so - it is clear that pushyness - except in your own children - and being jumped up are despised very much more. It is cheating the proper social arrangements which most rankles.

Island Laundry (Part II).

As at the Chemistry Building, it is important to distinguish between real snobs, who can be the nicest people you could meet, and those who, by putting on airs and graces, like to think they are. There are two important facts about professionals. One is that they get their money from us. The other is that much of the real work which brings them their high incomes is done by people like us - secretaries on low pay, for instance. Here in a nutshell is why the people at the bottom will always be there. But there is another reason too. The more you try to climb the ladder, the more will those further up keep keep kicking you back down. It's an unchanging fact of life. Nothing whatever can be done about it.

Professionals you are brought up to respect - like the Doctor, the teacher or the Parish Priest. This was felt, with one person

disagreeing, to make you feel inhibited in tackling doctors about what was wrong with you. Schools today ought to maintain proper discipline so that our children keep that bit of respect too. On the other hand the greater freedom of speech today's children enjoy will make it easier for them to avoid feeling inhibited in their dealings with people like doctors. Lawyers are an example of a profession taking far too much money off ordinary people who are, as a result, discouraged from buying and selling houses. It is not unknown for doctors to make money illegitimately outside the NHS. One person thought doctors were well worth their money, whatever it might amount to. But the senior steward in the laundry pointed out that their very large pay rises came out of the same pot as laundry workers who stood to be impoverished as a result (Chapter V).

The Health Board ought to pay wages in the laundry which compare favourably with people in similar jobs - in factories, bonded warehouses or the Electricity Board. And if the employer breaches this obligation, you are entitled to strike - if the support is there in the laundry (Chapter I). It would be a good thing to establish contact with other groups of workers employed by the Health Board, such as porters (Chapter VII).

Management ought to be able to plan and organise the work. Events at the time of the discussions seemed to suggest this was too much to expect. They certainly suggested the workers themselves could do a better job (Chapter III).

Viewpoint (Part III):

The steward reckoned care staff to be ranked too low and miners too high. He implied that the proper place of care staff was somewhere between clerical workers and the professionals, part of whose jobs care staff have to do. At present, though, care staff were "bottom of the rung". Apart from an adverse comparison with child care officers, other care staff had little to say about earnings. One full-time domestic and a porter said their pay was no good without weekend working. At the same time, a part-time domestic said the rate for the job compared favourably with others locally, including the NHS (Chapter IV). Promotion, which appeared in the final discussion to be the only way to acquire responsibility, tended to come between friends. One person gave an example of a good man who became a bastard of a foreman (Chapter V). A rigid interpretation of the grading differences between care staff and domestics by the Officer in charge evoked the principled response that "we should all be together." (Chapter I)

As at Island laundry, professionals were people you should be able to respect. Training is an important factor in this. But the real test is whether they are any good at the job. Some people felt social workers and doctors tended in far too many cases to come from middle class backgrounds and be out of touch with the world in which they have to work (Chapter II). There were sharp divisions on this point. It led to the heated discussion mentioned in the previous chapter. People living in estates surrounded by crime, find themselves having to undertake an intense personal struggle against financial and other obstacles in

attempting to get out. And moving to a better area is the only way to get a better life for your children. Two distinct and opposing views emerged about this. One was that it was a struggle against class distinction, which forces working class people to value and appreciate whatever they get out of life. Middle class people, with the money to buy the good things of life, are not seen as capable of valuing what working class people cannot afford. The opposing view was that class is "union talk, to keep those that work in their place". You should be able to see beyond the barriers created in your mind by these ideas - because they are only in your mind (Chapter III).

Initially, management seemed superfluous to the real work of the Home - with very little to do. Its limited skills often seemed to get in the way of seeing the residents as human beings and treating them accordingly. To the extent that a different view emerged later, it only did so after a bitter confrontation between management and its critics.

Trapped by ideas

In a different way in each case. the discussions in the three workplaces suggest a similar interpretation of the position of the workforce in the world generally.

At the Chemistry Building, cuts loom. People at the top are solving their problems at the expense of those at the bottom - cleaners in particular. There's virtually nothing you can do about it. There's nothing you can do about wages either. The fact that 'womens jobs' can't support a family is not, itself, seen as a problem. The problem is that there ought to be jobs for men - and there aren't. Ideas of powerlessness prevail. "The bottom", "the poor", "the people that have not got money" (Part I Chapter VII), "the wee ones - we just do what we're told" (Part I Chapter VI). And the people who do the telling are simply divided into "jumped up bosses" and those that "treat you as a human being" (Chapter VII).

At Island Laundry, "There's always going to be them up there and these people down here" (Part II Chapter V). Perhaps one reason for this is that the principle by which wages are judged itself reinforces the top and bottom. The proper yardstick is wages and conditions paid elsewhere - at the bottom - although Ann points out that Consultant's pay rises can actually deprive laundry workers of a living wage. But the top and bottom must also be reinforced by respect - something which school discipline ought to be passing on to a new generation. And they must be reinforced, too, if the organisation of work has to be a matter for management and a no-go area for the workforce. Here are several principles which, logically, seem to interlock into a rigid and unchangeable state of affairs.

The move from Iron House to Viewpoint seemed to offer a major challenge to the principle that manual workers do manual work and managers hold responsibility for that work. The workforce seemed united, at least around the idea that residents had the right to chose who should make them a cup of tea, what should be ordered to go in their fridges, when and whether they should have a bath, where they should congregate and so

on. These were residents' rights which should govern the work of the care staff and domestics in the flats - work for which the care staff were responsible and, relatively, unsupervised. These assertions were anathema to the officers when they came to read a stray copy of the transcript. The pendulum swung sharply back. The principle which then came to the fore was that of officers' responsibility - and the need to recognise their position, which rested upon that responsibility. The confidence which permeated the ideas the staff had expressed such a short time before, seemed to have been dissipated. A principle had now asserted itself which put the staff back in their proper place - giving due recognition to the position of the officers.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from these views of the world. The first is that in each workplace, although they come from many individuals pitching into the discussion, they together form a rounded and consistent view. Secondly, those views were very consistent **between** the three workplaces. There is just one outstanding exception. Even there - in the argument between the two factions at Viewpoint (in Part III Chapter III) - the two sides only differed over how far individuals can change their lives. The picture which emerges is one in which most people, including everyone who took part in these discussions, are more or less at the bottom, or lacking in recognised responsibility - in other words in a position of powerlessness. Thirdly, where that powerlessness is expressed as a principle, it is portrayed as right and proper. It is how things **should** be. Fourthly, this overall picture of powerlessness shows that the principles, the powerful ideas, listed in the previous chapter are not isolated ideas. The disadvantages most of them confer are consistent with powerlessness in general. The exceptions are the principle of knowing what your job is in the Chemistry Building, which seems to challenge the power of management to run the job (Part I Chapter II), and the principle of care staff's responsibilities being to fulfil the rights of the residents at Viewpoint (p.100) - a principle apparently negated in the final discussion by the assertion of the officers' responsibilities (p.149).

Nearly everyone who took part in these discussions was a member of the union. The question arises as to whether their ideas about the union show it to be a means, actual or potential, of redressing their lack of power. Is it a means of transforming ideas of powerlessness into ideas of the countervailing power of workers, based on unity between them?

Part of the union?

The Chemistry Building (Part I): There is a sense in which support for the principles "Get to your work, be on time" and "You know your job" means workers supporting each other. Putting these principles into practice is not something which people do in isolation. It involves mutual support. Signs of this ranged from worrying about whoever has to cover your work when you are late (p.3) to gentle, but firm disapproval of someone who allowed herself to be pushed into a "two-woman's job" when her friend retired (p.8). But this sense of mutual support found no expression in the idea of the union. Not only did everyone except the steward express either a lack of involvement or interest in the union, it was clear that the union was someone else - "they". Even when the union had argued against "two rooms" per person, it was clearly an outside force which had intervened, despite their own support being a factor in the outcome. Of course the union is, in some sense, an outside force. But any sense that it might also be 'us' was wholly absent. To the extent that "the union" ever meant anyone in the workplace, it was Carol, the steward, not the members (p.9). This was confirmed by the answer to the question of whether they themselves, sitting round that table, ever considered themselves to be the union:

"No."

"No."

"No."

Steward: "If you're paying your money, you're the union."

"We are the union if we're paying our money, she says!"

laughter (p.30)

When it came to discussing impending cutbacks, the commitment to not doing "two rooms" evaporated in the face of the power of the UGC and the top brass. There seemed little faith that 'the union' could do very much about it, although "the union bosses would meet the top of the tree" (p.43), because "the unions haven't got the same power they had years ago" (p.43). However there was a clear sense that this power had come from:

"Well, the people themselves."

"The workforce."

"But I mean there's a lot of unemployment now, so there's not as many people in the unions now. And they've not got the money...either, because they're not getting the contributions."

"I think they put the fright of them with the miners. And when you think the strike went on for one year... And I think this is at the back of everybody's mind. You could come on strike and they can sack you. That's what they can do. They can just sack you now. And you see you've not got any rights. And she's taken them all."

Two in unison: "She's taken them all."

She's taken all the power away from the unions." (p.34)

She who needed no name. So far from the union appearing as a means of redressing the powerless position of these workers in the world as a whole, its own lack of power seems to match theirs.

Steward: You won't get the support for going on strike. People are too frightened for their jobs to strike. That's really what's wrong.

Member: 'Course the power isn't there, the unions haven't got the same power as they had years ago. (p.33)

Island Laundry (Part II): Despite the threat of privatisation, there was a sense that the workers themselves had great power, if only they could be united enough to use it. And during a lengthy discussion on the subject (Chapter VII), the principle of mutual support was extended to the nearest department over in the hospital - the porters. Previously there had been some antipathy towards the porters because they appeared to have achieved a higher and more stable level of bonus with less graft. But the idea of power through unity clearly emerged. When a porter was said to have shown contempt for the laundry, someone said "We're all part of the same workforce... When you have splits like that, and something really big comes up...you have no chance whatsoever" (Part II p.95). However, the union was scarcely mentioned. And in the previous discussion (Chapter VI) it had appeared as a something completely external to the laundry. Never "we", it was always "they". The word 'members' was rarely used and never to denote the bearers of union power.

Separation between the idea of the union and the idea of the power of the workforce was total. Even when strike action was discussed, the separation was maintained. "The union had us out..." (p.86) or "They asked you to do a one-day strike" (p.85). In one way or another, all those who took part in the discussions subscribed to the principles of mutual support and unity upon which the union is founded, but divorced from the union itself. Power in the union resides at the top, "up here" as one person gestured with his hands. Even so, as in the Chemistry Building, the source of that power is understood to be the workers. Again, as in the Chemistry Building, unions had lost a lot of "their" power "because the government's crippled them". In particular:

Irene (steward): Usually, in all the strikes that I can always mind, years ago, if you got a strike, it went right through. I mean you didn't have the so-called blacklegs trooping back in and things like that, which you have now. That is maybe...why...the unions, they don't have the same power as they had. (p.87)

I still say that's what happened to the miners, y'ken, really...for some reason it wasn't as strong as it should have been. And it's a true saying "United you stand, divided you fall" and you always fall if you're divided.

Stuart: 'Course you will (P.86).

Viewpoint (Part III): The eventual splitting of the miners was seen as the means of the destruction of union power in Viewpoint too:

The last (miners') strike was because they were selling their jobs, right? And you were getting offered twenty, thirty thousand to sell your job. "Come out the pit" - after you've been there thirty years. Money does talk. Now what the argument was, the young ones were saying, they're selling their jobs for the next generation... Plus, never before, if one miner out the crowd decides to go to their work, never

would you get a police escort. They would have stepped out the house and two hard men would have said "Get back in" one way or another. And that would have been it. But you see, it was like an army. And it was just like a fight against the other (army)... (p.140)

Yet here too, the same person who had put forward this analysis, located union power with "...all the big guys that have got all the say..." (p.142)

Officer power?

This divorce between union power - at the top - and its source - at the bottom - is particularly apparent when it appears to attach to full time officers. Two instances illustrate this.

At Viewpoint, an account of a union officer intervening over redundancies in a hospital implies that his power to do so rested on his presumed personal qualities - or lack of them:

You see, they were scream'n when they were gett'n told that their job was obsolete. And that's when the union came down... And it was awfully difficult for the union man that did appear. He seems to be quite famous because I seen'm on telly, this wee guy. But I don't think he's got the gift o'the gab. He was fight'n for two women. They were on the night shift, alternate nights, right? And there was only one job. So he was fight'n for jobs for the two of them. It was a shame for him as well, that one got it and the other didnay, you see? And that's no very nice. That isnay really. So I dinna ken. The union wasna very good at that time. But that only depends on who's representing you. I'm quite sure'o'it. (Part III p.135)

Another example of union power appearing to be a special property of its officers crops up in Island laundry. The accumulation of full laundry bags had created a very dangerous situation. Access to fire exits was restricted for large numbers of workers and, because bags were getting too close to the machines, the danger of fire was itself being increased. Access to an emergency stop button had already been found blocked when it was needed and work had been piled on top of fire extinguishers:

In one respect I think you need the higher up lads, because I had an argument with him (the laundry manager) for months about the state of that place... It was a fire hazard. It was a safety hazard. I mean every other day I was in there saying "Look, they bags need shifted, bla, bla, bla." And, as I say, they were not, until we spoke to Ray Kennedy (full time officer) and he says "This is terrible. You'd better get something done." And there was a meeting called last Tuesday. But I was called off my holidays to go to it. And that's what it was about - the mess of the place. Obviously things are going to start moving now, because Parker (the laundry manager) was there with his boss. And Ray Kennedy was there with Sandy Miller (branch secretary). So things are going to start moving now. But it took him to do that...because it involved Parker's boss. His boss was quite angry and says "Well, you'd better get this done." We needed the men because they wouldn't listen to us (Part II p.83).

The speaker was a steward with only a few months' experience. Someone else disputed her view that Ray Kennedy was needed to get access to Parker's boss and felt she should have had the right to "go over his head." Even so, the full time officer had got results where the steward had not. The steward's explanation for the power of the branch secretary and the full time officer seemed to be that it paralleled the management chain of authority:

The union in general, when I joined, they never said to me "This is Sandy Miller...and this is what he does". I still don't know what that means. Ray Kennedy, again, he's higher than Sandy. So I don't know what he is, y'ken what I mean? ...I think they should really tell you who is serving you, and their boss too, further up, further up, so that you know exactly who you're dealing with if you have a problem... (p.82)

Here, then, are two instances in which union power seems to lie with full time officials. In the second case, power appears to increase with the rank of the officer. What power were union officers able to bring to bear in these two examples?

Certainly in the second case the full time officer would have found it easier than the steward to gain access to a manager with more authority than the immediate manager of the laundry. But this does not explain how he was able to shift either of them where the steward could not. What sanctions could the officers wield? Assuming no threat of industrial action was involved, in the first case, effective sanctions could only have been based on the redundancy regulations - and perhaps other provisions - contained in agreements reached between union and employer in the past. A manager who failed to honour the employees' rights, conferred by these agreements, would eventually be pulled into line by a manager further up the line, with greater authority. In the second case, the Officer would have been able to draw on sanctions provided in the Health and Safety at Work Act, which was undoubtedly being breached in the laundry. In both cases, the difference between the officer and the members (or steward) is that he knew about these things and they did not. Had they done so, there is no reason why a steward - or even a member of the union - should not have been able to wield exactly the same threat of sanctions. Of course the manager might have refused to treat with them. But the sanctions are real enough and, in the end, their use could only serve to convince any manager that their threat should have been taken seriously.

It was the members' lack of knowledge which made them dependent upon the union officers, as the steward already quoted at length at Island Laundry recognised:

You see, I've got to depend on him (Sandy Miller) generally, because I dinna ken a lot about it and that man knows a lot. Well, I think he knows a lot, right? So I just go by what he tells me... (p.90)

The idea of union power

There is one other sort of power which the officers in these two cases brought to bear. The idea of their power was firmly fixed in the minds of all concerned. Because everyone believed and expected the officer in the

first case to possess power, he came a cropper, damned as lacking the gift of the gab. And for exactly the same reason, in the second case the officer's intervention proved the indispensibility and superiority of his contribution. The power of such ideas should not be discounted. And this is exactly the point. It is through these ideas that the power of the union is divorced from the power of united workers. This is how that separation is sustained in the minds of those who took part in the discussions in these workplaces.

It goes without saying that this kind of power is very much open to manipulation by managers. There is no way of knowing whether this happened at Island Laundry. But it might very well have suited the manager to delay agreeing to tackle the health and safety problems until a full time officer intervened. It would have given him more time to smooth out the flow of work, which was causing the problems in the first place. And it would have had the added advantage of giving as little practical recognition as possible to the steward on the spot. Just as members' lack of knowledge can confer power on a knowledgeable full time officer, it can confer power on a steward too.

The separation of union power from the power of the membership provides fertile ground in which anti-union ideas take root. Whatever is wrong - and the discussions in Parts I, II and III, reveal plenty that's wrong - can easily appear to have nothing to do with the power, or lack of power, of workers. It seemed to one participant at Island Laundry to have everything to do with misdirected power at the top:

I think they're too misdirecting this power to worry about what happens down below (Part II p.85).

And he is bitter about:

...the lack of communication between the shop floor and the boys up there with the power. Dinna get me wrong, without the union we would get stomped all over... (p.84)

At Viewpoint, the person who had previously talked about the miners' strike said:

When you're talking about the miners' union, you're talking about Arthur Scargill and all these guys. But you're seeing all the time that somebody must be pulling his strings. And he gives that union a bad impression, that everybody in the Miners are all in - what do you call that there - like communists sort of thing. But I don't believe they're all like that... And all the miners that leave the pit, they're all glad to leave. ...they're glad their families don't work in the pit. And it's all the big guys that have got all the say, I think. Because that Miners' Union didn't give them a vote. Because they knew that their members would have all voted to go back by the time it finished (Part III p.88).

In other words the "big guys" pull the members' strings and somebody else must be pulling the big guys' strings. It would be very complacent indeed to regard these two members as isolated crackpots. It is important to

realise that such people, in order to avoid being 'stomped all over', have to tolerate a monstrously alien impression of the union. At the same time, it must be remembered that these views of union power do not come from neglected backwaters of trade unionism. Both of these speakers are members of highly organised branches, whose branch officers are experienced and committed activists.

The union, then, fits exactly into the views of powerlessness outlined in Chapter II. It has power, certainly. But, with the exception of one or two of the stewards, the workers themselves do not identify with it. Indeed they tend to be roundly critical of its use by the "boys up there with the power". And that power is understood in the same way as any other power wielded by big people over little people. The difference is that these big people obtained theirs from the little people themselves.

However, as this chapter has pointed out, the divorce of union power from its source has, at least, left a strong sense of the united power of workers, especially, but not only, at Island Laundry. And, although separated from the idea of the union itself, the principles upon which trade unionism depends remain intact. This must give grounds for confidence that the union, now seen as something largely outside, could return to the workplace from which it springs and where its independent power lies.

How? This is a question raised by research carried out in the union fourteen years ago.

How they defined the problem

Three Warwick University sociologists who carried out research on NUPE in 1974 were well aware of the problem discussed in the previous chapter. They called it remoteness:

"...if nothing is done to counteract it, the danger of remoteness is that "The Union" comes to assume the form of an external agency, its identity separate from that of the members. It then represents a resource which is beyond the ken of the membership at large and a structure which is outside their control. "The Union" is seen to dole out more or less satisfactory solutions to members problems in a fashion which at best seems generous, at worst seems neglectful, but which in any case appears somewhat capricious." (Organisation and Change in the National Union of Public Employees. Bob Fryer, Andy Fairclough and Tom Manson. Department of Sociology, Warwick University, August 1974. para 8.3).

"Remoteness" therefore referred to the gap between the members and the "structure". To understand what the authors meant by this, it is first necessary to put the 'Warwick Report' in its context.

At the same time, Local Government, the Water Industry and the Health Service were going through one of their periodic post-war reorganisations. Smaller units of administration were being welded together into much bigger ones. These three areas of employment accounted for virtually the whole of the union's membership. To tackle the new employers effectively, there was no doubt that the union would have to rethink its own organisation. The 'Warwick Report' was commissioned to do that rethinking. This background made it inevitable that whatever problems the research team might come across, the solution would have, first and foremost, to be in terms of 'structure'. In fact a Special National Conference on Reorganisation had already been planned before the research was undertaken. And that Conference later implemented changes proposed by the Executive Council in the light of the Warwick Report.

With the broad nature of the findings thus determined in advance, the word 'structure' quickly came to have a specific meaning. It concerned the relationships between seven different kinds of body in the new organisation which the research team designed for the union. At the top was the National Conference, with the Executive Council underneath it. At the bottom was the workplace. Districts, Areas, Divisions and National Committees came in ascending order in between. Each naturally had different functions. Resolutions travelled upwards through the structure, reports travelled back down again. In effect, the 'structure' became the union itself. 'Remoteness' became a question of how to make the members part of the structure:

One way of tackling isolation and remoteness is to hold regular sectional meetings of members at work... However, as things stand, the proper place of such meetings in the Union is unclear: practice varies

greatly from locality to locality and the constitutional position of the meetings has never been clarified. (9.2)

(Insert footnote: the paragraph continues:

Moreover, merely to implement widespread workplace and sectional meetings in a Union where the Branch meeting still has formal importance may in fact simply hasten the decline of the Branch. (para 9.1) This is not a criticism of sectional meetings as such, indeed our researches revealed their value. Over half of those Branches (54%) which have held sectional meetings reported an increase in interest and attendance. Only 5% said they had dropped them because of poor attendance... (9.2))

Their concrete proposals

The workplace meeting, then, was to be the means of incorporating the members into the structure:

A vital function of Workplace and Sectional organisation would be to provide an effective link between the mass of NUPE's members and the next level of the Union structure. In the first instance, Branches would be charged with ensuring proper representation of and communication with NUPE members at all Workplaces and Sections they cover. This would be achieved through regular contact between members and the Union Stewards, supplemented by meetings of the Workplaces or Sections properly constituted under the auspices of the Branch. Wherever possible, meetings should be held in working time. This would be only one of the facilities that...Branches would seek to establish for Union Stewards. (17.6 Note: By 'section' they meant part of a large workplace or a grouping together of very small workplace)

Stewards would have a vital part to play. Indeed the Warwick team saw stewards themselves as a means of overcoming 'remoteness':

Another way of coping with some of the dangers of remoteness and isolation is the growing system of union stewards... (9.3) Stewards need to know the aspirations and wishes of the members they represent and they require information on local and wider union policy if they are to act on behalf of the members and in the name of the union. This means that they need easy access to their membership, proper integration into the local union organisation and the provision of adequate back-up information. But it also means a readiness on management's behalf to meet the stewards. (9.12)

Union Stewards...would convey the views and resolutions of Workplaces and Sections to other levels of the Union structure. Workplaces and Sections would receive reports back and information from Union Stewards. (17.7) Sections and Workplaces would be related to the District level of the Union chiefly through the Union Stewards. All Union Stewards would sit on the relevant District Committee... (17.9)

Resolutions from the Workplace or Section intended for levels of the Union at or beyond the District would go to District level... (17.12)

Workplaces and Sections would receive reports back from District level via Union Stewards... (17.13)

(Insert footnote:

Contact between Workplaces or Sections and the Union's full time Officers would be through the Union Stewards (chiefly at District level)... Direct contact would occur only very rarely or when urgent and difficult matters were beyond the experience and capabilities of the Stewards...and other lay officials of the relevant District. (17.15)

The chief considerations at this level would be first the establishment of a regular pattern of Workplace and Sectional meetings held under the auspices of the Branch. Second, it would mean giving attention to the development of facilities for Union Stewards and to including them in all procedures agreed with local management. (17.17))

The claims made for building the workplace into the structure were far reaching:

The intention of building Workplace and Sectional organisation more clearly into the Union structure would be to improve the relationship between the membership at large and other levels of Union activity. The aim would be to counteract those forces creating isolation and remoteness. Activity at this level should have the eventual benefit of stimulating greater self-reliance and strengthening local Union organisation (para 17.18.).

Thirteen years on

Time has shown that these proposals - implemented, as they were, in all their essentials - have not fulfilled their objective. They have not solved the problem of 'remoteness'. At the same time, in the three workplaces involved in the present study, the Warwick team's warning of what would happen if it remained unsolved appears fully justified. A number of reasons for this can be put forward:

1. Their Report coincided with a time when public expenditure cuts began to bite into the union's workplaces. While the willingness of managers to give practical recognition to stewards may have increased, their scope for making real gains quickly narrowed as the seventies wore on.
2. The 'Warwick structure' involved the upward movement of resolutions through its various levels. As we have seen in the three workplaces in the present study, the problem which the Warwick researchers called 'remoteness' is associated with the assumption that union power resides at the top. The upward movement of demands from the membership - a process which can take many months before an appropriate reply comes back down - could only nurture this view. What this study has called the divorce of the union from the source of its power was thus inherent in the Warwick structure. The very problem the researchers had put their finger on was built into the structure they said would help to overcome it. But in practice, the problem was made more serious by the increasing public

expenditure cuts of the late seventies. If the idea had been for the development of union policy at a higher level to provide stimulus and guidance for people confronting employers at a lower level, for the most part this did not happen. Resolutions travelled upwards born on the hopes of those below that somebody up there would do something.

3. The Warwick team's suggestion "that the challenges and opportunities now facing NUPE can be resolved into the question of the composition of, functions of, and relationships between seven levels of Union activity" (16.1) should be treated with at least the caution of hindsight. After all, this is exactly the kind of conclusion which their terms of reference called for. 'Remoteness and isolation' define the problem in terms of the 'structure' they were asked to look at. Sadly, it can only have done the union a disservice to tell it, with all the authority which their report at once acquired, that so fundamental a problem could be disposed of in this way. In any case, a careful reading of the Report shows that it did not follow through its own arguments (in para 9.1 quoted above) and turn them into concrete proposals. The relevant recommendations (paras 17.6 etc, quoted above) are silent on the need for regular section meetings. Nor do they give effect to the need for workplace meetings to be defined within the structure. Yet these were to be "one way of tackling isolation and remoteness" (as it happens, only one other was suggested - "the growing system of Union Stewards").

4. The new Rules introduced to implement the "Warwick report" went into considerable detail in describing the duties, functions and inter-relationships of six of the seven parts of the new structure. Each had a separate rule in the Rule Book. This contrasts sharply with the seventh - the workplace. Its "integration into the structure" was to be via the functions of the steward. Any rights it might have to be an electorate, or be consulted and reported to, could only be deduced from the rule concerning the Steward. But this rule was, and remains, vague, even in such a crucial matter as the practicalities of election and re-election. Not surprisingly, it is silent on any obligation to hold regular meetings. But the Warwick team's reticence on this point is carried further in the drafting of the new rules. There is no obligation to hold any workplace meetings at all. Nor is there any obligation for stewards to report back to members on their doings in the "local structure", let alone consult them about it. There is thus no accountability for the person whom the Warwick team identified as the principal means of contact with its proposed structure. The relevant section of the rule introduced to implement it merely requires the steward to:

establish and maintain Union organisation at their section or workplace; (Rule 21.4(b))

5. With the emphasis of the rewritten rule book firmly on other parts of the structure, it was perhaps natural for the steward to become its "base" rather than the workplace. The workplace itself was taken for granted. All three workplaces involved in this study are fully covered by the 'post-Warwick' structure. But wherever and whatever the union is, in the eyes of these members, it is not them and it is not where they work.

"Dominance of the full time Officers"

Discussions in all three workplaces in the present study tended to identify 'the union' - the NUM and others as well as NUPE - with full time officers. The last chapter described two instances in which full time officers had intervened in two workplaces where members's lack of knowledge conferred the appearance of union power on these individuals. Both serve to illustrate the dependence on full time officers which lack of knowledge makes possible. Every intervention by a full time officer is therefore capable of appearing to confirm lack of power among members and, instead, its attachment to the person of the full time officer. The Warwick team was only too well aware of this process:

To those involved in the process, it might appear quite normal and they may see no reason to question it. But, both members and Officers can come to think it natural for the membership to rely heavily upon the Union's full time officials. The more the membership are treated and behave as if they are dependent, the more dependent they certainly become: the more either Officers or members assume that the membership are incapable of expressing, negotiating, resolving their own problems (a view, of course, often shared by employers) the more such an assumption seemingly hardens into "fact"... (p.17)

So, by implication, this dependence and the 'remoteness' of members from the union, were two sides of the same coin. And the solution to both was to be the same: "...a structure which encourages greater involvement and self-reliance..." (p.19)

One of the greatest difficulties about the 'Warwick Report' is that its authors never actually spelt out their reasons for thinking that the 'structure' they proposed would increase the participation of members and decrease the domination of officers over them. However, the explanation for this is implied throughout. And in a later paper by the leader of the research team it is explicitly stated:

Reflecting as they do the immediate concerns and experiences of the men and women they represent, the stewards embody a substantial opposition to oligarchy and prefigure democratic forms and processes (R.H.Fryer, unpublished paper "An epidemic of industrial troubles: The development of Union Stewards in the National Union of Public Employees" September 1982 p.46).

(Insert footnote: Even here, Bob Fryer does not explicitly claim this as his own position. Indeed he goes on to point to the crucial importance of "the consciousness and actions of the union members" (ibid p.470. It is tempting to wonder whether, by 1982, he may have considered that setbacks or shortcomings in this area could best account for the failure of his 1974 proposals to live up to their promise.)

This appears to be the basis of the new 'structure' they put on offer - and which, for the most part, the union accepted. But it was accepted in the absence of any explanation as to how it would achieve its aims. Stewards can only be a force for democracy to the extent that they do reflect the "immediate concerns and experiences" of the members in the workplace. The

further away from that workplace, the more difficult it becomes. At Island Laundry, Irene gave an account of the problems of getting to grips with just the first rung in the ladder of committees created by 'Warwick':

I would like to do mair but I feel - I've only been in it a year, right? And I mean I've enjoyed it. I have enjoyed it. I don't know - you're no taught enough. Because...they have monthly meetings, right? So I went to my first monthly meeting...and I reckon there were about twenty or thirty people. And I never knew anybody. Well, I knew Ann, because Ann took me to this meeting. And then he started talking about the minutes of the meeting previous. So I was completely lost. And that was wrong. He should have says "Well, we've a few new shop stewards, bla bla bla and this is what we are going to do now". I mean I didn't even know that the meetings were every month and what they were all about. I can still go to a monthly meeting and still be lost because they could be talking about something that happened earlier last year. Now that is wrong. That is completely wrong. We had a training course for shop stewards. But that was in the January and I took over in the September. So these three months were completely wasted. ...I thought "There's no way I'm going to get the hang o' this because I just don't know what all this is about" (Island Laundry p.81).

This steward was already well on the way to the time when she would have to face re-election. Yet her account shows that considerable knowledge and experience of the 'structure' are needed, even at this level, before a steward can use it as a means of reflecting "Immediate concerns..."

