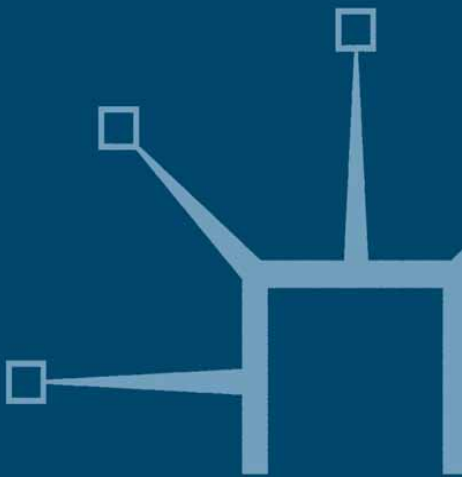
palgrave
macmillan

Partnership and the High Performance Workplace

Work and Employment Relations in the Aerospace Industry

Andy Danford, Mike Richardson,
Paul Stewart, Stephanie Tailby
and Martin Upchurch



Partnership and the High Performance Workplace

The Future of Work Series

Series Editor: **Peter Nolan**, Director of the ESRC Future of Work Programme and the Montague Burton Professor of Industrial Relations at Leeds University Business School in the UK.

Few subjects could be judged more vital to current policy and academic debates than the prospects for work and employment. *The Future of Work* series provides the much needed evidence and theoretical advances to enhance our understanding of the critical developments most likely to impact on people's working lives.

Titles include:

Julia Brannen, Peter Moss and Ann Mooney
WORKING AND CARING OVER THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
Change and Continuity in Four Generation Families

Andy Danford, Mike Richardson, Paul Stewart, Stephanie Tailby and Martin Upchurch
PARTNERSHIP AND THE HIGH PERFORMANCE WORKPLACE
Work and Employment Relations in the Aerospace Industry

Geraldine Healy, Edmund Herry, Phil Taylor and William Brown (*editors*)
THE FUTURE OF WORKER REPRESENTATION

Diane Houston (*editor*)
WORK–LIFE BALANCE IN THE 21st CENTURY

Theo Nichols and Surhan Cam
LABOUR IN A GLOBAL WORLD
Case Studies from the White Goods Industry in Africa, South America, East Asia and Europe

Paul Stewart (*editor*)
EMPLOYMENT, TRADE UNION RENEWAL AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Michael White, Stephen Hill, Colin Mills and Deborah Smeaton
MANAGING TO CHANGE?
British Workplaces and the Future of Work

The Future of Work Series
Series Standing Order ISBN 1–4039–1477–X

You can receive future titles in this series as they are published by placing a standing order. Please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address, the title of the series and one of the ISBNs quoted above.

Customer Services Department, Macmillan Distribution Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS, England

Partnership and the High Performance Workplace

Work and Employment Relations in the Aerospace Industry

Andy Danford, Mike Richardson, Paul Stewart, Stephanie Tailby and Martin Upchurch

palgrave
macmillan

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2005 978-1-4039-1753-9

First published 2005 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-51345-1 ISBN 978-0-230-50199-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9780230501997

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Partnership and the high performance workplace: work and employment relations in the aerospace industry / by Andy Danford … [et al.].
p. cm. – (The future of work series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Aerospace industries–Management–Employee participation–Great Britain. 2. Aerospace industries–Management–Great Britain. 3. Industrial productivity–Great Britain. 4. Industrial relations–Great Britain. I. Danford, Andy. II. Future of work (Series)

HD9711.5.G72P28 2005
338.4'76291'0941–dc22 2005043425

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05

Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by a grant from the ESRC Future of Work programme: L212252096.

The authors would like to thank the many managers, trade union representatives and employees at *Airframes* and *JetCo* who participated in the workplace interview and questionnaire stages of the research. We would also like to thank the small number of retired workers and the Right Honourable Tony Benn who contributed to the material presented in Chapter 2. Finally we would like to thank Viv Calway and Detta Danford for the immense amount of work completed in transcribing and checking the interview tapes.

List of Abbreviations

ACTSS	Association of Clerical and Technical Staff Section
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AEEU	Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union
AMICUS-AEEU	AEEU Section of the AMICUS
AMICUS-MSF	MSF Section of the AMICUS
APEX	Association of Professional Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff
ASSNC	Aircraft Shop Stewards National Council
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs
BAC	British Aircraft Corporation
BAe	British Aerospace
BFDJC	Better Future for Defence Jobs Committee
BSECSSC	Bristol Siddeley Engines National Combined Shop Stewards Committee
CAD	Computer-Aided Design
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CSEU	Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
E&ATSSNC	Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council
EEF	Engineering Employers' Federation
EETPU	Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GMB-APEX	The APEX section of the General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HPW	High Performance Workplace
HPWS	High Performance Workplace Systems

HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resource Management
IPA	Involvement and Participation Association
IPT	Integrated Project Team
JIT	Just-in-Time
JPC	Joint Production Committee
JSC	Joint Site Committee
MDW	Measured Day Work
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOT	Ministry of Transport
MD	Managing Director
MRP	Materials Requirements Planning
MSF	Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
PDR	Personal Development Review
PRP	Performance Related Pay
QWL	Quality of Working Life
R&D	Research and Development
RAF	Royal Air Force
ROCC	Raising Our Company's Competitiveness
SBAC	Society of British Aerospace Companies
TASS	Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section (Union)
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TQM	Total Quality Management
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WERS	Workplace Employee Relations Survey

Foreword

The changing nature of employment relations internationally is one of the key issues of contemporary debate. Developments in the UK have centred on the possibilities for partnership in the workplace to better transform the performance of organisations in private industry and public organisations.

This new research monograph, the seventh in the Palgrave ESRC Future of Work Series, examines the implications of the attempts by employers and employees to establish new working patterns, modes of communication and forms of participation and partnership in the aircraft industry – one of the United Kingdom's strategic sectors.

Advances in productivity in UK industries features very high on the Government's agenda, but have the implications for change in employment relations featured significantly in contemporary analysis and debate? The present UK government has espoused the concept of partnership between employees, but has it put in place the institutional mechanisms to achieve the effective modes of consultation, negotiation and regulation?

This study, produced by a notable team of researchers at the University of the West of England, addresses these questions head on. It illuminates the dynamics and effects of new human resource management practices, examines the responses, collectively and individually, of employees to these new practices, and sheds light on class and gender relations in the workplace that are too often neglected in studies of manufacturing. It is an important book that will significantly advance the contemporary debate about employment relations and the possibilities for new forms of partnership in the workplace. It is a major contribution to the analysis of the future of work.

Peter Nolan

Notes on the Authors

Andy Danford is Professor of Employment Relations at the University of the West of England, Bristol. He has published widely in the areas of trade union renewal and critical studies of lean production in the aerospace and automotive sectors. He is the author of *Japanese Management Techniques and British Workers* and co-author of *New Unions, New Workplaces*.

Mike Richardson is a Senior Researcher in Industrial Relations at the University of the West of England. His research interests include labour history. His recently published articles include 'Leadership and Mobilization: SOGAT in the 1986–87 News International Dispute'. He is also co-author of *New Unions, New Workplaces*.

Paul Stewart is Professor of the Sociology of Work and Employment at the University of the West of England. He has published widely in the areas of employment relations and labour processes in the automotive industry and the new lean politics of partnership at work. He is editor of *Employment, Trade Union Renewal and Future of Work* in the ESRC Future of Work series.

Stephanie Tailby is Reader in Employment Relations at the University of the West of England. Her recent research focuses on partnership at work in the UK, and contingent employment in European healthcare and financial services.

Martin Upchurch is Professor of International Employment Relations at Middlesex University Business School. His research interests include trade union strategies and comparative industrial relations. He is the co-author of *New Unions, New Workplaces*.

1
Modernization and Workplace Relations

We hear much these days, from politicians and media commentators alike, about the need to 'modernize' UK workplace relations. It is a term which, as a rhetorical device, is intended to convey a sense of rationality and progress. Thus, attempts to 'democratize' the workplace by way of new forms of employee participation bolstered by distinctively co-operative relationships between employer and union 'partners' have become synonymous with a modernization process that purports to mark out fresh paths to 'market competitiveness' and 'business success'. The power of the rhetoric is such that opposition is often regarded as both reactionary and pointless. Workers who question the new orthodoxy are routinely accused of being misguided and misled whilst their trade unions are often vilified for reacting like contemporary 'luddites'. For instance, at recent annual conferences of the British Trade Union Congress (TUC), Prime Minister Tony Blair seemed to revel in accusing trade union dissidents of reverting to 'bad behaviour' reminiscent of 'the bad old days of the 1960s and 1970s' and of adopting 'self-indulgent rhetoric that belongs in the history books.' In the not too distant past, this type of commentary would have been broadly dismissed in social democratic circles as the vocabulary of a reactionary conservatism but, as a defining element of the new modernization discourse, it has now become common parlance in business and in the New Labour government too.

The purpose of this book is to provide an alternative perspective that penetrates the realities behind the rhetoric of the modernization project. It adopts critical analysis of concrete processes of change and places at the centre of its enquiry the interests of employees – those who are often the objects of managerial initiatives rather than democratic participants. The book draws upon a research project funded by

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Future of Work programme. The project investigated the impact on manual and non-manual labour of the development of partnership in the high performance workplace, a process that is central to the new policy agenda.

Although partnership and the high performance workplace are both primarily located within the sphere of employers' capital accumulation strategies, they also have a significant ideological dimension. As a former Special Advisor to the Trade and Industry Secretary in the first New Labour government has argued, the shift away from traditional social democratic concerns with Keynesian economic and industrial management to the neo-liberal emphasis on fostering competition and enterprise had important implications for the shaping of employee attitudes (Corry, 2001). Unlike the traditional left, New Labour has come to embrace continual change in industry and to regard economic globalization as unimpeachable. In such sectors as manufacturing, widespread job loss, as well as job creation, are accepted as a form of 'creative destruction'. This in turn requires change in employee attitudes and the introduction of management techniques that create a more market-aware and co-operative workforce. As Corry puts it, the logic in government promoting greater employee consultation rights is that '[B]usinesses need their workforces to understand the commercial environment in which their companies operate. They should appreciate the pressures on them and the dynamics of the market, so that change is understood, is not a surprise and may therefore be resisted less. This includes restructuring as well as job loss' (2001: 131–32). This political discourse seems to differ little from Margaret Thatcher's refrain 'there is no alternative'. The possibility that workers might have independent minds, or have separate collective interests that conflict with the employers', must inevitably give way to the imperatives of co-operation and compliance.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the broad thrust of employment law introduced by the first and second New Labour governments sought a modernization of industrial relations based on a unitary model of social partnership. This involved the marginalization of workplace unions as autonomous organizations whilst union recognition legislation and state industrial relations practice were both skewed towards the promotion of a form of trade unionism that was to be treated as a subordinate 'partner' in the employment relationship (Smith and Morton, 2001; 2004). This scenario has led some writers to argue that rather than import the Rhenish model of social partnership – involving elements of joint regulation between managers and unions

– New Labour has preferred to export the Anglo-Saxon model of flexibility and de-regulation to Europe (Clift, 2000; McIlroy, 1998). Whilst there is much truth in this, there is also a disjointed 'Third Way' approach in the British case. That is, shifting coalitions within the European Union have forced a reluctant UK Government to introduce a new framework of employee consultation rights, albeit a much weaker version than the Rhenish model (Beckett and Hencke, 2004). At the same time, the Government, along with the TUC and some 'progressive' employers, have also been advocating the adoption of more systematic direct employee involvement techniques now associated with some North American workplaces. This alternative still requires co-operative trade union relations but it also promotes a new workplace environment that is supposed to enhance employee participation, skill formation and other features of quality of working life. Such an environment has come to be strongly associated with the high performance workplace and it is to this concept that we first turn our attention.

The high performance workplace

In the managerial literature there seems to be broad agreement that the high performance workplace has emerged in the context of shifting market and technological environments. As some key analysts have observed, more intense global competition in markets that are increasingly characterized by product differentiation and a concern for quality, coupled with developments in production engineering that exploit new flexible technologies and small batch manufacturing, have catalyzed an interest in new, less authoritarian methods of managing labour (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bélanger, J. et al., 2002; Giles et al., 2002). Located along the same continuum of job design as earlier experiments in 'human relations' and 'group relations' approaches this interest has centred on management techniques that attempt to capture employee commitment to the interests of the capitalist firm by way of more creative and participative work systems.

Eileen Appelbaum is one of the leading advocates of the high performance workplace amongst management school academics (see for example, Appelbaum, 2002; Appelbaum et al., 2000; Appelbaum and Batt, 1994; Appelbaum and Berg, 1997; Batt and Appelbaum, 1995). The essence of her argument is that certain groups of management practices (HPWS – high performance work systems) generate superior performance outcomes for firms by mobilizing greater discretionary

effort from employees. That is, rather than drive labour harder through compulsion or via the dynamics of peer pressure, greater effort can be volunteered by the use of HPWS. If workers are offered labour process conditions of relative autonomy along with opportunities to participate in work decisions, opportunities to utilize real skills and different material and intrinsic rewards then their job satisfaction will increase. This, in turn, is likely to translate into greater employee effort for the benefit of the firm. The specific techniques and conditions of HPWS include: worker autonomy or control over job content (akin to a traditional craft model); membership of self-directed work teams; participation in off-line problem solving teams (such as quality circles or continuous improvement groups); systematic communication and consultation between managers and workers; investment in workers' skills and individual development; superior pay and conditions; and the development of high trust relations between managers, workers and their union representatives.

There has been a good deal of interest from the government and various interest groups in promoting such HPWS practices in British workplaces. Government and employer organization policy documents have tended to adopt 'progressive' Human Resource Management (HRM) rhetoric in promoting employee involvement and commitment (for example, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 2004; Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 2004; 2003; 2002) whilst more trade union oriented groups and unions themselves have emphasized the importance of participation via employee representatives (for example, Involvement and Participation Association (IPA), 2002; TUC, 2003; 2002). What unites these positions, however, is an underlying belief in the potential of HPWS to reconcile conflicts of interest between employers and labour. That is, a 'mutual gain' can be generated based on improved productivity and profitability results for employers in return for more job involvement, satisfaction and career development for employees. This assumption, or hypothesis, has shaped a plethora of survey-based studies that have attempted to prove a positive association between the adoption of HPWS, employer performance and employee welfare. Much of this is managerialist in its methodology in that survey respondents are often managers who are used to elicit information governing firm characteristics and their range of HPWS practices. Statistical tests will then explore any association with different indicators of organizational performance.

Published results have, however, been somewhat confusing. For example, in the USA, researchers have claimed to find HPWS associa-

tions with low staff turnover and higher sales (Huselid, 1995), with higher labour productivity (Black and Lynch, 2000; 2001), and perceived market and organizational performance (Delaney and Huselid, 1996). At the same time, other survey researchers have failed to establish any HPWS effect (Freeman et al., 2000) or have uncovered associations with downsizing (Osterman, 2000) or increased labour costs (Cappelli and Neumark, 2001). Similarly in the UK, some studies have found an association between HPWS and company innovation (Michie and Sheehan, 2003) and with company performance (Patterson et al., 1998) whereas others have established more negative patterns, such as a reduction in company performance over time (Guest et al., 2003). Similar contradictions are evident in the relatively few surveys of employee experience and attitudes. For instance, Appelbaum et al.'s (2000) US-based study of workers in the steel, clothing and medical electronics instruments industries seemed to show positive associations between HPWS and some employee outcomes, such as commitment, trust and job satisfaction. On the other hand, Ramsay et al.'s (2000) analysis of the 1998 UK Workplace Employee Relations Survey found that the association between HPWS and improved firm performance could not be attributed to any positive employee outcomes. Similarly, one of the recent employee survey studies in the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC's) Future of Work programme found that HPWS can have a detrimental effect on employees' work-life balance (White et al., 2003).

In an excellent methodological review of some of these contradictory patterns, Godard (2004) has observed that the more managerialist surveys tend to produce confusing results because they are often marred by such problems as an insufficient operationalization of HPWS techniques and a failure to take into account broader market context and other structural factors. Whilst accepting this we would also contend that the overriding focus on heuristic models and hypothesis-testing, useful as this sometimes can be, could not measure the dynamics of management-labour relations and the micro-politics of workplace restructuring. Neither can it provide any insight into the lived experiences of labour and the complex interplay of interests between capital and labour at the point of production. An alternative, labour-focused case methodology (of which this book is an example) would need to raise a series of critical questions concerning employee welfare and the quality of working life under the high performance work regime. Before we itemize these, however, it is necessary to explicate further the treatment of labour and labour control in the academic literature

governing the recent development of those management techniques that make up the HPWS portfolio.

From Japanization to Lean to HPWS

Despite arguments linking HPWS to the search for improvements in the management of the employment relationship, little endeavour has been given to placing them within historically contingent (and strategic) motives for advancing management hegemony and control of the work force. Moreover, the belief that they encourage increased representation and participation has been used, often with very little evidence, as proof in itself of the veracity of claims for mutual gains outcomes. Further still, there have been few attempts to contextualize them in terms of conjunctural social change. In short, while we might argue about the focus on this or that account of HPWS in terms of advancing employee welfare, we need also to understand the way in which the high performance workplace has been linked historically and politically to specific themes of increased employee participation. This is important, as we shall see, because the way in which HPWS have been thought about, even amongst those anxious for their success (Ashton and Sung, 2002) is constrained by a powerful technocratic notion of social neutrality. In short, while proponents of HPWS advance what they take to be a technocratic, neutral, agenda, they read off from this a class neutral approach to the employment relationship.

To get a better sense of the lineage of academic accounts promoting HPWS, we note two related trends in writing about its more recent antecedents.

In the first, the *Japanization school*, there is a distinct attempt on the one hand, to technologize, that is, to render socially neutral, new management practices so they can be seen in essentially instrumental terms as promoting multifarious social interests. While on the other, there is, perhaps, an even stronger tendency to see new management practices, far from being neutral, as socially beneficial.

For one group of writers, the introduction of so-called Japanese management practices (for example, teamworking, kaizen and reduced buffers premised on just-in-time) would promote company development based upon new organizational and employee-management agendas focused on mutuality. Enhanced productivity and market growth via reduced costs attendant on efficiency gains and improved quality were the goals that would ensure success for all. The one (company) team would ensure win-win outcomes for all; workers

would be the bright new beneficiaries of the 'Japanese way' (for example, see Oliver and Wilkinson's *Japanization of British Industry*, 1992).

Another current within the school, while not denying the positive organizational attributes associated with the 'Japanese way', nevertheless felt less certain about the perceived benefits accruing to individual workers. This was summed up by the title of a key essay in a special issue of the Journal of Management Studies, 'The *Iron Fist* in the *Velvet Glove*' (Wilkinson et al., 1995). However, while the outcome for workers might not be all it was claimed, there would still be little choice but to embrace the imperative of the great wheel of organizational and technological innovation following on the heels of the 'Japanese way'. Some form of worker opposition would inevitably ensue but because labour organization was limited, whether by such broader sociological changes as individualization (Delbridge, 1998), or strategic retreat (Abdullah and Keenoy, 1995), individuals would be forced to more or less rebel alone. Accordingly, traditional trade union agendas would from now on be deemed inappropriate.

Our second trend can be traced to the rise of the lean production paradigm in the UK at the beginning of the 1990s. Lean production was to have one major advantage over the Japanization school and this was that its hard-edged technological, and ostensibly social and culture-free agenda would allow theorists and practitioners (especially) to leave behind all the difficult issues surrounding the transfer of management techniques from one culture to another. While all the salient elements of Japanese management were originally culture and institution bound, the discourse and practices of Lean would allow them to be infinitely portable – to any place, time or culture, variability in management competence accepted. Even if the system was (simplistically) seen as deriving from a sympathetic management reading of Toyota, far from being an impediment this would be used to illustrate potential hegemonic power for capital as it strove to restructure in the wake of the demise of Fordism.

Possibly the most significant claim in the 'lean portmanteau' was that Just-in-Time (JIT) would work because quality improvements depended on employee involvement which would in turn be guaranteed by an innovative production regime encouraging their participation via kaizen, or continuous improvement. The new lean production agenda had been advanced in Womack et al.'s (1990) polemical account of Toyota's meteoric rise in *The Machine that Changed the World* and was subsequently trumpeted loudly by Andersen Consulting

(Oliver et al., 1994) in the UK. While space precludes an assessment of Womack et al., it might be helpful to pick out the crucial points of reference, if only in stylized fashion, that gave the Lean paradigm its apparently radical agenda. These were:

- The problems attendant on the rise and fall of Fordism can be solved using a lean production regime.
- One of the memorable mantras of the school, 'working smarter rather than harder', would highlight to workers the eternal benefits of lean production.
- While trade unionism should not be seen to be simplistically opposed to company pre-eminence, it would be more acceptable, or functionally adaptable, were it to renounce Anglo-Saxon institutional forms of organising.
- Lean rhetoric would accept past management failure. Ostensibly genuine and altruistic in intent, this could also be interpreted as a sign of confidence in managerial omnipotence.
- The most significant ideological prop to Lean has been the most important imperative – One Best Way.

The weaknesses of the lean production model have also been well documented (for example, Lewchuk et al., 2001; Rinehart et al., 1997; Stewart et al., 2004; Yates et al., 2001). For our purposes we identify the following. Like Japanization, its progenitor, Lean fails to back up assumptions about anticipated employee benefits with research into its impact on the quality of working life. Moreover, far from promoting increased quality of working life factors, Lean has actually depended upon an assault on labour conditions; it depends upon a naive sociological reading of the relationship between management intent and social outcomes; it promotes a unitarist view of the employment relationship; and in consequence, it sees independent labour activity as unwarranted.

The lean paradigm has been cannibalized most successfully in the current ideology of the high performance workplace. Perhaps the central claim of the proponents of HPWS are that not only do these management techniques promise all the things imagined by advocates of Lean but that they provide answers to the critics. That is, in contrast to Lean, HPWS not only ensure product excellence but this can be achieved through employee development rooted in participation and a sense of shared 'ownership' of the product and the firm (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Ashton and Sung, 2002). All this leads inexorably to an

Figure 1.1 Core features of the Japanese Way, Lean Production and HPWS

Japanese Way	Lean Production	HPWS
Ideology. Change is inevitable; seen as promoting multifarious social interests.	*Ideology*. Change is inevitable; practices becomes global via 'One Best Way' ideology.	*Ideology*. 'High road' to business success requires innovation, employee involvement and commitment.
Management practice. Enhance productivity and market growth via cost reduction and quality improvements.	*Management practice*. Enhance productivity and quality via worker involvement in kaizen; 'working smarter rather than harder'.	*Management practice*. Enhance productivity and global competitiveness by providing employee autonomy, participation and development.
Labour control. Workers embrace the single company team; opposition is reduced to individual actions.	*Labour control*. Unions renounce autonomy; management weakens rank and file labour standards.	*Labour control*. Mobilizes greater discretionary employee effort; tolerates autonomous trade unions.

enhanced quality of working life. Moreover, even while the high performance work regime uses all the aspects of Lean's production repertoire (for example, JIT, kaizen and team-based participation), by contrast, it not only allows for, but in many respects can claim, to depend upon the promotion of employee autonomy along with a tolerance of independent trade union organization. This would seem like a fine way to abandon the problems of individualism, teleology and 'One Best Way' (advocates of HPWS argue that there are often myriad ways to success) associated with the two former trends. Indeed, it is with respect to this issue of the employment relationship that these advocates would seem to have scored a notable conceptual victory. HPWS will lead to improved quality of working life via increased employee participation, learning and development such that the old issues of employee powerlessness, poor quality of working life and the 'representation gap' can be overcome.

To complete this discussion we have summarized the core features of HPWS and its two antecedents in Figure 1.1.

The following chapters in this book pose and explore a number of critical questions that the new high performance work paradigm, and its many advocates, tend to overlook or disregard. For example, how does the employers' new found interest in so-called 'worker empowerment' fit with the cost-cutting demands of neo-liberal political

economy? What is the impact of the restructuring of the high performance workplace on employees' sense of job security? For workers, what does flexibility actually mean in these new work contexts? What impact does worker deployment into teams have on skill utilization and effort rates? Is joint problem-solving truly based on mutuality or on the imposition of the employers' will? What is the interplay between high performance work agendas and the traditions of rank and file labour standards at work? And do the new work reforms impact equally on employees irrespective of class, occupation, gender and employment contract? These questions, and more, constitute our first line of enquiry.

Partnership at work

The second line of enquiry focuses on the role of partnership-based industrial relations practices in the high performance workplace. This is of central importance because the core principles of HPWS require an appropriate institutional framework to promote a new regime of supposed workplace pluralism. And it is here that workplace partnership enters the equation.

There are many nuances and contradictory positions within the growing body of academic literature that seeks to analyze the meaning of partnership. As a result, it appears at times an elastic and nebulous concept which differs in accordance with, for some, one's role in, or for others, one's perspective on, the nature of the capitalist employment relationship. For this research, we operationalized partnership by adopting the principles formulated by the TUC, the body that has, perhaps, done more than any other to promote partnership in the UK.