Because the District Committee is a step on a ladder within the structure, there is a tendency for that structure to transform "immediate concerns" into resolutions for even more distant committees, whose delegates are even further removed from their democratic base. And the credentials which delegates need to operate these more remote parts of the structure are not so much their knowledge of the "the immediate concerns...of the men and women they represent" as familiarity with the workings of the structure **itself**. Indeed, to be effective in one of the union's national bodies, it is, arguably, not so much a question of "embody(ing) a substantial opposition to oligarchy" as being expert in understanding how to make it work. At the same time each committee away from the District is 'serviced' by a full time officer. It is difficult to see how dependence on these full time officers could be any less than dependence on full time officers in the Districts the delegates have come from. Dependence on their administrative back-up and advice is even more crucial than in the localities closer to the workplace. And, again, it should be remembered that dependence on full time officers was to be reduced by means of a "...a structure which encourages greater involvement and self-reliance..."

Sending resolutions away to become part of a cycle of committees, in which yet other destinations are often bound to be decided for them, is to perpetuate the key problem the Warwick team itself posed and which was quoted at the begining of this chapter. A structure which takes members' "immediate concerns" away from them in this way effectively confirms the union as an "external agency", "a resource which is beyond the ken of the membership at large and a structure which is outside their control..." Or, in terms of this study's findings, sending resolutions up the line feeds on

and reinforces the assumption that power lies at the top. Dealing with problems in this way affirms the separation of the union from the power of its members. So whatever the advantages of this structure they cannot be those claimed for it by its inventors. The problems **they themselves** posed - of officer 'dependance' and membership 'remoteness' remain. And, judging by the three workplaces involved in this study, they need to be faced and tackled at least as urgently as in 1974.

One last word is needed on the Warwick Report and the effect it has had on the life of the union since it was written. There is no academic discipline capable of producing an engineering blueprint for a system of social relationships. How the 'structure' is designed to work on paper, by anyone, is never likely to be quite the same thing as the way it works in practice. Perhaps one of the more important lessons of the Warwick research is this. **Saying it don't make it so.** Another is that the logical connection between any researcher's prescriptions and the research itself need to be followed through in a spirit of the most searching scepticism!

Grappling with the separation of the union from the basis of its power, can only mean taking the workplace at least as seriously as all the other parts which, after Warwick, took it for granted. But, whatever is done about it, perhaps, all these years later, the Warwick Report provides the union with a useful place to start.

PART V

SOCIALISM

This section addresses socialism as analysis, as ideas about transformation and as a loose body of active socialists.

Chapter I draws on Marx's explanation for the rise of capitalism to illuminate a discussion in one of the workplaces about a fictional small, privately owned workplace. It then finds in Marx's work an account which foreshadows the authority and discipline present in the three workplaces, which cannot be encapsulated in his capitalist private property schema. Socialism as a body of ideas about transformation, it is argued, has separated itself from the workplace as private property has progressively given way to other means of controlling the workforce.

Chapter II describes ideas in all three workplaces which it calls "workers running the job". It argues that socialism must address the ideas about powerlessness which actually exist in the workplace and recognise them as potential for its own fulfilment. Only as a body of thought which reflects, reinforces and enables such ideas to develop can it provide a link with the future transformation which it seeks.

Contents:

Chapter	I	IF I HAD MY OWN PLACE	page	198
Chapter	II	WE COULD ALL RUN THIS PLACE	page	210

Chapter I

"TRYING TO THINK IF I HAD MY OWN PLACE..."

Part IV discussed ideas about the world, and people's place in it, gleaned from the discussions in the three workplaces. Part V sets these ideas alongside another set of ideas about the world - Socialism. Socialism, of course, means different things to different people. But, at its simplest, it seeks to promote a view of a transformed world in which powerlessness and poverty are redressed. Originally, socialism also tried to explain *why* the world was the way it was. In many cases, it has now given up the attempt. And, in some, it has even lost much of its impetus towards change as well.

In Chapter I a discussion at Island laundry, and the union rule book, both act as a starting point for looking at the source of Socialism's most powerful ideas.

Today's leaders of the Labour Party subscribe to a view of the world which owes more than most of them know to the work of Karl Marx. Of those who do know, few would care to admit it. Not the least of the reasons for their reticence is that the official doctrine of the Soviet Union goes out of its way to claim affinity with Marx. It is the case of the one exaggerating what the other tries to sweep under the carpet.

Marx was not the only major socialist thinker in the last century. But without doubt he left by far the most influential legacy of ideas to every subsequent socialist movement anywhere in the world. He has also inspired a good many where the word 'movement' has been wishful thinking. Such is the power of his ideas that they even find an echo in Union Rules. Thirteen objectives of the union are listed in the rule book, the last of which reads:-

To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service including appropriate forms of industrial democracy. (Rule 2.1 (m))

This statement of socialist principles (which also occurs in the constitution of the Labour Party as the famous 'clause 4') is as good a place to start as any. The principle of common ownership is, naturally enough, a socialist answer to the principle of private ownership. To find out why, we need look no further than a discussion which took place at Island Laundry:

Joan: ...he was all behind the times. He took me through. And all he had was an old wooden ironing board with an iron for to iron the clothes. One for coats... He was right behind the times. That's all there was behind him.

laughter

-

Joan: - he was ironing a kilt!

laughter

Stuart: Then again you wonder how wee firms like that survive.

Fiona: There's shops like that where I stay -

Irene: Because the whole point is - and I mean really, it is - getting first class treatment... All hand done. That is first class. There's no machine really that can press it like you can press it yourself.

Joan: I was expecting one of those wee presses like we have up the stair...

Stuart: That's all right if there's a market for that kind of thing. But I mean there canna be much for that.

Irene: I wouldna think so on that.

Stuart: That's what you get when you stay in a high class place (where) I suppose you can afford that sort of thing! (Island Laundry p.49)

And of course, for the most part they have not survived. But at one time - and still in some parts of the world - most people who worked used their own tools. The tradition whereby some craftsmen still have to bring their own tools to work is a surviving link with this completely different way of doing things. And so is one person with their own shop and an ordinary iron and ironing board out the back.

In the same discussion Irene describes a more familiar kind of industry:

Trying to think if I was a boss, if I had my own place, 'ken, and a machine was going to do the job the same as what two women would do it. Over the years that machine would pay itself over and over again. So I'd be thinking of my circumstances and I'd say "Well, these two will need to go." That's looking at it as a boss's point of view. If its a workers' point of view I wouldna want to go. I'd want my job. So - I'll never be a boss because I've got a workers' point of view. There's not a lot you can say on that you know.

...at the same time we must move on too. I mean ...nay point being a boss o'all this...small equipment and two dozen workers. And you could bring in machinery to do it with one dozen workers, y'ken? ...no boss is ever going to say "Well, I'm not bringing that machinery because I wouldna like to pay them off". That just doesna work that way. They bring in the machinery and pay them off anyway.

Stuart: When there's other firms in the same line of business bringing in the machinery, the one that's got the big labour force is very soon going to go out of business.

Irene: That's right.

Stuart: ...you just canna stand in the way of progress (p.49)

The fact that Irene is unable, as a worker, to identify with this process is of great significance. It clearly illustrates the very sharp separation between the workers and the tools, machines, factories - the capital equipment - used for production now. Unlike the man ironing a kilt, someone else owns them. This discussion is based on commonsense about the world it describes. Yet it is a view which rests on some important assumptions made by those who took part:

1. "If I had my own place..." As Irene implies, the combination of people and machines she is talking about would only be possible if she owned the machines and they did not. Not only would they have to be non-owners of the machinery, they would have to be non-owners of any other means of making a

living in the market place. Going to her, or another owner, for a job must be their only option.

2. No less important is what happens when the unstoppable onward march of technology makes possible a machine which only needs one dozen workers and not two dozen. Only because that machine is her private property can she simply decide to dispense with the workers' services.

3. Her property rights actually extend far beyond the mere machines. The results of her employees' work also belong to her. She gets the charges paid for it across the counter, not them. Any profit made is therefore hers and not theirs.

4. And how has she managed to pay for the new machinery she is bringing in to replace half the workforce? She could, of course, borrow the money from the bank. But this is really the same question. How does she pay the bank? Obviously, she must make a profit.

5. Although her profit may come from selling what her workers have produced across the counter, its source can only be the activity of the workforce as a whole. She can only accumulate a surplus by holding onto some of the "fruits of their industry". Because she owns what they produce, she is able to get them to work, not only to pay their own wages, the electricity, rent and other outgoings for the factory, but to provide her with the means of cutting their numbers in the future!

6. She does not have the option of being soft-hearted towards the workers. She cannot keep them in their jobs instead of introducing new machinery because, as Stuart says, "the one that's got the big labour force is very soon going to go out of business."

The principle taken for granted in the discussion is a principle in exactly the same sense as those described in Part IV Chapter I. It prescribes how people should behave. It existed in the minds of those who took part beforehand and was then 'applied' to the issue under discussion. It did not need explaining or arguing about because it was part of a shared world of principles. This did not mean that it is a universal rule - it can apply only in the kind of circumstances implied in the discussion, namely "...if I had my own place".

The principle of private property implied in the discussion contradicts another principle also implied in it, that people should not be thrown out of work, a matter dealt with in Chapter II of Part VII. But it is easy to see why generations of socialists should have countered the principle of private ownership with that of "the common ownership of production..."

The existence of the principle of private property is also taken for granted in the work of Marx. The way of producing to which it applied he called "capitalist". The private owner, the capitalist, accumulates more and more means of production (capital) in their own hands as time goes by.

In competition with a capitalist factory containing presses like those in Island Laundry, one person working with their own little iron, in their own place, might not survive in the market. Unless, perhaps, a few rich

customers are willing to pay for "a first class job", the price difference will push them out of business. And then as new machines enable the factory job to be done with fewer workers, "the one that's got the big labour force is very soon going to go out of business." This is obviously what drives the process of change forward today. People producing independently, with their own means of doing so, give way to those who, without means of producing of their own, can only produce by creating capital for the minority who do. They, in turn, give way to ever smaller numbers required to create further capital.

From Feudalism to Capitalism

It sounds very simple and obvious nowadays. But if you go back a couple of centuries, replacing the man ironing a kilt by workers operating machines, enabling factory owners to accumulate capital, would have represented a very sharp change - a complete revolution. Marx came to the conclusion that two closely related developments had to take place before capitalist production could establish itself as the normal way of producing. Large numbers of agricultural producers had to be separated from their own means of producing - physically evicted from the soil - so that they could become a ready source of labour in the towns. Secondly, at the same time, private property - the absolute right of owners to do what they wanted with what they owned - had to become universal, fully expressed in the law. The small scale capitalist production described by Irene was made possible by these historical developments. Before capitalist production could be driven forward by the competition described by Stuart, these two conditions had first to be fulfilled.

It took hundreds of years, beginning with the end of feudalism. The feudal system involved a completely different kind of property. Feudal property meant that peasants, or serfs, had small parcels of land of their own which enabled them to live. But they were required, in addition, to work on their Lord's land as well, and provide recruits to fight for him. In return, the feudal lord had to provide protection - from other feudal lords! But as the King established his own authority over the nobility, the purpose of their retainers came to an end. Not surprisingly, the obligations of serfs to their lords also weakened and were replaced by rent. A new generation of nobles later began to see much greater profit in the rent they could get from sheep farming, for the growing wool trade, than from the more self-sufficient agriculture of the existing rural population. The size of this population was incompatible with the far less labour-intensive sheep. Large scale evictions and confiscations of common grazing land took place. Marx quotes a writer in 1578

If the old records of every manor be sought...it will soon appear that in some manor, seventeen, eighteen or twenty houses are shrunk..., that England was never less furnished with people than at present..., of townes pulled down for sheep walks and no more but the lordships standing on them...²

To begin with, the Law resisted this process³. Private property did not yet apply without limitation. But the lure of profit never let up. Alongside the still large population of independent agricultural producers, genuinely capitalist farming steadily developed. This new kind of farmer was able to

"make his capital breed", as Marx put it (Capital Volume I p. 694). The labour of his employees not only paid for their own wages and a surplus for the landowner's rent, it yielded a surplus in the hands of the farmer which made further expansion possible. This was, of course, greatly helped by the steady removal of common grazing rights by the illegal seizure of ancient commons. As a new class of farmers emerged, it became less and less possible for independent agricultural producers to survive. The law proved progressively ineffectual.

By the eighteenth century it had become possible for landowners, represented in Parliament by other landowners, to greatly strengthen private property. Acts for the enclosure of common land effectively redefined it as private property⁴. People were plunged into poverty and driven from the land in ever greater numbers. This coincided with the beginnings of industrial capitalist production in the towns, which proved capable of a vastly more rapid accumulation of capital than had been possible in the countryside. But it was capitalist farming which had provided the surplus population of labour for industry - which the economists of the day described as "free".

At this time in the Highlands, clan property was breaking up in much the same way as feudal property had several hundred years earlier. The standing armies which had been at the absolute disposal of the clan chief - and were fundamental to the clan system - were now outlawed. Their chiefly obligations to the clan (a Gaelic word meaning children) had gradually corroded away. However their clanspeople saw them, the chiefs had really become private landowners. Again, sheep became more attractive than people. The clearances involved the wholesale removal of people who had lived on the land since the Scots Gaels arrived from Ireland 1,200 years before. By this time, it could be done perfectly legally, with the forces of law and order in attendance. Tenancies were simply not renewed, houses were demolished and burnt on the appointed day. Vast flocks, owned by new tenant sheep farmers from the South, were immediately let onto the land. The Gaelic speaking population of the Highlands was decimated and has never recovered. Nor, for that matter, has the soil they tilled and grazed.

The rights of private property had taken a long time to reach their full development. But they were fully enshrined in law at exactly the right moment for their victims to become not merely cheap agricultural labour, but the source of the new industrial workforce in the growing cities too. Whereas the agricultural revolution had never succeeded in elbowing aside the power of landed property, the industrial revolution did. What counted now was not private property in land - industrial capital needed very little and its price was insignificant - but property in machinery and factories.

From capitalism to more capitalism

Chapter I of Part IV argued that the principles operating in the discussions were very powerful in their effect on the behaviour of those who upheld them. It also argued that in some cases the same effect would result from the power conveyed by sanctions. The two kinds of power seemed separate but in harmony. It is implicit in Marx that the history of the idea of private property paralleled the history of the brutal sanctions

which tore people away from their own means of producing. Both were needed before industrial capitalism could function fully. Both met in the development of the law - which involves both principles and sanctions.

Private property is thus central to Marx's account of the rise of capitalism. So powerful had it become, that the profit which a factory owner made, once he sold what his labourers had produced, concealed its true source - the surplus yielded from the extra work done by the workers over and above the cost of paying their wages. So they were not, as the extract from the NUPE rule book implies, being paid "the full fruits of their industry". It was because he owned everything they produced that his profit appeared to originate in the market rather than the workplace⁵. The important consequence which flowed from private property was that it could always be bought and sold in the market place. Independent producers sold what they produced. Once capitalism had separated its producers, the workers, from their own means of producing, they had to sell the only thing they still owned which was worth money in the market place. Marx called it their "labour-power". It was not their labour - but their capacity to labour. In selling it they agreed a contract to supply their labour-power by the week. Having sold it, it at once became someone else's property. This was how the factory owner, the capitalist, controlled what went on in the factory. If a seller of labour-power did not apply it in the way the capitalist required, he had no further need to buy it. He could go to another seller and get more of it from the market. The almost absolute right over the use of labour-power this gave the owner is clearly reflected in the discussion at Island Laundry. As soon as it is no longer needed, the workers selling it are automatically dispensable.

Although capitalist production was rapidly spreading throughout the world, at the very same moment Marx considered that its development was bringing about changes which would fundamentally change its character. This was because, in the new larger factories, the relationship between the ever growing numbers of workers and the capitalist was less and less capable of being embraced by private property. To begin with the machines which appeared in factories had not been much different to those which independent producers used in their own homes. But the process discussed at Island Laundry gradually led to the introduction of machines and processes which could only operate on the basis of co-operation between many workers. This co-operation itself became an important factor in production - much less easily controlled by a private proprietor entering into an individual contract for the supply of individual labour:

As the number of the co-operating labourers increases, so too does their resistance to the domination of capital, and with it, the necessity for capital to overcome this resistance by counterpressure⁶.

It is worth pointing out how much bigger than Irene's couple of dozen workers the workforces of Marx's time were becoming. One of the most advanced sectors of industry in the 1860s was cotton textiles. Yet figures quoted by Marx⁷ show that the average number of workers in each mill was 157. And he pointed out that competition in the market place meant that capitalists were knocking each other out, and bigger and bigger chunks of capital were falling into fewer and fewer hands. Small as they may have been by today's standards, their growing size was important for Marx in

considering both of the scale of resistance to the domination of capital and the scale of the problem, for the capitalist, of imposing his control over the workforce.

What Marx thought was happening was this. Inside the process of production, a new kind of relationship was developing - co-operation. But it was still doing so under the nose of the old relationship - "capitalist private property". The antagonism was still just as strong between the capitalist and the workforce, from whom he was removing the surplus which their labour created. But because "capitalist private property" was no longer the direct relationship between worker and capitalist, it was fast becoming a mere shell, which at some point would prove incapable of holding together. The resistance of the workforce would burst through. The relationship developing underneath would thus emerge in its place. The private property of the big capitalist would be restored to the actual producers who would then possess the means of production in common⁸.

Perhaps it is not surprising that more than a century later this is what the Labour Party constitution and the union rule book say ought to happen. But what ought to happen and what has happened are very different things. And since Marx was writing about a process which he considered to be under way at the time, there is quite a problem to untangle. And untangling it has been tried in as many different ways as there are brands of socialism. Undoubtedly the greatest mistake made by thinkers in the tradition Marx founded has been to simply graft new developments onto his observations⁹.

One way of making sense of developments since Marx was writing is to retrace one of his own steps. Where he writes of the growing resistance to capital of the increasing numbers of co-operating workers, he describes the capitalist's "counterpressures". These are of two quite distinct sorts. One is an idea. And the other, in parallel with it, is a system of sanctions. The idea is simply that the organisation of labour belongs to the capitalist who has purchased it:

...the connexion existing between their various labours appears to them, ideally, in the shape of a preconceived plan of the capitalist, and practically in the shape of the authority of the same capitalist, in the shape of the powerful will of another, who subjects their activity to his aims¹⁰.

That the organisation of co-operative or collective labour was the property of the capitalist fits exactly with Marx's view of "capitalist private property" in general. The workers have sold their labour-power to the capitalist who has thus purchased whatever he does with it. For the week for which they have sold it, it appears as his and not theirs. But is this similarly true of the control he exercises by virtue of his "authority" in order to extract a surplus from the workforce?

...in form that control is despotic. As co-operation extends its scale, this despotism takes forms peculiar to itself. Just as at first the capitalist is relieved from actual labour so soon as his capital has reached that minimum amount with which capitalist production, as such, begins, so now, he hands over the work of direct and constant

supervision of the individual workmen, to a special kind of wage labourer. An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist¹¹.

Later in the development of capitalism, capital directly confronts the worker in the form of "modern machinery":

The technical subordination of the workman to the uniform motion of the instruments of labour, and the peculiar composition of the body of workpeople, consisting, as it does, of individuals of both sexes and all ages, gives rise to a barrack discipline, which is elaborated into a complete system in the factory, and which develops...the labour of over-looking, thereby dividing the workpeople into operatives and over-looking, into private soldiers and sergeants of an industrial army¹².

That Marx is forced to use the language of the armed forces clearly shows that something is going on inside the factory which cannot be encapsulated in the idea of private property. Army discipline long preceded big industry and can only have been drawn into it because the owners found the power of private property does not readily convert itself into the willing obedience of the workers.

...on the basis of capitalist production, the mass of the direct producers is confronted by the social character of their production in the form of strictly regulating authority and a social mechanism of the labour process organised as a complete hierarchy - this authority reaching its bearers, however, only as the personification of the conditions of labour in contrast to labour, and not as the political or theocratic rulers under previous modes of production...¹³.

Here, in this rather strange language, Marx has to go out of his way to assure his readers that the hierarchy of authority represents private property and not the state or the church. No doubt this was, in a sense, true. But, like barrack discipline, it is difficult to see why a hierarchy of authority should be imported from where it belonged - certainly in the church and the state - if private property was really up to the job¹⁴.

That capitalists should have invented "barrack discipline" is obviously a contradiction in terms. And if its effectiveness rested solely on the power it derived from private ownership, why should they have to borrow a hierarchy of authority from elsewhere? It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that they brought their effectiveness with them from their sources, outside production. Both their methods of applying discipline, and the ideas which accompanied them, in the minds of those at the receiving end of that discipline, must have been the same as in the armed forces and in the administration of the state, even if the ultimate punishment might have been sacking and black-listing rather than hanging. Barrack discipline worked precisely because it was already the commonsense form of discipline of the world in which industrial capitalism was developing.

If private property was necessary for the development of industrial capitalism, it is difficult not to conclude that the barracks was too. Marx

shows that, in the process, private property was substantially modified. No doubt the "industrial army", too, evolved differently to its military model. But it is difficult to see how the relationships of the barracks could have been of any use to capitalists unless they were already, through universal familiarity, capable of subduing the awkward squad. They were, after all, at least as ancient as private property.

If the origin of "strictly regulating authority" and barrack discipline lay outside capitalist production, a number of logical possibilities must come into the picture. Drawn into capitalist production, they undermine Marx's view that capitalism can be reduced to a special form of private property. Secondly, a relationship inside large-scale capitalist production, which maintains the discipline of the workforce, is capable of continuing to do so once the shell of "capitalist private property" has proved incapable of binding capitalist production together. So, thirdly, far from the resistance of the workers bursting the shell of private property and placing production in their own hands, successful capitalist "counterpressures" against the workers seem to have been the order of the day. This is because they place production under the administration characteristic of the state, backed by the discipline characteristic of the armed forces. In which case, the question of whether the capitalist remains on his perch on top of the pile can only become less relevant, as time goes by, to the control of the workforce.

Just as the discussion at Island laundry took for granted a principle which matched Marx's "capitalist private property" relationship, so the other key principles which emerged from the discussions in the three workplaces can be thought of as powerful ideas about relationships involving workers. But they are more than this. They are a means whereby the power of those relationships is transmitted to the individuals who hold to those ideas. The principles which relate to relationships with those in control of the three workplaces all seem to be directly compatible with Marx's description of authority and discipline.

In the Chemistry Building the workforce held to the principle that managers should have full authority. In practice they had lost it for a variety of reasons. But what matters is the principle which described how it ought to be. Although they was never discussed - perhaps because contact with managers was so rare - the accompanying sanctions for breaching management authority are well known. "Insubordination" is still the archaic term used for refusing to carry out a reasonable order. "Dismissal from the service" is the no less archaic term for the ultimate punishment.

At Island Laundry the principle of distinguishing between management's work and workers' work parallels a sanction implied by the comment that "He's getting paid for work somebody else is doing." The workers get paid the same whatever they do, but, because management's work is so much better paid, doing it means doing something for nothing. No doubt if doing management's work actually went so far as to threaten the credibility of management, as a more valuable kind of work, more serious sanctions could be mobilised by managers themselves.

This is what appears to have happened at Viewpoint. Here the principle of recognising the higher responsibility of management seems to be paralleled

by a sanction explained by one of them participants in the final discussion. The consequence of an open challenge to this principle was "If in a year's time, I make a mistake, and I plead all innocence, you know, "I didn't really know about that mistake." "Look, a year ago you said - "They're going to drag it up again, I think this is what a lot of staff, who are not here now, are afraid of..." (p.156). The credibility of management as a more valuable activity had been challenged and, following an indignant reaction, there was now a real fear of sanctions among some of the workers.

These principles, of management authority, management's work and management responsibility, all parallel sanctions compatible with barrack discipline. But they do more than merely parallel those sanctions. For the most part they make them unnecessary - not out of fear - but because the principles themselves uphold the same relationships as those which the sanctions otherwise enforce. None are capable of being incorporated in the interlocking relationships of "capitalist private property" elaborated by Marx. Nor is there any sign of private property operating as a means of control over workers in any of the three workplaces in the way Irene's description of a small privately owned firm would suggest. Located, as they are, outside capitalist production, they suggest that the shell of "capitalist private property" is now badly holed - if it was ever complete. Unhappily, the content which have since emerged have merely changed the character of the whole. There are not many people who want to call it socialism.

The emergence of "...strictly regulating authority and a social mechanism of the labour process organised as a complete hierarchy..." seems today like the commonsense means of administration, whether extracting a surplus from the workforce is involved or not. It is the social relationship through which power is transmitted from "top" to "bottom" in any sphere of life. It is certainly consistent with principles of management authority and responsibility. In a hierarchy, these principles uphold the relationship between the workforce and the level immediately above. In all three workplaces there was an awareness of distant people "above" immediate managers, though they were often unknown by name. A hierarchy of authority fits exactly with views of the world as a whole, with a distinct top and bottom, in which workers were powerless at the bottom. And it fits, too, with a view of the union in which power lay, not with the members, but the top. Whether this relationship has emerged through the dissolution of "capitalist private property" and permeated the rest of the modern world - or whether it was really here all the time and was necessarily drawn into capitalist production - is a debatable point.

It is only reasonable to suppose that the authority and discipline Marx described worked then in the way they work today in the three workplaces - through powerful ideas in the minds of the workers in parallel with sanctions.

Another useful starting point for looking at developments since Marx is one of the effects he saw of an earlier stage in the development of capitalist production, which had brought into existence:-

...in every handicraft that it siezes upon, a class of so-called unskilled labourers, a class which handicraft industry strictly

excluded. If it develops a one-sided speciality into a perfection, at the expense of the whole of a man's working capacity, it also begins to make a speciality of the absence of all development¹⁵.

Later the introduction of machinery compounded this through:

the separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labourer, and the conversion of those powers into the might of capital over labour... The special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and the mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism and, together with that mechanism, constitute the power of the "master"¹⁶.

Hindsight shows that this separation, like barrack discipline, could not be embraced by the relationship of private property. So intense did the constant replacement of machinery and methods of production become, that the 'embodiment of science', at least after Marx was writing, became a rapidly growing number of accountants, engineers and scientists of all sorts, taken onto the pay rolls of the large capitalists. These may have been workers, in the sense that they sold their capacity to work to the owners. But they sold it in a relationship which already existed outside industry - between professionals and their patrons - and which was reflected in a very much higher price for their labour. The "separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labourer", and the clerical labourer for that matter, has become a deep-rooted and normal feature of most people's work.

Again, this separation finds an echo in the three workplaces in the form of respect for professionals (explicit in two and implied in the third). Again, it is very difficult to see why sweeping away capitalist private property, and replacing it with property in common, should, of itself, dent this relationship. It is clearly one which is capable of playing its vital part in the removal of a surplus from labour, regardless of whether the property is in the hands of private individuals, the state or, for that matter, the workers themselves.

Marx clearly saw capitalist private property as a relationship which, despite being eroded from within, at the same time increasingly embraced the entire world. Changes in the world as a whole were driven forward by continual process of change taking place in production. What would happen in the future was no more than an extension of development taking place at the time he was writing. Yet capitalist private property has, as the discussion at island laundry showed, survived in small firms. It has not proved capable of retaining its direct control over the workforce of big capital. Here the tendency of the workers to resist has been held in check by relationships which Marx identified but which lay outside the relationship of capitalist private property. When Marx was writing, it was, perhaps, possible for him to give a perfectly adequate account of the world in which just one of these relationships was completely dominant. There is no reason for thinking that the most essential feature of capitalism - the accumulation of wealth by not paying workers "the full fruits of their industry" - should not continue in the absence of private property. The experience of nationalisation in this country, not to mention

the development of modern industry or agriculture in the Soviet Union, suggests that it has. And there can be few who would seriously want to claim that either case entailed means of returning the workers' "full fruits" to them in whatever form.

However, it is impossible to dispose of this problem simply by concluding that Marx was wrong. Perhaps the most penetrating insight in his view of the world was that human beings, as workers, as direct producers, were right at its centre. The world as a whole could only be understood by understanding the crucial part played by workers. Their labour not only produced for use, it also produced a surplus which was being used to bring about a constant transformation¹⁷.

The tragedy of socialism a century later is that, in most of its forms, it has lost this vital insight of Marx's. It is precisely by keeping alive an insistence that "capitalist private property" is still the one and only relationship within which capitalist production occurs, that socialism ensures its irrelevance to most people's experience of work today. Work, and those who do it, have lost their central part in socialism's analysis (where it has one at all) and in its attempt to transform the world. The role of workers has been reduced to voting for it, or even buying it. Socialism, as a politics of government and public affairs, has become something to be handed down by those qualified to understand it. It has acquiesced in the relegation of the workplace to the status of a hidden and irrelevant backwater.

So what significance can be attached to "Clause IV" of the labour Party Constitution, also reproduced in Union Rules? As a response to Marx's view of the world in the 1860s it is hard to fault. But this is what enables it to duck all the difficult questions. Do workers "by hand" create the same fruits, and so get the same wages, as those "by brain"? Would the separation of hand-work and brain-work remain, in socialism, just as it does now? Do millions of women go on earning wages which no men would entertain? Does "the best obtainable system of popular administration and control" mean electing managers whose prerogatives otherwise remain unchallengeable? Do "appropriate forms of industrial democracy" give workers the right to decide whether some of the "fruits of their industry" should be devoted to new machinery and how the surplus made possible should then be used? Or are these still really matters for high powered professional "brain"? No doubt much of the experience of work today is perfectly compatible with some definitions of "the common ownership of production". By sticking to nineteenth century ideas it fails to address those, in the minds of workers today, which actually bear the imprint of their powerlessness. And by ignoring them, it cannot hope to bring into view the sanctions which would otherwise enforce that powerlessness. Socialism which sidesteps the ideas, the principles which govern people's behaviour, cannot itself be a source of ideas, of alternative principles, capable of unlocking the power and potential for realising it which exists in the workplace.

It is that potential, in the three workplaces, to which the next chapter turns.

Chemistry Building

Before making for the teapot, the warm welcome and the conversation of the cleaners' restroom, it is worth standing back from the Chemistry Building as a whole. How has the development of human society contrived such sharp contrasts between the conditions of life of the people who work in it? The technicians appear on the tapes as no more than jumped up cleaners in white coats. But the research scientists appear through the near-magical haze of unknown gases - and the irresponsibility of leaving their doors unlocked. Like other professionals, you ought to be able to respect them, provided they dress and behave in a proper manner. And someone once had a conversation with one in a supermarket check-out! So that they can come in and work 'by brain', at a time of day appropriate to the gentle care of that organ, work 'by hand' has done its part. The floors of laboratories, corridors and stairs are clean and dry to walk on. The windows give an unblemished view of the trees outside. And, when need arises, ancient vitreous fittings shine like new porcelaine and smell like a hospital. But this is the achievement of human activity which, for some, began in the middle of the night. It takes extraordinary self discipline. It is discipline from within now, but we also know how it got there. While their scientist contemporaries were beginning their trajectories into academic life, these workers were being brought up to "Get to your work. Be on time."

There is absolutely no way cleaning floors, windows, sinks and lavatories could ever be an intellectual activity. It can deploy not the tiniest part of the limitless resources of every human intellect. No wonder cleaning is the cheapest property in the labour market. And, of course, 'brain' must not be allowed to soil its fingers with such mean work. Nor must men. "This is a women's job."

Whatever socialism would look like, it is surely only fair to ask if millions of women would still be brought up to keep the world fit for men to work in. Will future generations of children of both sexes will still be brought up to deny, in themselves, the right to use at work that most essential human quality, their intelligence? Or will work be organised so that head and hand are attached to one and the same body?