Following the 'Partners in Progress' 1997 Trades Union Congress, the TUC launched its partnership policy at a special one day conference in May 1999, attended by, amongst others, Prime Minister Tony Blair. The conference provided a platform for specially selected 'twinned' management and shop steward speakers from a number of partnership establishments in the UK's public and private sectors. Case by case, speakers articulated a set of principles that were based on the 'mutual gain' argument (Authors' observation notes, 24 May 1999). Workers and unions who offer greater commitment to, and greater discretionary effort for, the enterprise should receive in return improvements to job security, a better quality of working life and the prospects of independent participation in decision-making processes at work. The

TUC's six partnership principles are now well known but they do bear repeating here:

- *Principle One: Commitment to success of the enterprise*. Effective partnerships are built on a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the business goals of the organization and to its lasting success.
- *Principle Two: Recognizing legitimate interests*. Effective and constructive partnerships embrace the notion that at any one time there might be quite legitimate differences in interest and priorities between the partners. The partnership arrangement, if effective, will embody a degree of trust and respect that should aid the resolution of such differences, but ultimately each partner will respect the need of the others to listen to and properly represent their respective constituencies.
- *Principle Three: Commitment to employment security*. Effective partnerships must address flexibility of employment but they should also embrace measures to ensure that flexibility is not earned at the expense of employees' security.
- *Principle Four: Focus on the quality of working life*. Effective partnerships should contribute to an improvement in employees' personal development, their terms and conditions of employment and employee participation in decisions about their work.
- *Principle Five: Transparency*. Meaningful partnerships must be based upon a real sharing of hard, unvarnished information, and an openness to discussing future plans at an early stage. Consultation with unions and employees must be genuine, with a commitment to listen to business cases for alternative plans.
- *Principle Six: Adding value*. The hallmark of an effective partnership is that it taps into sources of motivation, commitment and/or resources that were not accessed by previous arrangements. (adapted from TUC, 1999: 13 and TUC, 2001: 2)

This form of partnership has direct connections with what some have termed the new European social model. This is a neo-liberal model based on the objective of 'modernizing' work via the adoption of internal flexibility measures, worker involvement in teams, training workers for adaptability and employability, and a strengthening of 'employee voice' via both direct and indirect union-based consultation (Sisson, 1999). It is this latter question of employee voice that has become one of the principal concerns of current partnership debates in the UK. In one of the more influential pieces of published research,

Guest and Peccei (2001: 212) argued that if there is anything distinctive about partnership, it is the emphasis placed upon trust and mutuality and the related normative and institutional dimensions of how managers, workers and unions may work effectively together to achieve shared or complementary goals. Adopting similar lines of thought to HPWS writers, Guest and Peccei propose a virtuous circle connecting the adoption of partnership practices with employee voice and company performance. Specifically, partnership may be expected to enhance employees' job satisfaction and both employee and trade union influence over work design and wider organizational decisions; this will improve the quality of these decisions which in turn will have a positive impact on employee commitment and organizational performance. It is worth noting that in attempting to measure these associations in partnership firms in the UK, Guest and Peccei found little evidence of mutuality; data collected from managers and union representatives showed positive associations between partnership practices and organizational performance measures but at the same time low levels of direct and indirect employee participation, and low levels of trust.

Although there is a large amount of literature – primarily survey work – that investigates employee voice via the conventional route of measuring the effectiveness of management communication and consultation systems, there is very little published research that considers directly the views and experiences of workers in partnership environments. This book makes a contribution towards redressing this gap. There is, however, a growing body of work exploring the implications of partnership for union strategy in an era of considerable trade union decline. If we focus on those writers who, to varying degrees, advocate partnership as a viable strategy of union revitalization (and these do tend to constitute the majority) then three related themes can be discerned in their arguments. The *first* concerns an inevitability of partnership. Here it is argued that from their current position of weakness vis-à-vis the employers, trade unions may have little option but to positively engage with partnership since the traditions of militant union organization are no longer seen to deliver the levels of influence required to constrain managerial unilateralism (Bacon et al., 1996; Bacon and Storey, 1996; Oxenbridge and Brown, 2004b; Taylor, 2003; Terry, 2002). Leaving aside for the moment this assumption that the option of union opposition must surely be discarded, and it is one that this book addresses directly, one is entitled to ask exactly what positive engagement with partnership really means? It is instructive to consider

the employers' perspective here. One study of ten large unionized establishments that were developing partnership arrangements in the 1990s found that many managers continued to prefer union-free environments whilst for some, partnership was adopted as the initial stage in a longer term strategy of union exclusion (Bacon and Storey, 2000). The idea of positive engagement by unions does not sit easily with this management tradition. A more recent survey of employers' current practice found that managers had begun to welcome union engagement in partnership but that most would attempt to continue bypassing trade unions unless the latter eschew those 'traditional characteristics and attitudes' which act against organizational success (Ackers et al., 2004). This pattern of employer behaviour seems to take little account of independent worker interests, or indeed of the plight of those who face insecurity, poor working conditions or discrimination. It seems that positive engagement is reduced to an expectation that unions co-operate with management, and on management's terms.

The *second* theme concerns partnership's reliance on strong workplace unions. Although for many partnership advocates the relative decline in trade union influence renders traditional union opposition impotent, this does not mean that the partnership union has no strength. Indeed, it is argued that partnership is not sustainable without strong workplace union organization sufficient to maintain its autonomy and to defend legitimate rank and file interests (Haynes and Allen, 2001; Taylor, 2003). Another project in the ESRC's Future of Work programme attempted to explore this relationship more systematically by investigating the impact of partnership in different establishments with 'strong' and 'weak' union organization. Relying mostly on interviews with managers, union officials and lay representatives, Oxenbridge and Brown (2004a) found that in the successful partnerships with 'strong' unions the latter had become proactive intermediaries in improving management communications and legitimizing workplace change. One instructive example of this came from a manager who described the value of the shop steward 'partner' as the strategic messenger of change:

> At the end of the day, if you need Mrs Mop on an assembly line to do something differently, she needs to do something differently … she needs to be told, honestly, fairly, and straight, in simple language, 'You're going to have to change'. And you need someone to help you to do that. Now hopefully your managers can do that. But

> everyone needs a logic check, and if Mrs Mop hears it from one of her own, so to speak, then fine. (Oxenbridge and Brown, 2004a: 194)

These authors also found that many stewards could not prove to their rank and file constituents that they were working on their behalf and most reported that their views seemed to contradict those of their members. Moreover, many found themselves suppressing calls for action, experiencing their own feelings of isolation and being reduced to acting as the bearers of bad news (2004a: 198–200). Looked at in this light it is clear that sustainable partnership may well require a 'strong' trade union but exactly how the union uses its strength has itself become somewhat problematic.

The *third* theme concerns the 'institutional centrality' of trade unions. The argument here is that although workplace-level partnership practices might embody a managerial view of trade unionism that differs little from 1980s-style 'new realism' the different politico-economic conditions of the new century offer unions the prospects of at least bolstering their legitimacy at the point of production and in wider society. That is, as Terry contends, trade unions that pursue partnership strategies may have to discard their traditional role of advancing members' interests and maintaining local labour standards but in return they may expect to reinforce their procedural and institutional standing and to enjoy a measure of 'organizational re-engagement' (2003a: 469). This reasoning has been adopted most consistently by Peter Ackers and his different co-authors. These writers perceive a new ethical mood in the environmental conditions of the Blairite era, one that may allow social partnership to take hold since it represents 'the institutional process of applying the spirit of business ethics and the theory of stakeholding to the employment relationship' (Ackers and Payne, 1998: 531). The employers' interest in shaping this 'ethical mood' is premised on their failure to completely exclude trade unions or to build employee commitment, on their need to adjust to the new political discourse and policy of New Labour, and on the feeling that managers are having to construct new business-based moral communities in reaction to a decline in moral socialization through churches, schools, community and family. In these apparently propitious conditions for a more co-operative form of industrial relations, trade unions need to develop partnership strategies that allow them to 'get a foot in the door, and begin to advance their institutional centrality' (1998: 546).

Ackers (2002) develops this idea of institutional centrality further in a theoretical piece that adopts a rather confusing postmodern pot-pourri of different sociological positions, ranging from Durkheim to Etzioni to Gellner to Giddens to Will Hutton. The overall argument is framed by an assumption of contemporary social breakdown, that the new flexibility and lack of security at work have fragmented family and community cohesion. This has nothing to do with capitalism of course, it is merely a 'problem of order'. The connection between this scenario and industrial relations is that we require a different form of employment regulation to promote core ethical values underpinned by proactive social institutions. Ackers argues here for a 'neo-pluralism' that emphasizes the role of institutional mechanisms which may enjoin businesses to make a 'constructive contribution to community and society' (2002: 15). And in this respect there exists a key role for policies such as social partnership, and supportive institutions such as trade unions, in a new normative regulation of the employment relationship based on long-term, stable associations that are built upon trust and loyalty. The underpinning assumption of this argument (since no empirical evidence is provided) is that both employers and trade unions will surely buy into this neo-pluralism, presumably voluntarily. Very little is said of power, or imbalance of power, or of the power resources that might be required to make employers see 'ethical sense'.

To what extent is the sanguine nature of many of these partnership accounts justified? The results of the relatively few studies that explore the micro-politics of partnership at the workplace level do give cause for concern. Not only should the sustainability of partnership in neo-liberal environments be questioned, though as Stuart and Martínez Lucio (2005) argue, we have insufficient empirical evidence of why this is the case, but the expectation that partnership will ultimately benefit independent union organization and union members seems to have little validity. One reason for this is that although there has been much speculation about the decline of class conflict in contemporary society, a decline embodied by the low incidence of strikes and other indicators of union weakness, one tends to forget that the other side of this coin suggests that class conflict is very much alive. That is, the anti-labour activities of employers and governments, what is known as 'class struggle from above'. Arguments concerning the hostile union agenda of employment legislation adopted by recent Conservative governments, and mostly maintained by New Labour, have been well rehearsed. If we then consider the employers, one is entitled to ask exactly how their ongoing antagonism to independent labour organization at work is

supposed to accommodate the 'mutuality' of partnership? Kelly (1996) made this point a decade ago when he considered the widespread manifestations of employer militancy: union derecognition, bypassing collective bargaining, activist victimization, and more subtle anti-union strategies through human resource management. More recent case study research of industrial relations in greenfield sites and non-traditional union settings has exposed how, under the guise of partnership, little has changed. Employers have adopted highly regimented regimes of labour control involving arbitrary supervisory actions, widespread bullying and in some cases sackings. This has also generated a deterioration of quality of working life in the form of work intensification, workplace stress and poor working conditions (Findlay and McKinlay, 2003; Taylor and Bain, 2003; Taylor and Ramsay, 1998). Union engagement with partnership in these contexts has led to loss of independence, loss of rank and file influence and, as Findlay and McKinlay's research of the new electronics industries in Scotland found, a situation where union support for partnership 'seems forlorn in the newly organized sites of Silicon Glen', where stewards are seen as part of the problem in 'sustaining aspects of a hated regime' (2003: 131).

A related concern is the realization that in order to enjoy a degree of 'institutional centrality' in the employment relationship (via potentially greater influence over managerial strategy) trade unions must expect to forgo rights to maintain local labour standards. These are workplace-level standards that both protect rank and file job controls and constrain supervisory prerogatives (Bélanger P.R. et al., 2002; Terry, 2003a). But little is said of the implications of discarding such rights. In the current so-called 'post-industrial era', employers' labour control practices in manufacturing still involve pressures to increase workloads, to speed up the line, to reduce labour costs and to enhance managerial prerogative over task flexibility and working time. And just as we have seen in the past, rank and file pressure on shop stewards requires them to become leading agents of local solidarities aimed at countering managerial control and asserting an autonomous worker control (Hyman, 1975). These processes might appear mundane to some observers but everyday conflicts over the minutiae of job timings, staffing ratios, work allocation and overtime remain important focal points of a rank and file struggle for a degree of independence and dignity at work. In fact, a number of studies of workplace union behaviour have shown that there is an alternative to discarding these labour standards. Unions can retain or adapt them by engaging with partnership in a more critical and oppositional way. For instance, by exploit-

ing the new empowerment rhetoric to broaden independent union influence over such issues as labour mobility and teamworking, and by maintaining shop steward autonomy through the creation of new networks of rank and file activity (Danford et al., 2002b; Martínez Lucio et al., 2000; Stewart and Wass, 1998).

Among the many research themes arising from this partnership debate, the following labour-centred questions are investigated in this book. How does partnership fit into employers' strategies of capital accumulation in neo-liberal political economies? In other words, what is the 'business case' for partnership? In workplaces where employers are attempting to develop co-operative partnership relations, what are the attitudes of trade union activists and rank and file members to such shifts in management policy? And how are these understood in environments where adversarial industrial relations have often been the norm? How do union activists and workers experience the different mechanisms of employee voice? And can they exercise any meaningful influence over management decisions that effect such questions as quality of working life and job security? Above all, to what extent can we talk of the potential of 'mutual gain' in high performance-partnership work regimes, or indeed of the prospects for consensus between capital and labour in the new work contexts? This question is an underlying feature in every chapter of this book and is addressed directly in our conclusion.

Research design

This Future of Work project sought to investigate the effects of management attempts to develop partnership in four employment sectors: aerospace, insurance, health and local government. Our book focuses upon aerospace for the reasons stated below; for analysis of other sectors see (Richardson et al., 2005; Tailby et al., 2004; Upchurch et al., 2004b).

The two case studies presented in this volume are of large, UK-based design and production aerospace plants. Although long established the aerospace sector is relatively under-researched due to the difficulties of gaining access to firms that are either partly or wholly dependent upon defence work. There is consequently a paucity of sociological accounts of worker experiences in this sector. Aerospace is also, in many respects, an exemplar of the high skill, knowledge economy. For example, the two case study plants contained high concentrations of graduate engineers, well qualified technical workers and skilled production workers.

The two plants were located in the south of England, one in a rural community the other in an urban setting. The plants are given the pseudonyms *Airframes* and *JetCo* and where product types are referred to in the text, these are also described with different pseudonyms.

Airframes was responsible for the design and assembly of a particular generic type of aircraft that can be used for both civil and military purposes. The factory employed just over 4000 workers comprising 600 managers and supervisors, 1500 production workers (90 per cent of whom were skilled) and 1900 graduate, technical and administrative staff. The *JetCo* factory was responsible for the design and production of aero-engines. It employed 4300 workers comprising 1800 production workers (80 per cent skilled) and 2500 managers, graduate engineers, technical and administrative staff. In both cases, the proportion of graduates (and equivalents such as those qualified to Higher National Diploma (HND)/Higher National Certificate (HNC) level) employed was high, over 500 in engineering and customer support functions.

There were two main trade union bargaining groups per plant and all four of these were dominated by the AMICUS trade union. On each shop-floor, the majority of skilled production workers were represented by AMICUS-AEEU with the remaining semi-skilled groups represented mostly by the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). These joined to form single manual bargaining groups. In the white collar areas, technical staff were represented by AMICUS-MSF whilst a much smaller group of administrative staff were members of the Association of Clerical and Technical Staff Section (ACTSS) at *Airframes* and the Association of Professional Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff (APEX) at *JetCo*. In both cases, these joined to form single non-manual bargaining groups. Manual union membership density at both plants was virtually 100 per cent whilst non-manual densities for AMICUS-MSF were around 80 per cent but lower for the clerical unions.

The bulk of the data were collected between the spring of 2001 and early 2002. During this time we carried out taped interviews with 142 staff divided more or less equally between the two plants. These comprised 28 senior and line managers, 24 union representatives, 41 production workers (nearly all of whom were skilled) and 49 non-manual employees (comprising graduate engineers, technical workers and administrative staff). In addition, a questionnaire survey collected 878 responses from a sample of 1100 manual and non-manual employees at *Airframes* (an 80 per cent response rate) and 604 responses from a sample of 974 employees at *JetCo* (62 per cent). The response rate at

Airframes was notably high. The prime reason for this was that senior management gave workers time off to fill in the questionnaires at specially organized team briefing sessions.

In addition, to enable us to present a picture of the legacy of industrial relations traditions at the two plants, we have provided a labour history of the sector in southern England (see Chapter 2). For this, apart from accessing archive material, we interviewed five retired shop stewards/union members along with the Right Honourable Tony Benn, the Labour Cabinet minister responsible for aviation during the 1960s. Benn also had strong constituency interests in aerospace for much of his parliamentary career.

In his review of the HPWS literature, Godard (2004) observed that workplaces covered by most published studies are characterized by quite limited levels of adoption of HPWS techniques, typically just a few out of a potential of many. In this respect, another reason for choosing our two aerospace case studies was that both plants had adopted a large number of techniques – more than the norm in aerospace and in all probability more than elsewhere in British manufacturing. Firstly, at the time of the research the two sets of management were attempting to develop partnership relations with their manual and non-manual trade unions. At *JetCo*, a formal partnership agreement was signed with AMICUS-MSF in 1998. Secondly, both plants had adopted HPWS in the form of clusters of labour process and human resource management reforms. We present these in Table 1.1 by way of a comparison with a recently completed Society of British Aerospace Companies (SBAC) survey of the use of HPWS in the UK aerospace sector (Thompson, 2002).

Finally, the remainder of the book is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides a labour-centred history of the aerospace sector in southern England in order to set the context of current shifts in industrial relations. Chapter 3 introduces the two case study firms and provides evidence of radical organizational restructuring, changes in management style, and the impact of these on workers' job security and commitment. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the introduction of such HPWS techniques as cellular working, project teams and continuous improvement campaigns in manual and non-manual areas. We consider the impact of these on employee skills, autonomy, quality of working life and the politics of workplace resistance. Chapter 6 examines the employers' attempts to develop partnership relationships. It explores management's partnership rationale, the nature of partnership practices and the complexity of different trade union responses. Chapter 7 continues

Table 1.1 Use of HPWS in the Two Case Studies Compared to National Aerospace Patterns

	SBAC Survey (%)	Two Case Studies
Semi-autonomous teams	19	*Yes*
Cellular production	58	*Yes*
JIT	50	*Yes*
Integrated project teams	39	*Yes*
Kaizen	56	*Yes*
Problem-solving groups	15	*Yes*
Self-inspection	72	*Yes*
Job rotation within teams	15	*Yes*
Job rotation between teams	7	No
Team briefing	67	*Yes*
Formal consultation practices	58	*Yes*
Attitude surveys	41	*Yes*
Share ownership scheme	30	*Yes*
Profit-sharing scheme	41	*Airframes* only
Employee appraisals	58	*Yes*
Off-the-job training	26	*Yes*
On-the-job training	46	Yes
Merit/incentive pay	30	*JetCo* only
Harmonized conditions	80	*Yes*

this theme by analyzing employees' attitudes to partnership. The extent to which employees feel they exercise influence over management via systems of direct and indirect participation is systematically investigated. Chapter 8 covers the training and development dimension of partnership. It explores the nature of training policy, the distribution of training and the implications of employee appraisal and individual reward techniques for labour control. Finally, Chapter 9 returns to the key themes of partnership and the high performance workplace and provides an overall critique based on the contradiction between 'mutuality' and the dynamics of capitalist work relations.

2
The Legacy of Trade Union Power

The beginning of aircraft production in Britain nearly a century ago provided new settings for capital accumulation. Workers in this developing industry, however, still faced many of the problems associated with authoritarian employers whose power was premised on ownership of the means of production. Technological advance in an age of modernity did not bring with it a new era of harmonious industrial relations. Industrial strife was particularly prevalent between 1910 and 1920 when the wonders of aerial technology were first enthusiastically promoted, particularly by the right-wing press, and then embraced by the government and the armed services to strengthen Britain's capability to fight a war. For instance, between 1916–18, when the total employed in the aircraft industry underwent a five-fold increase to 268,000 (Edgerton, 1991: 14), widespread industrial action was experienced. Although this was notably prevalent in West London, where a number of rank and file workers' committees were active in the industry (Hinton, 1969), aircraft factories in other parts of the UK were not immune from strike action. The South West provides one example of this. In 1915, workers at the British and Colonial Aerospace Company had established a union shop in the face of strong resistance from the company's owner Sir George White, a virulent anti-trade union figure (Richardson, 2000: 25). In 1918 these workers struck in pursuit of a war bonus and an increase in wages.

The end of the war inevitably brought with it a collapse in demand for military aircraft. This provided the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) with the opportunity to take advantage of the weakened position of trade unions. In 1922, the EEF forced the engineering unions to concede (as they had done in 1897) that employers had the right to manage their establishments. Employers insisted that it was

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

their prerogative to dictate the working of overtime and utilized the lock-out when the engineering unions resisted. The unions' subsequent defeat resulted in the EEF imposing the 1914 York Memorandum. Buttressing the employer's right to manage, this memorandum gave prominence to conciliation and arbitration procedures that had to be exhausted before official strike action could occur. It had not previously been brought to bear because of the outbreak of the war when the government took over responsibility for the regulation of industrial relations and labour conditions.

The EEF victory left the engineering unions demoralized and debilitated. Unemployment was high and the demand for skilled workers low, eroding still further the ability of the unions to rebuild their organizations. Numbers employed in the aircraft industry collapsed from their war-time high of over a quarter of a million to fewer than 12,000 in 1924. Not until the rearmament programme in the mid-1930s did a new wave of union militancy emerge. Employment in the aircraft industry in this period grew from around 24,000 in 1934 to 140,000 in 1939 (Edgerton, 1991: 26). No discrete data on union density in aero engines and aircraft assembly are available but union density for metal and engineering workers, which would have included many aircraft workers, increased from 25 per cent in 1934 to nearly 36 per cent in 1939 (Bain and Price, 1980). In Bristol, an important centre of aircraft production in the South West, membership of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) increased from 1592 in 1933 to nearly 6000 in 1939 (Whitfield, 1979: 265). Dependence on skilled labour was an increasing feature of the industry as metal displaced wood in the construction of airframes. Expertise and efficiency in building military aircraft was monitored by the Air Ministry who had the power to remove firms that were deemed incompetent from the list of government contractors (Fearon, 1979).

Frustrated by the constraints imposed by the York Memorandum, in 1935 union activists responded by establishing the Aircraft Shop Stewards National Council (ASSNC) to co-ordinate solidarity work. The catalyst for its formation was an unofficial strike in March 1935 of toolroom and airframe workers at the Hawker Aircraft Company, located in Brockworth, near Gloucester. Drawing on the militant tradition of the wartime shop stewards movement, the strike spread to Hawker's Kingston-on-Thames site, in London, and continued for nearly three weeks during which time union activists held a national aircraft delegate conference. What eventually emerged from this conference, and a second one held around a month later, was the ASSNC with its own monthly organ, the *New Propeller* (see Fishman, 1995a for a full

account; see also Croucher, 1982). Communist Party members had a heavy involvement in the ASSNC but were divided over whether it should operate under the auspices of the AEU, which Fishman defined as 'constitutional militancy', or act independently as a rank-and-file movement. Union loyalists in the party ultimately won out but not before the ASSNC rank-and-filists had made an impact. For instance, in May 1936, the ASSNC helped organize an unofficial AEU strike over the use of trainees and semi-skilled labour on skilled aircraft work at Parnalls' aircraft works near Bristol. This hindered AEU officials from intervening in the dispute 'due to the interference by representatives of the National Shop Stewards Council, who were practically dominating the dispute' (AEU Executive Council minutes, 11 June 1936, quoted in Fishman, 1995a: 143).

By 1939, the Communist Party had attended to its internal differences concerning what direction the ASSNC should take, and wielded its considerable authority to keep the ASSNC, and its journal the *New Propeller*, within the bounds of 'constitutional militancy'. With this policy firmly embedded by the time of the outbreak of World War Two, the ASSNC opened its organization to all engineering workers and renamed itself the Engineering and Allied Trades Shop Stewards National Council (E&ATSSNC). It was this organization, following Russia's entry into the war in 1941, that enthusiastically campaigned for increased production. Not only did it rail against the perceived waste, mismanagement and inefficiency of prevailing production methods but also called upon workers to make sacrifices by reducing absenteeism and increasing the pace of production. The government too was concerned that war production was below that required; productivity levels in aircraft production were one-fifth higher in Germany and twice as high in the USA (Barnett, 1986: 146). This shared concern over production resulted in an agreement between the AEU and EEF in March 1942 to establish joint production committees (JPCs). It was pressure from the E&ATSSNC that convinced the government, TUC and AEU of the need for JPCs. This alliance in turn compelled the EEF to agree to recommend that its members setup JPCs on the understanding that they would cease to operate on the cessation of the war. Together with this drive on efficiency via participation in JPCs, Communist Party union representatives (and activists) strongly discouraged strike action. They argued that this dual strategy would enable workers, through their representatives, to have a greater influence over decision making. In short, from the party perspective this was part of a programme of creeping socialism.

The EEF successfully confined JPCs to the 'regular exchange of views between the Management and the workers on matters relating to the improvement of production and for recommendations thereon'. (Zweig, 1951: 237). Apart from a temporary reprieve in 1948, as a result of the fuel crisis, after the war JPCs either ceased to function or became largely ineffective (Hinton, 1995). Given that they held no sway over wages and conditions of employment, workers were not concerned whether these committees continued to operate or not, although some questioned the merits of collaborating with employers (Croucher, 1982: 170). On the whole, the EEF welcomed the JPCs' demise because it felt that employers' authority was threatened by these committees.