But we can do no more than give notice of these questions. One of the two separate worlds of the Chemistry Building is inhabited by women in middle age who are not destined to carry out scientific experiments. "Women's job" or not, it is all they have. And such is the precariousness of men in their jobs, it is all some of them have too. At the same time, in another world, live chemists who, if ever they were to clean their own laboratories, would "waste" part of their vastly higher salaries and deny someone else a job. The future is idle dreaming unless we look the present in the eye.

In the discussions in the Chemistry Building, there is a sense in which the world of the cleaning work is not as it ought to be. Indeed it is no longer as it once was. Managers ought to have authority as, apparently, they once

did. But for any number of reasons they no longer have it (Part I Chapter III).

The principle of management authority is obviously at odds with another principle upheld at the Chemistry Building. "You know your job." In particular, you know it better than they do. So in everyday practice, management authority seems to be redundant. The workers get on with it in their own way. The immediate reason why they do is because they are governed by the principle of the thing. And Anne gets the new pads for the machines. And the fresh rolls. And the Scottish Daily Records. And the kettle on.

It is all very well for the cleaners to uphold a principle which renders management irrelevant. But this is not likely to be how matters stand in the official doctrine of work. From time to time the apparent closeness between the workers and Anne, the supervisor, is momentarily ruptured by her very fluent version of the official view. And if it comes to the crunch - as it seemed it shortly would - management has more than enough sanctions to show the workers that they know best. If the University top brass say it's three rooms, three rooms it is. And the cleaners surplus to requirements will be on their way (Part I Chapter VI).

But socialism is a source of doctrine as well. Buried between the lines of "Clause 4" is the idea of workers running the job. In this case they do run the job. And they are doing it in a world in which running the job - in the form of "management" or even "supervision" - is recognised as far more important than merely doing the job. They lack that recognition. And, of course, the wages which go with it. Socialism's ideas can only be strengthened if they actually coincide with principles already upheld by workers. And with recognition, within a body of ideas which upholds the same principles, the principle of knowing your own job can itself only become a more powerful idea. It can only be more capable of countering the official idea that the budget has to be cut.

The University's sanctions remain unchanged. But then so does the workers' potential for resistance. Just as the power of the University takes two forms - the principle of management authority and the sanction of dismissal - so does the potential for resistance. "Know your job" is an idea openly defiant of management. It places experience above anybody else's attempt to tell you what to do. The sanction, of course, is that the University depends upon the co-operation of its workforce. Perhaps it could get by for a bit with dirty laboratories, or a breakdown in security, or no food, or no switchboard or, with the help of its managers, no cover in the boilerhouse. But all this means is that the workers in each of these activities do not possess sanctions on their own. Only together can they present a credible threat. Co-operation is what the University depends on, not any one job. The potential for its complete withdrawal confers formidable power.

Back in the restroom, the discussion about impending cuts in the Chemistry Building quickly turned to defeat (Part I Chapter VI). The miners strike had been broken three years before and still cast a long shadow of fear. Trade union weakness in the face of high unemployment, and the belief that striking would result in the sack, scuppered ideas of resistance. But the

possibility of desperate people waiting to cross a picket line to take your job does not make striking impossible. It makes it more dependent upon the unity of the workforce. The disunity of an earlier strike described by the steward has become an unaffordable luxury:

...a dozen women turned up and the flipping night watchmen opened the door and let them in. (p.33)

Clearly there are two components to the power of workers revealed here and in the other two workplaces. One is its practical dependence on united action, real or potential. But it is also dependent on ideas. And ideas are capable of either inhibiting or releasing the practical sanctions the workforce can bring to bear. What is happening, for the moment, is that ideas are holding practical action in check.

Obviously union power is central to this (Part IV Chapters III to V). If socialism is a body of ideas shared by all who profess to be socialists, it too must be capable of some influence. That workers should run the job need not be an idea in isolation. A socialism which is grounded in the experience of work can make it a unifying, more universal idea. How ever modestly, it can only add to the power of workers to resist. It is not preaching. It is not hammering any message across. It is recognising that, right under the nose of management, the idea is already rooted in practical experience. What it says is that cleaning the Chemistry Building is much more than cleaning. It also embraces what is currently called "management". And one of the principles associated with the idea of management is that it is worth a lot more wages than whatever is being "managed." Redistributing wages to the low paid is one idea guaranteed to find socialism, trade unionism and the workers in the Chemistry Building in pretty close harmony!

Island Laundry

Just as in the Chemistry Building management **ought** to have authority, so, in Island Laundry, you **ought** not to do management's work for them. But the workers did. They had to, because keeping the job running forced them into it. Clearly the two principles are close cousins. And in both cases they are honoured in the breach. Socialism could, in the Chemistry Building, perhaps take root in the opposing principle of knowing your job. This is less obviously possible in Island Laundry. On the other hand the idea of running the job does coincide with the workers' breaches of the principle of not doing management's job. And although there is no reason for thinking that the power of this principle rests on supporting arguments, the socialist alternative does address the arguments put forward by Stuart:

...he's picking up a wage for something somebody else is doing (p.57).

You see it's got to the stage now that people are saying... "We'll no bother him." They'll just go ahead and do it for themselves anyway. And he comes out and takes the credit for it. he says "Oh that's a good idea. I'm glad I thought of that!" (p.60).

A socialist idea of workers running the job would give recognition to the reality of doing management's work. And putting that recognition into practice could only mean getting paid for it and getting the credit for it.

Compared to the much simpler task of cleaning the Chemistry Building, running the laundry is clearly further from the workers' grasp. In the Chemistry Building the work is divided up between people working independently in pairs. Because the work of the laundry requires co-operation between several departments, some practical co-ordinating work lies in management's hands. So for the running of the job to be in their hands, the work of co-ordination would have to be collectively in their hands too.

At least two of the workers who took part in the discussion were confident of being able to do this work - although the only way this would be possible at the moment is, of course, through the unlikely event of one of them being promoted:

Irene: But for a start Stuart the place is never in a routine. Like...I feel that it should be run. I mean if I was running it, I'd run it this way, right? That you would have say, for eight o'clock to ten o'clock, Royal comes down and this hospital... So that on every day you'd be getting that linen the minute it comes in. But it disna. It all just comes in all in one big -

Katrina: Well before it used to.

Irene: Aye. But it all just goes through as it comes in so...if he's wait'n on theatre trousers and that, he canna say "Oh well they'll be down at ten o'clock because ten o'clock's their time." There is just no time for them...so there's no routine. I mean if I was running it there'd need to be a routine. I'd have to know exactly what time

...theatre tops go out every day or twice a week or whatever. And then if they're phoning at half nine, well you'll say it's ten o'clock when it comes through the machine. He couldna tell you that. He doesna know.

Stuart: You see, for all the arguments and disagreements I had with Mr Murray when he was there, that's exactly how it ran when Murray was there.

Irene: That's how I would run it.

Stuart: He was the under-manager before here. Now that man didn't get Parker's job I don't know.

Irene: Well that's how I would run it because it's so unorganised.

Joan : There used to be a certain type manager... No now. They haven't a clue (p.61).

How such a routine could be established by the workforce as a whole rather than by one person using the prerogatives of management is obviously a practical problem requiring a practical solution. But if the idea of workers running the job were less deeply buried in long-forgotten socialist principles, it would certainly ring bells in Island Laundry.

Viewpoint

The early discussions at Viewpoint suggest a contest between the idea of the workers running the job and the idea of management. For example:

Eleanor: ...they give you a lot of freedom to do your work. They're not breathing down your neck all the time. Much better than where I was for ten years. There was no trust...

Betty: Oh we've a lot of freedom here.

Bill: It makes a difference.....I've been used to "You go and do that" (p.98).

or:

Kate: These provisions books - we're left responsible in our jobs to take decisions for the residents - but they canna trust us...to get the provisions books signed!

Dennis: It's like going back to school again...we've got to send the book through from the flat for the residents. You've got to go to the teacher, the officer in charge, and "S'cuse me will you correct this for me?" (p.100)

or:

Dennis: ...this crazy paranoia over residents getting baths... I was saying, you know "Whenever you want a bath, get it"... But you were saying on the one hand the residents have got their rights. ...on the other hand they (the officers) decide whether the resident gets a bath or not... And that was about authority you know. And it was really bad. Because she was coming in and, Christ, it was like the world had ended if you hadna done a bath... You'd go home and you were still thinking about the bath you hadna done! (p.101)

Naturally enough, any assertion that the staff should run their own work directly conflicted with the principle that management should manage it; as the replies of the officer in charge suggest:

Where I feel that a certain emphasis has been put on the responsibility and independence of the care staff, the emphasis has been exaggerated and overlaid. They are not unsupervised. They are very closely supervised - I would say with a great deal of tact by Molly (Deputy Officer in charge) and me (Note 1 p.155).

The list of food that goes through, that we sign, is almost exactly the same as it was before we signed it. All we're doing is checking it. Because there was a build-up of food in the flats. I have a responsibility placed on me to ensure that people don't get the feeling that things are lax. I am responsible for the budget. It's a very petty responsibility in a way. But there it is, I have to count out the tins of salmon. It's part of my job to stock take. It's my responsibility. And therefore I can't have a loose issuing of food. I have to know who's ordering what, when, and be able to go round and check the cupboards (Note 5 p.158).

The bathing I don't have anything to say about. I accept that... There is an element of supervision, simply because of, as you would call it, as you said before, operator error. We can go between shifts. Somebody could have omitted to check up that somebody needed a bath. And I can go round and smell. I mean people can laugh at me for the nose that I have. But I work on my nose more than anything else. And if something smells, it's not right. Nobody wants to smell. Nobody wants to be offensive to anyone else. And if it smells, something needs to be done

about it. And that's all. I trust the care staff as I trust everybody. But I still have responsibility to check. Otherwise I wouldn't be here (Note 7 p.159).

However, this conflict of ideas turned into something of a crisis in the entire relationship between the Home's managers and the staff over the question of medical emergencies. The care staff, who do all the practical work of caring for the eight residents of one of the six flats, clearly felt in a better position to judge the medical intervention needed when their charges became ill:

Dennis: ...it's the care assistants, we feel responsible, because we're the person that's there at the time (p.110).

This was not quite how the officer in charge saw matters:

Someone may have a perception that somebody is very unhappy about something. And it's up to us to understand why - why somebody's feeling this about somebody else - and to take it through to its logical conclusion, which is how we can help the resident. We do rely on clues from the care staff. We don't rely on diagnoses from the care staff, any more than we can diagnose anything. We can only take a social work perspective - if we're trained for that. ...we take every single word of a report from the care staff and listen to it and examine it and discuss it with them, because we label them Key Worker. Why would we label them key worker if we weren't going to listen? We're well aware that we're not in the flats, seeing what's going on. However, once it is communicated to us, it is our responsibility to go through and judge the level of intervention necessary ...that responsibility is placed with us by our employment, our employers. We may not devolve that responsibility (Note 19 p.167).

Social work perspective or not, the preceding discussion (Part III Chapter II) suggests that the separation of this responsibility from the care workers does not work. The existence of substantial differences of opinion about the medical care of at least three very ill or injured residents in a matter of months points to a fundamental problem. Everyone is agreed that medical qualifications are not the issue. It is simply a matter of who decides whether, and when, and what sort of medical help is needed. There is no particular reason for thinking that managers should be better at making the right decision than the care staff. Or is there? The principle of management responsibility, enshrined in contracts of employment, decrees the answer. And it did so in this case. Because the subsequent discussion, which took place once its participants had read the replies of the officer in charge, yielded a fulsome statement of support for that principle:

Peter: I think it's in the terms of our contract you know. And I think it's really important that seniors have responsibility and those responsibilities should be recognised. If responsibilities like that are just thrown open to everybody, there wouldn't be any recognition of a senior's position. You could run the Home completely with care assistants. I think you've got to give them recognition. And as a care assistant I don't expect to take the blame for a mistake that should be made by a senior. Getting back to the illness thing, as long as I

report it I feel I've done enough, unless I disagree with their decision. Then I'd go back and, as far as I could, try and convince them. I just think it's really important to recognise the different responsibilities we've got you know (p.149).

As we saw in the previous chapter, by this time the sanctions which management can mobilise had also come into the picture. Rightly or wrongly, some of the staff believed the views they had expressed could get them into real trouble in the future:

Bill: If the thing is going to be dragged up again. If, in a year's time, I make a mistake, and I plead all innocence, you know, "I didn't really know about that mistake," "Look a year ago you said - ". They're going to drag it up again, I think this is what a lot of staff, who are not here now, are afraid of. That they've put something down that's been seen in black and white. A few months later they're going to get dragged over the coals for something they've said (p.153).

Of the care staff who had taken part in the earlier discussion which had caused the crisis, one had left and none took part in the final discussion. One later confided feeling under too much pressure to do so. Another had asked for her comments to be struck out of the transcript.

Two of the young adults who had taken part in the earlier discussions. Dennis and Shirley, frequently used arguments which seem to be drawn from socialist ideas. Both had argued, in effect, that the staff do run the job and that management don't, can't or shouldn't. In this they were supported by another care assistant, Betty, who later revealed strong Tory sympathies. What divided her, sharply, from Dennis and Shirley was her belief in the power of the individual to overcome obstacles in life. The others, together with another care assistant, Bill, argued implicitly that these same obstacles are fundamental to a world which should not be the way it is.

The impression which emerges from the discussions in Viewpoint is that faint echoes of socialism, as a body of ideas, proved directly relevant to the experience of work there. If that body of ideas, as they exist today, were not so fogged by their detachment from work, they could perhaps have given more reinforcement to the idea of workers running the job. As it was, that idea seems to have been displaced by the principle of management responsibility. And, if Bill is right in what he says about other staff, not present in the final discussion, management sanctions had a hand in that result.

Perhaps this is not so surprising. Responsibility for calling the doctor seemed to be an important symbol of the dividing line between management and workers. A very substantial wage differential seemed to hinge on this, the issuing of drugs, for which Betty considered special training to be unnecessary, and one or two other tasks.

Although the care staff have, in the words of the officer in charge herself, "responsibility, in a flat, for eight people" (Note 16 p.166), there obviously remains co-ordination work in the Home as a whole. But even one of the domestics had been undaunted by this:

Anna: ...as Betty says a wee while ago, we could all come in here and run ~~this~~ place. If they didna turn up it would still go.

Betty: To a certain extent.

Anna: And then, I suppose, there would always be somebody else at Oak Hall (Social Work Department HQ) would step in, wouldn't they, to do the wee bit paperwork or whatever they do, you know? This could be run without them.

Bill: I once came under a scheme like that in the Brewery... There was nine of us on the night shift. There were no managers, no formen, nothing. We ran the place ourselves you know (p.106).

Like Island Laundry, running the whole job at Viewpoint, as opposed to the greater part of it which the staff already run, would obviously require practical arrangements to place the work of co-ordination in their hands too.

In all three workplaces, then, the issue of workers running the job is very much alive. But alive in isolation. The human spirit rebels against the presumed brainlessness of work - and even triumphs over the cleaning of floors. But it is starved of any body of ideas on which it can feed and which it, in turn, can help to nurture. It challenges the principle of management responsibility, but when it comes to a confrontation, cannot defeat it. And normally it can only resolve itself into the promotion of its most vociferous protagonists into management jobs. The girder-work of ideas which keeps work by "hand" separate from work by "brain", and which keep the job separate from the running of the job, remains firmly in position. Yet ideas which clearly are present in the three workplaces show signs of being able to begin corroding it.

The construction of these ideas into a coherent socialist strategy would give them an altogether more serious context. For socialism thus to reflect back the ideas of the workplace in a credible form would itself be an encouragement of the ideas of unity needed to bring workers' sanctions confidently to bear. And it would, at the same time, reduce the confidence of those who wish to uphold the opposing ideas of management authority and responsibility. Socialists in the workplace need some means of sharing, deepening their own understanding and gaining recognition for the potentially socialist issues which exist there. The sooner socialism once again recognises that what people think and do at work are pillars of the system it wishes to change, the sooner will the workforce be able to obtain real leverage over its future.

The argument developed in this chapter has necessarily presupposed the possibility of socialism taking this part. But it is not at present able to be a crucible in which workers' ideas can develop and find reinforcement. The previous chapter suggested why socialism has become detached from work and, so, cannot provide that crucial link with its future transformation. Consideration of the form taken by that detachment, and a possible means of overcoming it, must await Part VII.

PART VI

RESEARCH

Chapter I re-examines two pieces of workplace research which influenced this study. It notes the existence of powerful ideas and sanctions both operating towards the same ends, in contexts which makes them difficult to disentangle the effect of the one from the effect of the other. Chapter II describes what was done in this study and discusses various aspects of the powerful ideas found in the discussions there. Chapter III begins by looking at Max Weber's account of the part played by ideas in the rise of capitalism for a possible explanation of the effectiveness of ideas over action in general. It then looks at possible Marxist explanations of the relationship between sanctions and ideas which operate towards the same ends. Chapter IV offers an alternative.

Contents:

Chapter	I	IDEAS AND SANCTIONS	page	219
Chapter	II	DISCUSSIONS IN THREE WORKPLACES	page	230
Chapter	III	IDEAS ABOUT IDEAS	page	243
Chapter	IV	CRISIS MECHANISM	page	252

Mysteries of control

Towards the end of their book *Living with Capitalism*, about a chemical plant, (Riverside, part of a giant chemical firm, ChemCo), Nichols and Beynon say that:

...a top stratum of management accountants...presides over a differentiated structure...to increase and realise more smoothly the surplus created at the point of production¹.

Their researches revealed little about this structure and less about how it works. Similarly, at the end of *Workers Divided*, another book about the same study in the same plant, Armstrong and Nichols refer to what they call "Chemco's system of economico-bureaucratic control."

Entrapped in a management dominated power structure at work, in order to think for themselves about work and society, ChemCo workers had to struggle against strong ideological currents - currents which would otherwise sweep them on to an understanding of the world in which it appears only natural that key decisions should not be taken by people like them...²

Again, we do not discover what this power structure is or how it operates. But whatever it is, how is the co-operation of the workers secured? Fear of sanctions - ultimately loss of employment - can clearly provide a perfectly satisfactory explanation. And in this particular workplace, trade union organisation is weak. The workers do show signs of resisting the power of management, by occasional acts of minor sabotage or acting dumb. But collective resistance is negligible. The terms of their co-operation are certainly tilted more in the employer's favour than they might be if the union was stronger. But when the researchers interview the workers they do not find a simple mirror in their minds of the powerful sanctions at the employer's disposal in enforcing their co-operation. What do they find?

Part of the background to this research was the large scale 'Affluent Worker' studies carried out in Luton a few years earlier. Nichols and Armstrong criticise this work for imposing categories on the inconsistent and unexplored views of the workers. By contrast their own starting point in looking at the ChemCo workers' views of the world is that they are rudimentary. These researchers want to avoid "...round(ing) out seemingly sensible typifications of social perspectives - an enterprise which is likely to lead to a representation of people's thought which is more logical, more functional and apparently stable than the thought of the individuals, or of whole classes of individuals may be"³. In order to avoid such pitfalls, they give detailed accounts of a few of the many individual interviews they carried out at the plant. And, certainly, the views which emerge are very varied. Now, leaving aside the dangers of false findings, is it possible that co-operation might be a purely individual matter? Could it be that these varied views of the world could be the form which the "power structure", referred to by Nichols and Armstrong, takes in each of the workers' minds? Such a possibility could only arise if the workers were completely isolated individuals. If there is any social life at all, there

must be shared understandings, based on shared experience of a shared social world. The ideas which are likely therefore, to be most effective in promoting co-operation are those which are shared.

Despite the use of individual interviews, which might not readily reveal ideas held in common, some do emerge from the accounts published in Workers Divided. Perhaps because of their angle of approach, the authors do not draw attention to these. They therefore need to be listed:

1. Fred: "...they've got the know-how."⁴

Eddie: "...when you've got brains, you're worth the money. Like Beeching..." (Beeching was a former Chairman of ICI)⁵

Bill: "...they do a lot of research and such-like..."⁶

Stanley: "If a man has...studied...to educate himself to be of benefit to other people - and this is what an employer is..."⁷

Four out of the five detailed interviews thus contain remarks which either take for granted, or state openly, that the people who run ChemCo do so because of their intellect - either gained from education or from having "brains". Whichever is the case, neither, by implication, applies to the person speaking. The authors also mention a general tendency at Riverside to say "ChemCo directors are all doctors and professors. They've worked for it and deserve it"⁸. However, there clearly is no complete consensus. They quote another remark: "All those Big Books, as I call them, getting about £20,000 to £30,000 a year and them out drinking whiskey on it..."⁹ But this does not challenge the idea of intellect residing at the top. It could well be that this shared view has come about through discussion in the plant. Even then, there seems to be a component which could hardly have been assembled on site. To have a good job is to have bosses with "brains"/"education"/"knowhow"/"research and suchlike." One of these comments - Bill's - suggests that this shared idea can have an important context:

2. Bill: "...they're looking after the future - they do a lot of research and such like. It'd be OK if more firms were like this one"¹⁰.

Fred: "I think they'd look after you if the plant closed...they won't if there's no profit"¹¹.

Eddie: "...money to invest. You've got to have sense to invest it right... Without shareholders...we'd be lost for money for development and expansion"¹².

Stanley: "I think all employment depends on whether a firm can get shareholders interested enough to keep their money in the firm. ...you're not just talking about a fiver to start this lot up. We're talking about millions and millions of pounds - miles above our heads"¹³.

There appears to be a common thread here. To the extent that your future can be looked after, this firm is doing it, even though the view of how it's done varies.

Both these shared ideas would seem to be capable of explaining, at the level of ideas, the co-operation of the workforce independently of the sanctions which would force them to do so anyway if they ever chose to stray from that co-operation. A third idea, again shared by four out of the five interviewees, concerns those sanctions themselves:

3. Eddie: "...they've sacked 1,500 in Wales...bang! They've got the right idea..."¹⁴.

Bill: "If I was an employer I'd sack anyone if they were a bad worker... Like my boss used to say, if you want more money, I want more work..."¹⁵.

Stanley: "a man's got to have his rights and he's got to have someone with knowledge to put his case to the management and the management have got to be reasonable. But if you've got a reasonable management you don't need trade unions"¹⁶.

Roger: "...you've really got to go in there with a cigarette and set light to it before you get the sack. It's bad you know.

Armstrong: Have you known many get the sack?

Roger: "No. It's wrong. I wish they did"¹⁷.

Clearly all think it right and proper that people should be sacked in the interests of co-operation. It is also worth mentioning that the five interviewees were more or less united in thinking that the well-publicised strikes of the period were crazy (this was 1973).

It is difficult to see why the authors of these two books did not regard such ideas as part of the "power structure". Perhaps part of the reason for this was their own rounded view of how capitalist production works. They give the impression of repeatedly drawing the workers' attention to the importance of events hundreds of miles North in the Company's Boardroom and Head Office. But it can be argued that there is an even more important sense in which capitalism was much closer at hand - in the minds of the workforce. It is not so much a case of a "top stratum" presiding over a "differentiated structure" to extract a surplus from the workforce "more smoothly". It is more a case of the workers ideas themselves promoting that smooth extraction. Nor is it easy to identify the workers' "struggle against strong ideological currents which would otherwise sweep them on to an understanding of the world in which it appears only natural that key decisions should not be taken by people like them". How do you struggle against ideology you espouse? Rather than merely "Living with Capitalism", their ideas seem to make them part of capitalism, no less than the research scientists, managers, Chairman and shareholders.

However, this observation that the sanctions which impose co-operation at Riverside are paralleled by ideas which are also conducive to co-operation, does nothing to help unravel the relationship between the two.

Imperative ideas

This question is tackled at the outset of another, more recent study of three factories ('LEF', 'MoFol' and 'Pennine') in *Ideology and Shop-floor Industrial Relations* by Armstrong, Goodman and Hyman. They see the workplace as:

...a stage on which the cross-currents of interests, supported by varying degrees of power, are mediated by appeals to value systems and moral perspectives and expressed in the debate between workers and their representatives and management. These values, which are rooted in ideologies in the wider society beyond the workplace, form the 'currency' in which goals are sought and in which attempts to maintain and change current rules and practices are presented¹⁸.

These appeals they call 'legitimation arguments'. If management want to change an existing practice, they support their decision by appealing to ideas already upheld by the workforce. And the converse also occurs. Where the workforce wants to defend an existing practice, they too argue in terms of ideas to which management is already committed.

While the authors certainly do show that this happens, they present the material of the research in terms of this concept, explained in advance. The concept of legitimisation fixes in aspic the relationship between ideas and rule changes in the factories. In other words, the analytical language they employ begs the question about that relationship right at the outset.

This raises an immediate difficulty for the authors themselves. The picture which emerges contrasts sharply with that found by Huw Beynon in his slightly earlier study of the Ford Halewood Plant, 'Working for Ford'. Armstrong and his colleagues say of Halewood "...the workforce feels dominated by the management, and...the regulation of interaction and the existence of norms and rules are accompanied more by sentiments of coercion than by legitimacy"¹⁹. 'Working for Ford' is, certainly, a history of open warfare. But the difference may be partly accounted for by a difference of approach.

For example, one incident about which a good deal of detail emerges from different parts of the book concerns a group of men operating footwear moulding machines at LEF. The process inevitably produces batches containing a proportion of mouldings which have to be scrapped. In the past these have been sorted by a group of women workers - until cutbacks led the moulding manager to ask the men to sort their own. His argument was:

"Look, if you were to take your motor in to be serviced, you'd want it right, wouldn't you, or else you wouldn't pay? Well, it's the same with me. It's no use you telling me, "I've done these mouldings. They're no good but I still want paying for them." Oh no. If I'm paying for them I want them right"²⁰

The authors explain that this is a legitimisation argument based on "delegated property rights"²¹. They say the workforce:

never succeeded in countering this argument. Once they had conceded

that their manager was an employer (ie that it was he who was paying) and once they had been induced to think that he was paying for the product rather than their labour as such, the conclusion seemed to follow.²²

We are not taken through the dialogue which purportedly brought the workers to this conclusion. Was this new rule really legitimised? Another possible explanation can be based on what the authors say then happened.

"...all but one of the men grumbled but bent their backs and got on with it. The one man refused point blank and walked out: to him it was more work and no more money was being offered"²³.

He was subsequently disciplined. Here was a mutual use of sanctions by management and one worker, with a predictable outcome! An alternative account of the manager's remarks would be that they are no more than a metaphor - a colourful reminder - of his power to enforce the change. Just as the owner of a car can compel a garage to rectify a duff service, so he can force the workers to rectify their own rejects. Is not the outcome consistent with the possibility that neither side saw any legitimacy in the other's position?

There is thus a serious difficulty in the use of the concept of legitimisation. How do we know to what extent co-operation has been secured because the person at the receiving end is convinced by a legitimising argument or because he or she is impressed by the power - the implied threat of sanctions - being legitimised? The outcome is, after all, the same. We are left not knowing, in any given case, just how effective legitimisation really is, by comparison with its accompanying sanctions.

The concept of legitimisation carries with it a number of other problems. The authors, as in their definition of the workplace already quoted, keep their concept of power, in the sense of a capacity to make successful use of sanctions, separate from the concept of a legitimising argument. It is difficult to see how this separation can be sustained. If management wants to change an existing practice, but only has the power to do so if, in addition to its access to sanctions, it employs a legitimising argument, clearly the ideas involved must also constitute power in their own right. If the ideas themselves are powerful, perhaps it might be possible for their effect on a particular change of practice to be even greater than that of any implied threat of sanctions. But assembling the material around the concept of legitimisation excludes such considerations. Nor does it allow any distinction between ideas which are themselves a representation of sanctions, as the example quoted appears to be, and those whose contents betray not the slightest hint of any threat of sanctions. In the summary of their concept of the workplace, the authors explain that appeals are made to "value systems and moral perspectives...rooted in ideologies in the wider society." This is perhaps a rather vague basis for the book's principle conceptual tool. If these ideologies are so important in explaining the outcome of many, many attempted changes of existing practice in the three factories, perhaps it is they, and not legitimisation which can best illuminate the rich material collected in the authors' research.

However, the problem here is that the wider ideologies the authors identify, are, as in the example of property rights already quoted, somewhat tenuously linked to the legitimisation arguments they document. At the same time, there do seem to be many instances in which more immediate ideas are at work, where no link with such exotica as private property can be established, yet which seem to be operating as what the authors call "legitimising principles"²⁴. Enough of these simpler, more immediate ideas are accessible in Armstrong and Nichols' book to permit five groups to be identified on the basis of apparent common threads between their contents. In legitimisation arguments, we are, presumably, only seeing their particular application. It seems possible that the following groups do represent their common, more abstract form in "the wider society":

1. The first group consists of ideas which seem to apply or elaborate the very simple idea of doing what the boss tells you:

- a) "I don't know what it is with me. I keep getting into arguments. I can't seem to take orders"²⁵ (LEF worker).
- b) I do what he tells me. He's the boss"²⁶ (MoFoL forelady).

In both these examples the idea appears in an almost pure form. The remainder in this group seem to contain echoes of the same idea, but in elaborated form. For example, at MoFoL, the idea seems to apply more directly to workers with lower levels of skill:

- c) "These men are craftsmen. They do whatever's necessary. I don't have to stand over them"²⁷ (MoFoL Works Engineer).

The idea of doing what the boss tells you only applies within certain boundaries:

- d) An attempt by MoFoL management to stop football in the yard during millroom mealbreaks was ignored and abandoned²⁸.
- e) A man working in a club while of sick was spied on by employees who were paid overtime for the purpose. After a strongly adverse reaction from the workforce, the union was given an assurance that in future there would be "...no payments for services beyond the terms of their (employees') contracts"²⁹

The idea applies more strongly the further you go up the management line:

- f) An LEF manager and director had a furtive Christmas drink with some of the workforce, which subsequently made it difficult for their immediate supervisors to gain their obedience when they tried to limit the extent of the festivities³⁰.

The bosses instructions can be extended forward indefinitely in the form of rules. However, if they are not enforced, precedents for not observing them are created and the rules become weakened:

- g) Two LEF women workers were given a "right bollocking" in the supervisor's office for following the general practice of slipping off

early at lunchtime to the pie shop. All the workers in the same department responded by cramming into the office with them. The attempt at enforcing the rule failed³¹.

Unions become involved in the enforcement of rules through agreed 'disciplinary procedures' which codify a method of dealing with alleged breaches by employees and 'grievance procedures' and 'disputes procedures' in the case of alleged breaches by the employees. In this study:

- h) Jim, in MoFoL's compund preperation room was a bad timekeeper who eventually fell foul of the number of warnings allowed in the disciplinary procedure and was sacked³².
 - i) The union full time officer, speaking to the senior steward at MoFoL on the phone, criticised the workforce for taking strike action against an attempt by the boss to enforce a rule, which had fallen into disuse, agaist booking work in such a way as to maximise earnings. The procedure should have been followed³³.
2. The second group involves ideas which seem to be derived from the idea of keeping to past bargains over wages and conditions:
- a) A semi-skilled worker at MoFoL successfully defended his pay and status on being transferred to labouring work³⁴.

These bargains are, wholly or partly enshrined in the contract of employment. If one side breaches a bargain, the other side is entitled to negate its own obligations.

- b) (already mentioned) Jim at MoFoL turned up late once too often and management terminated the contract which enshrines this bargain³⁵.
- c) Attempts by the MoFoL management to cut ten minutes off the millroom workers' customary 'washing up time' resulted in th men saying "Fuck that!" and walking out at the usual time³⁶.

One of the ambiguities of the bargain between management and worker is over workload:

- d) (already mentioned) One of the LEF moulding workers told to sort their own scrap objected, on the grounds that it meant extra work without extra pay, and walked out³⁷.

Less ambiguous is that it only applies while the employment is available:

- e) Eight Pennine chemical workers were faced with with a shutdown of their department. The union was iunable to defend their jobs and, therefore also their pay, which fell by £13.00 a week³⁸.
- f) Women workers at MoFoL were allowed, according to the national agreement with the union, a minimum payment of two hours when notice of short-time working had not been given the previous day. This was never paid because the supervisor ensured that they 'volunteered' to leave work without it. Some were unhappy, but nobody demanded payment³⁹.

3. The third, single idea, is that the bargain depends on the viability of the firm in the market for its products - sometimes measured in profit, always measured by management:

- a) "You'll have to take a reduction on this job if we're going to compete with the koreans"⁴⁰ (MoFoL manager).
- b) "Without a factory we won't need Health and Safety will we?"⁴¹ (Pennine works manager)
- c) "Every man who leaves should be seen as another man's wage rise"⁴² (Pennine chief executive).
- d) "Costs walk on two legs"⁴³ (MoFoL management catch phrase).
- e) If I don't make a profit I can't pay you"⁴⁴ (MoFoL works director).
- f) "We all have our own selfish interests and therefore have a common purpose and interests... In the meantime we must cut our workforce"⁴⁵ (Pennine chief executive speaking to the Works Committee).

4. Managers are experts, workers are not. This idea appeared only through managers failing to measure up to it in practice:

- a) "These men (the craftsmen) know their stuff, but they do not know what is to their benefit, particularly from the long-term point of view. As a manager does know what is good for them in the long term, they should accept managerial viewpoints and decisions as being in their long-term interests"⁴⁶.
- b) At MoFoL management were baffled by a run of lop-sided slippers. The women production workers identified the source of the problem in a batch of elastic. Grudgingly and without comment on their discovery, managers told them to go back to the old elastic. One worker commented: "He doesn't wear a white coat to admit he was wrong"⁴⁷.

5. Finally, this idea seemed to be grounded in the more universal idea of workers' unity:

"We got you out of the shit by sharing our bonus, when you were getting two quid. And as soon as we get anything out of it you want to pull out. We helped you"⁴⁸ (craft steward to semi-skilled production steward at LEF).

There were a number of instances in which workers did stick together. For example the MoFoL millroom workers, resisting a management attempt to get them to take their lunchbreaks in the canteen, marched into the canteen scattering dust everywhere. Or, in another example already mentioned, the same group of workers came out on strike against an instruction which, by enforcing a disused management rule about booking work, would have reduced their earnings. Equally there were instances where workers notably failed to stick together - as in the case of the MoFoL moulding worker who was unwise enough to walk out on his own over the instruction that they

should sort out their own scrap. But these are beside the point, because we are not told whether the idea of unity was involved.

All these ideas seem to be applications of five more or less universal ideas - of doing what the boss says; keeping to past agreements; the dependence of those agreements on the firm's viability; management claims to recognition as experts; and the need for workers' unity. All of these are ideas about how people ought to conduct themselves - ideas conducive to particular sorts of action.

The first group of instances only makes sense if, normally, without the special circumstances which modify the requirement, obedience to management is to be expected. Similarly, the second group of instances cannot be understood unless there is at least a tacit understanding and a presumption that both sides will honour it. The third requires its context to be understood. These firms were "rationalising" in a shrinking market. There would normally be little point in observing that, other things being equal, earning a certain wage depends on selling the product at a certain price. In capitalist production, it is no more than a statement of the obvious. But with fiercer competition in a smaller market, the logic of it is that the workforce and/or its wages will have to shrink too, regardless of past agreements. The fourth group is a little different. In one instance a manager claims his greater expertise than the craftsmen. In the other example, the worker's comments imply only that people who wear white coats pretend to expertise. We do not know how successful these pretensions normally are. Again, in the final instance, we only know that the unity of the workforce ought to exist. It tells us nothing about how far it does exist.

This is not to say that the implied universal form of these ideas necessarily exists as an overtly stated idea. Perhaps, for some of them, the implied form is their only everyday existence.

Nor are we in a position to assess the extent to which any of these more abstract ideas is universally effective. However, on the face of it, sticking to bargains is likely to enjoy more widespread support than obedience to management, which, in turn, is perhaps likely to be more widespread than the idea of the need for market viability. Managers' tacit claim to being experts and the need for workers' unity are, presumably, enjoy even less support. Indeed, in various combinations, these ideas contradict each other. It is possible to re-read many of the authors' 'legitimation arguments' as involving conflict between these various ideas - most commonly between the idea of doing what the boss tells you and the idea of sticking to a bargain.

Little as we know about the ideas active in the minds of workers in Armstrong, Goodman and Hyman's book, we do know they are not simple expressions, in the realm of ideas, of sanctions which also induce the same actions. If they expressed fear of the other side's sanctions or confidence in the effectiveness of those at the disposal of one's own side, they would be inseparable from the power of those sanctions. But the idea that you should obey the boss is quite a different matter from contemplating the fate which will befall you if you don't. And arguing the case for preserving an existing understanding is not the same as threatening strike

This chapter has reviewed two pieces of workplace research where workers' ideas appear as a major influence on their co-operation with their employer. In the first, at 'ChemCo's Riverside Plant', the authors, for understandable reasons, did not identify the "power structure", to which they specifically draw attention as a key problem, with workers' ideas. Even if they had done so, there would have been difficulties in discriminating between their effectiveness and those of the sanctions which would otherwise have enforced the workers' co-operation and are, presumably, also part of the power structure. In the second, at three factories, 'LEF, MoFoL and Pennine', a re-reading of the material similarly suggest the operation of workers' ideas conducive to co-operation with management. Despite constituting the subject matter of their book, the key question of the effectiveness of the workers' ideas, independent of sanctions, is obscured by the authors' concepts and analytical language. In fairness to them; it is also in the nature of their material that the two would have been difficult to disentangle.

The need to try and identify the independent effect of ideas led to the approach adopted in the present study.

The argument developed in Chapter I determined the approach of the present research in two ways. Firstly, this author's reading of the two studies suggested that it was essential to identify ideas held in common within the workforce. It was hoped that abandoning individual interviews, in favour of discussion in the workplace, might enable ideas shared by the workforce to emerge. And it was hoped discussion itself, between people sharing the same experiences of the workplace, although a researcher and a taperecorder would still be present, might yield a context in which those ideas could be understood by others. By asking participants to discuss a series of fairly broad questions, it was thought the discussions would allow the best possible opportunity for completely unsuspected shared ideas to reveal themselves. Some of the limitations of the researcher's preconceptions of what ideas to look for might thus be overcome!

Secondly, it was hoped that very broad discussion questions might avoid the difficulty found with the LEF/MoFoL/Pennine study, where the effectiveness of ideas could not be disentangled from that of sanctions pointing in the same direction of influence. Free from the straightjacket of industrial relations issues, perhaps their own distinctive effect might become visible.

The immediate problem was to find some workplaces where such discussions could take place.

Selection of the workplaces and organisation of the discussions

NUPE's Scottish National Officer identified three full time officers, covering Universities, the Health Service and local government respectively, whom he had asked to help locate suitable workplaces. The original intention was to include five workplaces, but lack of time had reduced this to three. An outline of the proposed study was given to a meeting of a University District Committee (a body consisting of the stewards from all Universities in the locality) led one of the stewards present to volunteer her own workplace. The University Personnel Department was approached with a request for a paid 15 to 20 minute extension to the 7.30 am teabreak at the Chemistry Building for an initial eight sessions. This was refused, but the cleaners kindly agreed to go ahead anyway, using their twenty minute teabreak, which, under the supervisor's watchful eye, was never exceeded. Twenty one or twenty two people were present each time.

The sole criterion in the selection of a workplace in the Health Service was whether or not the necessary facilities could be obtained. The Branch Secretary, selected by the second full time officer, followed up two possibilities. One was a group of nurses whose weekly training session he thought might perhaps be extended to include the study. The other was the laundry. The nursing group came to nothing, but the laundry manager kindly agreed to paid release for a small group of workers once a week for an initial eight weeks. It was then agreed with the senior steward and the manager that the best means of selecting the group was to make use of the existing NUPE representatives on the laundry's Joint Consultative Committee (a body which, in the event, seemed not to function). This group varied in

size between six and eight. Most discussions lasted just over half an hour, but one or two exceeded this.

The local government branch secretary, chosen by the third full time officer, had arranged to visit a number of workplaces with a photographer to obtain publicity material and invited the author to go along. Again, facilities were the deciding factor. At a large swimming pool complex the manager could only agree to individual interviews. Two school kitchens and an engineering workshop similarly proved impossible. One old peoples home was ruled out because the only feasible time during the week was booked up by a course which had just begun. But at a second old peoples home the officer in charge was happy, provided the Social Work Department agreed, which it did, to allow the home's weekly training period to be utilised. The group which took part varied considerably each week. Sometimes only one or two people had been present the previous week. And the total number varied between six and twelve. Twenty four hour coverage of the Home, and the resulting rota, made this inevitable. But the discontinuity between one week and the next was made more pronounced by an Open University course which ran simultaneously on three occasions. The discussions generally lasted for three quarters of an hour, but two continued for over an hour.

These differences are reflected in Parts I to III. The most marked difference can be seen between the transcripts from the Chemistry Building and the other two. The group was very large - too large for the author to learn more than a handful of names - and spread along the two sides of a long narrow table. On occasion this made it possible for people at the opposite ends to be taking part in quite different discussions. Often the discussion would dissolve into a hubbub of smaller ones - the more normal teabreak scenario. But obviously this was not an occasion for a formal 'chaired' meeting. However, on the whole, the material audible on tape was the same as the material which everyone present could hear. As a result the transcript is bitty in places and has been presented with the author's questions in the form of a linking commentary. Because this was unavoidable, the opportunity has been taken to include the author's analysis in it as well. This represents a far from ideal compromise. Because they were smaller, and the rooms enabled everyone to sit round in a rough circle, the discussions in the other two workplaces give a more than satisfactory account on their own.

Basis of the discussions

The starting point for seven of the discussions was the same seven questions asked in each workplace. These were:

1. (After asking each person to say who they were and how long they'd worked there) Could I ask you today just to tell me about the good points and the bad points of your job here?
2. This week I wanted to ask you to talk about the problems, any problems that you associate with this job or you have associated with this job over the years (Kings Buildings)/about specific problems...affecting individuals of everybody (Island Laundry)/about the problems - any problems - that have come up on the job since the place opened (Viewpoint).

3. Can I ask you about managers, about administrators, bosses, people who're in charge of other people, and about whether you think the recognition those people get is less than it should be, about right, or too much... not necessarily talking about this place, in general.
4. ...I'm wondering this week if I could ask you a similar question about people regarded as experts or professionals. Obviously in this building that's academics, but...I'm interested in your views about professionals and experts in general, as well as those in this building (Kings Buildings)/...I appreciate that there may be some professionals who have things to do with laundries - I don't know, engineers, architects, whatever. But I'm also interested in your views of professionals in general... I realise that in the Health Service, obviously, just across the road we're talking about large number of consultants, doctors, various other professionals. But professionals in general is what I'm interested in... (Island laundry)/...I'm not just thinking about the kind of professionals - no doubt the odd geriatrician, these kind of people - but your experience of professionals generally as well... (Viewpoint).
5. Obviously at work men get more money, more recognition than women do. ...do you think the amount of recognition women get in comparison with men is about right: is it too much; or do women get too little recognition at work by comparison with men?
6. ...the topic for today's discussion is just the union - your views on unions in general and this union in particular.
7. If you read in a local newspaper that another workplace, local workplace, was laying a whole lot of people off - they've found some way of increasing their productivity, better machinery or whatever, and it means cutting back the workforce. And there's all the old arguments in the paper about competition with the Japanese or whatever it is. It means that the British economy has to slim down and all that sort of thing, which I'm sure you've all seen, heard and read over the years - another instance of that. When you, if you were to pick up the local paper and you see that that was happening, how do you react to it?

This was the order in which the questions were asked at Kings Buildings. In the eighth week, clarification was sought on issues discussed previously, on questions 1 and 5. In the ninth week, the women were asked whether the discussions on managers and professionals meant there was an "us" and "them" in the world and, if so, who was us and who was them. Finally, once Part I had been completed (without chapters III and IV), copies were distributed to everyone through the steward and a final, tenth discussion took place about its contents. Part of this discussion forms the last two and a half pages of Part I.

Chemistry Building		Relevant Chapter in Part I
Week	Question	
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	6
8	Clarification on weeks 1 and 5	1 and 5
9	Is there an "us" and "them"? If so, who is us, who them?	7
10	Views on draft Part I (excluding Chs 3 and 4)	7

The order was the same at Island Laundry. In week 8 clarification was sought on a number of points discussed in previous weeks and a large part of this discussion appears in Chapter V. The final discussion, which took place when everyone had read Part II consisted mainly of minor corrections to the text and so was not transcribed.

Island Laundry		Relevant Chapter in Part II
Week	Question	
1	1	1 and 2
2	2	1, 2, 3, 4
3	3	3
4	4	5
5	5	4
6	6	5
7	7	1
8	Clarification on weeks 2, 3 and 4	5
9	Views on draft Part II	-

At Viewpoint things proceeded rather differently. All but the first few minutes of week 4 were lost because the tape was running the wrong side of the capstan. A discussion on the same topic - but which took a different course - was added in week 7. Discussion on the union was postponed until week 8 because the then steward was away and wanted to be there. Nearly the whole of week 5 was lost because a connection in the tape recorder's mains plug became loose during the recording. No attempt was made to replace this discussion, whose subject matter was, in any case, disposed of in short order. The discussion on professionals, which eventually took place in week 7, seemed to raise a number of interesting issues. The transcript was therefore given to everyone present at the end of week 8. Instead of

questions about earlier discussions, this transcript formed the basis of the discussion which took place in week 9. The material up to this point forms Chapters I to IV of Section III and was circulated to all who had taken part via the steward. Week 10 was not recorded. Although a number of detailed corrections - and some deletions - were made that day, the main subject discussed, with the NUPE Branch Secretary present for part of the time, was the status of the transcript after the Officers in the Home had also read it. After a transcript of an interview with the officers had been circulated, it was discussed in week 11.

Viewpoint		Relevant
Week	Question	Chapter in Part III
1	1	1
2	2	1 and 2
3	3	1
4	4	2
5	5	-
6	7	4
7	4	2
8	6	4
9	Arising from transcript of week 7, on professionals	3
10	Views on draft of Part III Chs I to IV	-
11	Views on transcript of interview with officers*	5

* See Part III Appendix

Because the discussions at the Chemistry Building were shorter, they needed less editing. Part I includes most of the material recorded up to and including week 7 and nearly all of week 9. Proportionately slightly less of the other two has been included. But the bulk of everything recorded up to and including week 7 at Island Laundry and 9 at Viewpoint appears in Parts II and III. Nothing scientific can be claimed for the process of editing. However, it was based on a number of considerations. These were the need to organise the material into a sequence in which similar topics were together, the need to avoid breaking it up into fragments stitched together without context, the need to ensure the substance of every recorded discussion was fully represented, yet also the need to avoid producing an unnecessarily bulky document. Of course nothing has been removed which could alter the sense of what remains. Apart from a very few words inaudible on tape included in brackets, no words have been added. All the edited text in Parts I, II and III, with the exception of Chapters III and IV of Part I which the author originally intended to omit, has been approved by the participants.

Interpretation

No doubt many approaches to an interpretation of these transcripts are possible. It was decided at the outset to ground interpretation in concepts

which could be derived from the worlds of ideas contained in the discussions themselves. It was felt that the field of interest identified in the previous chapter made this possible. Any reading which did not appear to be fully consistent with those worlds of ideas was therefore precluded. This can perhaps best be illustrated by giving two examples of kinds of understandings which the approach would rule out as being unacceptable.

1. At Viewpoint, an Old Peoples Home, the officer-in-charge, on reading the transcripts of all but the last discussion, told the author (not on tape) that two of the care staff who had taken part had very big chips on their shoulders. They had been highly critical of what they saw as management incompetence in arranging proper medical care for three of the residents. The officer-in-charge has, at first sight, the makings of a compelling explanation for their views. Both had been denied the opportunity of the social work training which would greatly increase their chances of achieving officer status (ie management status) themselves in the future. Both could therefore be said to have an interest in explaining their own failure in terms of the incompetence of those in a position to block their progress - most of whom were themselves without any kind of qualifications. But this conjecture, plausible as some might find it, is inherently unverifiable by those who took part. It requires the researcher to adopt a quasi-judicial judgement in the matter. Perhaps a large scale survey of the attitudes of people with blocked promotion might help. But even if criticism of management competence by such people is widespread, it could still be a universal characteristic of management! In any case, such an explanation takes the grossest liberty with the realm of ideas actually revealed by the study.

2. At the Chemistry Building a number of remarks had been made about younger women (consistent with later remarks about people over retirement age) which led the author to suspect that they might be explained in terms of a community of people in a certain age group defining its actions - getting to work, working independently of management - in relation to others who could not do these things on grounds of being too young. In week 8 the author asked a number of questions intended to test out these and other understandings about what had been said in the previous weeks:

TS: Younger women have cropped up in the discussions we've had several times really. ...when you're thinking about this job in relation to younger women not being able to do it, is that partly a change, is it that erm younger women are - you see as being different to the way you were?

Oh yes.

Oh aye.

Oh aye.

hubbub

TS: Anyone like to say anything about that? So, so it's more that when you're saying, for example younger women on the whole perhaps wouldn't be able to do this job, it's not that you're saying you wouldn't have been able to do it when you were young because some of you did.

Yes.

TS: You're saying that younger women now are different?

Chorus: Aye.

hubbub

It's a different way of living altogether.

They dinna bother - they dinna let things worry them like what worried us.

We're mugs compared to what the young ones are now.

Oh aye.

I mean they've got the money...and all the other opportunities...

TS: Sorry, you're saying -

They call us mugs for doing this. They willna do that.

We're idiots for doing this...but somebody's got to do it.

Somebody's got to do it.

It's just a different way of living.

That's right.

I mean they've got a different attitude to life now.

TS: Now are you critical of it?

No, no I just wish th'I'd been like that.

Aye.

TS: You wish you'd been like that?

Oh aye.

chorus: aye.

hubbub

They've got more freedom than we ever had I'll tell you that.

In this case, the author's own understanding, attractive as he found it, with ample support in the literature as a common enough phenomenon (EG see Graeme Salaman op cit p.32) was one he abandoned after submitting its key component to the discipline of the thinking of the workplace.

The ideas identified in Part IV Chapter I from the text of Parts I to III were those whose content and context showed them to be capable of influencing the actions of those present. That this is so is an interpretation based on the implicit judgement of the participants rather than factors external to the discussions.

Powerful ideas

- 1; Generally (g) upheld, or only by some (s) present?
? = not clear from context.
- 2; Explicit (e) or Implicit (i)?
- 3; Sanctions compelling same action (✓)? x = no;
o = sanctions compelling opposite action,
(s) = ideas of sanctions themselves.
- 4; Reinforces/reinforced by coherence of group?
x = no; (✓) = potential reinforcement,
p = reinforces/reinforced by polarisation.
- 1 2 3 4 5; Expression apparently occasioned by:-

Chemistry Building

Get to your work, be on time	g	e	✓	✓	Early start, occasional lateness
Know your job	g	e	o	✓	Supervision and earlier cutbacks
This is a woman's job, not a man's job	g	e	✓	✓	Male unemployment eroding principle
You cannot get justice without money	?	e	✓	?	Car crash
Everyone should retire at 60/65	s	e	x	x	Threat of cutbacks

Island Laundry

Judge wages and hours by similar jobs	g	i	(s)(✓)	Low and declining wages by comparison
If you aren't properly paid, strike	g	i	?(✓)	Low and declining wages by comparison
If the bonus is cut, throw it out	g	i	o(✓)	Increased throughput of laundry
Do not do management's work	g	e	✓(✓)	Increased throughput of laundry
If no reasonable environment, strike	g	e	(s)(✓)	Increased throughput of laundry
Only unity enforces management's duty	g	e	?(✓)	Increased throughput of laundry
Show respect to professionals	s	e	✓?	Unease at dealing with some doctors
Unity across the workforce	s	e	x(✓)	Discussion about isolation of laundry

Viewpoint

Residents' rights = our responsibility	g	i	o(✓)	Official 'Group Living' philosophy
We (all grades) should all be together	g	e	o(✓)	Management-emphasised grade divisions
Show respect to competent professionals	g	e	x?	Discussion about officers' competence
Individuals can escape circumstances	s	i	xp	Argument over conduct of social workers
Fight class barriers for a better life	s	e	✓p	Argument over conduct of social workers
Judge pay by place in pecking order	?	i	??	Management report on grading of care staff
Responsibility is management's not ours	s	e	✓x	Row about medical care of residents

Columns 1 and 2: Apart from the two indicated, only ideas whose degree of support is reasonably clear have been included. Is there a risk of assuming a consensus where, in reality, someone who disagreed felt unable to intervene? The risk is perhaps greater the larger the group. And at the Chemistry Building it was very large. But widespread support for the first two ideas listed there is specifically confirmed by affirmation, quite apart from the support indicated by the way they are taken for granted in the discussions. The third idea, that "this is a woman's job" is interesting from this point of view. Its endorsement depended on its context. In the context of unemployment and jobs in the university, there seemed, from the general course of the discussion, to be

strong support for the distinction between men's and women's jobs. But in the context of a later discussion about younger people and their view of work, there seemed to be a recognition that things were different for them. And there was a chorus of support for their "different attitude to life". The idea of retirement at sixty/sixty five met with strong support from many who took part, but equally strong rejection from a few others. This is where it can only be an advantage to have the transcripts available, albeit edited to knock out some of those characteristics of spoken language which make it indigestible on paper. Each case can only be judged on its merits.

Support for an idea cannot simply be assumed from lack of dissent. Individual contributions which actually change the subject slightly can signal tacit acceptance of what has gone before. The discussion on wages and hours at the start of Part II illustrates this. Each person who speaks does so in a way which takes for granted the shared nature of the picture to which they are contributing. It is a commonplace. That picture is brief, clear, assembled by several different contributors with strong feeling and confidence. There seems no obvious reason to doubt that not only are wages and hours seen as unjust, but that those of other workers in electricity supply and bonded warehouses are providing the yardstick for this judgement. When the solution of strike action is suggested, its rightness is taken for granted - only practicalities stand in the way. Later discussions about strike action - and throwing out the bonus scheme - leave no room for doubt about their appropriateness. The objections all concern practical problems of obtaining the necessary support from the rest of the workforce, which is, implicitly, the only way to get management to meet its obligations. The idea that the running of the laundry is the manager's responsibility and not the job of the workforce, is only put forward explicitly by one person, the senior steward. However, several pages of transcript confirm this, implicitly, as a shared view.

At Viewpoint, several people join in Dennis's critical catalogue of management moves against residents' rights. His view that it is the staff's responsibility to uphold them, is tacitly endorsed by the nature of these criticisms of management. Management-inspired barriers between care staff and domestics meets with criticism in which a majority present contribute - and do so with strong feelings. Anyone dissenting, feeling perhaps that management's distinctions between the grades were valid, would have some difficulty in sustaining such a view in the discussion. This is something to be born in mind. But general support for the emerging view seems beyond doubt. The context of the idea of respect for competent professionals is the lack of competence of the officers - a view very widely expressed in one form or another. But there has to be some doubt as to whether the discussion can be taken as confirming completely general support for the view put forward by three participants that competent professionals should be respected. The argument which unfolds in Chapter III of Part III took place after the last part of the previous chapter had been widely read in the Home. It conveys a sense of polarisation between two camps, one of them insisting on the superiority of individuals over the circumstances of their lives, and the other on the injustice of the obstacles in the way. There is no way of judging the extent of support for these two points of view, but it would seem to be considerable. In the final discussion, two participants strongly advocate the need to recognise responsibility in the hands of management rather than care staff. Another member of the care staff does not dissent from this while a fourth expresses doubts. As argued elsewhere, the emergence of this idea seems to be connected with open conflict between

officers and staff over the latter's apparent challenge to the officers' discharge of their responsibilities.

Column 3: Although "get to your work..." is an idea whose effect is also capable of being brought about by sanctions, in this case the two can be disentangled. As the commentary in Part I shows, the idea itself is more effective than the sanctions. "Know your job" is an idea which appears to fly in the face of the sanctions management could apply to get the job done its way. "This is a woman's job" is a distinction enforced by sanctions spelt out in the discussion. If a man takes a woman's job he won't be able to feed his bairns. On the other hand the condemnation and shame attaching to any man who might try makes it difficult to rule out as an effect of the idea rather than the sanction of lack of money. Lack of access to the law without money can, of course, be taken simply as a warning of the sanctions you'll come up against if you try it. On the other hand, its context makes it clear that it is a matter of profound injustice. This puts this idea in a slightly different category to the others. The idea that you should retire at "sixty/sixty five" only makes sense in the absence of sanctions to make you do it.

Most of the powerful ideas listed from Island Laundry do not point towards effects immediately enforced by sanctions. It is perhaps possible to think of lack of money as a sanction which could compel strike action. No doubt sanctions would oppose the rejection of any bonus scheme, simply because it would involve a wage cut. And we can speculate that any attempts to do management's work, other than in the special circumstances which applied at the time, would meet with opposing sanctions'.

The same sanction would oppose any strike over a dangerous working environment. The idea of sanctions could enforce respect for professionals, because it may be in the nature of that respect to believe that it ensures proper treatment.

At Viewpoint the officer in charge had told the porter and some domestics that they would not be working with the residents in a manner which they appear to have experienced as intimidating. To that extent, sanctions opposed the idea that "We should all be together". Sanctions, in the end, actually did oppose the idea of staff rather than officers' responsibility, just as they promoted the idea of recognising officers' superior responsibilities. Unlike the discussion at Island Laundry, it is difficult to see how respect for professionals might be enforced by sanctions. The context suggests that the treatment of residents or clients was at stake, not the treatment of those who took part in the discussion. It was in the nature of the argument in Chapter III that Anna's experience of the estates where she had lived was one of coercion, driving her to try and escape elsewhere. But the sanction against escape - the cost measured in having to work full time - was severe, a fact recognised in the 'socialist' point of view and denied in the 'individualist' point of view.

Column 4: Three of the ideas in the Chemistry Building benefited from the reinforcement to be gained by the social life of the workplace. A whole chorus confirmed that they would not hesitate to let a persistent latecomer know it was making them fed up. On the other hand there were no persistent latecomers, so it is perhaps unwise to interpret this as enforcement by means of sanctions wielded by the Chemistry Building cleaners themselves. In any case there were explanations of a different sort for getting to work on time - the

psychological effect of being late - "It just upsets you for the rest of the day" or "...you're thinking of the other women that will have to do your work..." (Part I p.3). The incident involving Joan, who "was wrong in the first place" to allow herself to take on extra work, illustrates the scope for enforcing the women's rule of "two rooms". And the withering condemnation of the man who came to work in another building on site, "and his wife all beside him", shows that there at least limited sanctions in the women's hands to enforce the distinction between men's and women's work on individuals if they wished to use them. But such sanctions from within the group of cleaners themselves cannot explain their shared adherence to these ideas. The sanctions they can impose on individuals presupposes their shared commitment to the objectives expressed in the ideas. Although, no doubt, the potential exists for the collective imposition of ideas on individuals in the other workplaces, there was no sign of this happening. The only possible exception was the argument at Viewpoint in Part III Chapter III, in which the whole group present appeared, to the author, to have already polarised into two camps before the discussion began.

At this point the problem of domination or leadership by individuals within the three workplaces must be raised. Could these shared ideas be a reflection of the distribution of power between individuals? This must be a possibility. But firstly, if so, it in no way alters the powerful status of the ideas. Just as the sanction of disapproval - or even, perhaps, ostracism - by the whole group presupposes its adherence to the ideas, the same applies to leadership. If leadership is effective enough to increase an idea's acceptance in a discussion, that idea has still arrives there independently of external sanctions. Secondly, it does seem a little unlikely that anyone could hold such a position of leadership, and disguise it in a discussion, other than by expressing ideas already and in any case acceptable to everyone else. At the Chemistry Building Hilda was perhaps the most outspoken articulator of ideas which the others then showed they supported. But there were several others who had no difficulty, when they disagreed with her about the union, in saying so, loud and clear. At Island Laundry, Irene, who said rather more than some of the other women, was a chargehand as well as a steward. But she was not a chargehand for anyone who took part in the discussion and - this may be irrelevant - she refused to wear a chargehand's overalls! And the strong criticisms made of the manager suggest no difference between the views of chargehands and others (Fiona too was a chargehand). Equally, Stuart, the only man other than the author present in most of the discussions, did sometimes interrupt and use his slightly stronger voice to push a point home. But this is not the same thing as success in imposing ideas on everyone else. The author has been unable to find signs of this happening in the text. In any case, how ever much individuals may influence the emergence of shared ideas, shared they are, no less than if everyone thought of them at the same instant.

Column 5: However, these ideas did not come from thin air. Column 5 lists the circumstances which seem to have evoked them. In the Chemistry Building perhaps here there are reasons why the subject matter of the first three ideas should be of permanent interest. It may be that the strain of getting up so early is bound to result in the most seasoned of workers sleeping in from time to time. This is exactly what had happened when the author, in week 8, asked again about getting to work (see Part I Chapter I). "Know your job" may partly be related to the occasional rows which blew up between Anne, the supervisor, and the rest of the women. One morning at about 7.25 the author came in the side door to the

sound of a loud, high-pitched voice somewhere in the distant upper reaches of the building. Shortly afterwards Anne came into the restroom, just as the taperecorder was being set up:

Anne: ...it's the first time for a long time, I can assure you that ...Calm down. Oh dear. I even swore. And that's no way either.

TS: Is that right?

Anne: Yes. And that's not me. That's not the principle at all.

TS: How ever short the fuse, the swearwords stay out usually do they?

Anne: Oh yes. They've got to. They've got to. But I'm afraid they didn't this morning. I was so angry.

TS: Well you've regained your equilibrium very quickly.

Anne: Aye.

TS: You've got a a very steady hand on that teapot I must say that.

Anne: Actually, to tell you the truth, that is a thing about me. You see I can blow a fuse in there, but I can speak to you in two minutes. I mean as I came down there, didn't I, blowing a fuse - it, it's forgotten about now. You know, I've said my piece and that's it finished.

[pours out more tea as women begin to enter]

Hilda: Anne...I do object to being shouted at - and shouting at wee girls ...the mornings...

Anne: The reason is you know you were in the wrong.

Jessie: Yes. I said they were in the wrong all right, that's granted...

[voice inaudible as more women enter]²

Anne's short fuse seems to be legendary. Apart from the other occasion when it leads to complaint (see part I p.3) it is the frequent cause of humour as well. Although they may serve to keep the assertion that "we know what our job is" at the forefront of people's minds, the author's impression is that these explosions are an ineffectual display. The normal attitude to Anne seems to be one of fondness.

Strength of feeling about the third idea listed at Kings Buildings may perhaps be because male unemployment has pitched "women's jobs" into crisis. They cannot carry the burdens of being the sole earned income of husband and wife. The world is sharply out of step with the way the idea says it should be.