While a few JPCs in the aircraft industry did survive – at Rolls-Royce in Bristol for instance – they failed to meet the expectations of those that thought they might deliver industrial democracy. In their place, traditional industrial relations structures were confirmed and consolidated whilst at the same time the shop steward role broadened. This was primarily due to union engagement with piecework, increasingly a source of disputes in the aircraft industry and elsewhere in engineering (Cronin, 1979). Apart from national engineering stoppages in 1953 and 1957, the annual number of strikes in the aircraft industry remained relatively low in the 1950s but the 1960s witnessed a significant increase. These reached a peak in the 1968–74 strike wave (British Labour Statistics Yearbooks 1960–76). The 1980s and 1990s marked a significant downturn in the number of official strikes but conflict and disputes, often more covert than overt, were ever present in the aircraft industry and some high profile stoppages did occur. The rest of this chapter will examine the form and content of some key disputes in Southern England's aircraft industry during the second half of the twentieth century drawing on the views and recollections of retired union members.

The 1957 engineering dispute

The post-war Keynesian consensus in support of full employment and the welfare state strengthened the bargaining position of trade unions both nationally and at plant level. The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' (CSEU) victory in the 1957 national engineering strike was a manifestation of their increasing strength vis-à-vis both the employers and the Conservative government (which was attempting to curb inflation by urging employers to resist inflationary pay claims). The government was forced to give ground as the strike led to

fears of an exchange rate crisis. It reversed its policy of resistance to wage claims above three per cent and advocated a quick settlement of the dispute (Price, 1986: 219; see Fishman, 1995b for a detailed and thorough analysis of this dispute). Union members, including those engineering workers in the aircraft industry, were not balloted on strike action. Shop stewards and lay branch officials were consulted. It was this layer of union activists, many of whom were either members or supporters of the Communist Party, who organized and directed the strike at district and plant level. Union members responded by striking in droves. In the first week of March 1957 just over 2 million working days were lost through strike action in the engineering industry and 1.5 million in shipbuilding (Fishman, 1995a: 256).

One retired Bristol aircraft worker, who served his apprenticeship in the Royal Air Force (RAF) before joining the Bristol Aeroplane Company in 1952, recalled how the strike had generated the will in his non-union model shop to act collectively and join a trade union:

> I think we were out for six or seven days, maybe longer … I wasn't in the union. But we decided that we ought to become organized and so we then became a trade union shop … In fact we all met together, we met on somebody's allotment and there was just seven or eight of us, it was a very clandestine sort of thing. We decided what we were going to do and departed with a shop steward and we were now part of the package. (Interview, November 2002)

One explanation for non-members' receptivity to unionization at Bristol Aeroplane Company at this time fits well with those aspects of social identity theory that draw on social categorization and social comparison to explain how in-groups of workers evaluate their 'positive distinctiveness' over out-groups (Hogg and Abrams, 1988: 53–4). An apposite example is the difference between those who exert control over others, and who acquire status distinctions as a result, and those who are mostly subject to control. Manual workers employed at Bristol Aeroplane Company were open to unionization due not just because of conflicts of interest with the employer but also as a consequence of the embedded hierarchical structure within the employing organization. This conferred an explicit 'them and us' culture on social relations within the company. As a retired worker recollected in the 1950s:

> [Bristol Aeroplane Company] was a very class ridden organization … the two main groups were the works and the staff, and the works

> were all on the clock and the staff, you had weekly staff, monthly staff, middle management, there were about eight or nine different levels there and they all had their own little canteens (Interview, November 2002).

These differences, and the fact that office staff had a pension scheme and manual workers did not, were seen as unjust, 'a very very sore point', and contributed to the shop-floor's separate identity. As there was little or no contact with senior management, it was foremen and rate-fixers in particular that brought to the shop floor expressions of management power and authority in the struggle over the effort bargain. Tony Benn, at one time the Minister for Technology (including Aviation) in the 1966 Labour government, was contemptuous of the air of superiority held by the upper echelons of management in the aircraft industry:

> I remember on one occasion when I talked to the shop stewards they said, 'when we see management, if they want something they offer us a cup of coffee, if we want something they don't offer us anything.' It was a real example of the old class structure, where guys at the top had inherited the job and studied Latin at Oxford and ran the aircraft industry and the guys who really knew it were treated with real contempt. (Interview, January 2003)

Piecework to measured day work

A pieceworker's pay, wholly or in part, is directly linked to work measurement, the time taken to produce work of the appropriate quality. In the aerospace industry of the 1960s and 1970s, in essence the pieceworker's wage comprised a basic rate that varied with skill and an incentive bonus that was usually premised on a standard time allowance to complete a specific job and applied to individuals or groups (gangs) of workers. By contrast, measured day work (MDW) is a payment system that provides a regular weekly wage, negotiated between management and the appropriate union, for which workers are expected to meet standard times for each job set by work study engineers (Lupton and Gowler, 1972: 263). In the 1950s and 1960s, a period of tight labour markets in engineering, aircraft workers exerted increasing upward pressure on piece rates. Managerial control over piecework systems weakened as workers combined to resist the imposition of demanding time values by rate-fixers. The rate-fixers deter-

mined the level of effort required to produce a new or altered job. Ostensibly, piecework wage determination involved a process of continuous bargaining between the rate-fixer and the operator. But 'custom and practice' demanded that once set piece rates could not be altered unless changes occurred in the product or productive method. Defence against rate cutting depended on union strength at the workplace. Organized resistance from gang workers to 'adjust' the effort bargain often occurred if piece rates were deemed to be unfair. Shop stewards, however, were frequently called upon to act on their members' behalf in respect to individual piecework bargains, a time-consuming process, which gave reason for some shop stewards to favour time-work over piecework (Brown, 1973: 125). However, one Rolls-Royce (Coventry) convenor representing aircraft workers argued that in a well-organized union shop, piecework could lead to higher earnings and give workers greater control over the labour process, as the operator had direct control over the pace of production. Moreover:

> The continual battle over rates makes the workers very militant, for when the rate-fixer comes out to argue with you, you're immediately faced with the basic element of class struggle: exploitation, potential or actual (Higgs, 1969: 163)

On the deficit side, piecework could generate inequities and weaken shop-floor solidarity based on egalitarian principles (Brown, 1973: 147). As reported at one Rolls-Royce union meeting, 'members come into piecework areas and can't get into the "brotherhood"' (Rolls-Royce Negotiating Committee, 1969). And differentials between operators on piecework could be substantial. One worker at Westland Helicopters in Yeovil recalled:

> I wouldn't personally want to see those days return … Even amongst fitters, you could have a good job with a good time on it to do it and make good money and another one, slaving away and not make anything, it's a very unfair system. (Interview, November 2001)

A retired British Aircraft Corporation (BAC Bristol) convenor also observed:

> I mean say the average was one hundred pounds with shop average, I mean you'd get guys on one hundred and forty, one hundred and fifty pounds. (Interview, November 2003)

This convenor recalled how rate-fixing disputes were continuous. Rate-fixers were described as some 'of the most obnoxious people you could ever come across'. A retired shop-floor worker in the same company likened rate-fixers with the 'Gestapo' (Interview notes, November 2002). If workers were the least bit timid, some rate-fixers would try to take advantage and cut the rate, and in so doing bring down the shop average. This was important to all concerned because when a job value was in dispute, which was an everyday occurrence, affected workers were paid the average earnings of the shop. So the shop steward's role was to contest those rate-fixer values that fell below that deemed to be fair. The BAC Convenor recalled that on those occasions he would take the case to the senior rate-fixer and either reach a compromise or place the job in dispute. Once in dispute, operators, under the national engineering agreement, had to be given another job until the dispute was resolved. Non-compliance with this agreement resulted in a stoppage of work by the gang or section affected (Interview notes, November 2003).

These types of disputes were common across the aerospace industry and in some plants were incessant. For instance, at Rolls-Royce's Bristol engine plant the frequency of disputes was of serious concern to the company. In 1970, management protested: 'We cannot allow the "argy bargy" of the existing system to carry on where there are daily argument[s] in every detail' (Rolls-Royce Negotiating Committee, 1970). Just over four years later, this problem was still a running sore. Increasingly concerned by the number of disputes occurring over piecework, in January 1975 the Managing Director of Rolls-Royce commented:

> I regret that in 1974 we continued to suffer industrial disputes, each with its own deadly effect on our performance. We have not been free from some form of industrial action on any working day since I was appointed your Managing Director. The vast majority of these industrial disputes involved manual employees at Bristol. It is vitally important for our future that a new wage structure should be agreed for the Bristol factories – one which is felt to be fair, which achieves constructive relationships and working practices and which drastically reduces the amount of industrial action we have suffered (Parkside Bulletin Issue 58, Feb/March 1975).

Although Bristol was opposed to MDW, most other plants in the Rolls-Royce Combine Committee had accepted its introduction and Bristol workers found that as a result, their wages, relative to other Rolls-Royce

workers in the UK, were falling behind. Moreover, the company was preparing the ground for the introduction of MDW without union involvement. Thus the decision was taken 'to take the bull by the horns and get involved in the new scheme'. After lengthy negotiations in the spring of 1975, an agreement was reached on a Bristol wage structure that included the replacement of piecework, which directly affected around one sixth of the workforce, with MDW. The new structure comprised six grades of labour with wages ranging from £40 per week on the lowest grade to £57 on the highest. This lifted Bristol workers back into second place in the wages league behind Coventry (Blackley, 1975; Parkside Bulletin Issue 60, April/May 1975).

Around the same time, just before nationalization in 1977, an agreement was reached between the engineering unions and management at BAC Guided Weapons in Bristol to abolish piecework. The strong bargaining position of labour on the shop-floor had resulted in wage drift. This was in part a consequence of the rise in 'non-negotiated' shop-floor wages, primarily fragmented piecework bargaining (Brown, 1973: 26). As the plant's Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EETPU) convenor put it, 'I think the Company had a problem … because the shop floor wages were escalating out of control really … quality control, the clerical people … the planners and engineers, really were being placed relative to the shop floor', whose wages were the highest (Interview notes, November 2003).

The carrot offered by BAC to replace piecework with measured day work was full sick pay; increased holidays; improved pension scheme; guaranteed regular and predictable earnings; and the discontinuance of the weekly confrontation with the rate-fixer. Ostensibly, control over the pace of production shifted from mutuality between the rate-fixer and the operator to the foreman. This qualitative change, in the context of rising unemployment and the emergence of Thatcherism, raised the stakes and put increased pressure on shop stewards. As Smith (1987: 133) observed, at the now state-run British Aerospace (BAe) 'the collective strength of the shop-floor unions was now central to the bargaining machinery and more effectively controlled the rate of exploitation than the traditional control battles between the individual rate-fixer and individual operator.'

Other patterns of conflict in the 1970s

Hobsbawm argued (at the 1978 Marx Memorial Lecture) that the increase in industrial unrest in the 1960s and 1970s was based on

wages militancy and sectionalism and as such was not progressive. The inability of organized labour to act as a 'class for itself' only served to deepen the divisions within the working class (Hobsbawm, 1981). Critics of Hobsbawm, including Ken Gill, General Secretary of the Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section (union)/(TASS), one of the largest aerospace unions, reasoned that the strong arm of state intervention in industrial struggles demonstrated that economistic militancy could quickly turn into class struggle (Kelly, 1988). This is an important debate because it influenced the thoughts and actions of the trade union leadership in the final decades of the twentieth century. With this discussion in mind, this section, and those that follow, presents some evidence of the incidence, form and content of industrial conflict in Southern England's aircraft industry.

As elsewhere in manufacturing, the number of working days lost through stoppages in the aircraft industry increased significantly in the 1970s. In 1971, for instance, as well as strongly supported one-day national stoppages against the Conservative Government's Industrial Relations Bill, other high profile strikes occurred. For example, despite a financial crisis at Rolls-Royce, its workforce in Bristol refused to handle products supplied by Fine Tubes because workers at this company were in dispute with their employer. The new state-owned Rolls-Royce (1971) Ltd. brought this dispute to a head by threatening to dismiss workers if they declined to work normally. Two thousand walked out in protest. Tony Benn, then an opposition Labour MP, intervened without success:

> Well I had to try and sort things that wouldn't imperil the projects and lose jobs. So in that sense you had to say to people 'look if this happens, this will happen and it would be bad so can you sort it out?' That wasn't exactly lecturing them from a government point of view it was acting as their political shop steward from a slightly different level. But I hope they never thought I was ever hostile to them (Interview, January 2003).

Eventually shop stewards agreed that their members could work on current stocks on the understanding that no more orders would be placed with Fine Tubes until the dispute was over (Beck, 1974: 66–71).

Industrial action was not just the preserve of manual unions; white-collar workers in the industry were also involved. The tactics employed in white-collar disputes often involved actions short of an all out strike, for example, overtime bans and withdrawing the labour of

members in key jobs. However, these could sometimes be countered by 'employers' strikes'. For instance, at BAC Bristol, in 1973, TASS imposed sanctions, including the withdrawal of labour in one technical office, in pursuance of representation rights on the company's pension committee. The company responded by locking out these technicians. It was eight weeks before a settlement was reached and they could return to work (Smith, 1987: 124).

Unsurprisingly, in the context of high inflation, wage strikes were common in the early 1970s. The largest disputes tended to be fought over increases to the basic rate of pay. One prominent example involved a walk out of over 6000 workers at Rolls-Royce in Bristol which crippled production for nine weeks during the winter of 1971. It was eventually called off after the company conceded a pay increase of £1.50 per week (Richardson, 2000: 43).

On the election of a Labour government in 1974, the TUC adopted a policy of voluntary wage restraint, known as the Social Contract. It was against this backdrop in June 1975 that TASS members, in one department at Rolls-Royce in Bristol, organized a sit-in to further a local pay claim. A retired TASS activist remembered how management argued that the claim had direct implications for TASS membership as a whole and refused to engage in local bargaining. The sit-in was sustained for eight days before a settlement was reached based on local discussions to resolve the dispute (Interview notes, November 2002; see also Milton, 1975). An EETPU convenor at BAC Bristol recalled other tactics used in industrial disputes in the 1970s including blocking the main highway, the A38, directly adjacent to the plant. On one such occasion:

> We piled everybody out … it was the clerical people, the timekeeper was out … and the inspectors were there. Because this was the first major dispute where all the unions were working together … So we blocked the A38 and there were flashing police cars and the policemen were taking my name and all that. (Interview, November 2003)

Occupation of plant buildings was another favoured form of industrial action at BAC. The personnel management building and management canteen were both common targets:

> And Filton House was another popular one to be taken over. We went up there quite a few times, in the board room and of course … the security coppers were in harmony with us lot so there wasn't a

> problem there. The worse one for the company was when we took over the management mess, they took that very personal … We went in there and they come over for their lunch and we all sat in there. They didn't like that. (Interview, November 2003)

Eventually, pent-up wage claims stimulated militancy among increasing numbers of workers, especially the low paid. This came to a head in the winter of discontent (1978–79). For instance, in April 1979, one thousand lower graded white collar workers at Westland Helicopters in Yeovil struck for more pay. Planning engineers and technical workers also took action. Between April and June 1979, 36,000 working days were lost in these disputes (Employment Gazette, 1980).

Whilst many aircraft disputes in Southern England could be categorized as local and economistic in this period, and thus, ostensibly, were consistent with Hobsbawm's critique, equally they involved worker mobilization against the power of the employer and the state through strikes, sit-ins, occupations, picketing and other demonstrations. Thus, the content of these disputes went beyond simple wage struggles. Some strikes of a political nature were also undertaken. Solidarity action taken in support of such groups as the Fine Tubes' workers suggest that one should exercise caution when applying the 'rise of sectionalism' argument. Moreover, as we explore later in this chapter, the fact that union activists in the aircraft industry diligently campaigned for nationalization and workers' control of their industry shows that militancy was not tied solely to wage struggles.

The Thatcher years

The election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979 was a watershed and foreshadowed a systematic weakening of trade union power. However the effect was not immediate. Within six months of the change in government, the engineering unions secured a significant victory in obtaining a shorter working week.

Just a few months before the election, the CSEU presented a claim covering wages, hours and holidays to the EEF. Negotiations broke down in July over the claim for a shorter working week following which the CSEU embarked on a series of weekly two-day stoppages. Manual workers at British Aerospace, Dowty, Rolls-Royce, Westland Helicopters and Smiths Industries all joined the strike. After the third two-day stoppage Rolls-Royce locked-out its 30,000 manual workforce (*Financial Times*, 8 & 11 September 1979). This only served to make its

workforce more resolute in support of the CSEU claim. The rank and file's willingness to support their unions in this dispute caught employers by surprise (Edwards and Scullion, 1982). Faced with this unified resistance, the EEF eventually weakened and in October 1979 offered a compromise, which included the acceptance of a 39-hour week by the end of 1981.

This victory did much to bolster the view held by some union activists in the aircraft industry that the Thatcher government was little different from preceding Conservative regimes. Before the Falklands war in 1982, there were high hopes that Labour would win the next election. The unpopularity of Thatcher's New Right policies combined with a significant increase in defence spending and improved employment prospects in the sector provide the conditions for the emergence of a new, younger and more politicized group of union activists. For instance, at BAe's Guided Weapons division in Bristol, employment increased by 24 per cent from 4200 in 1981 to 5200 in 1985 (Lovering, 1986). One TASS representative at the Bristol plant, elected to his first union position in 1981, initially believed that 'Thatcherism was a blip', but the eventual realization that this was not the case catalyzed a new interest in union activism:

> I think a lot of people believed in the 1970s that some form of Labour rule as social democracy was going to be with us more or less for good with an occasional break to allow the Tories to come in. We just thought that that was how British society was going. And when Thatcher got elected in 1979, I think a lot thought she was so awful and unpopular that she'd be out in the first term. And when she wasn't in 1983 then, and I know I wasn't the only one, for a lot of people in British Aerospace, it triggered something and a lot of us suddenly became highly active because we were young people as well (Interview, March 2004).

By contrast, the civil aerospace industry was experiencing recession. For example, in 1979, Rolls-Royce registered a loss of £58 million and did not get into the black again until 1985 (Pugh, 2001). Rolls-Royce published its Bristol Survival Plan (1982) in an attempt to pull this particular division of the company out of trouble. The plan emphasized that its implementation would 'result in a reduction in the present level of jobs at Bristol.' It also stressed that discipline would be tightened, flexibility increased and the porosity of the working day closed up. A significant proportion of the subsequent job losses comprised

women clerical workers. Lovering (1986: 44) suggests this may explain why union resistance to downsizing was minimal.

While conflict was constrained at Rolls-Royce, in August 1984 major strikes over productivity payments and wage harmonization hit both BAe divisions in Bristol (Civil Aircraft and Guided Weapons). On the day that Westland Helicopters announced that it was going to axe 700 jobs, and the 1984–5 miner's strike entered its sixth month, BAe manual workers, initially 450 in Guided Weapons and 2000 in the Aircraft division, occupied their respective plants:

> Angry pickets brought in a double-decker bus to aid their blockade. Defiant slogans on the bus included one saying: 'You'll never take us alive' (*Western Daily Press*, 28 July 1984)

A week later, on 8 August 1984, BAe was given a High Court order for the immediate repossession of its property. The occupation was terminated after three weeks when the Under Sheriff of Avon, supported by over 200 police, forcibly regained control of the site. Picket lines were immediately put in place and the disputes continued. On 23 August, 200 electricians at the Guided Weapons Division voted to join the strike and temporarily occupied half of the site. The strike at Guided Weapons was not settled until 26 September when an agreement was reached on a new productivity deal. A few days later, manual workers at the aircraft division accepted an offer that 'went some way towards conceding' their original demand (*Financial Times,* 3 August 1984, 2 October 1984).

A few months prior to these disputes in Bristol, 1700 TASS members at Westland Helicopters in Somerset secured a $32\frac{1}{2}$ hour week (a four and a half hour reduction) in return for double day shift-working. The settlement of this dispute was only reached after a four and a half week strike, triggered by the dismissal of TASS members for refusing to work shifts. The unprecedented attainment of a $32\frac{1}{2}$ working week while heralded as a major breakthrough was achieved only by relaxing TASS's policy of resistance to shift-working among white collar staff and striking a new technology agreement. Justification for this relaxation of policy was explained by Ken Gill in the following terms:

> There are good reasons to oppose shiftwork, not least of them being the disruption of family and social life that it can cause. However, if shiftwork is to be negotiated the Westland agreement is a model of its kind that not only protects the conditions of members but wins

> major advances in hours worked in return for reaching agreement over new technology (*TASS News and Journal*, April 1984: 3).

These were difficult times for Westland. The lack of orders and recurrent financial crises resulted in several hundred job losses in 1984 followed by a major redundancy of nearly 750 workers in December 1985. This coincided with the 'Westland Affair', the spat between Margaret Thatcher and Michael Heseltine, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, over the search for a suitable partner to inject capital into the company. Eventually, control of the company passed to a consortium made up of the US helicopter design and manufacturer Sikorsky and Fiat of Italy. The industrial relations climate hardened as the new company first tried to freeze wages and then introduced a profit-related pay scheme. These developments prompted the passing of a motion at the TASS conference calling for 'the nationalization of Westland along with the re-nationalization of the whole of the aerospace industry' (TASS, 1986: 116; 1987: 18).

The economic and political climate was hardly conducive to such appeals. National leaders in two of the main unions in aerospace, the AEU and EETPU, were supporters of 'new realism', a union survival strategy that advocated the need to face hard economic and political realities by forging non-confrontational relationships with employers and the Conservative Government. Notwithstanding this new policy orientation the CSEU leaders supported widespread lobbying and protest meetings in the workplace against the government's privatization programme. The government, however, was not deterred. It had sold BAe in 1981 and Rolls-Royce in 1987 thereby completing the denationalization of the aircraft industry in six years. While this was a set back for union activists in particular, it did not deter rank and file militancy. Selected strike action commenced in 1989 over a national CSEU claim with the EEF for a 35-hour working week that included sites in British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce and Smiths Industries. The strength of support from the union membership at the local level was a significant contributory factor in the withdrawal of the EEF from any further national collective bargaining processes as individual companies were forced to reach local agreements on this issue. Smiths Industries was one of the first to settle in December 1989 with an agreement that included the reduction of the working week to 37 hours. Throughout most of 1990, strikes continued and settlements were reached at individual sites that eventually covered approximately half of the engineering workforce.

Increased redundancies in the aircraft and engineering industry towards the end of 1990 brought the campaign to a close (Blyton, 1992: 32). Some major sites, such as BAe in Bristol, did not reach an agreement until later in the decade due to rank and file union resistance to company demands to introduce new flexibility practices. In many respects, this set the pattern for management-union relations during the remainder of the 1990s. Local struggles over management attempts to impose their prerogatives over such issues as the distribution of shift-working and overtime and the introduction of teamworking all involved recurrent unofficial actions in the form of go-slows, working to rule, and overtime bans. But the bigger disputes were much less frequent as the recession of the early 1990s began to take its toll. For example, between 1990 and 2000, the BAe Systems Airbus plant in Bristol lost nearly 2000 workers, the nearby BAe Dynamics (Guided Weapons) factory was virtually closed down, 1000 workers lost their jobs at Messier-Dowty in Gloucester, 4000 at Rolls-Royce in Bristol, 1700 at Smiths Industries in Cheltenham and the Matra Marconi space assembly site at Bristol was closed (Danford et al., 2003).

Industrial democracy

Before drawing this chapter to a close it is necessary to examine one other salient feature of industrial relations in aerospace which was without parallel in British industry in this period: the trade union campaign for industrial democracy. In November 1966, Bristol Siddeley Engines National Combined Shop Stewards Committee (BSECSSC) launched a campaign for industrial democracy as an integral part of the unions' call for the full nationalization of the aircraft industry. This included demands for 50 per cent worker representation at all levels of company policy making, and the establishment of workers' councils able to control, hire and dismiss plant managers. A working party comprising members from Bristol, Coventry and London was established to compile a dossier on workers' control in the aircraft industry under nationalization. Drawing on research conducted on their behalf by Alan Rooney (1968) it concluded that nothing short of a socially owned aircraft industry under workers' control would suffice (BSECSSC, 1969). While their report attracted much interest among the membership it was unable to turn this into union policy. During this time, Bristol Siddeley was taken over by Rolls-Royce which, together with the spiralling cost of developing the RB211 engine, contributed to the company going into receivership on 4 February 1971. The govern-

ment stepped in and took over state ownership of the company raising once again the interest of Rolls-Royce workers in industrial democracy. The election of a Labour government in 1974 presented unions and their members with the opportunity to pursue this interest.