As column 5 shows, at Island Laundry and Viewpoint, nearly all are associated with some significant change or other.

However, the circumstances in which the ideas emerged can be no more than the cause of their emergence. They cannot be their source. For the most part they enter the discussion by someone asserting them. They then, without argument, take up their place as ideas around which the discussion revolves and which it takes for granted. This cannot be explained other than through the previous existence of these ideas in the minds of everyone who, in conversation, now finds them acceptable. That they can slip into the discussions in this way suggests the existence of a body of shared powerful ideas upon which people can draw.

As has been stressed already, we cannot know whether there is a more abstract, generalised form of these ideas ready and waiting, as it were, on a shelf to be taken off and dusted down for particular uses. It may be that their only recognisable existence is of an applied sort. Nor can we know much about their

ultimate origins. But some of the participants do suggest how two of the ideas entered their thinking in the first place. These are the ideas of getting to work on time and respect for professionals. Both are said to have been a matter of upbringing. And in the case of respect, its continued incalcation through discipline at home and school is felt by those at Island laundry to be important. It seems only reasonable to suppose that these ideas acquired their present form through whatever sanctions childhood discipline may have imposed.

The next step will be to look, firstly, at a possible explanation of how these ideas achieve their effectiveness, how their power works, and then, where powerful ideas and sanctions operate towards the same end, to look for possible explanations of the relationship between them.

"Psychologically effective sanctions"

The German sociologist Max Weber took a very different view of the historical emergence of capitalism to that of Karl Marx. He did not actually take issue with Marx directly. But in 1904 he published the first version of an essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* which, in effect, attacked the Marxist view that ideas which were characteristic of capitalism "originate as a reflection...of economic situations"¹. Although followers of Marx took exactly this view (the 'materialist conception of history'), Marx's own position is not quite so clear-cut. He did often make bald statements to the same effect. For example "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production by which he sustains his life, and therefore also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them..."². The relationship between these in Marx's work has become a field of scholarship in its own right and the subject of never ending academic debate between Marxist and other scholars - some of them followers of Max Weber. However, for present purposes what matters is that in *Capital* Volume I, Marx's understanding of capitalist production is encapsulated in 'Capitalist Private Property'. This concept contains implicit assumptions about the historical development of technology, social relations and about ideas. For the world of capitalism to have reached the stage of development it had by the 1860s, essential changes had taken place in all three. As Part V Chapter I showed, Marx argued that people had had to be forcibly separated from their means of production, and private property had had to achieve full recognition in law, before capitalist production could come fully into existence. It is thus very hard to escape the view that, in Marx's schema for the development of capitalism, the idea of private property played some causal part of its own.

Weber's view was that "In order that a manner of life so well adapted to the peculiarities of capitalism...should come to dominate others, it had to originate somewhere...as a way of life common to whole groups of men"³. By comparing that way of life with parts of the world where capitalism had not developed so early, Weber produced a whole shopping list of essential historical characteristics. A certain kind of science, organisation of the state and its officials, the legal separation of business from household property and "rational book-keeping" were necessary. The significance of these factors lay in being associated with the way labour is organised in capitalism⁴. He was at one with Marx in pointing to the importance of technology (based on science) and the importance of law. But rather than the legal development of private property, Weber stressed the need for "a calculable legal system and of administration in terms of formal rules"⁵.

Weber's comparative approach also led him to conclude that capitalism - whether in the form of profit making or of labour - required a disposition to adopt the special conduct which was characteristic of both. In trying to explain it, he conceded that "every attempt at explanation must, recognising the fundamental importance of the economic factor, above all take account of economic conditions"⁶. But although partly dependent on technology and law, that particular form of conduct was heavily influenced by religious ideas⁷.

Weber noted that by the middle of the eighteenth century, ideas which upheld the special conduct required by capitalism were well established. These he

called the "Spirit of Capitalism". His essay claimed their origins lay in the ethics of certain Protestant sects in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe.

For a distillation of the spirit of capitalism, Weber looked to the writings of the American Benjamin Franklin. He quotes a succession of high-flown phrases about the good conduct of business, such as "Remember, time is money..." and "Remember the saying, the good paymaster is lord of another man's purse"⁸. Franklin's moralisms are, for the most part, directed at businessmen. His strictures against sharp practice and unscrupulousness would not have gone amiss if they put them into practice in their dealings with employees - as well as competitors, suppliers, customers, partners and others. But some seem more directed at workers than others - on the subjects of hard work and idleness, the alleged virtues of long working hours and abstention from drink. Weber sees the "Alpha and Omega" of Franklin's "ethic" as "...virtue and proficiency in a calling..." resulting in, and expressed in, the making of money⁹. And the essential part of his argument is that the Spirit of Capitalism reflected the thinking of businessmen. One writer has explained Weber's view in this way:

"To those who accept as a guide to their own conduct the idea of increasing one's capital as an end in itself and out of a sense of duty (an ethical imperative) Weber attributes 'the spirit of modern capitalism'. It is a spirit which characterises labour when in an individualistic way the workman calculates how he can maximise his earnings and will respond to economic incentives (designed to improve his productivity) to the best of his ability; whilst at the same time he manifests a sense of responsibility towards his work and a specific willingness to work hard and systematically. It is also a spirit which characterises an entrepreneur who accepts the pursuit of money as virtuous in itself and systematically organises himself and his productive resources to that end. His business is the *raison d'être* of his whole existence"¹⁰.

Weber does not explain how the spirit of capitalism influenced people. Why did they uphold these ideas? His observation that Franklin's tracts were "at present used for school reading in America"¹¹ does little to explain. Despite his profound interest in ideas he seems not to have considered this a problem. He did take the view that once "capitalism ... is in the saddle," it can "force people to labour..."¹². Is it possible that he saw the Spirit of capitalism simply as expressing that force? In which case what does he mean when he calls it an "ethic"? Ethics are the very opposite of force, the very opposite of the idea of mere response to crude economic sanctions¹³.

Weber locates the origins of the spirit of capitalism with the beliefs of certain Protestant sects active in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in some of the places where capitalism subsequently developed¹⁴. What makes this of special interest is that the way these beliefs influenced people's actions is at the heart of his explanation. By showing how religious ideas constituted a "revolutionary force"¹⁵, Weber produced a classic study in the effect of ideas on human conduct¹⁶.

In looking at the content of Protestant ideas, particularly in England in the seventeenth century, Weber draws heavily on the writings of the Puritan Divine Richard Baxter, because he "...stands out above many other writers on Puritan ethics, both because of his eminently practical attitude and, at

the same time, because of the universal recognition accorded to his works, which have gone through many new editions and translations"¹⁷. Weber was concerned "not so much with what concepts the theological moralists developed in their ethical theories, but, rather, what was the effective morality in the life of believers - that is, how the religious background of economic ethics affected practice"¹⁸. Unfortunately, of course, this day-to-day effective morality is not accessible. The "practical" writings of a Puritan Divines was as near as he could get.

Baxter told his readers to "be wholly taken up in diligent business of your lawful callings when you are not exercised in the more immediate service of God"¹⁹. Obviously it is in the nature of much business that "diligence" is wealth-creating. Would this relieve those who obtained it of the need to go on being diligent? "It may excuse you" says Baxter, "from some sordid sort of work by making you more serviceable to another, but you are no more excused from service of work...than the poorest man"²⁰. Elsewhere he says "...though they (the rich) have no outward want to urge them, they have a great necessity to obey God... God hath strictly commanded it (labour) to all"²¹. Weber says that for the much earlier Calvinists in Geneva, it was a duty to work, not for material need or gain, but for the greater glory of God. For the English Puritans, he says, favour in the sight of God could itself be measured in profitableness. Again he quotes Baxter: "You may labour in that manner as tendeth most to your success and lawful gain. You are bound to improve all your talents"²². If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul or any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept his gifts and use them for Him when he requireth it: you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin"²³.

"Wealth," explains Weber, "is thus bad ethically only in so far as it is a temptation to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life, and its acquisition is bad only when it is with the purpose of later living merrily without care. But as a performance of duty in a calling it is not only morally permissible but actually enjoyed"²⁴. This was a finely drawn boundary line which had to be fiercely patrolled by moral stricture. "Every penny which is paid upon yourself and children and friends," said Baxter, "must be done by God's own appointment and to serve and please Him. Watch narrowly, or else that thievish, carnal self will leave God nothing"²⁵.

These religious ideas were pervasive enough to supply the prevailing definition of wealth in the community - the visible evidence of men called to the service of God²⁶. This selfless view of wealth dovetailed with the Puritan view of labour, which Weber summarised as follows:

Now naturally the whole ascetic literature of almost all denominations is saturated with the idea of faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God. In this respect Protestant Asceticism added in itself nothing new. But it not only deepened this idea most powerfully, it also created the force which was alone decisive for its effectiveness: the psychological sanction of it through the conception of this labour as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining the certainty of grace. And on the other hand it legalised

exploitation of this specific willingness to work, in that it also interpreted the employer's business activity as a calling. It is obvious how powerfully the exclusive search for the kingdom of God only through the fulfilment of a duty in the calling, and the strict asceticism which Church discipline naturally imposed, especially on the propertyless classes, was bound to affect the productivity of labour in the capitalistic sense of the word. The treatment of labour as a calling became as characteristic of the modern worker as the corresponding attitude toward acquisition of the businessman. It was a perception of the situation, new at this time, which caused so able an observer as Sir William Petty to attribute the economic power of Holland to the fact that the very numerous dissenters in that country (Calvinists and Baptists) "are for the most part thinking, sober men, and such as believe that Labour and Industry is their duty towards God"²⁷.

The effectiveness of these ideas lay, then, in what Weber calls "psychologically effective religious sanctions"²⁸ of such power as to compel disciplined labour in the creation of the wealth of others. So far so good. But clearly that power cannot be secularised. This mechanism requires nothing less than the terrible tension between salvation and damnation. Weber's case that the Spirit of capitalism is the secularised form of ascetic Protestantism is convincing. But whence the power of the Spirit of Capitalism?

This is exactly the same problem as that which presents itself in the Chemistry Building. Whence the power of the ideas which compel the women who work there to get up at four or five in the morning, get to go in and do it? It is worth quoting again what some of them say is in their minds in the early morning if they can see they are going to be late:

"It just upsets you for the rest of the day - "
"Exactly."
" - that's all. That's all it does to you."

But why?

"It's just your age, I doubt."
"We don't like being late to our work....."
"And you're thinking of the other women that will have to do your work..."
"It's the principle...."

What do they feel about the women doing their work?

"Guilty."
"Guilt."
"You feel guilty."
"...it's just your age really....." (p.3)

The "psychological sanctions" are at work here may be different in nature from the fear of damnation. But they appear to be as effective in the Chemistry Building today as Weber says ascetic Protestantism was at the dawn of capitalism. This discussion seems to show that being late for work

in a secular world can still be a matter of very considerable psychological discomfort. Perhaps, the Spirit of Capitalism was also effective in this kind of way. Getting to work in the Chemistry Building suggests that it is at least possible. Certainly neither the Spirit of capitalism nor the ideas expressed in this discussion can simply be regarded as ideas about the sanctions of the market place.

How far other powerful ideas in the three workplaces - ideas not about sanctions - rest on internal sanctions is unknown. The psychological dimension of the power of ideas can be taken no further forward here. But it is clearly worthy of further inquiry.

Coercion and consent

There are perhaps two other approaches to explaining the power of ideas. Both of these, on the face of it, seem capable of explaining the relationship between ideas and sanctions which also encourage the same actions because the former is in some sense grounded in the latter. The first is the concept of legitimisation, considered in Chapter I. Its capability of explanation turns out to be less impressive than might appear to be the case. For an idea, which appears to have meaning of its own, to legitimate a sanction, whose power it does not express, its adherents must be at best mistaken, at worst dishonest. They must say one thing, but mean another. For the Chemistry Building women's "principle" which gets them to work to be the legitimisation of the sanctions which would otherwise drive them there, they must be deluding themselves - or at least each other. Such a possibility can only be dismissed as extraordinarily unlikely.

In any case legitimisation presents another difficulty. That which is being legitimised is power based on sanctions. The concept thus gives primacy to that power and so begs an important question. For example, in the case of the Chemistry Building workers it implies that the real or underlying or principle power which drives them to work is economic sanctions. Nothing could less plausibly represent what we know about the relative power of the two in this case. The commentary in Part I Chapter I shows that the idea is actually more effective, more powerful than the economic sanction. Indeed there seems no reason for not reversing the primacy implied by legitimisation. It is only possible for management to discipline recalcitrants just so long as the very great majority regard getting to work on time as something they ought to do regardless of such sanctions. These sanctions can have no meaning for those who get there on time for other reasons. This may be partly why at least some of them expressed such anger with Anne over her "rows". "...I mean you make an effort to come in". So the idea can just as well be seen as power underlying the sanctions which depend upon it.

The other kind of explanation comes from the Marxist tradition:.

Marx himself, as we have seen (in Part V Chapter I), held that relations in the sphere of circulation, where, for example, money seems to be able to "earn" interest, conceal relations in the sphere of production. What is concealed, specifically, behind the exchange of wages for labour power, is that the wage is equivalent only to the labour time sufficient to pay for its renewal or reproduction. The remainder of labour time is unpaid. The

worker, because he has been paid the wages which the labour market seems to say his labour is worth, is unable to see that portion which is unpaid, by which the capitalist extracts and accumulates a surplus. And then the surplus is rendered invisible by virtue of appearing to come, not out of production at all, but from the sale of the products in the market place.

From the point of view of the problem being tackled here, it is important to set this concealment alongside the sanctions which, in any case force the worker to yield a surplus to the capitalist. As Part V showed, the rise of capitalism stripped direct producers of any alternative means of production. Selling labour-power to those who do own the means of production, the capitalists, is therefore the only alternative to starvation.

The effect, therefore, of the concealment of the production of a surplus, is also to conceal the coercive consequences of being separated from the means of production.

There is an immediate problem with this schema. Today the majority of those who sell ordinary labour power exchange it for a portion of the surplus extracted from the labour of others. To apply Marx's schema literally today, workers outside the direct process of production are benefitting from the exploitation of the labour of those within it. Furthermore, labour productivity in production has increased by so many times over since the 1860s that some industrial workers must pay for the renewal of their own labour power in a few seconds each week. In other words, nearly the whole of their labour time is devoted to yielding a surplus. And a good deal of that surplus is removed by the state to pay for state services. Of course it is possible to amend the Marxist schema to avoid this conclusion. For example it can be argued that the share of the surplus removed from direct production by the state in fact pays for the reproduction of labour-power. There is a whole body of academic Marxism dedicated to keeping the ship afloat in this sort of way. In doing so, it has blunted the sharp cutting edge which Marx's work had in the 1860s. It severs its direct relationship between the workplace and the whole of society. And it has contributed to a diversion of attention away from the workplace and, instead, a focus on the state²⁹.

The problem is, therefore, that there has to be real doubt about what the reality is which appearance is concealing. In a world of private property capitalism it is at least possible to see the logic of this mechanism. In a world where the state, not the capitalist, takes the lion's share of the surplus from production it becomes very difficult to see how the concept of unpaid labour can adequately grasp and express the reality of work in the modern world.

Is it possible, nevertheless, that Marx offers a model which works differently in a different world of capitalism?

What is undeniable is that important effects of work, as well as the workplace itself, are hidden away. Part V argued that socialism neglects the importance of the workplace as the crucible of both ideas of the powerlessness of workers and, at the same time, ideas of the power of workers. But the failure of the workplace to occupy a central place in

socialism is a small matter beside its near total absence from the public arena of politics, journalism, advertising, education and the rest. An example of what remains permanently hidden from view is that work requires most manual and clerical workers not to use their intellects - arguably their most human quality. Not only does it require them to leave their "brains" at home, but, because they do not use them, they are paid vastly less than the small minority who do. Their deprivation is compounded, so that they take it home with them, where it is mirrored in a lower standard of living. That this is hidden and not subject to public attention is beyond dispute. What is much more difficult to accept is that there is some alternative, visible version of the world which might be concealing it.

More important, do the ideas identified in this study conceal, obscure, divert attention from the sanctions which operate towards the same end in the workplace? This does seem very unlikely. The evidence is not there. And unlike Marx's original, a mechanism of concealment also appears to be lacking.

Louis Althusser has offered a way forward in the form of a concept of ideology as "a matter of the lived relation between men and their world" which is at the same time real and imaginary³⁰. He gives the example of "the ideology of equality, freedom and reason"³¹ "developed" by the rising bourgeois class in France in the eighteenth century. For this to be an effective ideology in enabling it to exploit the labour of free labourers in the future, "the bourgeoisie has first to believe in its own myth before it can convince others... The bourgeoisie *lives* in the ideology of *freedom* the relation between it and its conditions of existence: that is *its* real relation (the law of a liberal capitalist economy) *but invested in an imaginary relation* (all men are free, including the free labourers)"³². The bourgeoisie is thus forced not only to believe its own myth, but to live it. Its effectiveness on labourers depends on as much. On this basis Althusser speaks of the ideology "blackmailing them with freedom so as to keep them in harness"³³

It is not easy to see how generally applicable Althusser intends this concept to be. What follows must therefore claim to be no more than inspired by it. Let us apply it in an imaginary way to the Chemistry Building. Let us suppose the women who clean it believe **everyone** should "get to your work, be on time" (which, of course, they may). This belief is born out in reality for most people. But it is also imaginary in that it conceals the fact that some people's work does not entail the very sharp contrast between working and not working which they experience. Therefore, if Althusser's proposition holds good here, this idea about work is an essential condition for getting women to forgo a social life in the evenings and, in some cases, go to bed late at night after doing housework, get up at 4.00 am ready to catch a bus in the cold and dark, and clean floors for scientists to step onto from their warm cars after they, the cleaners, on a fraction of their salaries, have already left to catch the bus home.

The ideology thus serves to conceal the real relations - real at a deeper level than can be expressed by 'everyone should get to their work...' - between scientist and cleaner whose working life is consumed in his service. This certainly has a ring of plausibility about it. As with the

removal of surplus in Marx's schema, the use of sanctions is paralleled by a set of persuasive ideas. But why? What is the relationship between them? Althusser's concept does not explain this. We are left with the notion that a powerful idea which operates to the distinct advantage of one class at the expense of another now, was "developed" by the one at some stage in the past. A problem of the present has been translated into a problem of the past and we are no further forward. More important, this kind of approach, whether to bourgeois 'freedom' or the universal necessity of 'getting to your work' assumes that there is something more fundamental outside the ideas of the subjects of power than there is inside them. This assumption remains unsubstantiated.

For Gramsci, writing in a Fascist prison in the thirties³⁴, bourgeois rule was based on both consent and coercion - both of them found in the state - for which he used the word hegemony. The task of the party was to develop an alternative hegemony which could counter bourgeois state power. This does raise exactly the same problem at the level of the state as that addressed here through the workplace - the relationship between the power of ideas (consent) and sanctions (coercion). Gramsci's own work, which he was unable to complete, does not attempt to explain this relationship. Perry Anderson suggests that it is this:-

The normal conditions of ideological subordination of the masses - the day-to-day routines of a parliamentary democracy - are themselves *constituted* by a silent, absent force which gives them their currency: the monopoly of legitimate violence by the state... In the most tranquil democracies today the army may remain invisible in its barracks, the police appear uncontentious on its beat³⁵.

The use of the word "legitimate" here betrays a difficulty with this formulation. It cannot simply be a matter of the state's monopoly of violence constituting conditions for a subordination of ideas through parliamentary democracy. The legitimacy of that monopoly of violence can only be endowed through that which it is held to constitute. Anderson concedes only that the assent of those trained to exercise repression is required for this to work:

Given this critical proviso, however, the 'fundamental' resort of bourgeois class power, beneath the 'preponderant' cusp of culture in a parliamentary democracy, remains coercion³⁶.

Clearly the concept of hegemony cannot help. There is no basis for claiming that the powerful ideas found in the workplace are, in some sense, upon the surface, sustained from beneath by sanctions. There are no grounds for thinking that the one is the fundamental partner of the more superficial other. This is as true for the ideas which endorse the potential power of management (authority, responsibility) and the sanctions in management's hands (dismissal) as it is for the ideas which endorse the position of workers (the need for higher wages, better working environment etc) and the sanctions in their hands (strikes). Nor does the concept of hegemony contain a mechanism for its operation.

To conclude this chapter, Max Weber has proved useful in two ways. His analysis of Ascetic Protestantism offers a means whereby ideas might be

powerful - through effective psychological sanctions. Evidence about one of the powerful ideas found in the Chemistry Building suggests that these might be a feature of secularly powerful ideas too. Unfortunately it is not something which can be taken further forward here. But Weber is important in another way too. By demonstrating the similarity between belief in the creation of wealth for the glory of mammon in one century and belief in the creation of wealth for the glory of God in the one before, he administers an essential qualification to Marx's materialist conception of history. He seems to be saying yes, the materialist explanation for the rise of capitalism is right, but in the form of the bizarre convolutions of Calvinist predestination, ideas quite independent of those material constituents played a crucial part in setting them free. And because of the nature of Marx's thought, Weber's qualification can be taken further - into the present. It is reasonably clear that, for Marx, the motion of history was a very close cousin of the motion of the present. Ideas play a crucial part in the historical development of capitalism and they also play a crucial part in its development now. Marx himself, in Capital Volume I, avoids having to attribute real significance to ideas in capitalism's historical development by conflating both ideas and social relations into Capitalist Private Property. He thus keeps faith with the materialist conception of history and avoids its pitfalls. Twentieth century Marxism, in Gramsci and Althusser, goes a long way towards giving ideas the separate significance which is implicit in Marx's own work in Capital. Althusser suggests the importance of the part played by ideas somewhat independent of the material constituents of capitalism. But then their provenance is mysterious. The conversion of one kind of mystery into another is not obviously appealing as an explanation. The mystery of ideas on the surface sustained by sanctions beneath creates a similar problem in Gramsci. In any case, both forms of Marxism tend to give ideas a second class status in relation to a world of economic sanctions. Even when they themselves are relations, they are still masks, they conceal that which is the more real.

The case for attributing any less reality or conceptual significance to ideas than sanctions in the three workplaces has not been made.

In attempting an explanation of the relationship between ideas and sanctions, it is, at this stage, necessary to introduce a term. The issue to be considered is not, as it happens, about ideas and sanctions as such. It is about two kinds of ideas. One kind is about sanctions themselves. Their power is therefore that of the sanctions. This is, of course, the only way sanctions can be brought to bear. The other kind of idea is about something other than sanctions but is nevertheless powerful, and that power operates towards the same end. The two kinds of ideas are thus quite different in content but parallel to each other in direction. Their effect is the same. For example, the idea of management responsibility is, in one of its senses, directed towards acceptance of management decisions. At the same time, the idea of the sanctions which management can bring to bear is also directed towards acceptance of its decisions.

In order to avoid the most cumbersome use of language, the word used by one of the Chemistry Building cleaners, principle, and adopted throughout Part IV, is reintroduced here. Its use is restricted to any powerful idea not about sanctions. This is not ideal. In everyday speech it indicates universal moral rightness. No such universality can be assumed here. It may be involved. But all we know about is a particular context - and that context may or may not narrow its meaning. With this qualification, the problem is to consider what relationship exists between principles and ideas about sanctions directed to identical ends.

The previous chapter has rejected the explanation drawn from Marxism that the principle is a velvet glove on the sanction's iron fist.

What do we confidently know?

In the first place we know they are quite different. Their power is independent one of the other. But they can meet in the person who wields sanctions. This happens in the repeated discussions about strike action at Island laundry. The failure of management to pay proper wages or provide a proper working environment translate themselves automatically into justification of strike action. How this happens we do not discover.

Principles and parallel sanctions can also meet in those at the receiving end of the sanctions too. And this is something which does happen in the three workplaces. It takes two forms. One of these can be seen in a single discussion, in the Chemistry Building, about lateness:

"Well, Cathy was late this morning. How did you feel about it Cathy?"

"Aye. How did you feel this morning?"

laughter

Cathy: "I was shattered as soon as I got in here - well trying to run on my poor foot."

"And actually, in actual fact she was only five minutes late. Really, because she gets her bus at ten past five. She went out the door at quarter past five and saw the tail end of it going away. So this makes her awful late because it's all the way from Kingsmuir. So by the time she hobbles down to the bus and waits for the bus coming - it doesn't come 'till, what, twenty to six - "

Cathy: "Twenty five to six, twenty five minutes - "
 So what passed through her mind when she saw that bus disappearing in the distance?
 Cathy: "I felt like turning round and going back again!"
 laughter
 Cathy: "But I mean you make an effort to come in."
 "You can Still make it."
 "You've still got time."
 Cathy: "Aye I can still make it. But y'are late."
 Anne: "Now that you mention that Cathy, you've never had a row from me of late have you?"
 (chorus:) "Oh!"
 laughter
 "We did it to her Anne when she came up the stairs."
 "Gi'er a row now!" (pp 4 and 5)

So here we see the idea of making the effort and the parallel sanction of a "row" brought together and - possibly - being re-emphasised. So, perhaps ideas reinforce sanctions in the face of individual infringements. Someone coming to work on time as a matter of principle might take unkindly to someone else getting away with not doing so. This is what another of the Chemistry Building cleaners is saying in an attack on "the regulars" ("...not just this building...") who, she alleges, take bogus time off sick (p.10). On the other hand there are also indications to the contrary. The remarks about "rows" quoted here seem not to have a serious side to them. The more feasible interpretation of this is that the women have such complete confidence in eachother's genuine efforts to get to work - on principle - that they either resent or laugh at Anne's rows. And here Anne is laughing at herself.

So, when individual infringements do occur, both principles and ideas about sanctions may come to the fore simultaneously. When they do, it is far from clear that they necessarily affect eachother.

There are two other cases of parallel sets of principles and sanctions coming together in peoples minds - in circumstances of crisis, where the consequences seem much clearer.

In the final discussion at Viewpoint two kinds of ideas emerged. One was an assertion of the responsibility of management and the recognition of management which stemmed from that responsibility. The other was the idea of sanctions which might apply to workers who got into trouble in the future. The consequences of future alleged misdemeanours might be made worse by a management upset by critical remarks made in the transcripts of earlier discussions. Now in these earlier discussions there was no sign at all of any recognition of management's responsibility. Very much the reverse - managers were under criticism for encroaching on the responsibility felt by the workforce for implementing "residents' rights". And certainly there was no sign of any fear of sanctions in the enforcement of management's responsibilities. So what had happened in the meantime? The staff's idea of residents rights, implemented without management interference, evoked in management the idea of a challenge to its responsibility. In

the crisis which followed, both the idea of management responsibility and the sanctions which accompany it were brought to the fore. Both were the answer to that challenge. So much so that the protagonists of the alternative view - of the direct responsibility of staff to implement the rights of residents - were almost completely silenced - some of them, at least, through fear of sanctions (footnote: the person who volunteered this information came in off his annual leave to take part in the discussion). Management responsibility, in both senses - as an idea and a wielding of sanctions - was transformed from an annoyance to a supreme power at Viewpoint. The discussions there ended in its overwhelming triumph. the alternative view had been paralleled by sanctions which, in crisis, could not be expected to equal those of management. They were of a passive sort, consisting of the ability of the care staff to make use of the separate nature of each flat, where management supervision could reach only with difficulty'.

Dennis, who had previously put forward the clearest "residents' rights" arguments, and was now awaiting the outcome of his application for social work training, was too demoralised to come to the final discussion (as it happened, his application was unsuccessful).

An important caveat must be entered about this. The discussions themselves were very much part of this crisis. Those who had earlier expressed the principle of residents' rights and the care staff's autonomy from management, and stayed away from the final discussion may well not have changed their ideas at all. Nor is it necessarily the case that Peter, who was instrumental in advancing the idea of management responsibility at the end, had subscribed to that idea any less at the outset. But, through the forum of the tape-recorded discussions, the conflict discouraged the one and helped bring the other to the fore. Peter's advocacy of management responsibility, and his own expression of interest in becoming a manager, were now as confident as others had been in "slagging them off" (p.107) a few weeks before. The question is whether this outcome accurately reflects the upheaval taking place in the Home. The author knows of no reason why it should not².

An important question is whether there was a direct relationship between principles and ideas of sanctions here. For the wielders of sanctions, no doubt the answer is yes. It is only reasonable to suppose that to the extent that they actually brought those sanctions to bear, their ideas gave them encouragement and perhaps justification (there has to be some doubt as to whether the officer in charge really did threaten sanctions. Whether she did or not, according to Bill there was a feeling that she might use them in the future). But what of those on the receiving end? This, after all, is where the issue of legitimacy arises. All that can be said is that there is no reason whatever to suppose that ideas in the minds of either side justified the other's use of sanctions.

Summary of the effect of the responsibility crisis at Viewpoint:

Source	Principle:	Idea of sanctions:
Chapter I, II	Residents' rights/ staff autonomy	Non-co-operation in the flats
~~~~~	↑ ~~~~~	↑ ~~~~~
	CRISIS	
Chapter V	Management responsibility	Fear of being called to account in future trouble

↑ = direction of replacement of idea

↑ = direction of successful  
use of sanctions

The strengthening of one principle at the expense of another has been brought about through the successful effect of its parallel sanctions and the consequent confidence instilled in one group and demoralisation of the other.

A second example comes from the Chemistry Building where one aspect of the idea "Your know your job" was that it had been an argument against cuts:

Carol: "I think... through the years, with all the cutbacks and that, new people starting are getting a lot more work added onto them. You know, we've been here for years, we know what our job is."

"Aye."

"There's no way we get two rooms..." (p.9)

However, in a later discussion, the women faced the prospect of further cutbacks. Supposing the University cut its cleaning budget and accepted that it would mean a lower standard?

"Last one in will be the first one out."

"Aye."

"I think people will just lose interest in the place, you know it willna get done right at all."

"Aha."

".....they'll no bother will they."

Carol: "If that's the standard of cleaning they want, that's the standard of cleaning they'll get. That's all you can do about it."

"That's what I'm saying."

"We're no machines, we're no scrubbing..."

"...very many women will take two jobs just to keep our job."

"...in a way it'll end up an easier job, because there's no way we'll be scrubb'n, hoovr'n and gett'n everyth'n'else done."

"They can get rid of the machines as well and make some money!"

(laughs)

"That'll make em a couple of pound!"

"I mean there's no way is anybody going to take on three or four rooms and do the work as it should be done - "

"No."

"No."



- and sweat, I mean, for what?"

"I don't think I would stay if the work was divided that way...

"...far too much to do."

"Well you just wouldna have too much to do because you just wouldna do it. ...at the end of the day you'd probably find you'd got an easier job. You're covering more rooms but you're no scrubbing."

"Oh no."

"...polishing." (p.33)

At the same time they discussed whether they thought they could do anything about it:

several: "No."

"Vote to go on strike."

"Go to your union."

"I doubt the union could do anything."

hubbub

Carol: "You won't get the support for going on strike. People are too frightened for their jobs to strike. That's really what's wrong. Course the power isn't there, the unions haven't got the same power as they had years ago."

Carol: "That's been taken away from them."

"But I mean there's a lot of unemployment now so there's no as many people in the unions now. And they've no got the money...either, because they're no gett'n the contributions."

silence

"I think they put the fright of them with the miners. And when you think the strike went on for one year and some of the men were reinstated and have still no been reinstated in the mines like. They've been reinstated by the government but no by the mines. And I think this is at the back of everybody's mind. You could come on strike and they can sack you. That's what they can do. They can just sack you now. And you see you've no got any rights. And she's took them all."

(two:) "She's took them all."

"She's took all the power away from the unions."

"...we're just the wee ones. We just do what we're told..." (pp 33, 34)

What seems to be at work here is precisely the destruction of one set of parallel ideas and sanctions by another. The "no way we get two rooms" idea had been defended by sanctions - a union instruction not to do extra work brought in as part of earlier cuts. But "no way we get two rooms" is being turned into "three rooms" and the idea of workers' sanctions is being crushed in the face of the idea of management sanctions (cuts obviously translate into the idea of sackings), against the background of the miners' defeat. And the final remark may signify the emergence of another idea, of powerlessness, in parallel with these unequal sanctions.

# Summary of the effect of the cuts crisis in the Chemistry Building:

Source	Principle:	Idea of sanctions:
Chapter II	"We know our job"/ "no way two rooms"	Union intervention/ extra work refused
~~~~~	~~~~~	~~~~~
Chapter V	"Three rooms"/"no scrubbing/polishing"	Cuts (ie redundancy)

↑ = direction of replacement of idea

↑ = direction of successful
use of sanctions

Here, then, is a possible explanation. Where a parallel 'pair' of ideas and sanctions come into conflict with another 'pair', both pairs are affected by the outcome. The idea of the successful use of sanctions strengthens the principles which parallel them simply because it gives those with the ideas more confidence to express them. The principles may well, in turn, strengthen the potential for wielding sanctions, although we do not know that it happens in this case. Equally, the idea of the unsuccessful use of sanctions, through the demoralisation of those who wield them, tends to weaken the parallel principles which are, in turn, in a weaker position to justify the future use of sanctions. Thus the idea of the successful use of sanctions tends to replace one principle with another.