Benn captured well the mood of the period in terms of management's arrogance in resisting inroads into extant managerial prerogatives and workers' desire for some form of democratic control:

> When I became Secretary for Industry, Sir Kenneth Keith came to see me as the chairman of Rolls-Royce. He said: 'I want to make absolutely clear that when I took this job I got an agreement with Heath [Conservative Prime Minister 1970–1974] that I wasn't going to be buggered about by some junior minister.' And I said 'well I was elected by the people of Bristol who think you're a rotten chairman of Rolls-Royce' and it absolutely clobbered him … I mean walking into my office like he was a bloody emperor. And he was living on public money.
>
> So anyway then you had this very imaginative and active trade union movement underneath [with ideas expressed in a] pamphlet on industrial democracy, I was really excited you see … These guys come along with the idea that it's not just about bargaining for wages, it's about having some control over what people do … So I tried to work directly with the trade unions and I might say slightly angered the trade union leadership in Bristol because they thought you talked to them, you didn't go over their heads and talk to the members. (Interview, January 2003)

Conferences held in Bristol and Crewe in 1974, involving Rolls-Royce shop stewards representing manual workers, agreed that a meeting should be sought with Benn, by then the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to convey their policy towards industrial democracy within Rolls-Royce. This policy contained two key principles:

1. Any representative in any position arising from the institution of industrial democracy should be a worker at Rolls-Royce, a union member and elected and accountable to the members he or she represents
2. The shop-floor must be involved to the utmost in all aspects of industrial democracy and decision-making, they must have a say in their destiny (Parkside Bulletin, September–October 1974)

Rolls-Royce shop stewards met with Benn on 3 March 1975:

> We discussed the question of industrial democracy and Tony Benn said he was for a policy of organic growth of industrial democracy with the unions, both at full-time level and the shop-floor evolving the structure …
>
> Tony Benn made an important point in saying that if we had a say in the running of things, then we must also accept responsibility, in other words the government was not a 'soft touch' and we should all have to play our part, which would not be an easy process (Parkside Bulletin, March/April 1975).

Within a few months Benn was moved from the Department of Trade and Industry allowing an increasingly right wing Labour Cabinet to purge nationalization policy of any element of worker control. In trying to implement an industrial democracy scheme that would impinge on managerial authority, Benn had upset influential establishment figures in big business and government alike. He is still an advocate of industrial democracy:

> Well really the thing that all establishments hate is democracy. The Pope doesn't let the Catholics pick their Cardinals, the Prime minister picks the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Stalin didn't want any nonsense with the rank-and-file. Hitler said 'democracy inevitably leads to Marxism', a marvellous phrase in *Mein Kampf*. So I've come to the conclusion as I've got older that the thing that really frightens everybody at the top is democracy. Nobody likes it. And democracy is the creative force that gave you trade unions. Democracy has called a mob into a movement and the movement created a Party and that's the thing that frightened them and they want to break the link with the unions and so on. So my philosophy is a democratic one. And socialism without democracy isn't socialism and democracy if it really comes will lead to progress, that's my opinion and that applies to political democracy and industrial democracy (Interview, January 2003)

Momentum for the nationalization of the aircraft industry was not just restricted to Rolls-Royce. Union members from BAC lobbied parliament on 2 March 1976 in protest against the government's failure to commit to nationalization of the whole industry. It had long been recognized that in order to stand any chance of successfully competing

with the American aircraft manufacturers concentration of the British aircraft industry was necessary (Plowden Report, 1965). The Labour government's plan to carry out the partial nationalization of the industry was based on achieving economies of scale. The focus on economic efficiency helped to dampen opposition from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and indeed the International Monetary Fund which had just granted the British government a US$3 billion dollar loan.

In 1977, under the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act, sections of the industry, including BAC, were nationalized in a process of capital rationalization that 'had little to do with "workers' control"' (Smith, 1987: 116). New consultation committees were introduced that offered a degree of involvement and participation for representatives of union and non-union employees but many shop stewards displayed little interest in this. One BAC steward commented:

> The beauty of the so-called democracy committees was that the managers would be on that, but we thought if you're sitting on that then your position might be undermined in some way …
>
> Because if you're part of the decision-making process then you're bound by it. So I think that was one of the problems and also that we weren't going to sit down with people who weren't affiliated to the TUC at that time. So that never got off the ground (Interview, November 2003).

As we have already noted, the period of state ownership of the industry was short-lived. However, trade union interest in one of the core justifications for nationalization did not entirely disappear. That is, the perceived immorality of allowing private firms to profit from arms manufacture (Smith 1987: 116). The 1980s saw sporadic activist-led trade union campaigns in the UK in favour of arms conversion, the principle of converting armaments plants into sites of socially useful production. In many respects, workers who campaign for arms conversion are practising a quintessential form of industrial democracy. They are mounting a challenge to the most fundamental of capitalist prerogatives governing the social division of labour, the right to decide what is to be produced in society. One of the principal sources of inspiration for these campaigns was the Lucas Plan drawn up in 1976 by shop stewards and their members at seventeen different Lucas Aerospace plants. In response to falling orders and a series of redundancies, a combined shop stewards' committee of union activists and rank and

file technologists, engineers and craft workers drew up an alternative plan based on its own audit of skills and resources and assessment of social needs in the wider community. Detailed ideas for alternative products included medical equipment, new energy technologies, transport technologies, vehicles and components (Wainwright and Elliot, 1982). The Lucas Plan eventually failed in the face of intense employer hostility, government indifference, conflicts in union relations and the possibility that it was too far ahead of its time (Webb, 1998).

During the recession and eventual cutback of defence spending in the 1980s, recurrent job shedding and plant closures in the industry catalyzed a number of new arms conversion campaigns across the country. One of the most prominent of these was based at Bristol. Located in a highly defence-dependent region, shop stewards and officials in the South West's aerospace unions set up an arms conversion group in 1983, the Better Future for Defence Jobs Committee (BFDJC). With the help of local university academics, ideas and policies were developed for supporting rank and file activity in the workplace. In March 1988, the BAe guided weapons plant at Bristol announced 1080 job losses, the first of a number of mass redundancies. In response, plant convenors who were also BFDJC members gradually developed an alternative strategy based on plant conversion. With the help of research commissioned by the local authority (Bristol City Council et al., 1989), the site unions launched a rank and file campaign involving skills audits, worker proposals for alternative products, detailed business plans, mass meetings, mass lobbies of parliament and eventual CSEU-led demonstrations. One senior MSF representative commented:

> It was based partly on our understanding of what had happened at Lucas in the late seventies but it wasn't quite as high principled as that in terms of the 'bombs or kidney machines' argument they were using then. We were more pragmatic in trying to pin down exactly what technology we had and what skills we had and focussing on bits that without too much effort, all it required was company will, could be converted to civil production. So, for example, we had a great printed circuit board manufacturing facility which was used to produce highly complex boards, electronic boards for the defence industry. We were saying this should be converted for the growing telecommunications industry. Semiconductors: we used to design and build complex integrated circuits, we were saying there was a crying need for this in the civil

> sector. Alternative transport was another, which was a hot issue in Bristol at the time. (Interview, March 2004)

The imbalance of power between employers and unions in the politico-economic conditions of this period meant that the Bristol initiative was bound to fail eventually. By 1991, 3500 workers had lost their jobs and the plant had become a skeleton operation. Interviews with the leading activists suggested, however, that this democratic challenge from below did have positive repercussions in that workers became politicized by the process of participation in a vibrant form of independent workplace unionism. The senior MSF representative again:

> There was a 'defence culture' in some of these plants, there was a very pervasive and powerful defence culture of belief in the product, belief that you were doing something more than building a complex product, you were contributing somehow to a national interest. It was powerful and it was supported by continual company propaganda … We thought we were going to have a problem with that but we didn't because, you know, we were buying into their deeper concerns, you know they needed a wage, they wanted job security and if this defence activity wasn't providing that then they wanted something that in the longer term was better at providing that whilst still maintaining this very strong skill base. And they bought into that. That long-term investment in complex, high-tech civil production was the way forward for our plant and not defence production.
>
> As far as the company was concerned, to tell you the truth I knew all along that they wouldn't run with this but in a sense we felt it was something we had to do, we felt it was morally right and strategically right and I think the company were more hostile to us taking up this agenda than anything else we'd ever done. When we fought them on wages, they didn't like it but it was legitimate in terms of industrial relations traditions. But what we were doing here was challenging managerial prerogative in a most profound sense. We were saying, 'we know better than you how to run this factory and what to produce.' (Interview, March 2004)

This chapter has set the historical context of the politics of production in the aerospace industry in Southern England. What stands out in mapping the history of conflict and militancy is the combative and

participatory nature of labour organization, particularly, but not solely, in periods more favourable to taking collective action. Moreover, notwithstanding sustained attacks from the state and employers in recent decades, a vibrant, independent form of workplace unionism had been preserved. And while relative union strength had diminished by the time of our research, organized workers in this industry were still a force to be reckoned with. It is this legacy that forms the context, and in part the rationale, for the employers' attempts to introduce high performance work reforms and partnership relationships that we explore in the remaining chapters.

3

Organizational Restructuring and the New Insecurity

Under the guise of the mantras of 'enterprise' and 'flexibility', the typical large British manufacturing firm became subject to considerable restructuring during the final two decades of the last century. The new environment of globalization, characterized by significant increases in capital mobility, international trade and market competition, along with industrial deregulation and privatization, provided the impetus for firms to continuously improve production processes and outputs. Organizational responses were also facilitated by advances in information and communication technologies. These enabled employers to put into practice the notion that 'smaller is beautiful' or as some have put it, that firms could operate as both 'lean and mean'. That is, technological developments made it easier for employers to specialize and disaggregate existing hierarchical and bureaucratic forms of work organization whilst maintaining and refining processes of co-ordination and control (Osterman et al., 2001; Sisson and Marginson, 2003; Sisson and Storey, 2000).

Although it might be deemed risky to impose a unitary model of restructuring on the manufacturing sector, one can, nevertheless, discern an underlying pattern of change. During the 1980s, industrial relations writers noted the implications for trade union power of an increasing decentralization of collective bargaining and wage-fixing (Brown, 1993; Brown and Walsh, 1991; Purcell, 1995; Smith and Morton, 1993). In the private sector, this resulted from the spread of the M-form company. Also known as 'divisionalization', it involved the disaggregation of single corporate organizations into separate business units or profit centres based on narrowly defined markets, products or geographical areas. Control over a firm's business portfolio remained at corporate headquarters whilst day-to-day operations

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

management was devolved to the different strategic business units. Although, British managers were characteristically tardy in adopting this structure compared to their foreign counterparts (Nichols, 1986), by the 1970s and 80s it had become predominant in British manufacturing (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Sisson and Marginson, 2003; Sisson and Storey, 2000). Since that time, typical organizational form has moved along the same continuum of decentralization and co-ordinated fragmentation. For example, some firms have extended the process of devolvement and accountability to cross-functional teams whilst the conventional boundaries of organizations have been reshaped via supply chain management, outsourcing, joint ventures and networking (Sisson and Marginson, 2003).

The implications of these structural changes for the politics of production will be explored in due course. So too will the impact of a further series of changes that has consequences for the management of labour and workplace relations. A number of writers have argued that the same pressures of globalization and intensified market competition have forced manufacturing firms to confront a stark choice between a so-called 'high road' to competitive advantage involving the adoption of high performance management techniques and a 'low road' of short-term profit maximization through low skill, low wage employment (Michie and Sheehan, 2003). Whilst at various points in this book the validity of this dualism will be called into question, this is not to deny a pattern of change in work organization and employment relations that has taken hold in some firms. Different forms of lean production, typically involving processes of labour rationalization through the management techniques of just-in-time and teamworking, became widespread in British manufacturing during the 1990s. Those who now perceive a high road/low road dichotomy contend that, as we noted in Chapter 1, high performance work systems constitute a more participative and empowering derivative of lean production. And it is argued that this dimension of contemporary restructuring most directly affects the quality of working life on the shop-floor and in the office. Higher labour productivity and organizational performance are held to be correlated with management techniques that, taken at face value, offer employee participation and commitment along with more co-operative relations with trade unions (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Giles et al., 2002; Osterman et al., 2001).

However, the unitarist assumptions that underpin the advocacy of this 'high road' do not always take sufficient account of political economy, as Godard (2001) has noted. Although some of the advocates

of high performance work systems and partnership do qualify their arguments by reference to the need for various forms of state intervention in labour market and financial institutions, they tend to gloss over the more significant constraints imposed by the demands of capital accumulation and its control. These demands are particularly acute in the case of Anglo-Saxon capitalism where maximizing profits and shareholder value remains paramount (Dore, 2000). To explicate this, we need to return to the M-form corporate structure. A number of writers have noted that despite the new rhetoric of flexibility and empowerment, many senior managers have been reluctant, or unable, to relinquish their systems of centralized control. The decentralization that encapsulates divisionalization is primarily characterized by a form of budgetary devolution that prioritizes short-term financial targets and profit maximization in the business units, quite often at the expense of conditions of employment and jobs themselves (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Brown and Lauder, 2001). This rather pernicious form of 'decentralization' in fact 'constitutes the most potent instrument of the centralization of strategic control within organizations' (Sisson and Storey, 2000: 75). Despite the assumptions of the high road/low road strategic choice writers, such management control does not constitute just one of a number of realistic options that can be easily substituted. Gospel and Pendleton's (2003) analysis of the linkages between a firm's financial structure, corporate governance and labour management policies highlights how employers in the Anglo-Saxon capitalist economies will inevitably enhance shareholder value at the expense of jobs. If firms are reliant upon equity markets or debt markets for raising external capital then their business strategies will almost certainly prioritize narrow financial objectives over broader concerns such as market share, employment security or skill development.

These structural constraints should remind us that we cannot take the 'mutual gains' assertions of the 'high road' advocates at face value. The impact of high performance work systems needs to be assessed in the context of the emergence of what Ackroyd and Procter (1998) have termed the 'new flexible firm'. They argue that many large British manufacturers are basing their capital accumulation strategies on new systems of financial control and adopting a financially-driven management style of the type alluded to above. Multi-tasked labour – rather than multi-skilled – is reorganized into accountable units or cells that both contribute to flexibility and facilitate the calculation of marginal costs. And in contrast to the inherent status divisions between the core and periphery of Atkinson's (1984) flexible firm model, core employees

in the new flexible firm forego privileged status and job security as they compete with sub-contract labour and alternative suppliers in production operations that are treated as discrete, dispensable units. Such financial control regimes are able to monitor the performance of business units and indirectly control workers through the threat of rationalization and downsizing (Ackroyd and Procter, 1998: 171, 176).

Whether we denote this type of flexibility as coherent strategy, or the outcome of a pattern in a stream of managerial decisions over time (Procter et al., 1994), there seems little doubt that workers in the manufacturing industry have been kept in order partly by recurrent outsourcing and downsizing policies, or by the fear of their likelihood (Beder, 2000; Brown and Lauder, 2001; Doogan, 2001; Hudson, 2002; Wilkinson and White, 1994). This also raises the possibility that rather than regard downsizing and high performance work practices as mutually exclusive patterns of corporate restructuring (one characteristic of the high road/low road dichotomy), these practices may be coordinated within firms (Biewener, 1997: 3). Looked at in this way, downsizing and outsourcing form part of the competitive strategy of the high performance work regime. This scenario is given credence by longitudinal survey research in the USA which found that firms which adopted high performance work practices were more likely to lay off workers compared to non-HPW firms (Osterman, 2000).

Whilst later chapters in this book investigate the impact on labour of specific high performance work practices, this chapter sets the context of change by presenting evidence of the restructuring of the two case study firms along the lines described above. Following this, we draw upon the viewpoints elicited from employees to explore some of the tensions and more stark contradictions between the rhetoric of commitment and reality of insecurity that form part of the high performance work experience.

Organizational restructuring in the aerospace sector

Looked at from one angle, the British aerospace sector could be considered a jewel in the somewhat tarnished crown of British manufacturing industry. Compared to the work systems of standardized mass production, aerospace constitutes a site of high value-added engineering, high skill utilization and technological innovation. Over a third of the industry's employees hold a degree-level qualification and over 11 per cent of the workforce is involved in research and development (Thompson, 2002). The aerospace sector is also relatively successful in

maintaining scale. The total output for the UK aircraft and spacecraft industry (not including weapons) stood at £17.5 billion in 1999, a £6.4 billion increase over three years. This compares with overall decline in all UK industrial output over the same period (UNIDO, 2002). The industry employs around 150,000 people, supports a further 300,000 jobs and makes a net contribution to the country's balance of trade of £3.8 billion per year (Thompson, 2002). However, if we look at these impressive performance statistics through the alternative lens of labour, we find a different picture, one where, in fact, British labour has been systematically stripped out of the production process. During the last decade the industry lost a quarter of its workforce as a result of recurrent organizational downsizing and mass redundancy at many plants throughout the UK (Dunne and Macdonald, 2001; Lovering, 1998a; SBAC, 2000; Upchurch and Danford, 2001). These developments have not been confined to the UK industry. In the much larger American aerospace sector, another exemplar of the high performance, knowledge economy, just over half a million jobs were lost in the first half of the 1990s (Seidl and Kleiner, 1999); in the US aero-engine sector tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs at the same time that new orders have increased (Almeida, 1997).

The basic structure of the industry in the UK can be traced back to government influence after the Second World War. The state's industrial policy at this time was to secure both monopolistic consolidation of the sector and scale economies by promoting a concentration of ownership (Pike, 2001). Initially, in the immediate post-war period, the objective was to support a consolidated group of twenty three firms comprising airframe, aero-engine, missiles and electronics production (Lovering, 1990). A decade later, as Chapman (1991) notes, the government began to use its financial and market leverage to secure the rationalization of many of these firms into five leading airframe and aero-engine companies.

Interestingly, Lovering (1990) also argues that up until the 1980s the labour process and employment relations within these firms corresponded with the 'Fordist' model to a much greater degree than the mass production industries. Buoyant product demand, government cost-plus contracts and relatively easy profit-making meant that many employers could afford to tolerate an institutionalization of the role of organized labour. Collective bargaining procedures and formalized labour markets governed employment status and rewards and this ensured decent pay and conditions for production and engineering labour. As a result, for many of these predominantly male workers life

was easy, jobs were secure and work remained of a high skill nature supported by relatively generous training (1990: 457).

These favourable conditions for organized labour went into reverse during the 1980s as the Thatcherite neo-liberal experiment took hold. A combination of cyclical recession in civil aerospace markets, the privatization of some of the core manufacturers, the introduction of competitive tendering for new defence contracts and successive rounds of cuts in defence expenditure catalyzed a significant restructuring of complete firms, plants and labour. Since that time, as Lovering (2001; 1990) and Dunne and Macdonald (2001) have observed, the structure of the industry has become transformed as suppliers created new international corporate networks whilst the state influenced an international concentration of capital by promoting joint programme initiatives in both the defence and civil sectors. During the late 1990s especially, a smaller number of core aerospace suppliers has established joint ventures, strategic alliances and sometimes full mergers with European and USA companies (Brzoska, 2001; Nicoll, 2001).

The impact of these changes on management and labour has been considerable. Many aerospace firms have transformed their previously bureaucratic and hierarchical organizational structures into more flexible organizations involving quite complex forms of divisionalization and intra-plant unitization (Danford et al., 2002b). In addition, as Lovering (1998a) notes, managerial culture and practice have changed. The adoption of new management techniques and human resource management has become widespread whilst old-style militaristic and bureaucratic management teams have been replaced by younger more market-oriented individuals. Production technology and labour deployment have been rationalized by the adoption of lean production control systems, just-in-time and teamworking. And companies have attempted to reform their systems of industrial relations by purging oppositional union activists, reducing the scope of collective bargaining and introducing a shift towards more individualized employment relations. However, perhaps the most substantial change has been the rationalization of labour itself. As a result of international restructuring, de-layering, the outsourcing of key production tasks and a determination by firms to concentrate on 'core' activities rather than diversify into alternative civil production, most of the UK's aerospace employers introduced mass redundancy programmes at regular intervals during the late 1980s and 1990s (Bradley et al., 2000; Danford et al., 2002b; Lovering, 1998a and 1998b). Although all manual and non-manual occupations were affected by this rationalization the most

hard-hit groups were production workers, non-graduate technical staff, administrative staff, and middle management.

At the time of the case study research in 2001–02, the sector was subject to heightened uncertainty following the al-Qaida attack on New York's World Trade Centre. In civil aerospace, although Airbus Industrie's global aircraft sales overtook the once mighty Boeing for the first time, this was in the context of a post-September 11 decline in civil aircraft markets, markets that were already in cyclical recession. In the defence sector, the USA's so-called 'war on terror' precipitated substantial increases in US defence spending which, though primarily aimed at bolstering American contractors, had the potential of changing the prospects of European defence firms (Done and Nicoll, 2002; Gow, 2004). For example, prior to September 11, a huge American Joint Strike Fighter programme was subject to speculation that it might be scaled back or even axed under a President Bush–Donald Rumsfeld defence review. Within six weeks of the Trade Centre attack, American and British firms were awarded a US$19 billion contract just for the development of the aircraft. And it has been predicted that UK involvement in this project alone could net British companies more than £50 billion over the next three decades (Cook, 2002). However, as the above review and our case studies both demonstrate, a profits bonanza for arms companies does not necessarily translate into secure jobs for their workers.

High performance management and organizational change

We now consider the organizational restructuring that took hold at the two case studies, *Airframes* and *JetCo*, during the five-year period leading up to and including our research at the plants (1997–2002). Although some of the changes were particular to each plant and contingent upon existing management, design and production structures, they nevertheless shared the same underlying themes. These were, a search for new time efficiencies in the design and production process; the adoption of new financial control imperatives within more flexible and accountable organizational forms; and significant reductions in labour costs via staff rationalization and a pronounced increase in the use of different numerical flexibility techniques.

The politico-economic and market environment that influenced these changes constituted an intensification of the neo-liberal reforms that, as we noted above, took hold in the aerospace sector during the 1980s. Each of our interviews with directors and senior managers con-

tained detailed explanations of the implications of the de-coupling of defence equipment procurement from state support for indigenous suppliers. The fact that this was continually threatened, if not always actualized, meant that customers (primarily governments) could extract major cost reductions from their suppliers. This was especially so in an environment of intense global competition for multi-billion pound contracts between the core aerospace players. At the same time, these firms' additional civil aerospace markets were subject to the same acute competitive pressures in the context of a cyclical decline in airline passenger numbers. One *JetCo* director summarized some of these pressures in the aero-engine markets:

> In defence the old position was cost-plus. In other words when you did a deal or reached an agreement to provide engines, spares whatever, the arrangement was that the customer would pay whatever it cost us to do it, plus a margin which they accepted was necessary to achieve a sensible return. That's changed now, the defence customer is behaving more and more like a civil aerospace customer. The pressure on defence spending is increasing all the time, that is, to reduce it. But equally importantly to get best value for money. [For example, our BX400 engine] is just about now coming into production, a very important engine. That is not on a cost-plus basis, it is on a fixed-price basis. We've done a deal that says that's the price so the customer understands that we have to make a return but on that fixed-price basis. So we have to enhance our efficiencies, effectiveness, productivity and so on to make a proper return in terms of profit and cash, return on assets etc. (Interview, HR Director, June 2001)

For the *JetCo* management, the shift in the balance of power from producer to customer had catalyzed additional pressures to simultaneously reduce costs and improve quality. For example, in civil aircraft markets the tradition of airframe manufacturers to single source an engine to power an aircraft type has given way to a system where the airline customers themselves choose between different engine manufacturers every time they make an aircraft purchase. The airlines are then in the position to extract considerable price discounts (in some cases up to 75 per cent) and advantageous financing arrangements from the successful engine supplier (Almeida, 1997; Smart et al., 1996). The result is that the final engine price will rarely cover the costs of design and manufacture and the suppliers' profitability will increas-

ingly rely on post-delivery maintenance, spares and follow-on sales activities. But these activities are themselves becoming subject to cost-reducing pressures. Similarly, on the defence side, such customers as the Ministry of Defence (MOD) are demanding significant cuts in support costs, requirements that have clear repercussions for work organization and the labour process:

> The Ministry of Defence are looking for a 20 per cent reduction in support costs over the next 2–3 years. So they're also looking for innovative alternative ideas to traditional ways of doing business … Their problem is of a resource which isn't big enough to do, ideally, everything they would like to do. So they're seeking to get the best return from their investment. So this is all keen market practice, the key drivers of ever improving quality standards if you like. If I use the example of the pole vault, the bar continues to be pushed up in terms of quality. Quality in all its forms in terms of delivery on time, quality in the sense of the product works, there are no quality issues with it, quality in the sense of our responsiveness to the customer. These standards are enlarging all the time in terms of what is expected of us. (Interview, *JetCo* HR Director, June 2001)

The senior management at *Airframes* was subject to similar types of pressure but mediated to an even greater extent by competition in global export markets. The UK market for the unique class of aircraft manufactured by the company was relatively limited. This created greater reliance on export sales in both civil and defence markets to secure scale economies. The same cost-cutting conditions were present as overseas customers demanded more sophisticated products without concomitant increases in price. In order to stay in business and maintain profitability, management had to rationalize the plant's design and production processes to secure significant time efficiencies. One director explained:

> Yes the new marketplace is the underlying driver, very much so. The UK marketplace but also very much the export one. We're about to sell the *SKUA* into Oman. It will be significantly cheaper than what we've ever sold a *SKUA* for before, but significantly more complex and with a tighter lead time. The *GANNET* is the same. We're very close to securing a contract now with Denmark, and again you have to drive the price down to the absolute minimum and drive the lead time down from 36 months to 24 months. So the marketplace is just

> absolutely dictating it. (Interview, Engineering Director, October, 2001)

The same director expanded on the theme of cost reduction:

> Lead time. Lead time reduction for the whole product. Cost reduction, that's cost reduction in the engineering activity, so the amount of time we spend on design, the cost of the design, particularly the out-turn costs, the product design element is cut. And when we launched the changes three years ago we really tried to emphasize those points over and over again. It's all about lead time reduction, non-recurring cost reduction, product cost reduction and improvement of quality.