This hypothesis also seems capable of illuminating the discussion about the 1984 miners strike in the three workplaces: Strikes can be thought of as overcoming the weakness of workers and exploiting a potential weakness in the employer. As Helen, at Viewpoint, said:

You see the last strike dennis was nothing to do with money. The last strike was because they were selling their jobs, right? ...now what the argument was, the young ones were say'n they're selling the their jobs for the next generation. And you see normally it is for a rise. And so the miners have got a rise. But this time it wasnay. Plus, never before, if one miner out the crowd decides to go t'their work, never would you get a police escort. They would have stepped out the house and two hard men would a'says "Get back in!" one way or another. And that would have been it. But you see it was like an army. And it was just like a fight against the other (army)... (p.140)

The miners were defeated by the use of superior sanctions. And the resulting demoralisation is visible in the three workplaces three years later. The encouragement it gave to people with Thatcherite ideas about the economy is all too obvious. Although there was no opportunity to study it here, union activists have often noticed the upsurge of socialist ideas which tend to accompany strikes. And if they succeed then the effect can be

long-lasting. It is worth pointing again to the Labour victory in 1974 in the aftermath of a successful confrontation between the miners and the government.

Perhaps significantly, Helen also makes a point which confirms that she does not believe opposing sanctions have directly affected whatever principle might justify the idea of a strike:

...so folk have mair interest in their standing orders in the bank than...in principles. And they ken that if you go on strike...and they canna pay the standing orders, they're standing all right - outside! because they can lose everything. And that's why people dinna go on strike now...no because they dinna believe in strike. (Part III p.41)

Summary of the effect of the 1984 miners' strike:

Principle:	Idea of sanctions:
Workers power/ Save jobs	Strike
↑	↑
~~~~~↑~~~~~CRISIS~~~~~↑~~~~~	
↑	↑
Thatcherism/ Free the market	Police activity

↑ = direction of replacement of idea

↑ = direction of successful use of sanctions

The lines of the hypothesis can now be drawn more finely. There is no evidence which points to a direct relationship between principle and a parallel idea of sanctions - except in a crisis where opposing sanctions come into conflict. When this happens, principle provides justification, and perhaps even stimulation, for the idea of the use of sanctions - but only in the minds of those who wield them. Sanctions which prove superior in such conflict greatly encourage those who hold to their parallel ideas. Sanctions which prove inferior, and are overcome or diminished, demoralise those who hold to their parallel ideas which then lose some of their capability for justifying or encouraging future use of sanctions.

Here then is a mechanism which could, over time, account for the selection and enforcement of powerful ideas of powerlessness (see Part IV Chapter II). The successful use of sanctions diminishes opposing ideas by demoralising those wielding opposing sanctions. Capitalism's whole system of power does, crucially, include ideas. They are in no sense 'reflections' of sanctions. They may indeed have nothing whatever to do with sanctions in any sense. But crises involving the successful use of sanctions promote and degrade ideas parallel to successful and unsuccessful sanctions. The two discussions, in the Chemistry Building and at Viewpoint, suggest that there are no hidden mysteries, no masks, no imaginary relations, no concealments.

Can this mechanism be applied to Marx's view of the rise of capitalism and Weber's of the emergence of the spirit of capitalism out of Protestant asceticism?

For Marx a crucial factor - if not the crucial factor - was the dispossession of people from the means of agricultural production. This took place in the form of evictions and enclosures of common land stretching from the end of feudalism to the eighteenth century. So it can be argued that for every community where this happened, it was a major crisis which entailed the use of violent sanctions. People in the countryside had the law on their side for several hundred years. But its sanctions proved ineffectual in the face of coercive force. The hypothesis would predict that each crisis of successful eviction or closure, in overcoming the resistance of the dispossessed, would simultaneously demoralise the advocates of the old obligations and so make it even harder for those old ideas to justify and advocate sanctions in their name in the future. At the same time, it would give the parallel ideas, of private property, one more push to the fore, inside Parliament and out.

Summary of the effect of dispossession crises:

Principle:	Idea of sanctions:
Feudal/clan/individual property	Direct resistance/ legal sanctions
↑	↑
~~~~~↑~~~~~CRISIS~~~~~↑~~~~~	
↑	↑
Private property	Violent dispossession

↑ = direction of replacement of idea

↑ = direction of successful use of sanctions

For Weber, "Puritanical ideals tended to give way under excessive pressure from the temptation of wealth"³. The very breakdown of the idea of creating wealth to the glory of God itself encouraged a return to fundamentals on the part of those of lower status. The result was a succession of Protestant revivals. The breakdown must have been something of a crisis even for the faithful. People who were once part of the same religious community would have been transformed from being predestined for salvation to being damned. But for those whose wealth removed them from the religious community, the crisis must have been far greater. Whether we think of this applying to individuals in their own lifetimes or across generations in the same family, the crisis of temptation steadily resolves itself in favour of the secular. The sanctions of the market place prove superior to those of the soul. The secular ideas paralleling the market at once replace the discomfort of damnation.

Summary of the effect of temptation crises:

Principle:	Idea of sanctions:
Duty of diligence for God's sake	Damnation
↑	↑
~~~~~↑~~~~~CRISIS~~~~~↑~~~~~	~~~~~↑~~~~~
↑	↑
Duty of diligence for money's sake	Market

↑ = direction of replacement of idea

↑ = direction of successful use of sanctions

For the faithful capitalist or, possibly, labourer, the promise of salvation and the fear of damnation compel the duty of diligence. The difficulty is that this is exactly the activity most likely to lead to gain. As the temptation crisis, driven by the superiority of market forces over fear damnation, resolves itself in favour of gain, the door to the kingdom of heaven is slammed shut. There is no going back. All is preordained. Calvinism and its sectarian progeny know no absolution of sins. The secular spirit of capitalism is the only possible replacement for the intolerable knowledge of damnation. Religious ideas can never again promote the effective use of parallel religious sanctions over those it has driven out of the religious community. It can only be a matter of time before that spirit, and the parallel sanctions of the market place, prosper at the expense both of God's glory and psychological power.

It may even be that this approach offers a way of solving the riddle posed in the last chapter of the effectiveness of the Spirit of Capitalism. Fierce competition between two capitalists in the same market can certainly involve a clash of mutually opposed sanctions. Perhaps in such circumstances, where profit margins are as tight as competition can make them, the power of ideas could be decisive. Spiritually driven self-denial, scrupulously careful book-keeping, paying creditors punctually, abstention from drink and the rest may be more effective as a practical response to such competition. And if the capitalist who puts 'spirit' into practice in this way ends up breaking the competition, he is likely to be greatly encouraged in his commitment to these ideas. This can, of course, be no more than speculation.

However, both Weber and Marx can be embraced by this approach. The idea of the successful use of sanctions encourages those with ideas which parallel those sanctions. By defeating the use of opposing sanctions it causes demoralisation and so reduces the capacity of ideas paralleling the defeated sanctions to justify and stimulate their future use. At the end of a long succession of such crises, dispossessive force has overcome all physical resistance. At the same time the parallel idea of private property

has replaced that of feudal property and individual property in production. For the idea of a duty of diligence for God to be replaced by that of duty to be diligent for money's sake, the parallel sanctions of the market place must climb into the saddle and put those of religion to flight.

That powerful ideas and sanctions which compel the same ends should normally be independent of each other seems, at first sight, to be a mystery. How could completely unrelated and quite different kinds of power come to produce identical effects? What has been suggested is that they meet and can be reinforced, or weakened, in periodic clashes between opposing sanctions.

Finally there is the issue, mentioned at the start of this chapter, of ideas justifying the use of sanctions in the three workplaces. In the Chemistry Building there were certainly some people for whom the cuts represented automatic justification for strike action (Part I p.32). At Viewpoint, the low pay of care staff provided automatic justification for striking at least in Dennis' eyes (Part III p.43). Even if this is a view widely shared there, there are obvious obstacles in the way of putting it into practice in an Old peoples' Home. However, at Island Laundry it was clear that low wages compared to outside industry provided complete and automatic justification for striking for everyone present. Lack of support was, on good evidence from the past, attributed to others. It may be significant that there was less evidence of demoralisation from the miners' strike in the Island Laundry discussions. Certainly the workforce there would seem to have very much more effective sanctions available to it than the other two. Several discussions at Island Laundry leave little room for doubt that the necessary ideas exist there to justify and encourage the use of sanctions in the future. In one discussion the practical impediment provided by the threat of privatisation is carefully weighed (Part III pp.3 and 4). This is thought to be what holds the rest of the workforce back. Lack of justification seems not to be the problem. In other words, the necessary powerful ideas which would encourage a strike are in position - the Health Board's breach of its obligation to pay wages measured by the yardstick of outside industry. The question of when strike action does take place therefore appears to depend on ideas about its dangers.

Two sorts of ideas are relevant to this. The first concerns the unity of the workforce and the separation between these workers and the union discussed in Part IV. Ideas about unity were quite strongly present in Part IV Chapter VII. The work of trade unions is evidently crucial to bringing the sanctions available to these workers to bear in remedying their deeply felt grievances.

The second sort of idea concerns the economy as a whole. At the time of writing, the Government has been making promising noises about the state of the economy for some time. This is very much a double edged weapon. Although it proclaims the success of Thatcherism, it does so in a way which stands to rebuild the effectiveness of workers' sanctions. It runs the risk of steadily creating an infectious climate of confidence. It is obviously not possible to create business confidence without also creating the very conditions which make it vulnerable to the successful use of strike action in private industry. It can only be a matter of time before groups of workers find themselves able to make the kind of fine calculation about the

risk of striking seen at Island laundry in a way which will lead them to do it - and do it successfully. It is worth pointing out that workers' sanctions are very much intact. Trade union membership is still high - far higher than in the pre-war depression - even if it has not yet penetrated some of the most advanced sectors. Most of the new legal restrictions on strike action depend on the willingness of workers to obey them. Without that willingness, they are likely to be as ineffectual as medieval statutes against eviction and enclosure. The sanctions available to workers continue to be as fearsome as ever they were. The modern sanction of a united workforce rests with the absolute dependence of production and services on its co-operation.

Demoralisation from the application of overwhelming state sanctions during the miners' strike has, in all kinds of ways, simply pushed ideas of workers' power onto the back burner. They are still there. Indeed the extent of the miners' defeat leaves the Government exposed to the consequences of successful strikes in the future. The ensuing confidence of the workforce is likely to be every bit as infectious as the demoralisation of cuts and the miners' strike. Judging by the anger felt towards Mrs Thatcher in these three workplaces, the mechanism of crisis, seen operating against the power of workers in two of the workplaces studied, could operate in its favour with a vengeance in the future. Making up lost ground could be a very encouraging process

## PART VII

### OVERCOMING SEPARATION

Each chapter of this section provides a conclusion to each of the previous sections, by completing the analysis and putting practical proposals, which address that analysis, to the three bodies of ideas and people - the union, socialism and social research.

Chapter I argues for four separate measures whose aim is to reunify the union with the basis of its power, by enfranchising the workplace within the union rule book, changing the way its officers approach the workplace, re-introducing a form of accountability of officers to the membership and flattening out the ladder of pay and status in the union's own workforce. Chapter II examines why Socialism fails to reflect, nurture and reinforce potentially socialist ideas in the workplace and finds, through the opportunity for cutting working hours presented by mass unemployment, a means of tackling socialism's separation from work, workers and workplace. Chapter III draws together the threads of the analysis and argues that in Max Weber's concept of 'adequacy at the level of meaning' is the basis of a link between the world of social research and the world of the workplace, in which communication cannot all flow in one direction without breaching the requirements of his method.

#### Contents:

Chapter	I	REUNIFYING THE UNION	page	264
		APPENDIX	page	274
Chapter	II	RECLAIMING LABOUR	page	276
Chapter	III	REGROUNDING RESEARCH	page	285



Part IV showed that the powerful ideas of powerlessness, discussed in the first two chapters, found an echo in ideas about the union in Chapter III. This was not because its members failed to subscribe to the principles upon which trade unionism depends. In one way or another, almost all showed that they upheld the principles of mutual support and the unity of the workforce - but independently of the union. Nor was it because they were unaware of the basis of union power - ultimately the capacity of a united workforce to withdraw its labour. It was because power appeared to reside in the same place in the union as in the rest of the world of human affairs - at the 'top'. The basis of union power had become divorced from where it now appeared to be.

There may be some people who will want to argue in favour of unions as 'external agencies', as the 'Warwick Report' put it. For them this state of affairs is, for the moment, perfectly satisfactory. "The Union" can simply be a conveyor belt for free legal assistance, annual going-rate pay rises, professional representation at disciplinary, grievance and Tribunal hearings. And it can wield the appropriate enforcement procedure when employers breach the Health and Safety at Work Act, the Redundancy Regulations and other remaining statutory provisions at work. However, Mrs Thatcher has already shown that nothing is sacred in this field. Almost all these things are highly vulnerable to further demolition, whether by legislation or the simple withdrawal of real recognition which privatisation brings with it. A Union as an external agency is likely to be doomed, and sooner rather than later.

Clearly there is another view of what unions are. Every gain that has ever been made has stemmed directly from the central principle that individual workers can overcome their weakness in relation to the employer, by uniting with fellow workers. Of course, a union in this sense is able to make use of other forms of power, such as labour shortages in periods of full employment or legislation during Labour Governments. But in the last analysis the only power at the union's disposal is that which its members possess by their unity. There is no other power independent of the employer's power. Logically, if the idea of union power becomes separated from the idea of the united power of workers, the union stands to be weakened. Members will expect the union to use its power, without their involvement, in their interests. And, when it appears to fail, they will feel betrayed, leaving the union that much less able to draw on the unity of members in the future. This weakness can be illustrated from the three workplaces:

...the other big thing that affects...the Health Service is the privatisation aspect. I mean if the unions are so sure of themselves, and they're sort o'saying "We are all for the working people", how can they let things like that happen? (Island Laundry p.85)

"I doubt the union could do anything."

"...the unions have a strike."

"...the union bosses would meet the top of the tree."

"Oh well, we'd be as well without a union if the union canna fight for you any more." (Chemistry Building p.33)

In trying to overcome the separation between an 'external' union and its membership (or between the apparent location of its power and the true source of that power), one of the two must make at least the first move. Now, intitial movement in one of them can be ruled out. No amount of exhortation, no amount of extra sophistication in 'getting the message across' can possibly turn the members into 'the union'. It is in the very nature of the problem that 'the union' cannot reach its members in order to undertake the necessary transformation. Only 'the union' can move. Only it can make the intitial changes necessary to enable the members to begin to rediscover the union's power in their own workplace and in their own experience rather than "up there".

That this is so follows directly from the evidence of the three workplaces. What does not follow from this study is how the union should begin to transform itself from what the Warwick team called an 'external agency' into something which its members can grasp as their own. Although the remainder of this chapter addresses itself directly to the evidence from this study, there is no reason for treating it as other than the author's suggestions for action. It cannot claim to be in any way better than anyone else's ideas. Far from it. The problems of a collectivity need to be thought about collectively. On the other hand it would be unreasonable to draw attention to so serious a problem without offering any solutions at all. If the problem itself finds its proper place on the agenda, these suggestions will have achieved their aim.'

#### 1. Reunifying union power by enfranchising the place of work

When the steward at the Chemistry Building goes to a branch meeting and, when Island Laundry's newest steward goes to a District Committee meeting, they both enter a different world. By so doing they become part of that world. They can find themselves stuck with trying to represent it to the members back in the workplace. Like the Chemistry Building:

Steward: If you're paying you're money, you're the union.

Member: We are the union if we're paying our money she says!  
laughter. (p.30)

For the steward at Island Laundry with less than a year's experience, her own transition to this other world is difficult. An unfamiliar language, for instance about minutes of previous meetings, and the unfamiliar roles of officials, have to be grasped. It seems to take time and training to get on top of the "rights" of members back in the workplace - not to mention the "rights" of the steward to get them honoured. She described that other world in terms which could only be understood from the listener's knowledge of an employer:

As I say, when I joined, they never said to me "This is Sandy Miller...and this is what he does." I still don't know what that means. Ray Kennedy, again, he's higher than Sandy. So I don't know what he is... I think they should really tell you who is serving you - and their boss too, further up, further up.... (p.82)

...that's not how I would run it (the union). (p.81)

I think you need the higher-up lads.... (p.84)

Now I don't know if you had the right to object to Ray Kennedy and Sandy Miller... In a way I thought they're sort o'our boss o'the union. And I thought, well, they tell us "That's right" y'ken. So we must accept it. (p.88)

But, then when you've got somebody above, like Ray Kennedy, agreeing to it, I don't know if I've got the right...to say "Well, I dinna agree with this" y'ken? I'm a shop steward, aren't I. ...I mean who am I to say "That's no right?" That must be Union Rule, y'ken? I don't know. I just don't know (p.90).

As so often in these discussions, they steer us in the direction of a solution to the problem:

Stuart: Are you, as a shop steward, bound to agree with everything the union puts forward?

Irene: I dinna ken. It doesna say anything about that in the -

Katrina: Well, I dinna think that's right -

Irene: But if he agrees wi'management -

Fiona: Well it shouldna be up to him.

Katrina: Well it shouldna be up to him. (p.90)

The steward, by the sound of it, has tried to get the answer from the Rule Book. And despite the intention of the Warwick Report to bring the structure within reach of members, it is not there.

The Rule Book cannot provide all the answers. But when people go looking for one there, it most certainly can. And in countless other ways it does. In both the cases referred to, the Rule Book could act as a guide to the unbelieving and a source of remedy to the aggrieved and dissatisfied. Otherwise The answer is the one which, implicitly, emerges in all three workplaces: This Union Belongs to Somebody Else.

Filling the gap left in the 'Warwick structure' should clearly define the collective rights of members. A rule spelling out the powers of the Workplace or Section would only do for members what the rule book already does for the Branch, the District Committee, the Area Committee, the Divisional Council, the Divisional Conference, the National Committees, the Executive Council and the National Conference. It could cover:

1. An entitlement to elect and be represented by a steward;
2. Enough detail for people with no knowledge of the union to put into practice a proper method of holding a steward election meeting;
3. The steward's obligation to ensure the annual steward election is actually held, with redress for members where it is not;
4. Entitlement to have workplace or section meetings held regularly and whenever members wish, and have the steward bound by its decisions (so long as they do not offend the Rules or undermine the Union Agreement);
5. Entitlement to receive reports from the steward on any meetings attended in that capacity, and, in particular, reports on the problems and condition of the union in other parts of the same workforce;

6. Entitlement to be consulted on any proposed changes in working practices, conditions and wages.

A possible draft covering these points is included as an Appendix².

One of the provisions of the rule on Union Stewards requires them to "report to the Branch Committee all developments affecting members in their section of workplace" (Rule 22.4(d)). However, no specific provision for this appears in the list of functions of the Branch Committee itself. As part of any attempt to focus the attention of the union on the workplace, and build up its strength, this gap could usefully be filled. The same provision could also be inserted in the rule covering the District Committee. That the attention of these bodies is not focused in this direction is reflected in the fact that there is no formal requirement that they should hear reports from each steward who attends. Are District Committees too big, or the remainder of their business too important for this? Perhaps, in considering such priorities, the question is, what is the union? Is it, first and foremost, the members in their places of work? Or is it something else - something outside, an "external agency"?³

This logic could be followed throughout the existing structure of committees. At present the requirement is for reports to flow from top to bottom. This 'post-Warwick' characteristic endorses the view of union power lying at the top rather than with the membership. If reports came from whatever part of the union the delegate represented - say a District represented on an Area Committee - the focus could be switched to one of mutual support and the requirements of building up the strength of Districts throughout the Area. Again, the relevant question is what more important business is currently transacted by each of these bodies?

There would be a further important consequence. These bodies all distribute written reports. If those reports reflected developments in the places where delegates came from, it would give an even wider recognition to the reality of the parts of the union closest to the membership. Here is a very simple way to switch the attention of people who attend meetings to helping each other in their union work, and away from questions of what someone "up there" should do for them.

## 2. Reunifying union power through the work of officers

The few full union time officers who appear in the transcripts loom very large indeed.

Picking over the bones of the bonus-protection issue at Island Laundry afterwards, those who took part in the discussion felt they could have done better. There were several points at which they evaluated the industrial strength of the workforce. They bore in mind the threat of privatisation, a strike which had weakened at the very moment when the employer had been in trouble and another strike which had involved only partial support. And they took into account the increasing concentration of laundry work and new machinery on the site. There is no point in trying to improve on their own view. Whether they had the power to extract a better offer through negotiation is not the important issue. What is important is that they felt let down.

Why had they? The steward who had been present believed something had been agreed in the office before the two stewards got there. At the subsequent mass meeting nobody had felt able to challenge the full time officer's 31% figure. The steward was uncertain about her right to do so. Those who took part in the discussions felt the figure to be unfair, bearing in mind the co-operation they were being asked to give, the extra work coming in, the amount of bonus paid in other laundries and the bonus paid to porters over the road in the hospital. And they felt the knowledge of the laundry which comes from working in it meant they, and not the officers, were qualified to know if the offer was right.

The implications of their view are serious - particularly in a workplace which has proved so disunited in the past. Only if the stewards are confident that the best possible result had been achieved will they be in a position to tackle the splits and build up the unity of the membership. On the face of it, here is a workplace which should be a principal focus of trade union power. But instead of the bonus issue providing an opportunity to strengthen trade union power **within** the workplace, it appears to have been an opportunity for the union as an **outside agency** to sell itself to the workforce. It was a failure on both counts and can only have left the **union within** weakened. And it confirmed the appearance of union power as the property of officials. At no point in the discussion about this does anybody mention the need to try and do anything about the divided workforce. It is not hard to see why. It had not been allowed to become a relevant factor.

What changes in the practice of branch and full time officers could begin to reverse the effect of such an encounter between officer and members?

I mean it must have been all discussed before Ann and I went in the office (p.88).

Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. But why should it not become recognised practice to ensure that the steward is always present? If there are those who believe significant union power lies in confidential relationships with management, the onus is on them to make their case.

They should have spoke over with the shop stewards. And the shop stewards should have come back t'the shop flair and discussed it t'the workers - and then went back - if it was acceptable or not. (p.88)

I mean by rights they should come to us and say to us "Look, this is bla, bla, bla". And "Do you think this is OK?" Or "Do you no think it's enough?" ...no management's going to give you too much to start with... But I mean how can they walk in, have a meeting, walk out to the stewards and then say "I've got you" - that's how they say it to you - "I've got you 31% protected bonus"...? (p.89)

In other words, a genuine flow of consultation is necessary, rather than what seems to the workforce like the presentation of a fait accompli.

I still find it hard that they two people in particular - Ray Kennedy and Sandy Miller, they're the only two that I've been associated with in the union - how they can come into our building, and Parker can put

a proposition to them and they can say "That's fine, I'll tell the workers" (p.89).

Whoever brings proposals back to members for consideration should set out in detail the elements of the balance of power with the employer as they see them. The discussion should centre on the strength of the union on the ground, (bearing in mind such other considerations as the use of disputes machinery, the provisions of existing Agreements and so on). It is, through open discussion, the opportunity this gives the membership to evaluate its own union power which is important. Awareness of its relevance is what provides more active members with the means of gaining greater commitment from the less active - and, of course, bringing in non-members.

So I mean how can they negotiate something o' that nature instead of us?  
I mean we're the workers, we're doing it, we work in the place...  
(p.89)

Negotiations with management should be undertaken by the representatives closest to the membership - wherever possible, the stewards. Whenever possible the role of those further away should be to provide advice and information to supplement the knowledge which comes from "working in the place". Again, whenever possible, that advice should be given outside meetings with management, but, where officers do attend themselves, their role should be that of advisers whose help is provided during adjournments rather than in open discussion. Members are much more likely to see the power of the union in the workplace reflected in an agreement reached by their own stewards than if "the union bosses talk to the top o' the tree."

We had discussed it prior to that - no a great deal - but he knew we were looking for a lot more than that (p.89).

Now I couldna possibly sit at that table with him - and him stand up and say "This is the best deal" if I totally disagreed wi'im. So what would I be able to do? Would I be allowed to say "Now look...I dinna agree with that"? What would be my rights then? (p.90)

Perhaps recognised rights there could be. But it seems extraordinary to have to legislate against failing to listen to, and reach agreement with stewards, in negotiations with management. And its effectiveness must be doubted. If the sensitivity of male officers to women stewards is as big a problem as this, it is surely ripe for being thoroughly politicised.

This chapter began by arguing that in trying to close the gap between the union as an 'outside agency' and the union in the workplace, only the outside agency can make the first move. Since the bearers of its apparent power are often, but not exclusively, full time officers, changes in their method of working must be part of the agenda. The Warwick team likewise:

have argued throughout the report that Officers should deploy their attention towards strengthening areas of weak organisation  
(Organisation and Change in NUPE p.59).

However, the last thing that could achieve this is the union as a whole using the prerogatives of the employer to enforce changes. For anything so

important to get caught up in the supervisory relationships between officers at different levels in the ladder of authority would be similarly counter-productive. But if the union is serious about concentrating its officers into the direct task of building up the union where it is weak, this involves a significant change in what is expected of them.

A way of avoiding unnecessary and probably damaging conflict would be to ask the officers to tackle the problem collectively. This could involve working towards a code of practice for interventions in the workplace designed to strengthen the union there, rather than selling members an external service, which weakens it. Many officers see themselves as 'organisers' whose work is in any case aimed directly at encouraging self-reliant workplace trade unionism. But this does not make it any easier to throw off methods of working, encouraged by members' need for help, which have the opposite effect. This is where collective self-education would help to identify the kinds of approach which help rather than hinder workplace power and turn them into universal practice.

This is not to argue that the negotiating experience of officers is no longer needed. It is needed more than ever at a time when frequent meetings with employers affect the incomes and jobs of huge numbers of members. But the first question is whether, by concentrating education and advice, rather than professional negotiating, into every possible workplace, they can make a significant contribution to rebuilding union power. And the second is this. Where there is contact between full time officers and members, how can it become an educational experience in which members discover their power rather than witness a display of the apparently magical skills - or lack of them - of the full time officer?

However, full-time officers cannot be left to treat their work simply as a 'professional' activity which needs to be rethought - especially as the problem is not limited to them. Active members in any capacity, and none, need to be involved if significant change is to occur. What is required is a collective solution, involving everyone who works for the union, paid or unpaid. The need is to find ways out of methods of working which constantly have the effect of appearing to locate power 'up there' and so weaken it in the workforce. After all, until a few years ago it was possible to take the power of the workforce for granted. For some officers, their job was to tame and channel it. That it might ever become our task to help people to rediscover the union in that power would have been regarded as sheer provocation.

#### Reunifying the union through the accountability of officers

At the same time, the practice of branch and full time officers can, on its own, make only a small impact on the divorce of union power from that of the membership. The three workplaces show that the view of the union officer as the bearer of union power is a reflection of a much wider view of the world. We are certainly not in a position to argue that the members who used these terms are simply 'wrong':

The union bosses would meet the top of the tree. (Chemistry Buildingp.33)

In one respect I think you need the higher up lads. (Island Laundry p.83)

...the boys up there with the power... Personally I dinna feel, maybe, they do enough for the so-called wee shower - the boys who work... But who are they shout'n at? Who are they shout'n for? I dinna feel they're shout'n for us. (Island Laundry p.84)

...the ones above us agreed... (Island Laundry p.87)

I don't know, because they had discussed it with management and, well, in a way I thought they're sort o'our boss o'the union. (Island Laundry p.88)

...and it's all the big guys that have got all the say, I think... (Viewpoint p.142)

In not one case were these words uttered in a spirit of mischief. They are what union officers really do appear to be. These images arise in a world of images. In that world the union has no control whatever over them. All it can do is make sure its own active members are in a position to demonstrate to everyone else that the images are false. But can they do that?

Until the beginning of the seventies there is one respect in which they could. They could point to the union's system of officer accountability and show that full time officers were servants of the union, not bosses. Delegates to six-monthly Area Conferences, based on counties, were elected at branch meetings. They received a written report itemising every case the officer had dealt with over that period, and its outcome. These could be individually questioned and criticised by delegates - and were. It was perfectly feasible for a branch to send its delegate along to an Area Conference with specific instructions to voice its discontent over the handling of a single case. By the time the Warwick team carried out its research, this accountability had, in most cases, been abolished some time before, at the request of the officers. But even then they reported:

... those (delegates) who remember the "old style" Area Conference, when Officers reported on each case in hand in the Area (and one or two still follow this procedure), argue that much has been lost in moving away from such a system. In "the old days", we have been told, at least it was possible to see just what had and had not been achieved by the Union in the Area. (Organisation and Change in NUPE para 11.2)^a

Of course the nature of the task to be accounted for could not be the same today. But there is no reason why accountability for work done in strengthening the organisation of weaker workplaces or training or advising stewards should not take its place. In rebuilding union power, the case for this kind of practical accountability of officers, through delegates, to the membership they work for, is a very strong one. Accountability cannot be a matter of voluntary practice. In that case it amounts to doing people a favour. To make any difference to the question of where power is located in the union, it must be an absolute requirement.



## Reunifying union power through the unification of 'top' and 'bottom'

At Island Laundry, the steward of nine months mentioned the full time officer in these terms:

Ray Kennedy, again, he's higher than Sandy (branch secretary). So I don't know what he is... I think they should really tell you who is serving you - and their boss too, further up, further up.... (p.82)

It would be very hard to argue that this imagery of the union administration, based, as it is, on that of any employer, is false. As a career structure for its full time officers, it is identical to any other ladder of offices. At the bottom are negotiators who handle local negotiations. Promotion leads to slightly more important negotiating bodies and further promotion leads to the most important of all - national negotiating bodies. The ladder of promotion exactly fits - and cannot fail to reinforce - the myth of union power residing at the top. Nobody has ever asked whether this is the most sensible way for the union to organise its employees. The unstated assumption is, as in any ladder of promotion, that satisfaction with lower salaries at the lower levels will be sustained by the prospect of later promotion to higher office. Again nobody has ever asked whether this actually works in practice. Are officers in any way motivated to work well by the prospect of promotion? If so, it is difficult to see how the right sort of work could be got out of anyone by such means.

In other words, the career structure of full-time union office is essentially founded upon the same assumptions as that of the management of any medium-sized employer. Is the imagery employed by the steward at Island Laundry 'wrong'?

But do national negotiators do a job which could, in any sense, be regarded as more valuable than that done by local full time officers? What proportion of any pay rise could be accounted for by the special skills of a national negotiator, as opposed to the relative strength or weakness of the membership? No doubt it would be possible for the job to be done incompetently and members could be sold short. But assuming this is not the case, a wage settlement is precisely an index of industrial muscle, or lack of it, and the position of members in the labour market at the time. A few years ago the union's then national negotiators would certainly have claimed otherwise. But it is unlikely that the occupants of the present posts, especially in the midst of a recession, would have anything but a coldly realistic view of the limitations of their jobs. Yet the presumed greater value of what they do is the dubious basis of both rung and ladder.

If the ladder of status and salary were removed from these posts, it is improbable that the queue of applicants would disappear. What reason is there, in a trade union, as opposed to a normal employer of labour, for such a ladder? Administering one of the Divisions, making the union's case on a national negotiating body, organising locally, providing union education, research, or, for that matter, handling the paperwork - they are surely all jobs which are very difficult to distinguish on grounds of importance or value to the membership.⁴

Yet the reality of this ladder is surely the mirror image of the world portrayed in the ideas of union members in the three workplaces (see Part IV Chapters II and III). If union members regarded themselves as anywhere but at the bottom of such a world, this might be unimportant. If they saw it as a world capable of change, it might matter even less. But, unlike members of white collar professional unions, they do see themselves as at the bottom. And, to the extent that changing the top and the bottom is even considered, it is ruled out as completely impossible (Part II p.37).

Is the apparent permanence of these social arrangements consistent with the union's central objectives? Is it compatible with its socialist commitment? Will its members always be the victims of whatever is decided at the top? Will low pay always be with us? Will members always be divided by a proper pecking order? Trade Union power ought to stick out of such a world like a sore thumb. But, as these chapters have shown, that world translates union power into its own kind of power - power located firmly at the top. Unifying the union's own top and bottom, and transforming its "bosses" into its members' servants, would not only help to bring union power more clearly into view. It would help to build that power among its members.

The transcripts in this study show that ladders of money, status and power are the problem. The last thing the union's own ladder could ever be is part of the solution. Taking it down would help to make the union's objectives more feasible. Through its own example, its own model of equality, it would begin to show that a world without a bloated top and an impoverished bottom is a possibility. Here is a potentially powerful idea. Why should not the union put it into practice in its own house?

The union's 'top' and 'bottom' (with the three workplaces for comparison)^s

Gross weekly pay (£)	Union	Island Laundry	Viewpoint	Chemistry Building
500	Gen.Sec 519 Dep.Gen.Sec 483 Ast.Gen.Sec 460			
400	Nat.Sec 405 Nat.Offr 386 Div.Offr 345	Manager 349		
300	Ast.Dv.Offr 305 Area Offcr 286   Area Offcr 231	Manager 276	Of-in-C 292   Of-in-C 267	
200				
100		Worker 105	Care Ast 121 Cook 101 Dom Asst 97	

Clnr 34

## Appendix to Chapter I POSSIBLE POWERS OF MEMBERS IN THEIR PLACE OF WORK

1. The members of the Union shall be entitled to elect and be represented by a steward from among their number in the place where they work. For this purpose, large workplaces may be subdivided, and small workplaces may be grouped together into sections, having regard to the convenience of holding meetings of members in one section or workplace. In the event of any disagreement as to the boundaries of a workplace or section, the matter shall be decided by the branch meeting.

2. The period of office of the steward shall be as set out in Union Rule. In implementing such rule, the members in a workplace or section shall be entitled, by majority on a show of hands at a meeting called to elect a steward, to appoint a returning officer for the purpose of conducting the election. The returning officer shall not be the steward currently in office nor any member standing for that office. He or she shall ask for the names of members to be nominated for the post of steward, each to be nominated by at least two other members. The returning officer shall ask whether members wish the election to be by show of hands or ballot. If by show of hands, he or she shall ask for votes in favour of each candidate, starting with the last nominated, each member having one vote. If by ballot, he or she shall ask each member to write the name of their preferred candidate on a piece of paper. In either case, if no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the returning officer shall eliminate the candidate with the lowest number of votes cast before holding a fresh show of hands or ballot. He or she shall repeat this procedure, as necessary, until a candidate receives a majority of the votes cast. The returning officer shall arrange for the Branch Secretary to be speedily informed of the name of the steward elected.

3. Upon resignation, or during one month prior to the Annual General Meeting of the Branch, the steward shall, with not less than one week's notice, call a meeting of the members in the workplace for the purpose of electing a steward, whether or not he or she wishes to continue in office and whether or not he or she knows of any member likely to be nominated. Where no such meeting has taken place prior to the Annual General Meeting of the Branch, any member of the Union shall be entitled to secure from that meeting an arrangement for the Branch secretary, or other officer of the union, to call a meeting of the workplace or section, within one calendar month, to elect a steward.

4. The members of the Union in a workplace or section shall be entitled to attend a meeting of their number called by the steward quarterly, and more often as he or she considers necessary. In addition the steward shall call a meeting upon the request of a majority of members. Where facilities agreed with the employer permit, such meetings shall take place within working hours. Where not, such meeting shall take place during a break or outside working hours, having regard to the convenience of members. The steward shall, by majority on a show of hands, be bound by any decision of a meeting of members in any subsequent meeting at which he or she is present in the capacity of steward, provided such decision shall not breach Union Rule, nor seek to undermine the Union Agreement with the employer.

5. At a meeting of members of the union in a section or workplace called for the purpose, they shall be entitled to receive from the steward a report on any meeting which he or she has attended in the capacity of steward and to be consulted about the business of any such meeting. Any two members shall be entitled to have a vote taken on any matter arising upon which they wish the steward to be bound by the decision of the members, the decision to be by majority on a show of hands, provided such decision shall not breach Union Rule, nor seek to undermine the Union Agreement with the employer.

6. Where any change in working practices, conditions of employment, or pay, are proposed to be implemented at any discussions between union representatives and the representatives of the employer, members are entitled to be consulted at a meeting for the purpose, which shall be called by the steward for their place of work or section. Where such discussions affect more than one workplace or section, the members in any one workplace or section shall have their votes, counted upon a show of hands, included in the total from which a decision shall be taken by simple majority. Where such discussions affect only the members in the workplace or section, the decision shall be taken by majority on a show of hands at the meeting called to consult members. In either of these cases, the steward and any other officer of the union shall be bound by such decision, provided such decision does not breach Union Rule, nor seek to undermine the Union Agreement with the employer. At any meeting called to consult members, all members, including the steward, shall be free and unfettered in the questions they may wish to raise and the views they may wish to express.

For Marx, capitalism had torn people away from the means of production - and kept them apart from it. On the other hand, this same system of production placed in the workers' hands the very power needed to repossess it in a new form. What went on in the workplace was therefore at the centre of the socialist tradition in which his ideas became so hugely influential.

Part V argued that socialism has become separated from work because private property has become separated from most people's work. A vital link in Marx's analysis has been severed. Private property was, at one and the same time, the nature of power in the capitalist world as a whole and the means of control over the workers. Socialism has been seduced by the former at the expense of the latter. Socialism's separation from work, workplace and workers has taken many forms. A few are worth listing.

1. The emergence of the Joint Stock Company in Britain, the separation of the manager from the mere money capitalist and the early development of the Co-operative Societies were all noted by Marx, who regarded them as necessary steps towards socialism. They have since tended to direct the attention of socialists towards questions about who holds power rather than how people are subjected to that power. The problem for socialism therefore became one of replacing the holders of power in the "commanding heights" of the economy. And it became one of replacing their profit motive, and dependence on the ups and downs of the market, with rational planning.

2. Through universal suffrage, the power of the state has offered a means of subduing the private property power of capital. The emergence of a Party of "Labour" in this country has taken place entirely since Marx's time. If the party of labour could take over the power of the state in a General Election, then it could use that power, through legislation, to get rid of the private ownership of production. Of course this change did not involve the workers doing anything other than what they had always done. The owners - often deeply hated in mines, railways, steel and other major industries - could be disposed of by the simple expedient of casting a vote. Certainly the workers in the nationalised industries did then enjoy the benefits of centralised planning and, for a time, less unfriendly bosses. But nothing fundamental changed in the workplace because, apparently, nothing needed to change there. The idea of nationalisation was surely nothing less than "the common ownership of production..." (Clause 4).

3. If "the separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labourer..." has been transformed into the separation of the "labourer" from the professional scientist, engineer and accountant in production, this is certainly no less true in politics. Socialism itself became transformed into an affair of the state. The Party of Labour increasingly sent not workers to represent workers, but its university educated sons - nearly always sons - to organise socialism for it via Westminster and Whitehall. Politics now presents itself as an affair of the utmost complexity. The management of the national economy, constantly buffeted by storms in the world market, seems to require fearsome skills. The same with defence and disarmament, civil nuclear power, health, education and the rest. Each appears to require a high degree of specialist expertise, well beyond "the ordinary voter". No wonder most Labour MPs

today have University degrees. The number without such credentials sinks with each successive Parliament. It is as normal to be a graduate in the House of Commons today as it was to be a businessman in the House of Commons a hundred years ago, and a landowner a hundred years before that. What happens at work could hardly have become less relevant. Socialism is something somebody else does for you. Up there.

4. If the strand of socialism which has developed from adult suffrage has been transformed into an intellectual matter, this is no less true of the other strand which developed through the Russian revolution. Represented by a multiplicity of small sects in this country, its adherents tend to identify themselves today according to their particular view of the fate of the Russian revolution itself and the writings of its leaders. While stressing revolution rather than mere "reform", their politics centres on the state no less than that of the Parliamentary strand of socialism. The revolution is something which is going to happen first and foremost at the level of the state. But while acknowledging the role of workers in making that revolution, in practice their politics is profoundly intellectual. To take part in analysing capitalist society requires such reading of Russian history, or the works of Bolchevik leaders, or Marxist economists, and such understanding of obscure debates in these fields, as to completely exclude ordinary mortals. Workers who become involved in the revolutionary sects have no alternative but to surrender their own judgement about politics to the intellectual leadership - just as surely as a patient surrenders all judgement about illness to a doctor, or law to a lawyer. Stress on the continued division of the world into the classes derived from capitalist private property - the bourgeoisie (owning class) and proletariat (propertyless working class) conveniently locates the intellectual leadership in the same class as the workers. The principle means of recruitment is through selling newspapers. The analysis of strikes is central to this strand of socialism. It stresses their revolutionary potential. Strikers themselves fail to see this because they are regarded as having been prevented from acquiring the necessary class consciousness. The certainty of this belief makes the "revolutionary" strand of socialism a bad listener. Essential to its politics is the very separation between "head" and "hand" which is, in turn, so central to the social system it seeks to transform through workers' power. Needless to say, despite keeping an army of Civil Service intelligence specialists busy filling huge files on their members, the socialist sects have never posed the slightest threat to the British State.

By no stretch of the imagination could the Labour Party be accused of advocating that people should use the power they have by virtue of being workers. Indeed, any such use appears to negate its Parliamentary aims. This is where socialism has come full circle from the central idea of work and workers in the socialism of Marx. In the Labour Party, the same idea presents it with two apparently insuperable problems. One makes it difficult to get elected. The other makes it difficult to govern.

The discussions in all three workplaces show that work itself creates major concerns for the participants. Yet in the world in general, outside the workplace, it is hard to find that preoccupation with work reflected anywhere. It simply is not part of the world of public affairs. To become visible at all, work has to become exceptional. Workers have to be killed

or maimed or ill - and even in such cases, the workplace still often remains out of sight and out of mind. Or else work has to stop. When work is not happening, particularly because of a strike, the workplace starts to show up against an empty backcloth. The kind of discussions recorded here give access to a world unknown - except to the workers in each separate workplace.

What does appear on the outside of work is the production which come out of it, and the part it plays in the national economy as a whole. Work is taken for granted in enabling the production of goods and services to be kept up in the world market. Anything which interrupts it merely appears to threaten all our consumption of these things. You do only your own work. You consume other people's. How ever principled your own strike might be, other people's are a nuisance. They intrude into a part of life in which they threaten to deprive you, either directly, or through damage to the economy as a whole. Outside work it is easy to deny the identity of 'worker'. It has no real meaning beyond the workplace itself. And the Labour Party completely fails to act as an external mirror of what matters there - including the issue of workers running the job discussed in Part V. And the fact is that the workforce fails, repeatedly and in enormous numbers, to vote for the Party which bears its name. The Labour Party may be paying a very high price for failing to let daylight into the place where what is consumed has first to be made - and where people have most to offer and most to gain from socialism.

Once elected, and after a period of comparative quiet, the Labour Party confronts the second difficulty which the workforce places in its way. It tends to withdraw its consent to having enough surplus extracted from it to satisfy those whose disproportionate incomes it feeds and keep British capital competitive in world markets. To be sure, the workers have had the help of the owners, managers and financiers of British capital, who have, of late, shown a good deal less ingenuity than their foreign counterparts in getting the surplus out. And, having got it out, their record at getting it back in again is proving even less impressive. But here too the workforce is allegedly blameworthy. Even the Government's carefully planned, brutally executed and salutary defeat of the miners has failed to convince British owners of capital that industrial workers here will provided them with the "best return on investment". While the workers at the three workplaces confirm the weakening of union power through the miners' defeat, the British owners of capital, at least, seem to think workers' power more than capable of recovery.

This is the kind of argument often advanced for the defeat of the Calaghan Government in 1979. In fact the spectre of workers' power paraded before voters then was very much more imagined than real.' However, it is worth remembering that Labour replaced the Heath Government in 1974 in the immediate aftermath of another miners' strike with a very different outcome. Heath had called the election early, under the slogan "Who governs Britain?" If the wisdom that workers' power is an electoral handicap to labour holds universally true, a Tory landslide should have ensued. There may even be a case for thinking that workers' power helped Labour then because it was strong, even if some voters thought Labour had a better chance of holding it in check.

But this is not the same as saying that the Labour Party can advocate the use of workers' power. Its appearance ranges from industrial sabotage to a sinister threat to the constitution. Nobody can identify their own experience in such images. The struggle of workers for a better life has been pushed back into the past:

I think people that were fighting in the twenties and thirties, in the miners' strikes, were aware that...the rich were getting richer and the poor were really poor. So people did have a cause. And they knew that, as a body, the only way to get something was to fight. But...there's no real fight in people now... (Dennis at Viewpoint p.137)

...I can always mind, years ago, if you got a strike, it went right through. I mean you didna have the so-called blacklegs trooping back in and things like that, which you have now..." (Irene at Island laundry p.87)

There is a heritage of struggle, recognised by the Labour Party. But no present. Work, workers, workers' power were once important. Not now. These things tend to get in the way of elections and the serious business of 'managing' the economy.

The second chapter of Part V pointed to the potential which exists in the three workplaces for achieving fundamental changes in the relationships of work. Part of that potential is workers' power. Part of it is that the issue of workers running the job is already a live one now. So long as socialism as it exists today in the Labour Party cannot be a means for such ideas to flourish and develop, the potential is unlikely to be realised. This Chapter has suggested why the Labour Party - or any other manifestation of socialism - seems incapable of being a means to unlock the potential of the workplace.

#### **Mass unemployment: disaster and opportunity**

Is there a way out of this impasse? It may be that mass unemployment provides both the need and the opportunity to bring the workplace into the Labour Party and the Labour Party into the workplace.

"Just at this table alone how many men - how many a'yer men - have got a job?" [a few hands go up]

"There y'are. All these people. That's the only men that are working...the rest have either been made redundant or they just canna get a job. Now that's bad. And that's, what, maybe twenty o'us at this table. It must be degradn' for a man to see's wife gae'n'out at five o'clock'the mornin'."

"Aye."

"There's a lot a men wouldna take a job like this."

"No."

"But then there is a lot that would take it for the sake of bein'out t'work."

"Aye."

"They'll have to."

"...they've not come to that."

"Mine wouldna."



"Nor mine."

"Mine wouldna."

-

Anne: "Well I've just had a case like that last night. A man that was paid off and his wife works - not with me personally - but wi' ma firm. And she came personally last night to see if there was any work that he could get. Because he's tried everything else. And he can get nothing. And they're so desperate because they've got a family. He'll even come out at ten o'clock at night to help them out."

-

Carol: "...there's a chap next door to me and he canna get a job. He's a driver and everything. He works in the Sherrif's Court early morning and back in there at night again, just for the sake of getting - they got married a year ago - and that's the only job he can get."

-

"Mrs Thatcher was say'n a the television last night that in 1977 "It must be very degrading for a man not to have a job - ""

"That's right."

"Aye."

"" - to protect his family. It must be terrible." That's what she said in 1977 - "

"Aye."

" - and there was only a million unemployed then."

"Aye."

"...Three million."

"There's nearer five million unemployed."

"Aye."

"...man who's the bread winner."

"That's what she said, "The breadwinner. It must be very degrading..."

(Chemistry Building. p.23)

Shirley: ...when you had unemployment in the war years etcetera, I mean people rallied round and tried to help and do things. But now you're really just thankful you've got a job yourself. We all feel sorry for those that are out of work. But really, you've got to look after yourself.

(Viewpoint. p.131)

Dennis: ...the Government's got a big hold over everybody. It's unemployment. Everybody knows. I mean you're in a job. There's hundreds of people out there. And they can say well "If you don't want your job, go." Which is really one of the most important reasons why people should be in a union. To protect yourself against that. But then again, being in a job, it doesn't mean to say you've got to...put up wi'what somebody says up there.

Helen: The reason I'm putt'n up with things is because I need the money. Years ago I used to be able to say "Ah, I'm no going back." And I used to pack jobs in. And I used to get a job the next day. No fantastic jobs. But y'ken -