Such market imperatives gave rise to different forms of organizational change at the two case study plants. These will now be described in turn.

The new flexible firm: the case of *Airframes*

The managerial culture at *Airframes* underwent a quite marked change during the 1990s. The core characteristics of the previous regime were those associated with a paternalistic bureaucracy, permeated also by militaristic values. Vertical lines of accountability worked their way through a tall, multi-layered managerial hierarchy. Career progression depended on age, seniority and 'knowing the right person' (or sometimes a reluctance to 'rock the boat') whilst senior staff flexibility, or at least career movement between departments, tended to be limited. A relatively high proportion of managers were ex-armed services personnel, particularly in such functions as customer support, and a convention of deference to rank was prevalent in these areas. One personnel officer disclosed that it was only recently that the company dispensed with an agreement which prevented ex-armed services personnel managing anyone who used to be of higher rank.

The shift in the politico-economic and market environment of the 1980s created the conditions for the emergence of younger, better educated managers who were more at ease with the ideology of competitive markets and free enterprise. This process accelerated in 1994 when the company was subject to a hostile and bitterly fought take-over by one of the UK's largest engineering multinationals. Although there were widespread fears that *Airframes* would be subject to asset-stripping, and indeed land surrounding the factory was sold off to

some leading retail firms, the new parent company did inject fresh investment into the plant. It also introduced management practice that was more common in mainstream manufacturing. For example, individuals began to rise through a downsized managerial hierarchy on the basis of commercial awareness and degree qualifications rather than seniority; many managers received support in the acquisition of additional business qualifications, and many began to periodically move around the business to gain a wider experience of the different operational functions.

At the time of the research in 2001–02, this process of commercialization was further extended when the company completed a second, international merger with an Italian civil aircraft manufacturer (given the pseudonym *Agricola*). The merger created a new *Agricola-Airframes* division of 10,000 workers that became the world's second largest manufacturer of the generic aircraft-type. Although the methods of counting productive staff differed between the two partners, this did not stop the British management from using the merger to demand more efficiencies from its workforce. The plant's non-manual union convenor commented:

> Certainly management have played one plant off against the other in terms of if you're looking at the major drive within the company, to deliver at maximum speed at minimum cost. And certainly production staff have had fired off at them the view that it takes 11,000 hours to build a *GANNET* aircraft in *Agricola* and 16,000 hours here, and therefore we need to improve the productivity of the company. (Interview, AMICUS-MSF Convenor, October 2001)

Perhaps the most significant organizational change to affect management control on the shop and office floor was implemented in the late 1990s. The factory site had already been 'divisionalized' by its separation into three different business units, each operating as separate trading companies. The largest of these was *Airframes*, responsible for aircraft assembly. The two other units were the suppliers of the core sub-assemblies: transmissions and structures. The *Airframes* assembly unit then underwent further fragmentation. First, its production areas became formally segmented into different groups in accordance with product family; each area was then organized into production teams. Second, the complete business unit was reorganized into a basic matrix structure comprising different product and process programme directorates. Third, the plant's large Research and Development (R&D) and

engineering facility was transformed from single entity into a more refined matrix organization. The latter represented a return to a management innovation that was pioneered by the American aerospace industry in the 1970s and which again became fashionable in the 1990s (Anderson, 1994). It allowed different specialists to be deployed flexibly across a variety of programmes in accordance with project priorities.

These changes did have a direct impact on the labour process, quality of working life and trade union organization in both manual and non-manual work areas and this is explored in more detail in the following chapters. However, for management, the most significant dimension of the restructuring was that it generated some of the required labour savings and time efficiencies by providing greater transparency of the marginal costs and benefits of different design and production processes, including the so-called 'non-value-added' activities. Once the structure was put into place, new more 'entrepreneurial' managers were put in charge of the different programmes and held accountable for stripping out human and material 'waste' from the design-to-manufacturing process. The following comment from one of the more ebullient of these new style managers is instructive in this respect:

> This previous system really generated a 'give us the bits and I'll build you anything' culture. It left a trail of MRP [material requirements planning] shortages, they robbed themselves stupid, and even then didn't have good reporting techniques. When I knew I was moving in there, and I've only been doing this job since June last year, so I've been in for what, June, July August, September, 16 months, no numbers stacked. You with me? How many men have you got? how many hours are you spending a month? divide by two, you're going to fail, you haven't got enough men for the hours, simple mathematics.
>
> … So what's changed locally? I beat the whole fucking lot up. I got rid of a lot of people. I found an organization where I was literally on the top of a fucking huge pinnacle. I'm a flat worker, always have been a flat worker, I'm a manage-by-wandering-around worker. I moved quite a few people, lost them. (Interview, *GANNET* Operations Director, October 2001)

It should be noted that this new system of identifying costs through the creation of smaller, more manageable operational units was very

much an instrument of centralized financial control. Managerial decentralization did not extend to devolved budgetary control as the following comment from a more disillusioned line manager makes clear:

> I believe personally that our Director is very controlling. Everything has to be signed by him. It has to go through him and he makes the judgement whereas I think before, as I say, budgets were allocated to the next level down who looked at the head count and allocated to the next level down … I feel very loyal to *Airframes*, I think *Airframes* has been very good to me. I've gone through promotion, more money I can't grumble about that. But it doesn't seem to have the heart and soul as it used to. I don't think because of all the changes that are going on and because of the lack of visibility of what's going on. I don't believe it is that family thing in quite the same way, there's a lot of people who are out for themselves who are more ambitious themselves, the agendas are a bit more hidden. (Interview, Data Analysis manager, October 2001)

The company also adopted different numerical flexibility techniques to place additional controls on labour costs. Unlike the *JetCo* case study, where, as we shall see, international outsourcing became systemic at the time of the research, outsourcing activity at *Airframes* appeared to be restricted to certain ancillary services and to the use of sub-contract engineering labour where skill shortages required this. However, things only appeared this way because the *Airframes* plant had gradually developed into a final assembly facility over a very long period. Compared to the immediate post-war practice of manufacturing and assembling aircraft on one site, around 85 per cent of aircraft manufacture was now performed by *Airframes*' suppliers in the UK and abroad. This had been a slow, incremental process of change and was not regarded as a political problem by either management or trade unions. What was new was the adoption of temporary labour and downsizing policies.

There had been a number of mass redundancies at the plant between the late 1980s and mid-1990s but following this the workforce expanded again, when, as one manager put it, the factory entered into a period of 'quite astronomical growth' involving a tripling of turnover in just five years. By 2001, the workforce had increased from 3000 employees to over 4000 (although a major redundancy hit the plant during the final weeks of our fieldwork, as we describe in Chapter 6).

Some of the growth in aircraft orders was covered by the use of temporary labour, mainly manual and non-manual agency workers. This reached a peak in early 2000 when 750 temporary workers were employed on-site – 18 per cent of the total workforce. Different managers made clear that the use of temporary labour was not to be regarded as a singular event but instead as part of a developing core-periphery employment strategy aimed at better managing the fluctuations in product demand. For example:

> But one of the reasons for doing that was knowing that if we'd grown our permanent workforce by that much again we knew we were going to come a cropper. So that was a deliberate policy. Today we've not only reduced our permanent workforce back to about 3850 from 4200 which was peak, but our temps have gone from 750 down to about 300. (Interview, HR Development Manager, November 2001)

The company's Human Resources (HR) director also explained how this developing strategy began to coincide with a Dutch auction on labour costs between *Airframes* and its new Italian partner, *Agricola*:

> And by the way it's [the core-periphery model] very much the Italian way of doing business. You get to a sort of core level, which if you like is your minimum core level to retain your expertise and competence and thereafter you manage everything else through outsourcing and temporary labour. That's how they do it, that's how the Italians have managed to get their cost base to the position they have, which has enabled them to be as competitive as they need to be in the civil market. So they will then look over the sea to us and say, why don't you do that then? (Interview, October 2001)

A pertinent question that arises here is why did this particular employer adopt temporary working as a major plank of its staffing strategy (well before the Italian merger) at the time when elsewhere in British industry there had been hardly any noticeable shift towards this practice (Robinson, 1999; Supiot, 2001)? The answer to this, simply put, may be that the employer did it because it could. Local labour market conditions were favourable and the plant's trade unions were eventually supportive of the policy. First, the fact that the factory was by far the largest employer in what was effectively a single company town, and an employer that offered favourable wages and conditions,

meant that, as many managers and employees reminded us, there was no shortage of candidates for permanent or temporary work. Second, the plant's recognized trade unions came to see the use of both temporary labour and sub-contract labour as an instrument for enhancing the job security of their core membership, the permanent workforce. In the production areas:

> Personally, I was always in favour of sub-contract labour. I mean in 1989, having been through the biggest redundancy ever, I proposed to the company that we introduce sub-contract labour on site. Because I could see it from my point of view that when they had a big contract they employed people and when that contract finished they would shed people. The people that they shed were not normally the people they had just taken on, they were the indirects like myself. So I had an 'insight', I could see what was happening. So I said instead of taking on full time employees, let's take on temporary labour to cover those areas. Now I suggested that in 1989 and in 1998 we eventually had an agreement for sub-contract labour, which I have to say has worked very well and has helped us to avoid our problems. (Interview, Manual Group Union Convenor, October 2001)

And in the office areas:

> No resistance, not particularly because people see them as a bit of a buffer, and there's always been a bit of rubbing people up the wrong way in terms of … mostly you see sub-contractors stood on the street corner somewhere on the telephone trying to get a better job somewhere else. We would never see them as committed to the end product as perhaps full time staff or to the company either and we certainly have heavily criticized the company where they've allowed themselves in some areas to have sub contractors who have become experts in a particular field. (Interview, Non-Manual Group Convenor, October 2001)

The end result was that the trade unions effectively colluded with management's flexible employment strategy. This was on the condition that the length of employment contract was properly policed and that, for agency workers, equal pay and conditions were applied so as to prevent the undercutting of core workers' conditions. In many respects, the policy of the union activists was to treat temporary staff as

a 'necessary evil' as the above interview comments suggest. The unions made little attempt to recruit agency workers whilst the traditional principle of 'last in first out' was replaced by 'temps in temps out', a local manifestation of a much broader pattern of exclusion of these workers by British trade unions (see Conley et al., 2001; Heery et al., 2002; 2003).

The new flexible firm: the case of *JetCo*

Compared to the legacies of paternalistic management at *Airframes*, the management culture at *JetCo* was marked by the traditions of stricter adherence to bureaucratic procedure. *JetCo* was a much bigger company and the case study plant, though of comparable size at the time of the research, had a recent history of labour rationalization on a massive scale. Workplace relations were governed by a system of control that corresponded with Edwards' (1979) post-Taylorist 'bureaucratic control'. Employees' responsibilities and career progression were subject to a more systematic use of formal standards and procedures. For example, job specifications, grading schemes and individual appraisal systems. This form of bureaucratic control over individual performance and advancement also ensured that employees knew where they stood at any one time, that is, they knew their place. One director we interviewed remembered the formal status markers that confronted new recruits to the company and the industry:

> I probably look a bit older than I am but I was a trainee in 1981. When I came out of college, I couldn't believe it when I came out here. I remember they had different toilets for different types of people still. I recall there were different canteens still, there were certainly different times for them to eat and us to eat, and *JetCo* is better than other businesses. I remember going for an interview after college to BAe and it was gob-smacking, we went to this canteen for lunch and the canteen was like a restaurant, silver service and all this stuff. The chap I was with said, 'of course you have to have a title to come to this restaurant.' And that was not that long ago, about 20 years ago. (Interview, Engineering Director, June 2001)

Despite the all-pervasive discourse of 'de-regulation' and 'post-bureaucracy' in business commentary, at the time of the research the activities of workers and managers in the *JetCo* factory were still bounded by regulation and procedure. As we shall see later in this

book, the employee development agenda of the high performance workplace has appropriated many of the conventional practices of bureaucratic control. In the aerospace sector, there has always been an additional technical dimension to this based on quality assurance. At *JetCo*, for example, the specific customer requirements of engine design and manufacture meant that engine safety was of paramount concern. And maintaining engine safety required a regime of technical bureaucracy, such as strict adherence to volumes of engineering and quality standards. The same director observed:

> It takes a long time to shake things up and that's probably why some of the younger generation probably increasingly now, come in with enormous expectations, come into a big company, get a little bit frustrated with the inertia and the bureaucracy. In fact there *is* bureaucracy in our business because number one is safety and safety cannot be taken lightly at all.

However, these bureaucratic parameters did not mean that the style of management at *JetCo* remained static. As far as individual influences are concerned the plant developed a recruitment strategy during the 1990s that placed a premium on the acquisition of younger managers who had experience of implementing new financial and production control procedures. Lean design and manufacturing techniques were central to this. On the production side, a relatively high number of management recruits came from the British automobile industry, some of these from Japanese transplants. More broadly, the company adopted a system of 'fast-track' management that sought a new organizational dynamic through a continual movement of senior managers:

> If you look at the MDs for instance, only one of the MDs is still there from two and a half years ago. And if you look at the MD's first line, the operations directors, they're all new. Also the majority of those people, nine out of ten, have been outside of the organization. So we're also having the influence of people coming from the motor industry from Rover, Mitsubishi, Honda, Ford, and also people from British Aerospace, GKN. It's the first time we've gone out and said we believe we need a different animal to manage our business. (Interview, Personnel Manager, June 2001)

The shift in management culture was accompanied by radical structural change. In 1998, the company reorganized itself into a matrix

structure of a more complex form than we saw at *Airframes*. Single site divisions were integrated into a new structure comprising twelve business units that were categorized as 'customer focused business units'. Each of these units reported directly to a corporate headquarters. Six units were responsible for different aero-engine markets, such as defence, airlines and helicopters, the remainder covered other business, such as, power generation, and different support operations. The case study plant was only one of two of the company's UK factories to have all twelve customer facing units located on site. A matrix was formed by introducing a further nine business units responsible for supplying the customer facing units with the core sub-assemblies of aero-engine construction. For example, fan systems, combustion systems and turbines. The site that was previously a unitary division was transformed into a location for a plethora of different businesses, some located in a complex supply chain, others responsible for engine assembly for global markets.

The matrix structure was devised for a number of reasons. One director used a metaphor of fluid dynamics in describing it as a 'fractal', a complex geometrical shape of repeated patterns used to improve flow (in this case communication flow). Another director stressed the importance of concentrating skills on particular products and of improving business focus in the 'drive for cost-effective profit'. However, the core business driver for corporate headquarters was to secure improved financial control over every aspect of the business, albeit under the guise of 'managerial decentralization'. In this respect, the matrix structure was introduced primarily to reduce costs, particularly labour costs, by securing greater transparency and business unit accountability. As the HR director put it, 'the major thrust of the organization is accountability, driving accountability as far down the organization as is sensible to do so.' A plant manager for one of the business units explained his role in taking responsibility for cost control and becoming accountable to his new budgetary paymaster:

> So my job basically is to run a plant or a business, the output of which this year is £32 million. It's like running a mini business inside a big company. So I have all the responsibility inside that. I have a business accountant, I have control staff which can take in orders from other parts of *JetCo* and turn those orders into manufacturing orders. I have capacity owners who run cells on the shop-floor for the manufacturing side and then we have hourly paid workers who actually make the parts with the machine tools .... We

> issue accounts once every four weeks in terms of the progress that the business is making against its business plan for that particular year, and I have a business review with the operations director from my business every four weeks where we look at the profit and loss, we look at the expenditure, we look at all the things that a normal business would have to look at, cost of employees, cost of running the business … (Interview, Plant Manager, Turbine Systems, June 2001)

Another cell manager commented somewhat ruefully on the implications for managerial culture of the underlying centralized command that is inherent to this form of 'decentralization':

> The company likes to control, control all the time. Obviously there needs to be an element of control but I still believe that you have to be prepared to let go and let other people control, not feel you've got to control yourself. I would rather see emphasis on the control of work, the job, rather than the current emphasis seems to be on controlling people. (Interview, Cell Manager, June 2001)

Just as we witnessed at *Airframes*, the *JetCo* management also relied partly upon numerical flexibility to control labour costs. However, the techniques adopted were different. *JetCo* followed a twin-track strategy: sacking workers and outsourcing core manufacturing work. Taking the first of these, when faced with product market difficulties, most British employers tend to opt for cuts in staffing levels rather than explore more sophisticated means of managing reduced output (Wilkinson and White, 1994). *JetCo* was no exception but for a firm with a multi-billion pound annual output and blue chip credentials it seemed particularly adept at taking the more ruthless option. In 1980, the plant employed 13,000 workers. By 1990 this had reduced to just over 8000, and by 2001 to 4300. The only occupational group that was spared from this rationalization was the company's graduate engineers. The plant's manual workforce took the brunt of the job losses though many technical workers, administrators and mid-level managers were also affected.

At the time of our fieldwork in 2001 further redundancies were announced, involving 350 manual workers and technical staff. Apart from organizing token protest, overtime bans and reducing the numbers of compulsory redundancies (without reducing the job loss total), the site unions conceded that they were virtually powerless to

stop the process. And interestingly, the fragmented business unit structure at the plant was an important contributory factor to this impotence. A single announcement of job losses at one site can create a focal point of trade union resistance. If the same job losses are dispersed across many different business units then it is not difficult to see how potential resistance can be dissipated. As one union representative observed:

> You have got to remember the way the business is structured. Rather than the company come to us and say we want to lose 300 technical staff which, if they said that, would provide a focal point for our membership. Instead, because we are broken up into business units, what actually happens is that one particular group will have no compulsory redundancies, another group may have 10 per cent, etc. And the timing of the announcements, although around about the same time of year often has different impacts on different groups. So therefore if we wanted to actually adopt an opposition strategy it makes it more difficult for us to do so, because clearly you are really asking people to do something or perhaps to support people, on a circumstantial thing that does not directly affect themselves. (Interview, AMICUS-MSF representative, July 2001)

There is no doubt that tightening controls over defence budgets and cyclical recession in civil aerospace markets were partly responsible for the job losses at *JetCo*. But an additional factor of considerable weight was the impact of the company's second form of flexibility: the outsourcing of work. As we described earlier, the aerospace sector has been subject to widespread international restructuring via such processes as joint ventures, licensed production and the formation of new globalized networks. One manifestation of this, at the level of the firm, has been the transformation of conventional manufacturing enterprises into 'systems integrators'. This involves sub-contracting the manufacture of large parts and assemblies to different firms in the supply chain and then acting as final assembler of these parts and providing post-sale services (Braddon, 2000; Dunne and Macdonald, 2001). The *JetCo* plant underwent profound change as a result of this labour cost-cutting strategy. Prior to the 1990s, most manufacturing processes, such as gear manufacture, were performed on site. By 2001, 65 per cent of the plant's manufacturing processes were outsourced. The objective was to increase this to 80 per cent of the total manufacturing requirement. Two logics were applied to this outsourcing strategy. The first was

termed 'make-buy'. This required differentiating between the most advanced manufacturing processes that required highly specialist skills and technologies and those that could be more easily outsourced if the required skills combined with cheaper labour were available. One production director commented:

> … I think a lot of it's come from where most companies have come to look at their core businesses – a realization that you cannot be good at everything from both the skill and an investment point of view. And that it's about really understanding what are our competitive advantages, what would we not want to give away commercially, and what we feel can be best manufactured elsewhere in the industry. Clearly, that is a difficult situation to bring across to people, you know the employees and the trade unions. Because it can look like, for all the co-operation they give, and all the working together they can offer, there's still the ultimate, you know, that they could lose work out of that. (Interview, Production Director, June 2001)

The second logic was political. In order to secure export orders in increasingly competitive global markets, joint ventures and licensed overseas production become key instruments for gaining influence in these markets. Moreover, the client nations increasingly demand these 'offset' deals to help nurture their indigenous aerospace industries (Almeida, 1997). As a result of these pressures, the *JetCo* plant was outsourcing different manufacturing processes to North and South America, Europe, and the Far East, including China. The same director:

> I think the other thing to bear in mind from a military point of view is that military engine manufacture is very much governed by political situations and many of our joint ventures are generally about political allies rather than commercial-type deals. So if we want to sell planes or engines to a particular country then politically it's good to have a joint venture with them on making some bits … So there's a big political map, if you like, that fits around some of the joint ventures that we do.

At the time of the research, the plant's manual unions were locked in dispute with the company over plans to relocate the manufacture of engine gears to a joint venture in the USA, the latest of a number of similar disputes over work transfer. In the main, the unions had

enjoyed little success in frustrating such management strategy. One reason for this was the clandestine manner in which these joint ventures were designed, a process which excluded trade union involvement. The implications of this for partnership between management and unions are explored in due course.

The new insecurity: worker attitudes to high performance management

We complete this chapter by exploring worker attitudes to the emergence of the high performance management regime. As we have seen, the adoption of financial control measures and new forms of flexibility was a key characteristic of this. The concomitant organizational changes had considerable implications for the management of the labour process and employment relations and these receive detailed analysis throughout the remainder of the book. At this stage, our interest lies in employee perceptions of the shift in management style and the impact of this on their sense of job security (or insecurity) and commitment.

High performance management and employee commitment

The first point to note is that, on the surface, the manual and non-manual workforces at both aerospace plants seemed highly committed both to their work and respective employers. This is reflected in the questionnaire survey data presented in Table 3.1. When asked whether they felt 'loyal to their employer' large numbers of manual, non-manual and especially managerial staff agreed that this was so – the only significant dissenting group was a sizeable minority of *JetCo* manual workers. Larger majorities of all groups at both plants felt 'proud to tell people who they worked for'. A different type of question asked employees whether they would be 'willing to work harder to help the organization succeed', an indication of commitment in terms of effort. Once again, although managers were most likely to answer positively, large numbers of manual and non-manual workers did likewise. The final question presented here asked employees whether they would 'take any job to keep working for their organization' – an expression of a willingness to be flexible to the point of some personal sacrifice (Gallie et al., 1998: 238). The results showed that for many employees their commitment did not extend this far. However, also noteworthy is that sizeable proportions of manual workers did indicate a willingness to take on any job, a reflection both of their weaker

Table 3.1 Indicators of Organizational Commitment (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
Feel loyal to my employer					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	18	66	8	2	6
Non-Manual Employees	7	66	15	4	8
Manual Employees	14	55	17	5	9
JETCO**					
Managers & Supervisors	36	55	4	2	3
Non-Manual Employees	10	60	19	3	8
Manual Employees	11	49	24	8	8
Proud to tell people who I work for					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	24	62	4	2	8
Non-Manual Employees	11	64	9	3	13
Manual Employees	13	63	15	3	6
JETCO**					
Managers & Supervisors	43	51	3	1	2
Non-Manual Employees	17	59	14	2	8
Manual Employees	11	58	17	6	8
Willing to work harder to help the organization succeed					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	16	68	10	2	4
Non-Manual Employees	9	60	14	3	14
Manual Employees	12	63	15	3	7
JETCO**					
Managers & Supervisors	28	58	11	0	3
Non-Manual Employees	9	67	13	3	8
Manual Employees	11	60	16	5	8
Will take almost any job to keep working for this organization					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	2	17	51	21	9
Non-Manual Employees	2	21	44	20	13
Manual Employees	10	42	32	7	9
JETCO*					
Managers & Supervisors	3	20	49	18	10
Non-Manual Employees	4	19	45	25	7
Manual Employees	7	28	41	15	9

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

labour market position and, in this case, their greater dependency on two employers offering relatively high wage, high skill employment. This was particularly so at *Airframes*, the sole provider of such employment in its rural location.

However, these quantitative indicators do not tell the whole story. Notions of employee commitment command little consensus among academics (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Mowday et al., 1982). Indeed, as Ramsay (1997) has observed, much research offers a pattern of contradictory results born out of a conceptual muddle (for example, different emphases on affective commitment, normative commitment, commitment based on organizational values, personal values, and so on). In an attempt to make sense of this, Meyer and Allen have reasoned that the *focus* of commitment (such as, the whole organization, or senior management, or a team manager, or team) can be as important as the nature of commitment itself (1997: 20). Although we do not share the managerialist premise of this argument, we do accept the logic of the essential question that underpins it. That is, if workers do show some form of commitment in a capitalist enterprise, what exactly is it that they are committed to?

Our interviews with workers at the case study plants suggested that where the focus of commitment was to the 'organization', the source of this was often sheer economic dependency (particularly for manual workers) mixed with a strong sense of pride in complex and distinctive end products. The following two comments illustrate this:

> People in *Airframes* love nothing more than slagging *Airframes* off, but you find that they are fiercely loyal. And they do pay well and there's not many places in this town where you could go and get the standards of health and safety, pension, pay, holiday etc, that you get here. You hear all these horror stories elsewhere of people working twelve hour days with a half hour lunch and this that the other, so at the end of the day, *Airframes* is a good employer. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, November, 2001)
>
> I've always had an affinity to aircraft and flying in particular but it's just something you build up working on the aircraft, you get to know it, it's like a friend. I think you'll find a lot of people who have worked on the SKUA who know its quirky bits. It becomes part of your life. Yes there is an element of loyalty to the actual product itself … There's a whole family, related around the product. There's a whole bunch of people interested in the same thing and that gives

> you a bit of a warm feeling. (Interview, *Airframes* Design Engineer, October, 2001)

However, there was also evidence of a 'defiant' loyalty and commitment to manufacturing enterprise. We use the term in the context of localized worker experience of the national decline in the prominence of 'making things' and utilizing 'hard skills' and its replacement by work in the service industries. For example:

> No I don't feel loyal to the company. I think, as far as engineering is concerned, when I first started working as an apprentice in the late 1960s, I think it was a job worth having. But this country has decided that it doesn't want manufacturing. We have become the job centre of the world where we work for everybody else and manufacture nothing for ourselves. But one thing they won't do is take away the pride that I have in the job that I do and the respect I have got from the job that I do myself. They try to take everything else away, but they would never ever take that away. (Interview, *JetCo* Mechanical Inspector, June 2001)

During our discussions on changing management styles with our interviewees it became quite clear that very little of the commitment and loyalty indicated in the questionnaires was directed at management itself. Or linked to organizational change. Instead, the predominant pattern was one of growing alienation from management. One manifestation of this at both plants was a widespread feeling of frustration that the traditions of engineering management – and support for high quality engineering practice – had given way to the cost-cutting exigencies of financial control and accounting. The following example was typical:

> They want people who are going to do as they're told and get on and do it and not question anything. Whereas, if we don't see something right, we'll query it. We'll say, hang on a minute, you can't put it together like that. Whereas the style of management we have got now, tends to be very money-orientated. All they want at the end of the day is the product pushed out at the end of the line and it doesn't matter whether it's 100 per cent or 90 per cent, they keep saying they want 100 per cent but as long as it goes out 90 per cent right, they're happy. To me, you can only sell crap once. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

We also detected a more fundamental source of discontent and distrust within both workforces. This was borne out of the feeling that the concrete demands of capital accumulation, exercised from on high by the new cost-cutting management regimes, were systematically destroying the relatively advantageous employment conditions that had, for so long, characterized the British aerospace industry. For many, this was the real experience of the new 'high performance' management:

> I think the objective, to have a contented, happy work force basically is a brilliant ploy and has been employed for years, but I think those days have gone now. I've seen in the last five years there's now more exploitation, what can we get out of you, we've got to get the share price up. It's all about double-digit earnings. That's the priority that we have at the moment, and I think that's where the company's driving people. They keep going on about their main objective, that is their main asset is 'the people', but if that's the case why is there redundancy? and why are you moving all these people? and why are you slimming the work force down? If 'the people' were that essential you wouldn't get rid of them would you? (Interview, *JetCo* Site Engineer, June 2001)

And another:

> My personal view is I think the engineering director has got a lot to answer for. He likes to show figures to the board saying I've saved five million pounds this year but saving that five million pounds what's it done to the workers, is it worth it? To him on paper you save five million pounds but he stops people training, he stopped people enjoying their work because they're down doing something they don't want to do. I used to feel really proud to work for *Airframes*, but this last year, year and a half, it's not the case anymore. (Interview, *Airframes* Flight Test Engineer, November 2001)

It may also be instructive to reproduce the following written observation from a *JetCo* engineer who seemed to speak for many in that his droll commentary could not hide a deep-seated sense of anger and discontent:

> ... we now have a new style of 'career manager'. These people are different from the old style manager. Yes they are still the usual self-

> centred, self-opinionated, back-stabbers they have always been, but nowadays they have no loyalty to a section, department or company. You can spot these 'career managers' by their TM, the suit (three times too big), the phone (wap-with an annoying ring tone), the laptop (in a shoulder bag), the stupid haircut (because of premature hair loss), the use of the current 'buzz' words, etc, etc. As they only expect to be in a department/company for two or three years, these 'new stylers' demand that they are seen to be effective, so 'change' is the order of the day. Change anything, upset any apple-cart, get people running around and you look as though you're having an effect, then before anybody realises what a cock up you've made, you move on (and start all over again). It's also good during your period of 'change' to introduce anything American or anything that involves a graph or a chart. (Questionnaire comment, *JetCo* Design Engineer, August 2001)

To complete this initial exploration of worker perceptions of the new management style we posed two rudimentary questions in our employee survey that assessed the extent of *joint* commitment at work. Although we hear so much about the importance of employee commitment, for employees themselves an equally important factor is the extent to which management display a reciprocal commitment. This is especially so in the context of employers' attempts to develop partnership. We asked respondents whether they felt that management and employees should be members of the same team and then, whether they felt that management believed they were in a separate team to their employees. Taken together the two questions constitute a simple index of joint commitment and partnership from the point of view of labour.

As Table 3.2 shows, there were stark contradictions between the two sets of results. At both plants overwhelming majorities of manual workers, non-manual workers and managers believed that management and employees should indeed regard themselves as members of the same 'team'. However, when asked if management themselves put this belief into practice, overwhelming majorities of manual and non-manual workers responded negatively, as did quite large proportions of managers themselves. These results – and the qualitative data that support them – suggest that the claims for social cohesion in the high performance workplace should be treated with caution, something we explore in more detail in the later chapters on partnership at work.

Table 3.2 Employees' Perceptions of Joint Commitment (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
Management and employees should be members of the same team					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	38	52	3	1	6
Non-Manual Employees	33	57	2	1	7
Manual Employees	24	59	8	3	6
JETCO					
Managers & Supervisors	33	61	3	0	3
Non-Manual Employees	36	53	4	2	5
Manual Employees	24	65	6	2	5
Management believe they are in a separate team to employees					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	17	45	25	4	9
Non-Manual Employees	29	43	15	0	13
Manual Employees	37	47	8	1	7
JETCO**					
Managers & Supervisors	11	41	33	11	4
Non-Manual Employees	25	42	23	1	9
Manual Employees	46	42	8	0	4

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.

High performance management and job insecurity

In exploring the climate of job insecurity at both plants we took into account both the objective and subjective dimensions of this. Objectively, labour rationalization and ensuing job instability have been systemic features of the aerospace sector for reasons we analyzed above. In the case of *JetCo*, all groups of workers witnessed wave upon wave of redundancy during the decade leading up to our research. By comparison, workers at *Airframes* enjoyed relative stability during the latter part of the decade (managed by the use of temporary labour), but by the time of our research, rumours of potential job losses did start to develop and these culminated in redundancies in 2002. However, the subjective dimension is equally important. As Burchell (2002) has argued, job insecurity also concerns employees' personal feelings about the risk of job loss and its ramifications for quality of working life factors, such as, autonomy, motivation, morale and stress. These are of

course core factors in the supposed 'humanizing' agenda of the high performance work regime.

Job insecurity was fairly pervasive in both workforces but more prevalent in the production areas where labour rationalization had been a common experience in the past. Our statistical analysis of the questionnaire data found no significant relationship between employees' feelings of job insecurity and their age, or length of service. However, our interview data did tend to reflect national survey findings that older, less qualified men of longer service were most likely to suffer both job loss and loss of earnings if they find new employment (Burchell, 2002; Gregg et al., 2000; Gregg and Wadsworth, 1999). That is, we detected a much greater fear of job loss, and sense of bitterness over management's perceived responsibility for this, amongst older manual workers with longer service records. One typical *JetCo* employee commented:

> … if you're over 50 then you have got a target on your back for redundancy. This is going back to the 1970s and 1980s, management were wiping out experience which had taken guys 30 or 40 years to get, they were wiping it out in weeks, just by turning round and convincing people that over 50 you were a target. I am 53 now, as I said, and I knew that as soon as I became 50 I had a target put on my back because this company it wants to get rid of the likes of me. (Interview, Mechanical Inspector, June 2001)

Similarly, an *Airframes* fitter felt that:

> … no one knows what's going to happen, they're just prepared to let us evaporate if you like. And that is very hard to take. A lot of my mates are very bitter about this because after 25 years it's as though you mean nothing to the company. And I find that a very naive attitude from management because they're not looking at the skills that I've got and my colleagues have got and saying, well hang on a minute, these are the guys we need because they can do any job at the drop of a hat, whereas that guy who's only been here 18 months, he might only be able to plug that computer up all day … (Interview, Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

Inevitably, such feelings had a negative effect on individual and collective morale. This was particularly the case at *JetCo*. The widely-held view that, as one worker put it, 'it's gone from being company men to

"sod them" basically', provided additional evidence of the problematic nature of employee commitment. Furthermore, the continual awareness of the threat of redundancy, the fact that job insecurity seemed to constitute an ever present backdrop of the working environment meant that many employees were inevitably subject to feelings of disorientation, or lack of control. One departmental union representative put it like this:

> As soon as the summer holidays are over, out come the swords, which is basically when the directors of the various businesses, start talking about how much workload they have got next year. That translates into announcements that will be coming out perhaps in late December/early in the new year about tasks for each business unit and basically how many jobs it will require. And that is when people say, 'have I got a job this year?', you know? Unfortunately, you can't just look at the overall workload and say the books are full we must be all right, because the company is always looking for outsourcing or looking at doing things differently. You can still be in a very insecure set up. Even if the overall prognosis for the business is very good, it keeps everyone on their toes. (Interview, *JetCo* Manufacturing Technology Engineer, July 2001)

These patterns were explored more systematically by the use of two questions in the survey questionnaire. The first measured the extent to which employees felt secure in their jobs; the second elicited views on managerial performance in maintaining job security, one of the central components of the 'mutuality' equation in the high performance workplace. The results are presented in Table 3.3.

These show clear, class-based patterns of difference in the experience of job insecurity. At both plants, very large majorities of manual workers felt insecure in their jobs. Despite the fact that during the five years leading up to the research employment at *Airframes* was marked by relative stability for core workers, almost as many manual workers at this plant felt insecure as their *JetCo* counterparts. This result supports the view that the source of job insecurity can be manifold, for example, a result of intra-organizational change, or managerial change, as well as fear of job loss. There was also similarity in the significant proportions of technical and administrative employees who felt insecure at both plants (a result that corresponds with national patterns for this group, see Cully et al., 1999). In contrast to this, managers, and particularly graduates, felt relatively secure in their jobs. For most grad-

Table 3.3 Employees' Views on Job Security (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
I feel my job is secure in this workplace					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	10	46	24	5	15
Graduates	3	54	28	3	12
Technical & Admin	3	44	30	10	13
Manual Employees	1	22	45	22	10
JETCO**					
Managers & Supervisors	6	47	34	6	7
Graduates	3	81	6	10	0
Technical & Admin	4	44	36	11	5
Manual Employees	2	17	47	24	10
	Very good %	**Good %**	**Poor %**	**Very poor %**	**Undecided %**
How good are your managers at maintaining the job security of employees					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	2	56	20	8	14
Graduates	0	39	31	8	22
Technical & Admin	4	36	34	9	17
Manual Employees	2	30	35	21	12
JETCO**					
Managers & Supervisors	1	44	39	8	8
Graduates	3	44	22	16	15
Technical & Admin	1	32	36	19	12
Manual Employees	1	17	36	34	12

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.

uates this can be attributed to a realization that they would have little difficulty in securing alternative high-quality employment in a labour market of scarce engineering skills.

Employees' evaluation of managerial performance in maintaining their job security was also marked by class differences. Manual workers were most likely to give their managers poor or very poor ratings. Significant proportions of non-manual groups, including some managers themselves, also delivered negative ratings. Moreover, these patterns reflected differences in the objective indicators of job security at the two plants. That is, manual, technical and administrative workers

at *JetCo* gave their managers relatively lower ratings because they had experienced a greater mass of job losses than their counterparts at *Airframes*.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter for the two case studies we have attempted to set the politico-economic and industrial context for the emergence of the high performance management regime. The two firms, which were both exemplars of the high-skill aerospace sector, over a number of years had developed a flexible and ostensibly decentralized organizational structure that in many respects mirrored developments elsewhere in British manufacturing industry. The creation of a multiplicity of divisions, followed by different business units, constituted the corporate architecture for new methods of financial control and accountability of plant management. This was accompanied by the emergence of a management style that prioritized cost control and financial results over bureaucratic stability and engineering innovation. That the business strategies of the restructured firms targeted short-term financial gain rather than longer term market share, or indeed, such new social objectives as employment rights and job security, was a function of the structural imperatives of the British capitalist economy rather than the outcome of some 'rational' strategic choice. If they were to survive in highly competitive global markets, both firms had to achieve high performance in profitability and cost control whilst providing transparent evidence of this both to their customers (primarily governments) and City financiers.

The organizational changes within the two firms took on an additional dynamic as a result of political and cultural shifts within the aerospace sector itself. For example, quite marked fluctuations in civil and defence aerospace markets along with different manifestations of a marketization of the sector engendered quite radical changes in managerial culture, local organizational form and employment relations. The introduction of complex business unit matrices *within* both plants run by managers who became imbued with the cost-cutting imperatives of lean production systems paved the way for the establishment of a 'new flexible firm' that took on many of the control characteristics of the Ackroyd and Procter (1998) model. To varying degrees, both firms also adopted labour rationalization strategies that are now characteristic of the management of 'high performance' in large manufacturing and service sector enterprises. That is, 'delayering' and 'downsizing', or

to put it less euphemistically, the mass sacking of workers, has resulted partly from extant 'hire and fire' mentalities but also from organizational restructuring in the form of joint ventures, mergers, outsourcing and the exploitation of a more casualized temporary labour.

The skilled and committed workers who labour under such work regimes are likely to display highly critical attitudes to management. They are also likely to experience profound alienation from processes of change that are seen to undermine the traditions of employee autonomy and beneficial employment conditions within the industry. We have argued that this discontent can be given a further twist by a pervasive job insecurity that has its roots in restructuring, managerial change and fear of job loss itself. Of course, it is partly the case that the systemic, ongoing process of downsizing in many Western firms can give rise to a disciplining effect on workers, that labour rationalization is not just concerned with staffing levels but also with transforming the attitudes of the residual workforce (Hudson, 2002; see also Mort, 2001). This argument has a certain cogency for which we did find some supporting evidence in the two studies. However, we would also contend that the structural features of the high performance management regime ensure that the shift in employee psychology is unlikely to comply with the form desired by management. Instead, employees' experience of the new insecurity may give rise to a mix of unease, distrust and at times, resistance. In the following two chapters we resume our exploration of this 'management problem' by examining the character of the labour process.

4

High Performance Work Systems and the Production Worker

The fragmentation of previously single corporate entities into more complex business unit structures was, in both case studies, one of the central building blocks of the high performance work regime. The principal objective was to secure for management a more transparent framework of cost control. However, 'decentralization' did not stop at the level of the business unit. Management also introduced production teams in the form of cellular working along with systems of kaizen-style problem-solving. Both were aimed at rationalizing capital and labour deployment whilst, ostensibly, providing a greater degree of worker input into job design.

For many writers, the adoption by firms of teamworking and problem-solving groups constitutes the core mechanism for employee participation in high performance work organization (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bélanger J. et al., 2002; Edwards, P. et al., 2002; Watson and Rosborough, 2000; Wood, 1999). There is nothing especially novel about the use of these techniques and they have, for some years now, featured in many of the critical labour process debates on 'post-Fordist' work design. What is new, however, is the emphasis that is placed on employee autonomy in the labour process and a more *systematic* mobilization of tacit knowledge and worker discretion. This emphasis has prompted the advocates of HPWS to make much bolder claims for worker empowerment than has been the case hitherto. For example, job design on the high performance factory floor is expected to provide a greater degree of employee autonomy over tasks and methods; employees should be able to share skills and solve problems by drawing on their own experience and that of technical specialists; teamworking should be self-directed to some extent; and teamworkers should be given greater responsibility for core processes by their involvement in

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

continuous improvement groups (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bélanger J. et al., 2002; Buchanan, 2000; Cutcher-Gershenfeld et al., 1998).

Alternative critical assessments of the impact of teamworking on employees' quality of working life have questioned this empowerment thesis. Relying primarily on case study material, this labour process critique has highlighted processes of labour subordination, task enlargement, work intensification and job insecurity (for example, Danford, 1999 and 1998; Delbridge, 1998; Garrahan and Stewart, 1992; Graham, 1995; Lewchuk and Roberston, 1997; Rinehart et al., 1997; Stewart and Garrahan, 1995). However, more recent secondary analysis of the WERS98 data has suggested that a degree of caution may be necessary here, finding that teamworking had very little effect on either patterns of employee discretion or work intensification (Harley, 2001). The same author has also argued that the differentiated experience of employee autonomy is more likely to be a function of the skewed distribution of power in organizational hierarchies (towards management) than the latest innovations in work design (Harley, 2001 and 1999; see also Bacon and Blyton, 2003; Steijn, 2001). One reason for these contradictory conclusions may well be the problem of specificity. Many of the critical labour process studies have been based in the 'labour-driven' environments of lean, mass production (such as automotives and consumer electronics). But it may well be the case, and the advocates of HPWS would support this, that teamworking will not necessarily have uniform effects irrespective of sector and product market conditions. Outcomes will be contingent upon a number of factors, such as the nature of production technology, whether this is small batch or flowline production, the skills base, human resource policies, the nature of industrial relations, and so on (Geary, 2003; Marchington, 2000; Procter and Mueller, 2000). Whilst we would not fully embrace this contingency approach, since surface appearance and apparent endless variety can too easily obscure shared underlying dynamics and exploitative social relations, we would accept that certain workplace conditions might be expected to foster more favourable employee responses to teamworking. This is why the choice of the aerospace sector was critical to our case study research with its traditions of low batch production, craft work autonomy and high concentration of skilled labour.

The debates concerning manual worker involvement in continuous improvement initiatives raise additional problems. Of all the techniques in the HPWS portfolio continuous improvement (or kaizen) bears most similarity with Japanese manufacturing practice. In emphasizing the

scope for enhanced discretion and self-fulfilment by worker involvement in quality improvement teams, and broader interaction with technical specialists, the leading HPWS writers in the USA, such as Appelbaum et al. (2000) and Osterman et al. (2001), are clearly following the path marked out a decade earlier by their compatriots in the 'Japanization' school. For example, Kenney and Florida (1993) conceptualized Japanese management practice as a form of 'innovation-mediated production', involving new participative practices that integrated the knowledge of design and production workers. In this formulation, job enrichment and worker empowerment became the new bywords in an anticipated post-Taylorist factory organization driven by joint problem-solving. Writing in a similar vein, Adler (1993) argued that blurring boundaries between the design and execution of production tasks through worker participation in kaizen groups raised the prospects for the emergence of a new 'democratic Taylorism' (1993: 98). The incorporation of this participative continuous improvement agenda into the high performance work regime requires careful scrutiny, not the least due to the large body of critical work that has questioned its claims. For instance, there is now a great deal of research that has focused on attempts by employers to implement total quality management techniques (TQM). Adopting a 'critical management' perspective, many such analysts have defined group problem-solving techniques as the core employee dimension of TQM. They have consistently argued that managerial short-termism, incrementalism and resistance have undermined the potential for employee empowerment (for example, Dawson, 1994; Hill and Wilkinson, 1995; Snape et al., 1995). A more profound critique from a critical labour process perspective has contended that although workers might derive satisfaction from problem-solving activity, its inevitable subjugation to managerial parameters and dictates is likely to result in worker alienation, and in some cases, work intensification and job instability (Danford, 1999; Garrahan and Stewart, 1992; Graham, 1993; Rinehart et al., 1997).

This chapter examines the impact of decentralization, teamworking and continuous improvement campaigns on production workers at the two factories. In so doing we assess the validity of the optimistic claims of the HPWS writers. Taking each case study in turn we first consider different patterns in the organization of the labour process and skill deployment and the extent to which these have been reconfigured by both teamworking and continuous improvement campaigns. We also assess the evidence for meaningful employee involvement through these techniques. In the context of these changes the next section

relies primarily on questionnaire survey data to present analysis of the quality of working life on the shop-floor. This takes into account job autonomy, flexibility and changes in the intensity of work. The final section focuses on the politics of production and factors which influence employees' readiness to accept or resist work organizational change in the high performance workplace.

High performance work organization on the shop-floor

A longitudinal survey of UK aerospace companies found that the use of cellular manufacturing, JIT and kaizen techniques had significantly increased between 1999 and 2002. Moreover, these practices were becoming widespread in the industry: nearly 60 per cent of firms had adopted cellular manufacturing, nearly 50 per cent used JIT production control and nearly 55 per cent used kaizen techniques (Thompson, 2002). It is one measure of the leading position taken by the two case study plants that they had both adopted all three manufacturing practices (further evidence of their use of a much broader range of high commitment techniques is provided in Chapter 7). In this section we explore the different patterns of their impact on the labour process, its control and employee autonomy.

Cellular manufacturing: the case of *Airframes*

Apart from spares manufacture, the *Airframes* production areas were physically divided into three main aircraft products. We have given these the pseudonyms *Gannet*, *Skua* and *Wasp*. The *Gannet* and *Skua* areas adopted broadly similar methods of production control whereas the *Wasp* area was designed effectively as a separate 'greenfield' site within the main site. For ease of analysis we consider this latter production area separately.

Different variants of the *Skua* aircraft had been in production since the early 1970s and of the *Gannet* since the early 1990s. In both cases, the introduction of a form of cellular production was a recent development, just two years before our fieldwork research began in 2001. From the point of view of management, the previous system of production control was characterized by a pattern of 'creative chaos' that eventually delivered aircraft, occasionally on time, but rarely within budget. A typical aircraft went through five separate phases in the production process. Major structural sub-assemblies, such as the rear fuselage and the cockpit, were delivered to the assembly area by either internal or external suppliers. The first phase of production was to assemble these

structures and create the basic shell of the aircraft. The shell then progressed through a systems fit (such as fuel and hydraulics) before moving into an electrical wiring phase. After this, the assembly was fitted with engine and transmission systems. It would also be fitted with external panels and doors before moving on to systems and flight testing. However, this progression was not always achieved via a simple sequential movement. Skilled labour was deployed across these different operations in accordance with the competing demands of different contract managers, production superintendents and component availability. If components were scarce in one area, or if a particular external customer was suddenly prioritized then gangs of skilled workers could suddenly find themselves switched to a different aircraft or phase of production. These workers were therefore subject to a specific form of flexibility in that they could be expected to work on any phase of aircraft assembly. One production director summarized these problems in the following graphic terms:

> The work organization was, which way was the moon? Because the tide went with the tide. If the panic was at the front end then the Ops Managers would shove every fucker up the front end. If it was at the back end of the process then everybody would go to the back end. As a result there was no learning to be had in the whole place because nobody did the same job twice.
>
> … But I think the best way describing the shop floor world would be, 'everybody else was a wanker'. Tides in, tides out, run up and down the line, no numbers bloody matched, headless chickens all the time, rob from here, rob from there, never recording things, scrub them, I'll pay you to scrub all the asset histories. You had project managers who kept nicking bits as well and giving them to the customer free. And then all of a sudden it's, 'all the assets are gone, why have we never got paid for them?' (Interview, Operations Director, October 2001)

In this context, the introduction of cellular working and lean production control was aimed at securing a greater degree of predictability and cost transparency in the assembly process whilst also recomposing the existing patterns of labour flexibility. Teams of production engineers developed a computerized system of JIT component supply. This allowed both external suppliers and a downsized internal stores system to feed parts directly to line-side bins when requested by production operators via a kanban card system. The practice of robbing parts from

other production areas was restricted as a result. The tradition of flexible labour deployment was also significantly altered by reconfiguring the five different production phases of the aircraft into formal, discrete cells. Each production cell was responsible for just one phase. A typical cell would comprise a stage manager, a stage supervisor, teamleaders (top-grade fitters who were responsible for the progress of work within their cells as well as carrying out production tasks) and five teams of six skilled operators covering a specific set of assembly tasks across different production shifts. Although the new cell workers could rotate around the different tasks required to complete a phase they would rarely be deployed on alternative work outside of their cell. As a result, this change had contradictory repercussions for labour flexibility. Across the complete production cycle, overall flexibility was reduced as the management control regime opted to forgo its right to deploy labour on any assembly task anywhere on the factory floor. However, management gained through the cost reductions associated with the rationalization of the labour process itself as each production worker took responsibility for a fixed cycle of tasks within a stage. This was an example of the use of teamworking to reshape labour flexibility via a more functionally and spatially focused type of work organization (Martinez Lucio et al., 2000). The outcome for many production operators was a more *intensive* form of narrow task flexibility. One stage manager described this:

> Now the guys normally only work 3 ops. plus a back up operation. They're continually rotating. They do op.1, op.2, op.3 and then back to op.1 again. So that takes us down the learning curve a lot quicker keeping those guys within the cell. (Interview, *Gannet* Stage Manager, October 2001)

These types of changes did secure 'high performance' outcomes for the supervisors of the production process. For example, between 1999 and 2001, the total build hours required for completion of a *Gannet* aircraft was reduced from 17,000 to 10,000 (the equivalent of 425 operators building an aircraft in one week reduced to 250 operators). Other indicators included reduced hours per assembly stage, reduced lead time, improved labour utilization and downtime (Interview notes). The key question then becomes, to what extent did these changes also generate a mutual gain for the manual workforce? Later in the chapter we provide some statistical evidence of their impact on the quality of working life on the shop-floor. For the moment, however, we are inter-

ested in different workers' reflections on the qualitative shift in the organization of their work.