Annette: You could do that then.

Helen: - if you're maybe working in a glue factory one night. You were wrapping biscuits in a factory the next night. It was as simple as that. I didn't think twice about pack'n a job in then, Dennis, but I

couldna di'it now. I mean actually I couldna afford to di'it.  
(Viewpoint. p.137)

Annette: They don't do nothing for the young ones. I mean it's not fair. I've got a son that's unemployed. And my daughter was unemployed for about four years until recently. They don't do nothing for the young ones at all.

Dennis: No. They really con them. Because when you think of it, when you were sixteen, everybody had a job.

Annette: Exactly.

Dennis: When you looked at the unemployment figures, it was people who were unemployed and didn't have jobs. And now they've capitalised on it and invented all these wee schemes so they've cut down -

Helen: That's right - so there's no unemployment!

(Viewpoint. p.145)

Irene: ...the more we advance our technology the less people are working. And there's no way you'll stop that. Whether you approve it or disapprove it, you'll never stop that.

Stuart: If the union steps in and tries to save their jobs and they come back "You're standing in the way of progress" more or less. That's their argument.

Irene: This is one of the reasons unemployment's as high. I don't know how they solve that. I definitely don't know. I mean it's hard to say you disapprove of it. We're all for advancement really, y'ken. But then it's costing people their jobs, it's costing people their livelihood, y'ken? So I take account o' that fact. It's very, very difficult.

Stuart: It's hard to draw a line between the two.

Irene: Of course it is...

(Island Laundry. p.49)

Paralleling the disaster of unemployment - which reaches far beyond the unemployed themselves - is another disaster. That the Labour Party should be unable to enter a General Election promising to abolish it is an extraordinary setback for socialism. It is one which has crept up on us almost unnoticed.

Until the early seventies Labour and Tory Governments used a growing share of the surplus created in production to create jobs in the state (including local government). It did so as rapidly as improving technology enabled them to be destroyed in production. That process no longer works. In New Jobs for Britain (published March 1978) the Labour Party HQ could only identify 550,000 jobs-worth of extra work which needs to be done - mainly in construction and caring services. Even if this was a modest total, tailored to the requirements of electoral credibility, the message is clear. Unemployment can no longer be tackled through the management of the economy by a Labour Government.

But it could be tackled by the actions of a Labour Government in concert with action which could only be taken by people in their place of work. What follows is an outline proposal for overcoming unemployment which would necessitate an alliance between the two. The workforce would cut its hours in such a way that they could only be replaced by people out of work. The

Government would use the taxation system to pay each worker for the hours no longer worked.

The creation of satisfactory new jobs and an increase in each existing worker's time off could only be achieved through co-operation between the workers within each workplace. In outline the arrangements would be simple. For example four five-day workers moving to a four-day-week would create one new four-day job. All five workers would then all qualify for a tax allowance large enough to pay them the average take-home pay for a day's work (if they were too low paid to pay this much in tax, the difference would be paid in cash and claimed against the employer's tax liabilities). In practice some people would no doubt want the time off other than in chunks of a day a week. The time off could be planned so as to meet these preferences, provide new jobs not less satisfactory for newcomers and maintain existing production or services, It could only be done through co-operation between workers in each workplace.

The Government would have to set a maximum reduction in hours which it would pay for. This might have to vary between areas with higher and lower unemployment. An hourly tax allowance based on the average take-home pay for an hour's work would more than compensate the low paid for their reduced hours. Their gain would therefore not only be in time off. By the same token, the arrangement would be unattractive to people earning more than the average. But, in any case, there would tend not to be recruits available in the dole queue to replace their reduced hours of people with higher levels of skill. Those with most to gain would be the lowest paid with the least recognised skills.

Both before and after an election, the implications of such a plan, both for the workforce and the Labour Party, would be considerable.

It would immediately signal the fact that workers have a crucial, active part in socialism through their understanding and experience of work. The existing relationship between workers and intellectuals in the Party, whose knowledge of the workplace is limited to the very much less oppressive world of professional work, would begin to change. Such a major initiative would go far to redefining the Party's activity. Purely intellectual debate about "policy" to be implemented using state power would be tempered by practical considerations about what could only be done in the workplace. The Party members with the most essential contribution to make in this process would be the men and women most actively involved in the union in manual and clerical workplaces. Credentials would be little use. Their absence an advantage.

One of the greatest benefits of the politics of substantially cutting full-time working hours is that it begins to erode the distinction between men's work and women's work. A practical beginning would be to set a maximum number of hours per week - say thirty two - at which the proposed tax allowance would be payable. Full-time workers whose hours had been cut from forty to this level to obtain the allowance would be prevented from taking other employment to fill the gap. Part time workers below that level would not.

The electoral advantage of the active involvement of the workplace would be obvious. The benefits of a dramatic improvement in working conditions, which could only be introduced with the help of a Labour Government, would make Labour support and membership of the Party highly attractive. In the last election it appeared that large numbers of workers in the English Midlands and South East, although concerned about unemployment, feared that the cost of Labour's job creation proposals would eventually fall on them.

The greater part of the cost would be met from reductions in the existing cost of unemployment. Official statistics (from the New Earnings Survey) show that the dividing line between manual and clerical earnings on the one hand and professional and executive earnings on the other, is fairly sharp. It is difficult too to see why the remainder of the cost should not be met by increasing the higher rates of income tax, without hitting ordinary incomes. The effect on the economy as a whole would be to shift purchasing power from higher income groups towards people who, at the moment, are either on ordinary wages or outside the workforce altogether.

The tax allowance would have to be a key manifesto commitment. At the same time it would be difficult to make the necessary cuts in hours by means of legislation. Although employers would have little financial incentive to resist (it would be possible for the state to cover all the additional costs of employment if this was thought necessary), they would have no incentive to introduce them either. The initiative would have to come from the workforce. This would provide a strong incentive towards joining trade unions.

It would be extremely difficult for the Tories to invoke the stigma of "extra-Parliamentary" and insurrectionary politics by the Labour Party. On the one hand the question of working hours is a normal part of "industrial relations". On the other, nothing could be implemented without an election.

Directly linking cuts in work time to cutting unemployment would doubtless produce many changes. But they might none of them be so important as the effect, on both the Labour Party and the workplace, of the process of getting there. Knowledge and experience of the workplace would be the most valuable of all qualifications anyone could bring into Labour Party meetings while its practicalities were being hammered out in local unionised workplaces. Workers and workplace ideas would establish a foothold in the Labour Party which would make all kinds of developments possible - including the emergence of workers running the job as an issue in the Party. It would make it just that bit harder for socialism to turn its back on the nature of work. Work creates wealth and services. In doing so, work places a straitjacket on the expression of the human qualities of the workforce. But work also contains the powerful ideas and powerful sanctions needed to spring these fetters. And for the transformation of work to find its way onto the socialist agenda would mean reconnecting it with its traditional power base.

In any case, unless it takes steps to rediscover its roots in the workplace, Labour may find it has no way of regaining its lost electoral support. In the South of England, in the 1987 General Election, 44 per cent of manual workers voted Tory, while only 28 per cent voted Labour (Ivor Crewe, The Guardian 15th June 1987). Offering people the chance to do less

work, without loss of pay, so that others could do more, would make a great deal of electoral sense.

Social research separates itself from the object of its study through then process of interpretation. This is a problem both for this study and for Sociology as an intellectual tradition. This final chapter finds the basis for overcoming that separation in what Max Weber said was his approach to sociological interpretation.

Parts IV, V and VI, while addressing different and separate bodies of people and ideas, nevertheless contain the elaboration of the same concept - that of powerful ideas, ideas which stand out in the collective thinking of three groups of workers, ideas which they imply to be effective in their lives.

The threads of this elaboration must briefly be drawn together. In Section IV the ideas themselves were identified and then located in the workers' views of the social world in which they have their effect. Among these views are those which both reflect and help to determine the separation of the union from its members. The content of the powerful ideas themselves, and the workers' views of the social world in general and the union in particular, is of powerlessness. Powerful people in the union seemed no different to powerful people of any other sort. They were 'at the top'. The union as a whole is clearly weakened by being unable to express the power of the workforce. The problem posed, therefore, is one of reunification.

Part V argued that in Marx's explanation for the rise of capitalism, the crucial role of both ideas and sanctions is implicit. The effect of both was the separation of workers from the means of production. Capitalist private property, enshrined in law, expresses both forceful dispossession and the idea of the social form of that separation. Socialism is the body of ideas and people which proclaims the reunification of workers and the means of production through its possession in common. But Marx's own analysis of how workers were controlled in factories cannot be encapsulated in his concept of capitalist private property. While the tendencies he noted have become even more pronounced today, socialism, in both its Parliamentary and revolutionary forms, has retained its allegiance to the fundamental idea of repossession. Despite the implicit involvement of ideas in Marx's concept of capitalist private property, socialism in its present day form seems not to grasp the importance of workers's ideas for their own control at work. In consequence it fails to address the kind of ideas of powerlessness found in the three workplaces - "management's job", management "authority", management "responsibility" and respect for professionals. Socialism has separated itself from ideas, also found in all three workplaces, which resist and challenge this form of powerlessness. It is failing as a means of reflecting, drawing together and reinforcing the fragmented ideas of workers running the job found there. As a result, socialism has lost its purchase on the cause of workers' powerlessness and its access to the workers' power required to overcome it. The problem posed, therefore, is one of reclaiming socialism for the workforce.

Part VI looks at two studies of ideas in the workplace in which, it is argued, their power is also implicit. It notes the parallel operation of both powerful ideas and sanctions. It looks to Max Weber's Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism for a possible prototype which could help

explain the power of ideas. Weber, while insisting that he does not challenge the importance of other factors in the rise of capitalism, particularly economic factors, seeks to demonstrate the crucial intervention of the ideas of protestant asceticism. These ideas operate in the minds of the faithful in the form of 'psychologically effective sanctions'. While they have a very different content, one of the powerful ideas found in one of the workplaces in the present study does seem to operate through psychologically effective sanctions. The possibility that other powerful ideas may operate in this way is thus raised. However, once established, Weber sees capitalism operating through coercive rather than psychological sanctions. His work cannot therefore help to elucidate the relationship between powerful ideas and sanctions as they seem to operate in the three workplaces now. At the same time, Marx's concept of capitalist private property involves both, in a way which makes it hard to get at the relationship between them. His own view that relations (which, in his schema, implicitly include ideas) in the sphere of circulation conceal the extraction of a surplus in the sphere of production (thus constituting coercion) does not, at least today, offer a useful model. Nor, it is argued, do more direct attempts to relate ideas to coercion (sanctions) within the Marxist tradition by Gramsci and Althusser. Finally, a hypothesis is offered which relates powerful ideas to sanctions through conflict.

Much weight has been given to the work of Marx and Weber because of the author's difficulty in locating the problems raised by this study in the contemporary sociological tradition.

Marx was very clear in principle about the method he used to appropriate the world in thought. It was, as noted earlier, a process of abstracting from existing 'chaotic conceptions', stripping them down to the simplest abstract concepts and then reassembling again in the other direction. His aim was to "reproduce the concrete subject in the course of reasoning" (in David McLellan. Karl Marx: Selected Writings 1977 p.352) - to achieve a better conceptualisation at the end than the ones he started with. But on what basis the end result was to be found superior to the starting point is not clear. However, Political Economy provided him both with the basis of his method and a large body of material which he considered had already been partly worked. He was prepared to draw on an extraordinarily wide variety of other sources. Quite apart from the large number of authors he cites in the writing of Capital, he draws on newspapers, pamphlets, political speeches, statutes and every imaginable official statistic as well as public health, child labour, Factory Inspectorate, Parliamentary Select Committee, Royal Commission and other official reports. Marx did, towards the end of his life, collaborate in the design of a questionnaire addressed to workers, 25,000 copies of which were subsequently distributed in France. It contained no less than 101 questions, some requiring a great deal of detail and many of them reminiscent of the kind he knew from the 1861 Census. Only two can be said to have sought any element of the respondent's opinion, one of them simply asking for "General comments". However, there was no such thing as a tradition of social research when Marx was writing. So despite people's ideas being implicit in his concept of a social relation, systematically finding out what they were did not really arise.

Weber, on the other hand, provided a comprehensive insight into his working method. Like Marx, he saw understanding as a process of abstraction. The question was how to do it correctly. In interpreting a "concrete course of action" he looked for "adequacy in respect to meaning" and "causal significance"². Both were needed to constitute valid sociological generalisations. Perfect adequacy with respect to meaning, would, presumably, be in terms of the subjective meaning intended by whoever carries out a course of action. But - and this is an interpretation of Weber - there are various reasons why such rigour is generally impossible. For example, there are actions whose intensions vary between individuals. And there are actions which lack conscious intent. At the same time there is the problem of interpretation for the observer. Perhaps it is difficulties on the side of 'intent' which lead Weber to allow a good deal of scope on the side of 'interpretation'. This is a matter of associating overt action with 'motives' where:

A motive is a complex of subjective meaning which seems to the actor himself or to the observer an adequate ground for the conduct in question. We apply the term 'adequacy at the level of meaning' to the subjective interpretation of a coherent course of conduct when and in so far as, according to our habitual modes of thought and feeling, its component parts taken in their mutual relation are recognised to constitute a 'typical' complex of meaning. It is more common to say 'correct'³.

Meaning is therefore something to be assembled by interpretation. Weber seems here to take it that the observer is able to climb inside the meaning which someone taking a course of action attaches to it. He says that being able "sympathetically to participate in his experiences" is a "great help" but "this is not an essential condition of meaningful interpretation"⁴. A "purely intellectual" understanding of action oriented to 'ultimate values' is less full than if the observer shares the same values and can "imaginatively participate" in such action⁵. The observer has to get as close as possible to the actual meaning the actor attaches to any action. This includes its context which, by implication, may not be part of the actor's conscious awareness. Adequacy in respect to meaning must then be combined with uniformity, to be established either through statistical means of establishing probability or by the observer setting up 'ideal types' whose typicality can then be tested by comparison with observed cases. 'Causal significance' is thus established.

Weber's approach undoubtedly leaves a great deal of room for the work of the observer. It can be argued that in his own work this room expands far beyond the limits of his framework for valid sociological generalisation. In the case of class⁶, he is careful to define its social existence in terms of meaningful action - action based on a feeling of belongingness on the part of a group which takes it. But then the action is class action because those who take it share a common 'class situation'. Now class situation is not itself a form of meaningful action. In the modern world it is derived from meaningful action governed by the rules of economic activity. A common class situation applies to people similarly affected by those rules⁷. It is thus a potential for class action which is, from time to time, realised. Among the factors which may lead from class situation to class action is the extent to which the consequences of the rules - in the



similar way they affect everyone with a common class situation - are visible. If they are highly visible, the isolated actions of workers in going slow, for example, may give rise to action based on a feeling of belonging to the same class.⁸

Weber thus applies his rules of sociological validity to the question of class by linking one sort of meaningful action with another through a concept which breaks those rules. 'Class situation' is part of the context of meaning outside people's awareness. In Weber's hands, and those of his successors, it constitutes 'structure'. It does not seem to matter what meanings workers might really attach to working to the rules of the workplace, together organising a go-slow or, for that matter, striking. These actions are to be thought of using a concept constructed by the observer. Understanding here cannot involve adequacy "with respect to meaning". The best that might be claimed for it is perhaps **compatibility** "with respect to meaning"⁹.

Ideal type concepts also enable Weber to escape some distance from perfection in the matter of meaningful adequacy:

The theoretical concepts of sociology are ideal types not only from the objective point of view, but also in their application to subjective processes. In the great majority of cases actual action goes on in a state of inarticulate half-consciousness or actual unconsciousness of its subjective meaning. The actor is more likely to 'be aware' of it in a vague sense than he is to 'know' what he is doing or be explicitly self-conscious about it. In most cases his action is governed by impulse or habit. Only occasionally, and, in the uniform action of large numbers, often only in the case of a few individuals, is the subjective meaning of the action, whether rational or irrational, brought clearly into consciousness. The ideal type of meaningful action where the meaning is fully conscious and explicit is a marginal case. Every sociological or historical investigation, in applying its analysis to the empirical facts, must take this into account. But the difficulty need not prevent the sociologist from systematising his concepts by the classification of possible types of subjective meaning. The resulting deviation from the concrete facts must continually be kept in mind...¹⁰

What do all the others, the great majority, have in their minds while their action is under the control of "impulse or habit"? Is it nothing? Or could it perhaps include inappropriate ideas, which fail to capture any of the action's meanings which the sociologist thinks possible? Is this the beginning of the slippery slope down which meanings are accessible only to a few individuals - and sociologists?¹¹

Although it is possible to see in Weber's advice about the preparation of a "survey...concerning selection and adaptation (choice and course of occupation) for the workers of major industrial enterprises"¹² the outline of his method - balancing subjective attitudes with the use of statistics - it cannot be said that the systematic, practical investigation of people's ideas was Weber's chosen approach. Since the rules of his method seem to require it, perhaps this was simply because the practical tools were not available.

Can the present study be located in Weber's approach?

The 'powerful' ideas identified in this study encourage action in a way which seems closest to Weber's type of "Pure rational orientation to absolute values"¹³. It is in the nature of the discussions whose interpretation yielded them, that they are not meanings restricted to a few individuals. Their adequacy with respect to meaning is thus good. Their adequacy with regard to causal significance - the probability that meaning and action occur normally in the way shown - is, of course, poor. In its absence, "interpretation must necessarily remain a hypothesis." However, supposing that Weber's strict rules were satisfied by further work to establish causal significance - what implications would they have for what Weber calls 'structure'?

It would be perfectly consistent with Weber's practice simply to incorporate them within - or perhaps refine - existing sociological concepts, such as class. The immediate difficulty about this is that the actions associated with the ideas from the three workplaces - as well as the kind of action Weber calls 'conduct' - are determined by their intended meanings. In other words, if it were found, for example, that "don't do management's work" was the idea (and the only idea) universally associated with that action (or, in this case, absence of action) it would:

1. satisfy Weber's criteria for the "correct causal interpretation of a concrete course of action";
2. itself, as an idea - or in Weber's terms a meaning - have a determining effect upon the social world in the workplace and beyond.

Under these circumstances, the requirement not to do management's work is the only form in which the action can be grasped by strictly Weberian 'sociological generalisation'. To define it as a phenomenon of, say, relationships of private property or of class-situation is to affront and violate the actually occurring meaning, and so break Weber's own requirements for a "correct causal interpretation of a concrete course of action." Sociology based on Weber's criteria of validity cannot therefore offer interpretations derived from already-formulated abstractions - such as Political Economy - if they alter conscious meanings. A Weber with access to people's ideas (and thus no longer needing some second best, such as we saw in the writings of Baxter in the Protestant Ethic) would only be able to describe "structure" based on those kinds of actions for which people lack their own meaning. (Did he perhaps exaggerate the extent to which people act purely on "impulse and habit"?)

If a strict version of Weber's rules actually operated it would be impossible for sociological conceptions to be so far removed from those found in the three workplaces. However, adherence to those rules would make abstractions like class very difficult.

As the Introduction explained, the author expected to be able to find evidence for a broadly Marxist view of class. In the event the transcripts from the workplaces reveal very little which could be understood in this way. There were some signs of a socialist conception of class in a discussion at Viewpoint. But the author's own part in the discussion may

have created more than was otherwise there. There was a generally positive response in all three workplaces to the question "Do you think there are still classes in this country". But there was little sign of uniformity in what was meant by it. At the Chemistry Building, for one participant, it evoked landed property on the one hand and, implicitly, usurpation by pop stars on the other. At Island Laundry, in one person's eyes, it evoked an image of people who go shopping with airs and graces, fur coats and credit. At Viewpoint it was used in relation to moving from one area to another to live among a better class of people. But more important than this, class seemed to contribute only to a vision of the world which has a top and a bottom - and in which all the participants were at the bottom.

The strict version of Weber's rules of understanding - as opposed to the conceptual labyrinth of its application - disposes of the author's preoccupations at a stroke. But what of the contemporary sociology of class? The enormity of its offence against "adequacy with regard to meaning" will be briefly illustrated by referring to a recent study, *Skilled Workers in the Class Structure*, by Roger Penn. The purpose here is by no means to doubt the scholarship - or indeed value - of Penn's work. However, it is forced to demonstrate both through its success in wrestling with the problems of the whole intellectual tradition in which it is cast.

Penn draws attention to two approaches to class, the first through consciousness - or the lack of it - and the other through structure. The first, which includes various strands of Marxism, he finds unconvincing because it assumes that:

the working class has existed or exists in some sort of pristine fashion. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the nature and existence of the working class, not to assume it¹⁴.

Nevertheless his method of working is very much in the tradition of Max Weber's ideal type concept. He sets up a testable assumption that class does exist and that the extent to which it does so depends on how far 'economic boundaries' are translated into social boundaries. His focus of interest is not the whole of society but "the nature of the British working class and, in particular, the relations between skilled and non skilled workers"¹⁵. By the most detailed documentary investigation in Rochdale he demonstrates the existence of an economic boundary between skilled and unskilled labour there over a period of more than a century. He then shows that this boundary fails to appear to more than the most minimal extent in the choice of marriage partners throughout nearly the whole of the same period. The economic boundary has therefore not been a class boundary.

What was and is the meaning, in the minds of workers, of this skill boundary? What meanings are at work in the minds of young men and women in their choice of marriage partners? These questions are of no relevance to the study, because it only seeks to tackle questions thrown up by the intellectual tradition itself. The study was inspired by the existence of an academic debate about the significance of skill for the 'structuration' of the working class. In its field, Penn's findings are of the first importance because they pull the intellectual tradition within which social research takes place back into a closer relationship with the world it tries to grasp. He has helped it to overcome a misunderstanding. But this

man has had to consume years of his life in the effort of rolling an enormous boulder a few inches back uphill!

What might a 'strict' Weber approach look like - doing as he said rather than as he did? Suppose a researcher had instead investigated the meanings of contemporary choices of marriage partners in Rochdale. And suppose the study ended up with a vast list of meanings which were individually different. But, presumably, identifiable consistences would make it possible to identify categories of people who were chosen and other categories of people who were not (what Weber would have called mass actions). The research findings would then be in a position to enable young workers in Rochdale to attribute a meaning to their choice of marriage partners which was not there before. By this means, they would become a source of new meaning for an old action (from which, in Weber's schema, communal or even societal action might in perhaps emerge). In principle, then, a strict version of Weber's schema is capable of providing sociological validation for the results of social research, where these can be returned by research to form the basis of such new meanings.

The alternative - meaning which can exist only for the separate world of sociology - is as unsound as if Weber himself had been willing to entertain private, idiosyncratic meanings in his interpretations. His remarks on this subject quoted above (p.287) imply that interpretation is possible because the actor's and the observer's subjective meanings are essentially the same. This approach has the not insignificant advantage of being the same as that of the ordinary Weberian in the street.

However, to return to Rochdale, in practice, there is no obvious reason why people there, who had explained their choice of marriage partner to a researcher, should then be in the slightest bit interested in a further explanation based on categorising them. The suggestion is patently absurd. For the categories to act as a basis of new meaning they must address a body of ideas and people for whom they could be immediately useful. Such a body of ideas and people in Rochdale is, at least at present, unlikely. For its results to be capable of achieving adequacy "with respect to meaning" in their own right, research cannot expect to be able fly in out of the blue on its own terms.

What is the answer? Sociological research cannot but offer potential new meanings. Its problem is to find ways of offering them for validation in action. It must find contexts in which it can fruitfully press on the boundaries of existing meanings. The present study must face this same discipline. The only test of its validity at the level of meaning is whether it succeeds in contributing meaning to the action required to overcome the separation of the union from its members.

Class, meanwhile, whether for socialism or for sociology, remains only potential meaning. For the moment its adequacy at the level of meaning is that of the Tower of Babel. Its understanding of the world is to be validated in changing the world.

## Notes to Part IV Chapter III (page 189)

1. This picture of the union has remarkable similarities to that found by Anna Pollert (in *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives* 1981) in a tobacco factory in Bristol where "the union was 'them', the leaders, not 'us', the union of rank-and-file workers..." p.167

## Notes to Part V Chapter I (page 200 to 209)

1. This formulation does no more than take note of the existence of private property as an idea in Marx's work. The private property which motivated evictions, enclosures and clearances, and was ultimately fully expressed in law, must have existed as an idea governing proper behaviour in the minds of those who approved, carried out and - eventually - legislated for such barbarities. The "capitalist private property relation" was an abstract concept expressing not merely the idea of private property but the real relation of which it was a part. This is not, therefore, a separation which Marx himself often makes.
2. Descriptions of England. Capital Volume 1 p.672.
3. Capital Volume I p.673 ff.
4. Capital Volume I p.678.
5. Insert footnote: "...the simple fundamental form of the process of accumulation is obscured by the incident of the circulation which brings it about..." (Capital Volume I p.530)
6. Capital Volume I p.313.
7. Capital Volume I p.409 and 410.
8. "Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the co-operative form of the labour process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market, and with this, the international character of the capitalist regime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at least reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. Thus, integument is burst assunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." (Capital Volume I p.715).
9. With a bit of a shove here, and a minor revision there, they have often been forced into an uneasy fit. Such an approach makes no attempt to apply Marx's own method of working. This was to start with the "chaotic conceptions" or ideas already in people's minds - he took the

ideas of Political Economy as his own starting point - and try to break them down into the simplest possible abstract concepts. What then remains is to reassemble them again into a better representation of the world as a whole than the starting point (the General Introduction of 1857. In Karl Marx: Selected writings. David McLellan 1977 p.352). Where he felt he had succeeded in doing this, in Capital, his understanding of the world as a whole - capitalist private property - lay in the simple abstract concepts which he elaborated (production, circulation, the buying and selling of labour-power and so on) and their inter-relations. Equally, each of these had to be understood in its relation to the world as a whole. The idea of a new kind of relationship in production emerged from, but could not be embraced by, the idea of capitalist private property. The object of his work was therefore to produce a movement of ideas which exactly reflected the movement of the real world - a revolution in thought which reflected the real potential for a real revolution.

10. Capital Volume I p.314.

11. Capital Volume I p.314.

12. Capital Volume I p.399.

13. Capital Volume III p.881.

14. Barrack discipline may have been more than a metaphor for state-like sanctions in Marx's mind:

"The factory code in which capital formulates, like a private legislator, and at his own good will, his autocracy over his workpeople, unaccompanied by that division of responsibility, in other matters so much approved by the bourgeoisie, and unaccompanied by the still more approved representative system, this code is but the capitalistic caricature of that social regulation of the labour-process which becomes requisite in co-operation on a great scale, and in the employment in common, of instruments of labour and especially of machinery" (Capital I p.400).

If the works rules and their formulation are a caricature of requisite social regulation of the labour-process, it suggests that Marx himself had a state-like vision of socialist production. Quite how it would differ from the bourgeois state we do not know. However, his later marginal notes on a proposed unified platform for the two Socialist Parties in Germany in 1875 (the Gotha Programme) suggest that in the State itself power would be in the hands of the working class as a whole rather than in remote representative bodies.

15. Capital Volume I p.331.

16. Capital Volume I p.399.

17. "In the long run that transformation would become a complete social transformation. The "capitalist private property" relationship had already given rise to a society divided into three great classes, the working class (the Proletariat), the Capitalists (the Bourgeoisie) and a class of landowners - of which the bourgeoisie was rapidly becoming dominant. The erosion of its power in production and the disintegration of capitalist private property would bring the working class to a pre-eminent position, through socialist production, just as surely as earlier forms of production had brought a land-owning and then a capitalist middle class to pre-eminence. The workers themselves would now enjoy "socialised" property through "co-operation and the possession in common of the land and of the means of production" (Capital Volume I p.715).

Notes to Part VI Chapter I (pages 219 to 229)

1. Living with Capitalism: Nichols and Beynon. p.173.
2. Workers Divided: Armstrong and Nichols. p.213.
3. Ibid p.150.
4. Ibid p.163.
5. Ibid p.168.
6. Ibid p.78.
7. Ibid p.191.
8. Ibid p.56.
9. Ibid p.57.
10. Ibid p.178.
11. Ibid p.58.
12. Ibid p.169.
13. Ibid p.189.
14. Ibid p.171.
15. Ibid p.171.
16. Ibid p.195.
17. Ibid p.204.
18. Ideology and Shop-floor Industrial Relations: Armstrong, Goodman and Hyman. p.15.
19. Ibid p.19.
20. Ibid p.72.
21. Ibid p.72.
22. Ibid p.73.
23. Ibid p.113.
24. Ibid EG p.53 ff.
25. Ibid p.83.
26. Ibid p.67.
27. Ibid p.70.
28. Ibid p.103.
29. Ibid p.107.
30. Ibid p.93.
31. Ibid p.102.
32. Ibid p.148.
33. Ibid p.199. The role of the union full time officer can be highly ambiguous, as this exchange shows:  
Full time officer: "Right, I'll approach the management on this one because I have to look at both sides."  
MoFoL steward: "Both sodes be bugged, they never look on ours."  
Full time officer: "But I do, because I have to come in as an arbitrator." (ibid p.154)
34. Ibid p.117.
35. Ibid p.148.
36. Ibid p.86.
37. Ibid pp 72, 113, and 184.
38. Ibid p.124.
39. Ibid p.164.
40. Ibid p.77.
41. Ibid p.181.
42. Ibid p.181.
43. Ibid p.181.
44. Ibid p.181.
45. Ibid p.70.

46. Ibid p.74.
47. Ibid p.90.
48. Ibid p.156.

#### Notes to Part VI Chapter II (pages 239 to 241)

1. Between them, those involved in the discussion piece together an almost complete view of how the bonus scheme works. But there is one vital piece of information missing. The figure of 65.85 articles per person per hour is not just based on 'time study' with a stopwatch. It also depends on the work study people's judgement of how fast each job should be done - 'rating'. The 65.85 therefore reflects their opinion of how much extra work they can load on, for thirty three and a third per cent bonus, without the workforce chucking out the scheme. This is difficult to categorise. Perhaps it should be thought of as an ideological sanction built into the bonus scheme - the deliberate concealment of information. In practice the set-up sheets with the ratings on them are beyond retrieval and, therefore, the completely subjective aspect of the scheme, which appears so 'technical', is unchallengeable.
2. This dialogue, not included in the transcript in Part I, was recorded in week 6. A previous complaint about her rows occurs in week 1 - see Part I p.3.

#### Notes to Part VI Chapter III (pages 243 to 252)

1. Max Weber. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism p.55.
2. Capital Volume I p.352, footnote 2.
3. Weber op cit p.5.
4. Capitalism = rational profit making - constantly renewed (as opposed to adventurist and speculative) profit, calculated and recorded through book-keeping, gained on the basis of market exchanges involving a characteristic organisation of free (ie unbound) labour under regular discipline. Ibid p.17 onwards.
5. Introduction to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism p.25. This is not part of the essay. It is in fact an introduction to a projected compilation of works on the Sociology of religion which Weber was prevented from pursuing by his early death in 1920, and, as Gordon Marshall has pointed out (In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism. 1982), can be misleading if read as an introduction to the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism on its own.
6. Ibid p.26.
7. Ibid pp 26, 27.
8. Ibid p.53.
9. Ibid pp 53, 54.
10. John Eldridge: Max Weber: The Interpretation of Social Reality. 1972. p.40.
11. Weber op cit p.198 note 12.
12. Ibid p.282 note 108
13. John Eldridge's stress on the "ethical imperative" suggests he does not see the sanction of bridle and stirrups as the Spirit's means of enforcement. But how is a sense of duty sustained within the ethic? Eldridge asks:  
"How does one account for the behaviour which enables a man to become a



self-made parvenu? The motivation must be very strong for him to withstand the criticism and resentment of then traditionalists (capitalist and non-capitalist) and to feel himself justified. It is here that the linkage with Puritanism is suggested..." (ibid p.42) But while Weber is quite clear how Puritanism imposed a certain conduct on the believer, it clearly cannot hold good in the secular Spirit: "...an ethic based on religion places certain psychological sanctions (not of an economic character) on the maintenance of the attitude prescribed by it, sanctions which, so long as the religious belief remains alive, are highly effective..." (Weber op cit p.197 Note 12). However, the linkage with Puritanism has been severed. As Eldridge says:

"...Franklin is used to illustrate the fully developed spirit of capitalism ('accumulation for its own sake') which was only attained in its secular phase. Franklin is, as Weber puts it, 'expressly denoted as a man who stood beyond the direct influence of the Puritan view of life'" (Weber op cit p.198 note 12 quoted in Eldridge op cit p.45). So the essential question remains. What is the 'direct influence' which sustains the spirit of capitalism in the absence of religious sanctions? The same problem confronts the present research. What is the nature of the power associated with ideas shown to be powerful in the three workplaces?

14. The validity of the 'Weber thesis' does not depend on finding a perfect correlation between places where Protestant asceticism was strong and places where capitalism developed. In looking at the case of Scotland, where Calvinism had been particularly strong, Gordon Marshall (in *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the development of capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707*: 1980) has shown how the spirit of Capitalism was certainly present by the eighteenth century but other factors suppressed its application. In particular, the survival of feudal regulation of industry in the towns, and vigorous protectionism by the Scottish state, meant the promotion of industries subsequently shown to have no chance of survival in world markets at the expense of potential growth industries.
15. Ibid p.197 note 12.
16. Recent substantiation of the Weber thesis comes from Gordon Marshall in *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1982 and Gianfranco Poggi in *Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit* 1983. Marshall's book appears to be a particularly thorough review of the current state of play in a long and continuing argument.
17. Ibid pp.155, 156.
18. Ibid p.267 note 42.
19. Ibid p.265 note 28.
20. Ibid p.265 note 28.
21. Quoted by Weber in the same footnote.
22. Ibid p.268 note 43.
23. Ibid p.162.
24. Ibid p.163.
25. Ibid p.275 note 72.
26. Inevitably, as Weber points out, "...these Puritanical ideas tended to give way under excessive pressure from the temptations of wealth, as the Puritans themselves knew very well. With great regularity we find the most genuine adherents of Putitanism among the classes which were rising from a lowly status, the small bourgeoisie and farmers, while

the *beati possidentes*, even among Quakers are often found tending to repudiate the old ideals" (ibid p.174). The result in the long run was repeated Protestant religious revivals. Among these was the rise of methodism a century later, whose founder, John Wesley, Weber quotes: "I fear wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so with pride, anger and love of the world in all its branches. So although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away..." (ibid p.175). But in the short run, that which was later only too clear to Wesley, that the glory of God could so easily transformed into the self-glorification of the owners of wealth, was rendered invisible to the Puritan faithful. It stemmed from the Calvinist belief in predestination which, according to Weber, gave rise among the faithful to the fear that they might be predestined to damnation. The Church gave two kinds of pastoral advice. "On the one hand it is an absolute duty to consider oneself chosen (for salvation), and to combat all doubts as temptations of the devil, since lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence of imperfect grace" (Weber op.cit p.111). On the other hand, in order to attain that self-confidence, worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means. It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives certainty of grace" (ibid p.112). This is where the notion of a "calling" comes in, an idea in which the individual is a tool of divine will. Calvinist predestination held that emulation of the elect (those bound for salvation) "rested on a power within himself (the individual) working for the glory of God; that it is not only of God but done by God" (ibid pp 114, 115). Good works were "the technical means, not of purchasing salvation (which was the Lutheran belief) but of getting rid of the fear of damnation" (ibid p.115). Elsewhere Weber says "...the religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful lever for the expansion of that attitude to life which we have called the spirit of capitalism" (ibid p.172). "...the power of religious asceticism provided him (the businessman) ...with sober, conscientious, and usually industrious workmen, who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God. (And) it gave him the comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of goods in this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence, which in these differences pursued secret ends unknown to men" (ibid p.177).

27. Ibid pp. 178, 179.

28. Ibid p.217 note 3.

29. As he made clear in the *Grundrisse*, Marx himself in the 1850s projected a major work in which Capital would only have been part. The state would have been another. Although other works, including the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, *The Civil War in France* and his marginal notes on the *Gotha Programme*, are relevant, they do not approach the depth or breadth of analysis of Capital. It is difficult to see how such a work could have been written without moving away from the all-embracing relation of Capitalist Private Property.

30. Louis Althusser. For Marx 1969 p.233.

31. Ibid p.234.
32. Ibid p.234. Brackets and emphaissis are Althusser's
33. Ibid p.235.
34. Antonio Gramsci. Prison Notebooks.
35. Parry Anderson. New Left Review 100 Nov 1976 - Jan 1977 p.43.
36. Ibid p.44. This view of Gramsci's concept of hegemony agrees with that of Joseph Femia that "To him, bourgeois hegemony was a legitimating mask over the predatory nature of class domination" (Gramsci's Political Thought 1981 p.225 - 1987 edition).

#### Notes to Part VI Chapter IV (pages 252 to 262)

1. Both Betty and Dennis had declared their unwillingness to co-operate with management in earlier discussions. Betty had said she would not always do what management told her and she could justify not doing so (Part III p.8). Dennis had, in a somewhat convoluted passage edited out by the author, said he had circumvented the provisions order rule. There is therefore a sense in which the idea of independence from management was paralleled by more active individual sanctions.
2. To some extent the crisis centred on the author, who was phoned late at night by the officer in charge after she had read the transcripts of the earlier discussions. A senior manager and the union branch secretary were both called in at different stages. The recording of the officers' response (Part III Appendix) was a matter of delicate negotiation.
3. See note 26 from previous chapter.

#### Notes from Part VII Chapter I (pages 264 to 273)

1. The proposals are put forward in the light of the discussions in the three workplaces, not a study of the workings of the "post-Warwick structure". Their scope does not, therefore, extend to a review of that structure. If and when such a review is carried out, there will, after so many years, be many things to be considered which will have no direct connection with the 'Warwick Report' itself. However, it is essential that any review should focus on the problems the structure was intended to tackle. In particular, it should be born in mind that the structure was intended not merely to draw the union closer to the stewards who sit on its many bodies. It was intended to overcome the remoteness of the membership as a whole.
2. Further extensions to the workplace franchise could include workplace balloting for branch officers, the right to send a member to represent the workplace at a branch meeting where larger attendance is difficult, and the right to replace a steward during the one year term of office. However, these changes would require modifications to other rules.
3. In a more recent paper, 'The Development of Union Stewards in the National Union of Public Employees', 1982 (unpublished), Bob Fryer emphasises the scope for officer domination through the Area Conferences. Perhaps faith in the "substantial opposition to oligarchy" which stewards "embody" (p.46 of the same paper) leads him to overlook the scope for officer domination within the structure he and his colleagues designed. However, he does say this of Area Conferences: "For all their limitations, early Area Conferences, particularly in the first twenty years of their life, represented some restricted opportunity for delegates (mostly branch secretaries, largely male) to

exercise a check on full-time officials activities. Many of the items reported to the Area Conferences concerned individual cases and a single organiser's report could easily run to twenty or thirty pages, covering as many as 200 individual cases. It would be wrong to see only the restricted and bureaucratic aspects of Area Conference. Clearly, when problems of recalcitrant councils and unresponsive employers were encountered, it was not so much the elaboration of branch machinery (shop stewards, committees) that was necessary, as the combination of high levels of union membership with solidarity from fellow members and branches..."

4. It can be argued that arranging these jobs in a ladder reduces overall effectiveness by making movement possible in only one direction in the course of a working life. One example is that it makes it impossible to move to work which can be done with regular hours in early parenthood. Another is that promotion means the more 'senior' the position held, the less close contact there is with union members.
5. Union officers' pay includes Inland Revenue car benefit, in modest recognition of their value for private use (approximately £10.00 a week on the lower grades). National officers' pay and above includes London weighting. The laundry manager was on A&C scale 23. Laundry workers' pay includes bonus and foul linen payment, but not overtime which was irregular. The care assistants' pay includes alternating shift pay and weekend enhancements covering a rota with five out of every six weekends worked. The figures for the cook and full-time domestic are for five weekdays. All figures relate to gross pay during the period May/June 1987.

Note to Part VII Chapter II (page 278)

1. Calaghan's pay limits - part of a policy of wage restraint apparently endemic to Labour Government - had come unstuck. Workers in the Health Service and Local Government were at the forefront of its rejection. The campaign of strikes christened by Fleet Street "the Winter of Discontent" followed. But workers in fields upon which human life and compassion depend, have always proved reticent in exercising what the General Secretary of the TUC then called "the right not to work except on agreed terms and conditions". An example of such reticence was a picket line at the gates of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham which allowed in vital supplies. A breakdown of communication with the Hospital Administration - not unusual in the most normal of circumstances - meant that cancer drugs were unintentionally turned away. Instead of consulting Administrators, the consultant in charge of the radiotherapy department sent patients home to the accompaniment of lurid headlines such as "Lift the Cancer Blockade" (London Evening Standard 25.1.79), "Pickets hit Cancer Wards" (Daily Mail 25.1.79), "Life or Death picket" (Daily Express 25.1.79). Next day the Mail, in small print on page 2, felt moved to add "...the pickets, belonging to the national Union of public Employees, demanded and got what they called a "direct repudiation" of cancer specialist Mr William Bond's claim that some patients sent home were in danger of dying." But only the Morning Star carried the union's official comment that a statement from the Administration "...showed that Dr Bond acted on his own without consultation with the hospital administration." And he "did not use the machinery which has been established between the DHSS and the

union to deal with emergency situations" (Morning Star 26.1.79). But by this and similar stories, the alleged but unsubstantiated inhumanity of hospital workers became firmly established in Fleet Street and, thus, in the public imagination. So much so, that a few months later, after the election, the Express was able to comment on a Trade Union Congress debate on media coverage:

"They continue quite seriously to contrast the favourable coverage they receive in the Communist Morning Star with that they receive in every other newspaper.

But Fleet Street did not invent last winter's bitter industrial disruption. We only recorded it. If only the trade unions could see themselves as the nation sees them. They have conveniently forgotten what happened in January and February this year. We have not.

**They could not have behaved more callously. The dead were left unburied. The sick and disabled were left unattended.**

The trade unions hit knowingly and intentionally at the sick, old and young - those least capable of fending for themselves. What a pity they were not as sensitive then to peoples' needs as they are to their own image!

The unions have got the media coverage they deserved..." Daily Mail Sept 1979.

#### Notes to Part VII Chapter III (pages 285 to 291)

1. The other reads: "What is the general physical, intellectual, and moral condition of men and women workers employed in your trade?" Perhaps the number of questions and the detail sought makes it unsurprising that very few answers were received by the socialist journal, Revue Socialiste, which distributed it in 1880. From Karl Marx: Selected writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy. T B Bottomore and M Rubel 1963.
2. Theory of Social and Economic Organisation pp 99 to 100 and in J E T Eldridge op cit p.98.
3. Weber op cit pp 98 to 99.
4. Ibid p.90.
5. Ibid p.91.
6. In Gerth and Mills op cit p.180 ff.
7. Or 'order' - see Weber op cit p.124. The part played by order in this schema suggests that Frank Parkin (Max Weber 1981 Chapter 4) is wrong to express surprise at the absence of the state and bureaucracy from Class, Status and Party. Order in the market - including production - is the means whereby both state and bureaucracy can be constitutive of class situation. Party occurs alongside class and status because of its capability for representing either in action orientated towards the acquisition of power - through 'communal' and 'societal' action. Gerth and Mills op cit p.194.
8. In other words 'mass actions' giving rise to 'communal' action which is also class action. ibid p.184.
9. "Were one to accept Weber's methodological reflections on his own work at their face value, one would not find a systematic justification for his analysis of such phenomena as stratification or capitalism. Taken literally, the 'method of understanding' would hardly allow for Weber's use of structural explanations..." H Gerth and C Wright Mills. From Max

Weber 1948 p.57.

10. Weber Op cit p.112, Eldridge p.102.
11. "...the 'conscious motive' may well, even to the actor himself, conceal the various 'motives' and 'repressions' which constitute the real driving force of his action. Thus in such cases even subjectively honest self-analysis has only a relative value. Then it is the task of the sociologist to be aware of this motivational situation and to describe and analyse it, even though it has not been concretely part of the conscious 'intention' of the actor; possibly not at all, at least not fully. This is a borderline case of the interpretation of meaning" (ibid p.96).
12. In Eldridge op cit p.103 ff.
13. Weber op cit p.116.
14. Roger Penn. Skilled Workers in the Class Structure. pp 12 to 13.
15. Ibid p.3.

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