It is important to recognize that most of these production workers emerged from a craft tradition of relative autonomy that historically characterized the labour process in the aerospace industry. The deployment of discretion and tacit knowledge was an integral part of their daily work routines. Indeed, most of the workers we interviewed felt that within the teams they were still able to maintain a degree of autonomy and ability to manage their work themselves. However, many workers also articulated a sense of frustration that both their formal and tacit skills were becoming diminished in the face of production rationalization and the demands of economies of scale. For example, some complained that the company was devaluing the status of their work by increasingly employing the likes of 'car mechanics' and 'agricultural engineers'. It was felt that although these less skilled workers were quite able to complete the new narrow tasks cycles, they were not trained as aircraft fitters and did not have the necessary experience to build a complete aircraft. One aircraft fitter of twenty years experience explained the contrast between the old and new way of working:

> The job's changed quite dramatically from when I first started here. When I first started here it was just coming to the end of the days where you put the aircraft together yourself. There was health and safety, and there were drawings, but there were no build standards as such that were adhered to as they are now … So without specifications, you were given a bit more political licence. You were fitting in the true sense of the word. You built the aircraft and you got it to work. And one of the key skills of being a fitter was to know what was acceptable and wasn't acceptable. So you thought okay, there's a problem here and I know how to get round it and I'll fix it and I'll carry on, to the point where you'd say no, I'm going to have to see someone about this and get it looked at.
>
> Whereas the line we run now, you don't have any opportunity to do anything but bolting. Whereas previously if something was too short, you'd go up a length and that would be the end of it. But now you can't do that. So in a way your fitting skills have been taken away from you. (Interview, *Gannet* Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

Many workers also complained of a lack of involvement in decisions that had a direct impact on the ease with which they could carry out

their work tasks. The implementation of JIT production control was a case in point. The predominant view was that although JIT might make some sense in large-batch, standardized mass production environments, it was a mistake to adopt it in the more complex, small-batch production routines of the aerospace sector where the rectification of unforeseen snags and faults is a constant. And it was the accountants, and others who were obsessed with cost control, who were party to this decision – rather than the workers who had to manage its repercussions:

> They keep operating on this just-in-time principle don't they? Personally I don't think it works in the aircraft industry. It might work in the car industry where there's continual production, it might work there, but on an aircraft, not as heavily tooled as a car production line, there's going to be mistakes made and the bits have to scrapped. We're all human at the end of the day and that can cause them problems because they haven't got the bits, they haven't allowed for that bit maybe being scrapped. I don't think the just-in-time principle works. The accountants are running the firm now, so that's it. They decide what's what and we have to go along with it. Accountants obviously aren't human, are they? (Interview, *Skua* Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

The third main production area in the *Airframes* factory was devoted to the assembly of a USA-designed aircraft, the *Wasp*. The cultural environment in this area was quite different from the rest of the shop-floor. The *Wasp* order arose from a licensed production agreement between the UK government, Boeing in the USA, and *Airframes*. Between 1999 and 2004 Boeing would deliver nearly 70 partially-assembled aircraft to the *Airframes* factory. Most production stages would be completed at this point, the *Airframes* production operators would be responsible for the final stages of power and transmission assembly and systems test. What had been created was, in effect, a 'screw-driver' final assembly operation since most of the skilled work routines had been accomplished in the earlier manufacturing phases in the Boeing factory. The range of skills required to complete the aircraft assembly was much narrower compared to the *Gannet* and *Skua* areas. Some of the *Wasp* managers we spoke to highlighted the more 'enriching' form of teamworking they had adopted within small teams of, typically six, workers who were now responsible for completing operations on a whole aircraft rather than just for one production stage. However, this obscured

the fact that very few production stages had been entrusted to the UK factory.

What was unusual about the *Wasp* area was its creation as a discrete 'greenfield' production site within the confines of the main site. Apart from the modern plant and equipment that were provided, its most notable characteristic was that the spatial demarcation of production was also marked by distinctive approach to the control of labour. That is, when management invested in new production facilities it was also seeking 'greenfield' labour and non-industrial worker attitudes. The overall labour requirement was just over sixty operators per shift. The first thirty to be selected were regarded as 'leading operators' who would train the remainder. Management refrained from recruiting from the existing workforce because it required individuals who did not carry the political baggage of union-mediated flexibility and demarcation. Instead, it employed operators who had recently completed military service in aircraft maintenance trades. A *Wasp* manager explained:

> For recruitment I had to go outside which meant I could start with a clean sheet. So whatever I decided to do then was pretty much what I wanted to do. I could forget all the bad traits which you get in any industry, things that have been going for years because it's custom and practice. I think people are like that because it's just an easy way of just following on. So I reviewed the things I didn't like and which way I wanted to go forward. And at the same time we did a roadshow at a large local RAF and naval base where we recruited ex-servicemen … By this means we had a totally different organization with a different view. People who didn't come with any baggage from industry, they came from the services with a totally open mind … It sounds silly but what we actually put in place was a team. The skills were taken for granted because of the cvs, what we looked for was team players. (Interview, *Wasp* Operations Manager, October, 2001)

This ex-military labour, recruited both for its positive attitudes to flexibility and acquiescence to managerial demands, was then sent to the Boeing factory in the USA to become further inculcated with the methods of lean manufacturing and empowerment. When it returned to the UK it came to embody a new 'micro-corporate culture' that marked out an assumed attitudinal superiority to other more 'backward' production areas in the plant. One visible status marker adopted

for this purpose was the requirement for all *Wasp* production operators to wear black overalls (in contrast to the green versions worn by the rest of the manual workforce). The *Wasp* operators came to be known as the 'men in black' much to the annoyance of many other workers in the plant:

> Not only did we make a team but we actually suggested to them that we wanted something which made them stand out, you know to mark them out as a team. So we reviewed all different issues and in the end it was a choice of overalls. We gave them a choice of overalls and they decided black and within days they were known as 'Men in Black'. And now they're known throughout the Board of Directors, outside in the Ministry as well, as the 'Men in Black'. Even in Boeing it's 'Men in Black'. So that give us a truly different team. It somewhat upset a lot of the other players in the factory. (Interview, *Wasp* Operations Manager, October, 2001)

Our interviews with some of these ex-military personnel did confirm significantly more positive attitudes to lean manufacturing and team-working. They also highlighted a willingness to 'go beyond the norm', to cross the skill boundaries between mechanical and electrical fitting work, for example, even though fellow workers in other production areas might object to this. But it was exactly that attitude, encapsulated in the following comment, that management sought to foster, and indeed, use as a catalyst for similar attitudinal change elsewhere on the shop-floor:

> The way I look at it, for 29 years in the navy I signed a contract that I would serve my Queen and country. And part of that to work on an aircraft, keep that aircraft serviceable and get two guys to go out and fly it and take it away and make sure they come back again. But the big difference was I had to be flexible because I was paid in the navy over a 24 hour period. Now at any time they could come and get me out of my bed and they could say you've got to go and help. I was brought up over those 29 years never to question that, that was my job. And so as I got older it just became the norm. Unfortunately when you try and do that in a system which has got a trade union involved you cannot do it because you could be over stepping a boundary which actually goes into someone else's trade description if you like. I found it really hard to rein back on the flexibility side of things. And some workers within the company

> tended to feel that we were doing jobs that we shouldn't be doing. We were going out on a limb whereas some of these guys were saying well I'm not going out on that limb because I'm not paid to go out any further than here. (Interview, *Wasp* Aircraft Fitter, November 2001).

Management's use of ex-military labour in this case provides a unique example of more general patterns in employers' exploitation of lean production settings and insecure market environments to create artificial fault lines and divisions within the working class (Yates, 1998). In this case, ex-military 'team players' were cynically inserted into a milieu of civil 'deviants'. The extent to which this strategy of management control succeeded is explored in the section on worker resistance below.

Cellular manufacturing: the case of *JetCo*

We have already described the introduction of a new business matrix structure into the *JetCo* factory. This involved a quite radical reorganization of the plant into twelve separate business units mostly responsible for discrete families of aero-engine products, along with nine additional units managing core engineering processes. The matrix structure was partially designed to improve flexibility and market response. However, the core objective was to reduce costs by establishing greater financial transparency and unit accountability.

Just as we saw at *Airframes*, it was the next stage in managerial decentralization, the creation of more manageable work units, such as cellular working, that had a more direct impact on the organization of the labour process. The pattern of change at *JetCo* was more complex, a function of the different technologies and work routines required to build an aero-engine. The underlying dynamic was management's determination to introduce lean manufacturing. In 1996, the company invited a firm of Japanese management consultants to audit existing practice and develop plans to secure time efficiencies in the organization of plant and labour. This was in the aftermath of a series of major shop-floor redundancies. Three years later, significant changes began to take hold. At the same time as the business matrix was implemented, the manufacturing facilities for the newly created production-oriented units were spatially partitioned. Large, function-based manufacturing departments, such as different machine shops, were broken up into the different product and process-focused business units. At the same time, production flow and labour utilization were both improved by the strate-

gic reorganization of machinery and processes to reduce so-called 'non-value-added' activity. Management referred to this as 'value stream mapping', one of a number of continuous improvement activities.

The company was also developing a computerized system of just-in-time production control. In some production areas, more visible JIT techniques, such as kanban, had been introduced. These new methods provided a systemic interface between customer-order processes and engine assembly enabling tighter production planning and a reduction of stores, buffers and waiting time on the shop-floor. One senior manager explained:

> We have seen an increase in efficiency, through the working methods, through the implementation of technology as well, through driving waste out, getting flow into the shops. And the measures we're really looking at now are on inventory and stock turn, how much inventory we've got lined up in the business. Are we satisfying the customer? What's our delivery performance like? So it's the measures of schedule adherence, are we achieving our costs? And within all that have we got the right levels of inventory? Rather than the older way of let's just put inventory into the business, just in case, and keep it high, keep the guys busy. (Interview, Operations Director, June 2001)

The reorganization of production into smaller, discrete units was aimed at providing a new infrastructure for controlling production costs. It also created greater transparency for identifying less profitable parts of the business, and indeed, for locating suitable units for outsourcing. As we saw in Chapter 3, these types of changes generated widespread feelings of job insecurity. Their impact on the organization of the labour process itself was less uniform. Although the production managers in all departments we visited adopted the discourse of teamworking, in fact, authentic cellular working was implemented only in those areas where work routines were more rhythmic and where production operations could more easily be divided up amongst small teams of workers. Just over 50 per cent of the shop-floor workforce was deployed in cellular production, the remainder worked in 'teams' that were really larger sections of sixty or seventy operators.

Prior to the reorganization, groups of skilled fitters could, in theory, be expected to work anywhere in the factory on a variety of engine building projects wherever their skills were required. Workers who were permanently resident in large, single function shops, such as

machinists, would tend to operate just a single machine but produce a wide variety of jobs for different engine projects. The new work organization, whether in cells or sections, made employees responsible for specific groups of tasks for specific projects whilst their line managers were accountable for unit output and cost control targets. Just as we saw at *Airframes*, it did not introduce greater skill flexibility, it merely reshaped the existing pattern of labour flexibility into a more 'cost-effective', more easily controlled and more intensive form. For example, workers in the production cells took on a narrower range of skilled tasks required for a single manufacturing process. Typical component production cells in the engine turbine unit, for instance, would comprise groups of grinding, milling and laser machines. Flexibility within the cells would entail, theoretically, job rotation around the three machine groups in accordance with just-in-time schedule requirements and the advice of cell 'coaches' (who in practice were little different to old-style foremen).

In some respects, the impact of these changes on the labour process and existing relations of control was modest. For the same reasons that we saw at *Airframes*, the traditions of craft autonomy and specialized knowledge in small-batch, complex production routines remained a resilient characteristic of shop-floor social relations. As one worker described, these relations were quite different to the close supervisory control associated with mass production systems:

> [The supervision] appreciate that we're all, mostly, skilled guys with experience and we can work unsupervised. You don't have to have somebody standing over you, watching you. We're very much left to our own devices as to how we do the job. (Interview, Engine Fitter, June 2001)

Nevertheless, many workers faced a potential loss of job control and skill recomposition as a result of the rationalization of labour deployment within the new sections and cells. Prior to these changes, a typical machinist might be working on bevel gears one week, gear cases the next, rotor blades the next. Cellular working involved a more intensive but narrow task flexibility as the same worker became responsible for completing different machining tasks on just one component, or one element of a component, week in week out. One typical view was:

> Since we've gone into the cell structure the work can be boring at times because you're doing the same repetitive job whereas before

> we had more variety. There's certain components that we used to do the whole job for, machine it, everything. But because you've got this cell up and running, which is set up to deal with that one job, that's been taken away from us. (Interview, Machinist, June 2001)

The substitution of job variety on single machines by multi-machine minding in cells also created tensions between workers who were willing to support the new management objectives and those who were more oppositional for job security reasons. Some of the younger, less experienced workers we interviewed tended to display more accommodating attitudes compared to colleagues with longer service records. The latter, who were well accustomed to the tradition of securing livelihoods by controlling jobs, tended to comply only under duress or when advised to by their shop stewards. One younger machinist commented:

> I find that, because I am expanding my skills under the new management at the moment, I suppose I am enjoying it more. The reason being that I am not stuck on one machine every day. Today, for instance, I've been operating four machines in the same day, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, which people who are stuck on one machine every day, frown upon. They say, I can't be handling other people's work, going round all these different machines every day. (Interview, Machinist, July 2001)

A more experienced worker:

> You must maintain the demarcation for self preservation. People are frightened to death that if they cross the trade barriers it will mean less people. It all goes back to security of employment. The problem is the type of multi-skilling that management are after. Ideally they want a small group of people with every skill they need … but if you do that then you are slicing the workforce down to the bare bones, you are putting yourself out of a job. (Interview, Engine Fitter, June 2001)

At both case studies, therefore, the overall impact of the core high performance practice of teamworking was not greater autonomy but an intensification of narrow skill flexibility within the confines of cells and other smaller units. Worker reactions to this tended to be negative although subjective experience, and indeed, practice, differed in accordance with their varied employment histories and 'collective memories'.

Continuous improvement

Management at both case study plants had introduced different continuous improvement initiatives during the two years prior to our research. Many of these bore close resemblance to standard practice in Japanese manufacturing plants. For example, under the campaign banner of ROCC (Raising Our Company's Competitiveness) the *Airframes* management had attempted to involve shop-floor workers in various schemes aimed at improving the flow of work through the production plants, reducing 'non-value added' activities and waste, and tidying up work areas. These were labelled with the now customary Japanese tidiness and waste reduction jargon such as compliance with the '5Ss' and '7Ws' (very few workers or managers we interviewed could define these!). At *JetCo*, exactly the same lean manufacturing outcomes were sought from an even greater array of initiatives. Amongst these were '5Ss' campaigns, 'Total Productive Maintenance', 'Operational Equipment Effectiveness', 'Value-Stream Mapping' and 'Kaizen Scrums' (the latter denoting the idea of getting heads together to 'brainstorm' continuous improvements). At the time of the research, the *JetCo* management was also devoting considerable resources to giving workers time-off to participate in a new '40-day engine' campaign. The objective here was to reduce the lead time for engine manufacture from a current span of between 70 and 200 days (depending on engine type) to just 40 days by systematically rationalizing the flow of work and non-production activity.

The questionnaire survey results showed that just over 50 per cent of the large samples of shop-floor workers at both case study plants had participated in at least one of these continuous improvement initiatives. Our interviews with these participants suggested that if the principles and practice of continuous improvement could somehow be abstracted from the demands of capital accumulation then many workers might enthusiastically embrace participation in discussions governing substantive engineering problems in production. As it was, the notion of 'pride in the job' constituted an important facet of their craft identities and most had no objections to the more mundane improvement activities, such as the '5S' clean up campaigns. However, it was once 'continuous improvement' metamorphosed into the more euphemistic 'business improvement' that worker participation became more problematic. 'Business improvement' came to be regarded by some workers at both plants as a cipher for management control, staff reduction and job insecurity. For example, one ROCC participant at

Airframes described how colleagues in his team had refused to give up information on how they carried out their work. They feared that management would use this to make job times more visible as a precursor to rationalizing team organization and labour (Interview notes, November 2001). Another worker at *JetCo* voiced similar concerns:

> Value stream mapping, kaizen scrums, 5S's and all that? Well the attitude of some people is, "I'll go on it, it's easier to go on it than say no." But once they've got them on it, of course they can drag it out of them, that's management philosophy isn't it? They're not daft, I'm not saying that management are daft, far from it. That's psychology. I mean, while I'm sat here with you Andy, you drag things out of me that I'd never thought of saying, I mean that's the profession isn't it? There are trained people in these teams to do that, to drag out stuff on improving productivity. There's been a marked improvement in productivity but we haven't gained anything from it, that's the only problem. (Interview, Sheetmetal Worker and Shop Steward, June 2001)

As a result, it was perhaps inevitable that continuous improvement and joint problem-solving did not generally result in the types of mutual gain outcomes suggested by the advocates of high performance work regimes. Instead, many workers came to display a cynicism, and on occasions anger, at management's insistence on subordinating real worker concerns about their jobs and working environment to narrower managerial prerogatives. There were a number of sub-patterns to this. Some workers raised the superfluous logic of continuous improvement in the context of, from their own perspective, parsimonious company attitudes to investment in capital equipment. For example:

> 5S's? How the hell! Part of the 5S things that some of our chaps got involved in was brushing up around their machines and taking a photograph before and after. Don't get me wrong, we realise when you are doing high precision work you need the environment to work, there is no point in doing it in a shit-hole. But at the same time, it gets to a point where it goes beyond a joke. If the company is serious about quality then forget the 5S's, start giving manufacturing some investment. If a company is really serious it wouldn't ask blokes to make components for 2001 jet engines on machines that go back to the 1940s and 1950s. (Interview, *JetCo* Mechanical Inspector, June 2001)

Others complained of a contradiction between the rhetoric and reality of employee participation. Although our management interviewees at both plants adopted much of the populist discourse of employee 'empowerment' and 'ownership', the common experience on the shop-floor fell far short of this. Many workers described situations involving a type of class snobbery and a refusal by managers and white collar engineers to entertain the idea that manual workers might be their equals in work-related discussions. For example:

> I've got no influence. They will do what they want to do … you might have a designer down here with a jig and tool designer and a couple other more suit bods. All there with their shirts and ties on. And you'd be asked for a bit of input on your job, because something's going wrong. So you suggest something, a solution. Then they'll weigh it up and say, 'oh no no no, you can't do that.' Then, three, four, five years later, all of a sudden look! The drawing's changed to how we asked it to be done. They didn't want to admit that a person doing the job was as good or better than them for getting it done. So we get no credit or recognition … they don't like your input to tell them how to do it. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, October 2001)

On the same themes of inequality and low trust, we uncovered many examples of management's condescending attitudes to subordinates that, in some respects, had the effect of reducing employee engagement with kaizen to the teacher-pupil relationship of the junior school. For example, on the main *Gannet* production line at *Airframes*, it was hoped that workers would come to regard the idea of 'McDonaldization' at work as both authentic and literal. The project's operations director described to us how, following the advice of a professional management consultant, teams of production workers would be taken for an educational visit to a McDonalds fast food restaurant across the road from the factory gates. In return for a bulk purchase of Big Mac and chips, workers would go behind the counter for half an hour to watch the just-in-time production system in operation, no doubt in wonderment (Interview notes, October 2001). Similarly at *JetCo*, many workers described their demeaning participation in 40-day engine exercises that required them to do little more than, 'put stickle bricks together like a bunch of school kids' as one worker explained. Another described a typical kaizen team-building event:

> Yes, some of the blokes were totally cheesed off with this kaizen when they were stuck outside throwing a ball to each other. The idea is teamwork and they had them all in a circle and they were throwing a ball to each other and all this sort of thing, to show them if they done it a certain way, if they done it right, it is quicker. The blokes thought it was a load of bleeding rubbish. Everyone else around the site was just cracking up at it really. A load of blokes stood there throwing balls at each other. (Interview, Engine Fitter, July 2001)

Overall then, our examination of continuous improvement found plenty of evidence of multiple practice within the two case study plants but little indication of enhanced worker discretion and influence. Employee responses ranged from lukewarm support for the more mundane activities to outright hostility to management agendas that either patronized or ignored independent worker interests.

The quality of working life on the shop-floor

The adjustments to the labour process described in this chapter were partly a function of broader organizational change within the two case study firms. That is to say, although teamworking and continuous improvement were significant components of the shift towards high performance management, equally important were the effects of business unit decentralization and the new financial control measures that accompanied this, plus of course, labour rationalization. Our questionnaire survey and worker interviews took cognizance of this by posing general questions concerning changes to the quality of working life (QWL) on the shop-floor in the context of multi-faceted organizational restructuring.

National surveys of employee experience have generated consistent evidence that effort rates have been steadily increasing in the UK (Burchell, 2002; Cully et al., 1999; Gallie et al., 1998; Green, 2001). Notwithstanding the multiple pressures behind this, Burchell's survey found that from the employees' viewpoint, the organizational downsizing that follows increased firm competition and shareholder influence has led to fewer workers having to complete the same quantity of work (2002: 76). Given the pattern of labour rationalization at the two aerospace firms (especially *JetCo*) and the attempts to reconfigure work organization in order to secure a more intensive task

flexibility, we would expect to see some indication of work intensification on the shop-floor.

The employee survey questionnaire operationalized both extensive and intensive work effort. Extensive effort relates to the quantity of hours worked whilst intensive effort refers to the intensity of work during the typical working day (Green, 2001). We measured extensive effort by establishing patterns of average working hours and by asking employees whether the number of hours they were expected to work had changed. We measured intensive effort by asking three questions concerning changes in the amount of work to be completed, the degree of flexibility involved, and the responsibility involved in jobs over the previous three year period. We also asked employees whether they had sufficient time to complete their work.

At both plants, the contractual working week for shop-floor workers stood at 37 hours. At the time of the research the mean hours worked at *Airframes* was 42.04 and 41.42 at *JetCo*. However, some worked considerably more than this. At *Airframes*, 53 per cent worked on average between 41 and 48 hours per week and five per cent between 49 and 61 hours. At *JetCo*, the corresponding figures were 39 per cent and eight per cent. Many therefore worked an extended day although as Table 4.1 shows, these hours had mostly remained unchanged over the previous three years. There was a more obvious pattern of intensification of effort. With some variation between the two plants significant proportions of workers reported that the amount of work they were expected to complete each week had increased and that the responsibility involved in their job had also increased. In addition, 82 per cent of *JetCo* workers and 74 per cent of *Airframes* workers felt that the degree of flexibility required in their jobs had risen, a reflection of the more intense task flexibility described in the previous section. Some workers also indicated that their skill levels had increased although for many of our interviewees this was another manifestation of task flexibility rather than upskilling. Overall, job loss seemed to be driving labour harder, especially at *JetCo*.

A good number of worker interviewees commented on these trends. Some felt that insufficient staffing levels within the production cells meant that workloads could be excessive whilst cell members were increasingly expected to cover for absent colleagues. The more common (and related) observation was that individuals were coming under intense pressure because site-wide labour rationalization had coincided with management demands for greater factory output. For example:

> Yes, definitely there's pressure on you to get the job done. That's here, and industry generally really since the 1980s, since Thatcher. I think they have trimmed to the bone and they're expecting more out of the people they've got working within the factory. Obviously its all about counting costs and things like that, there definitely is since the 1980s a lot more pressure on individuals here. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

Another worker commented on how these pressures affect older workers:

> The company's main attitude is you put your life on hold for *JetCo*. As I said earlier on I come to work because I have to live, I don't live for the job, so my spare time is important to me. I cannot put the hours in that I used to do in my 20s. I used to do a day's shift, I used to do a night shift and I used to play in groups and bands on weekends.

Table 4.1 Manual Employees' Assessment of Change in Job Requirements and Work Intensity Compared to Three Years Ago (*Airframes*, n = 336; *JetCo*, n = 251)

	Increased (%)	Decreased (%)	Stayed the same (%)
Change in the number of hours I am expected to work each week*			
Airframes Manual Employees	12	15	73
JetCo Manual Employees	18	10	72
Change in the amount of work I am expected to complete each week*			
Airframes Manual Employees	49	4	47
JetCo Manual Employees	58	4	48
Change in the degree of flexibility required in my work			
Airframes Manual Employees	74	1	25
JetCo Manual Employees	82	1	17
Change in the responsibility involved in my job*			
Airframes Manual Employees	68	3	29
JetCo Manual Employees	53	6	41
Change in the skill level required for my job			
Airframes Manual Employees	49	5	46
JetCo Manual Employees	43	7	50

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level.

> And I used to do overtime as well. I was burning the candle at both ends, in the middle, several times and I used to come back for more! But as I have got older I have found I can't do it, but I also find my tolerance level is lower. And you find you are trying to do many jobs but the company keeps putting a set of goal posts up, and you are trying to achieve their goal posts and then the bastards come and move it. They move them a bit further and you say, hang on a minute we haven't got to the first set yet. (Interview, *JetCo* Engine Inspector, June 2001)

The last comment highlights a second QWL theme. Researchers have found evidence of a strong correlation between effort intensification and workplace stress. Different forms of work overload are likely to have a deleterious impact on employees' physical and psychological well-being (Cooper et al., 2001; Green, 2001; Macdonald, 2003a and 2003b; Wichert, 2002). Table 4.2 shows that manual workers at both aerospace plants did exhibit some stress symptoms. One in five workers indicated that they worry a lot about work outside working hours whilst over 60 per cent reported feeling very tired at the end of the work day. Moreover, around one third of workers indicated that they never seem to have enough time to complete their jobs. This is a relatively high proportion given that problems concerning the pace of work are normally associated with the mass production industries rather than the slow, small-batch manufacturing that characterizes the

Table 4.2 Manual Employees' Experience of Workplace Stress (*Airframes*, n = 336; *JetCo*, n = 251)

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
I worry a lot about my work outside working hours					
Airframes Manual Employees	4	16	47	28	5
JetCo Manual Employees	3	16	42	34	5
I feel very tired at the end of a work day					
Airframes Manual Employees	12	50	29	3	6
JetCo Manual Employees	11	50	29	5	5
I never seem to have enough time to get my job done					
Airframes Manual Employees	3	26	59	5	7
JetCo Manual Employees	6	27	58	5	4

aerospace industry. Using Spearman's rho correlation tests we also found that those workers who worried about work outside of working hours were more likely to report increases in working hours, workloads and not having enough time to complete jobs. Similarly, workers who felt tired at the end of the workday were more likely to report not having enough time along with increases in hours, workloads and work responsibilities.

A further dimension of employee welfare and QWL is the relationship between job insecurity and stress. A number of researchers have shown that the uncertainty, fear and tension that accompany both downsizing and more prolonged job insecurity can have a detrimental impact upon employees' psychological well-being (for example, Murphy and Pepper, 2003; Ferrie, 2003; Wichert, 2002). Some of our questionnaire data did support this relationship. For example, workers who reported feeling tired at the end of the work day were more likely to be those who also reported feeling insecure in their jobs (Table 4.3). The most pronounced association, however, was between job insecurity and employees' sense of control at work. Loss of, or insufficient, control is one of the key determinants of stress (Peterson, 2003; Macdonald, 2003b) whilst insecure employment can be a factor that reduces job control (Ferrie, 2003). Table 4.3 shows that those manual workers at both plants who felt insecure in their jobs (and these were the majority) were far more likely to report less control over work decisions and less satisfaction with the amount of influence they were able to exert over their jobs.

We carried out further explorations of this by creating a five-item scale of job discretion and control. Employees were asked how much influence they had both in deciding *what* tasks they completed and *how* they carried tasks out. They were also asked how much influence their supervisors had in deciding both of these and to what extent written task specifications influenced how they carried out their work. Responses to the first two questions on personal control were coded as three (a lot), two (some), one (a little) and zero (none). The same coding, in reverse order, was used for the final three questions on supervisory and task specification control. This group of questions had an internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.6054. Mean scores of the summative scale are presented in Table 4.4.

Two important points emerge from this. The first is that despite the egalitarian, 'inclusive' rhetoric of the high performance work regime and its associated discourse of partnership, employees' experience of discretion and control was distributed unequally in accordance with

Table 4.3 Manual Employees' Experience of Workplace Stress, by Job Security (n = 587)

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
I feel very tired at the end of a work day*					
Employees who feel secure	14	39	36	6	6
Employees who feel insecure	10	55	27	4	4
My job allows me to take part in making decisions that affect my work*					
Employees who feel secure	13	61	22	0	4
Employees who feel insecure	2	13	45	17	3

	Very satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)	Undecided (%)
How satisfied are you with the amount of influence you have over your job*					
Employees who feel secure	10	74	12	2	2
Employees who feel insecure	2	44	34	13	7

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

Table 4.4 Employee Discretion and Control, by Occupational Group and Job Security (n = 1482)

	Mean scores
Managers & Supervisors*	9.46
Non-Manual Employees	8.15
Manual Employees	6.74
Manual Employees who feel secure**	7.56
Manual Employees who feel insecure	6.49

* Kruskal-Wallis test found significant differences between the three occupational groups, p = 0.001.
** Mann-Whitney 2-tailed tests found significant differences on these scores between manual employees who felt secure and those who felt insecure, p = 0.001.

social class. As we explained in the previous section, the predominantly skilled shop-floor workforce was not subject to the close supervisory control normally associated with mass production or the assembly line. Nevertheless, many of these workers enjoyed significantly less job discretion and control than other employees in the non-manual and managerial hierarchy. The second point is that the data provide additional evidence that manual workers' job insecurity (which in the manufacturing sector is fast becoming a defining feature of the high performance work regime) seems indelibly linked to diminished job control.

Labour control and resistance

As we have seen, the pattern of organizational restructuring and job reform had a mostly negative impact upon the QWL of both sets of manual workers. It would be wrong to assume, however, that all of these workers were mere passive recipients of these outcomes. For example, our analysis of worker responses to the companies' different continuous improvement campaigns highlighted how widespread cynicism, sometimes in the form of jokes, at other times more belligerent, can constitute a type of collective resistance, albeit a weak one (Graham, 1993). More powerful forms of organized counter-mobilization were also present although these were mainly based at the *JetCo* factory. We complete this chapter by examining this resistance, looking at first, the factors that tended to militate against it at *Airframes* and second, the successful acts of mobilization at *JetCo*.

Airframes: Militarization of labour control

It would be wrong to suggest that resistance and struggle were absent from the *Airframes* shop-floor. During our discussions with different shop stewards and rank-and-file members, we found evidence that local collective controls still placed constraints against the free exercise of supervisory prerogatives. For instance, transparency and equal treatment in the distribution of overtime and shiftworking remained two key ethical principles for the manual workforce. Most shop stewards were effective monitors of local supervisory practice and ensured that if any one individual was offered the additional pay advantages of a few extra hours or shifts then all members of the section or workshop had to be offered the same. If this was not forthcoming then all workers would withdraw co-operation. One shop steward commented:

> If you've been offered Saturday morning and you'd love the overtime, then you won't be doing it unless I've been asked, that's quite clearly so … If they offer some people Saturday morning overtime but not others then I will go in the bosses' office and say, 'well you know if you've offered it to one man then it should be offered to everyone.' And they will no doubt say, 'no we don't recognize that, sod off.' But then an hour later they will go out on the shop floor and find that everybody's happily busy because they're mowing the lawn Saturday morning, they've got no-one who's prepared to do their overtime. That sort of thing can happen a lot. (Interview, Shop Steward, November 2001).

Nevertheless, the volume of shop-floor resistance and conflict seemed to be much lower compared to *JetCo*. It would be easy to ascribe this to the small town setting of the *Airframes* plant and the potentially acquiescent work attitudes that are often associated with non-industrial locales. Whilst there could be an element of truth in this such an account would have difficulty explaining the similarity in historical patterns of worker militancy at the two plants. However, two factors did stand out. The first was the orientation to management of the manual union leadership within the *Airframes* plant. As we describe in Chapter 6, the manual union convenor proactively supported partnership-based workplace relations and this did have an impact on the readiness of the rank and file to mobilize against some of the high performance management initiatives. The second was the unusual nature of labour control. We have already described how management attempted to create new fault lines on the shop-floor by actively recruiting ex-military labour, a new type of 'team player' whose loyalty was more likely to reside with the supervisor than the shop steward or workmate. This process began with the recruitment of personnel for the 'greenfield' *Wasp* production area but by the time of the research a good number of new employees with recent armed services backgrounds were also working on the longer established production lines. These workers tended to ignore the instructions of shop stewards by, for example, breaking extant custom and practice governing skill demarcation, or agreeing to supervisory requests to work extra hours and shifts. This caused a good deal of resentment on the shop-floor. For example, one worker on the *Gannet* line complained:

> Well they work outside the shift system and work outside the overtime agreements. Unless you've got a five-hour overtime slot offered

> to everybody and it really is for everybody then we put a ban on overtime. But the ex-military lot tend to sneak in and do bloody extra work and undermine things for all of us. They're not unionists that's the problem. They only join the union because they've got to. (Interview, Aircraft Fitter, October 2001)

This division and conflict could be cynically manipulated by production managers to weaken any oppositional groups in their areas. One worker described how in some areas an atmosphere of fear and suspicion had developed since many of his peers believed that the ex-military employees had acted as management spies in union mass meetings and informal discussions on the shop-floor. Another felt that these workers enjoyed discriminatory treatment when it came to career advancement:

> I think if you look at the factory overall, they've become like freemasons … It's like a buddy system. See a job that comes up, it seems to be a forces guy who gets it. We have noticed that. They definitely do look after each other, it's a mutual help group. And it's caused resentment in the rest of us. (Interview, Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

Whether or not these concerns were based on hard evidence, the fact remains that management's strategic insertion of a new type of malleable worker into a traditional environment of craft-based job control engendered shop-floor divisions and exacerbated feelings of insecurity. These conditions, coupled with a rank and file leadership that preferred partnership to conflict, tended to undermine the necessary worker confidence that is a prerequisite of effective collective resistance.

JetCo: Instances of counter-mobilization

The politics of production on the *JetCo* shop-floor were marked by continual worker contestation of company attempts to fragment work organization and group solidarities. The leading stewards at the plant adopted a hostile attitude to partnership, arguing that the protection of worker interests in capitalist firms will always require robust, independent trade union organization. The collective base upon which this form of unionism depended came under constant threat from the organizational imperatives of decentralization. For example, every one of the senior managers we interviewed spoke at some length of their desire to synchronize business unit employment costs with market

conditions by devolving union negotiations to the level of the unit. The shop-floor unions rejected this and insisted upon maintaining single site negotiations to secure equal employment rights and conditions for all members irrespective of their business unit attachment. This opposition was given organizational form by a strategic shift in member-activist relations. The tradition of shop steward accountability to the rank and file became subordinate to the gaze of a central, cross-business unit executive of senior stewards who monitored any local deviation from union agreements (see Danford et al., 2002b).

Our interviews with cell managers and other shop-floor supervisors highlighted how, notwithstanding the widespread assumption that union control at the point of production is a relic of past British industrial relations, collective worker organization and a culture of opposition maintained significant constraints over their perceived 'right to manage'. Although the incidence of strikes and other official industrial action had declined, workers were still able to mount effective unofficial actions, such as overtime bans and go-slows, to defend their own independent sense of order and dignity at work. Supervisors, shop stewards and members provided different accounts of successful worker opposition to such issues as disciplinary actions, unequal overtime distribution, labour flexibility, unpopular continuous improvement activity, and in one case, an attempt to transfer work to another *JetCo* plant. One cell manager reflected wistfully on the collective constraint – or culture of opposition – that these forms of action embodied:

> If I talk to the workforce or you talk to the workforce as individuals, they say wonderful things and you think great you can do something here with these people. But then suddenly, when they get together collectively, suddenly the collective view is quite different from the individual view … I was looking out on the shop floor yesterday and watched one of our new recruits. He was quite a rarity, only 20 years old, and I was thinking that he could potentially be holding many fresh ideas and ways of thinking about problems. But he is going to come under tremendous pressure to conform. The men are set in their ways, there's tremendous trade union pressure to conform and I just knew that before too long this young lad would also be conditioned into conforming. If he was innovative and wanted to try new ideas then he would be shunned, ignored, his life would be made hell on the shop floor. (Interview, Cell Manager, June 2001).

The nature and form of this worker opposition sometimes varied in accordance with the different individuals involved and issues at stake. We were able to examine this in greater detail in one of the more militant areas of the plant where we gained interview access to a larger number of supervisors and shop stewards as well as manual workers. This area was engine test, a strategically important unit since it covered the final stage of engine manufacture and any dispute there would cause an immediate halt to factory gate output.

Prior to a reorganization in 1995, the engine test area employed around 500 workers mainly in manual fitting trades and non-manual test and evaluation work. These workers were deployed in demarcated functional groups, such as test engineering, maintenance, instrument fitting and engine fitting. The reorganization involved a redundancy of 250 jobs. Remaining workers were redeployed into five main cells each of which were further sub-divided into four or five teams. A typical team would comprise test fitters, maintenance fitters, electricians, tinsmiths, and coppersmiths. Management's objective was to create a more 'efficient' test unit through lean techniques. That is, these different skilled workers were expected to maintain existing output levels by adopting multi-skilling, covering for each other when requested by the team managers. The engine test shop stewards were unable to halt the job losses but the experience of dealing with the distress and victimization associated with compulsory redundancies led them into drawing a line in the sand when it came to further labour flexibility. In the interests of job stability, they developed a strategy of contestation of every management demand for multi-skilling within the cells. Their eventual success in limiting management's room for manoeuvre, helped by their members' relatively powerful position in the engine production cycle, created the paradox of a reduction of skill and task flexibility. The act of confining previously large groups of skilled workers into small, discrete cell units generated new demarcations both within and between cells. As the senior steward observed:

> In theory it [teamworking] could have broken up the members, absolutely. But in practice we undermined it from day one. We refused to accept anything involving skill movement within the cells and only limited movement between the cells. It threw us more demarcation lines than ever before, it was almost like trade union utopia for us.
>
> … So although there is an element of mobility there is no flexibility. For instance, Tony here is a fitter tester and a bloody good one

> by the way, John is a maintenance fitter, fairly shoddy! For a lot of our engine test work you always need a second pair of hands. What the employer complains about is that Tony won't do any aspect of John's job and vice versa. And what the employer always wants is a cross-trade second pair of hands. 'You are all skilled men, if we're short of labour then we recognize you can't be the lead figure but you have the skill to be second pair of hands.' Well they have not got a second pair of hands here. The members want secure jobs. So if two people are needed it will be two maintenance fitters, or it is two inspectors, or it is two fitter testers, or it is two service fitters. (Interview, Engine Test Senior Steward, July 2001)

Although the different teamworkers we interviewed had no objection to flexible working *per se*, it was because this was being proposed in an environment of continual job insecurity that they strongly endorsed the policy of their union. Multi-skilling was perceived as an inevitable path to job loss rather than job enrichment. And despite this insecurity, the union was highly effective in maintaining the tradition of job control. It did so by adopting a form of participative collective organization that forced management to seek permission for workplace change rather than impose it on the workforce. The senior steward described this process:

> We have managed to keep hold of the shop stewards' organization as the main body for communications in this plant. We hold sectional meetings to make decisions so everyone's involved and then if it goes beyond the section we have mass meetings throughout whenever the employer wants something. So we can sit in front of the employer and say, 'we are not in a position of authority to agree to that demand until we go back and discuss this with our members.' And they bloody hate it because a mass meeting is a strike without a ballot … and we constantly, continually have meetings. And at the meetings we always bring in the *politics* of any managerial change, of why they want this change. It is not simply because of the 'business need' it is about this management ideology that underpins it. (Interview, Engine Test Senior Steward, July 2001)

The engine test supervisors spoke at length of their frustrations over the limits placed by the union on their ability to exploit cells to the full or to synchronize labour utilization with the hours and shifts required by production scheduling. For instance, one somewhat

abashed cell leader described the repercussion of his attempt to coax workers into giving up their bank holiday weekend without first going through the union channel:

> When you work with staff as individuals you have more flexibility as a manager to get things done because when you handle things at an individual level there's a lot less union involvement. And I've always been able to do something to get around bank holidays – a bit of time off in lieu or something. I tried to do that recently with the cell. Then, because I did not involve the works unions, after about two hours of informally sounding out the guys, I was hauled into my boss's boss's office for a good kicking. And then the unions were called in and I was given a bit of a dressing down in front of the stewards for having "gone outside my authority" so to speak. (Interview, Cell Leader, June 2001)

The sense of union control in this engine test area was quite palpable. In this respect it stood out from the rest of the *JetCo* plant in terms of its more militant shop steward organization and adroit exploitation of a powerful bargaining position. But it also serves as a conspicuous example of a broader pattern of shop-floor struggle in the context of a deterioration of QWL, a deterioration that is inherent to the demands of capital accumulation in the high performance work regime.

Conclusion

On paper, the two case study plants provided propitious conditions for the emergence of new workplace relations based on more systematic employee participation in job design. The traditions of labour control had always involved a good degree of 'responsible autonomy' on the shop-floor (Friedman, 1977). The combination of complex and highly skilled manufacturing work with small-batch production meant that the typical craft worker was used to relatively relaxed forms of supervisory control. A considerable element of trust was therefore integral to management-employee relations. The introduction of HPWS in such an environment, involving managerial decentralization, teamworking and multifarious problem-solving techniques, might be expected to foster employee autonomy and mobilize worker discretion for the benefit of the organization and workforce alike. This would be the scenario expected by those writers who adopt a contingency approach to analyzing organizational change; a pattern of mutual gain outcomes.

The reality, however, was quite different. Although there were variations in degree, the underlying pattern was one of diminished employee autonomy (rather than enhanced discretion), more intense task flexibility (rather than job enrichment) and feelings that continuous improvement campaigns ignored independent worker agendas for improving the quality of working life.

The reasons for this were structural and linked to underlying political economy. If we consider first the impact of teamworking, it became clear that its introduction into a high skill setting acted to demarcate potentially polyvalent craft workers into the confines of production cells responsible for a relatively narrow range of tasks. This was not an unintended outcome. The restrictions on autonomy and broad skill utilization were a logical consequence of the system of financial control that provided the dynamic of organizational change. As Ackroyd and Procter (1998) argue (see also Harley, 2001), teams are usually managerially driven and designed to improve performance by allowing small unit transparency in the calculation of marginal costs and benefits. In this context it is almost inevitable that the supervisors of labour, subject to increasing accountability, will be more concerned with controlling staff costs and reasserting their prerogatives than 'empowering' their subordinates. Similarly, although employee experiences of participation in the more mundane continuous improvement campaigns were not negative (or particularly enthusiastic) many workers became highly critical of management's determination to keep these campaigns firmly within the narrow parameters of improving efficiency and quality. That is, when employee participants attempted to interpose their own agendas, based on improving working conditions, or if they challenged the tenets of the various management initiatives then they were confronted by a wall of patronage, dismissal and resistance. Improving performance rather than QWL became the core concern of 'problem-solving'.

Our QWL data for production workers at both plants showed that many had been subject to patterns of effort intensification and workplace stress. This cannot be attributed to any particular HPWS technique but instead to the broad raft of restructuring measures which inevitably included some form of downsizing and consequent job insecurity. However, such degradation of employment conditions did not go unchallenged by organized labour. It is a measure of the essentially managerialist nature of the mainstream accounts of HPWS that labour's position in the high performance work equation is reduced to one of recipient of participative measures and other incentives and

provider of greater discretionary effort (for example, Appelbaum et al., 2000; Guest et al., 2003; Wood, 1999). The problem of worker resistance just does not feature in this objectified treatment of acquiescent labour. Our case studies provide an alternative picture. At both plants, the introduction of HPWS created material conditions for employee discontent and potential counter-mobilization. In the case of *Airframes*, the prospects for effective resistance were reduced, though not completely suppressed. Incidents of contestation and conflict tended to be more fragmentary due, *inter alia*, to an accommodationist union leadership and a management control strategy based partly on engendering schisms on the shop-floor by externally recruiting a distinctive form of malleable labour. At *JetCo*, a more powerful and independent rank and file union organization had greater success in constraining supervisory prerogatives and maintaining a form of job control. In some areas of the plant the collective defence of a set of ethical practices and norms marked out an alternative 'employee autonomy' very different to the superficial empowerment of high performance management.

5

High Performance Work Systems and the Technical Worker

Technical workers are one of the largest occupational groups in Britain's manufacturing sector and the largest in aerospace itself. Their role of indirectly productive workers within 'mental' labour (Smith, 1987) or 'productive intellectual labour' (Armstrong, 1987) makes them as indispensable to production and the generation of profit as productive manual workers on the shop-floor. The labour embodied in a finished aircraft or aero-engine includes the work of large numbers of scientists, design engineers, technologists, stress engineers, draughtsmen and women, estimators, production engineers, quality engineers, planners and progress chasers, plus support roles contained in project engineering, procurement, marketing, accounting, sales and customer support. It is curious, therefore, that the experience of technical workers is rarely included in recent accounts of organizational restructuring or of the impact of high performance work techniques in manufacturing (McGovern, 1996 and 1998 provides one of the few exceptions).

The role of technical workers in British capitalist development, their labour process and class location have, however, been subject to more systematic investigation. The method of organizing technical work in Britain has been categorized as a form of 'craft organization' (Meiksins and Smith, 1993). This places most technical work at the tip of a hierarchy of craft labour suggesting a close proximity between the skills and interests of skilled manual workers and technical workers. Historically, this is based on an extension of autonomous skilled work on the shop-floor, the continued synthesis of the conception and execution of work in some industries, and the manner in which traditional engineering apprenticeships allowed individuals to acquire both manual and non-manual skills within the same firm (Meiksins and

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

Smith, 1993; Smith and Whalley, 1996). Nearly two decades ago, Smith (1987) investigated this craft tradition at a large aerospace plant in Bristol. He found that although a joint interest in craft, skill and product did form the basis for a 'qualitative form of association' between technical and manual workers, whilst a growing bureaucratization in the industry contributed to a distancing between technical workers and managers, this pattern of social relations was weakened by the increasing salience of graduate engineers in the organization of the 'mental' labour process. The latter group came to their roles through the acquisition of engineering credentials rather than previous craft experience and many became demarcated from the craft tradition. This separation was on the basis of degree qualification, the use of new technology and in some respects a closer affinity to management in terms of specialist knowledge, interests and class location. Lovering (1991) provided additional evidence of this in a national survey of engineers and scientists employed in the UK's defence industry. Unlike the production to design career trajectory of the traditional technical worker the typical career pattern of the newly graduated engineer was marked by design specialization, promotion via moving to new employers, and an eventual choice, often just ten years later, between a management role with generic skills or a highly specialized engineering role.

In the context of the ever increasing proportion of degree-qualified employees in the aerospace sector (currently more than a third – Thompson, 2002), this analysis suggests that technical workers cannot be treated as a single coherent entity. The 'craft organization' model has become antiquated in British engineering (Meiksins and Smith, 1993) and new divisions have emerged between technical and manual workers based on a 'bifurcation' of the labour process and 'knowledge' barriers to class unity (Smith, 1987: 302). These in turn have been created by fractures within technical labour itself, most obviously between graduate engineers and the more traditional craft-based technical worker. The first focal point of this chapter, therefore, is to consider whether the introduction of HPWS has a differential impact on the labour process and quality of working life of these sub-groups of technical workers (which might lead to a deepening of class divisions), or, whether there is an opposite tendency towards a more unitary experience of change.

A second related theme concerns the extent to which employee autonomy has changed. Greater operational autonomy in the form of control over a body of specialized knowledge, relatively low levels of

direct supervision and a good degree of discretion on how to complete work tasks is most commonly found towards the upper levels of the occupational hierarchy (Hodson, 2001; McGovern, 1998; Randle, 1996). The level of autonomy enjoyed by technical workers is likely, therefore, to be relatively high although this may be contingent upon specific organizational context. For example, Whalley (1986) argued that engineers working in more complex small batch production environments will often experience a greater degree of skill utilization and discretion compared to those working in standardized mass production settings. Smith's (1987) evaluation of technical work in the aircraft industry confirmed this. The labour process of many technical staff in his study was characterized by unobtrusive supervision, more relaxed use of time and greater control over job content where, 'knowledge of a specific job usually resided in the head of the particular draughtsman or planner, and not the manager or section leader' (1987: 127). In a more recent study of technical labour in a small electronics firm, Darr (2000) found that different sub-groups of engineers may use their own competing interpretive frameworks to carve out a position of 'real engineers' involving claims over the right to monopolize sets of skilled tasks. The key point here is that in some contexts technical workers may embark upon professionalization projects aiming to enhance their autonomy and control via exclusive claims to a jurisdiction over specialized knowledge.

In capitalist firms, however, there are constraints against excessive 'responsible autonomy' despite the indeterminacy of technical work and the problems of management control. As Meiksins and Smith (1993: 140) have observed, 'for technical workers, whose work placed them in the heart of the capitalist enterprise, there is no shelter from capitalist dynamics', meaning that claims to professionalization and exclusive jurisdiction may be opposed by employers on the grounds that the new profession is likely to become 'extremely expensive, scarce, and difficult to control.' Moreover, as Armstrong (1987) argues, technical labour constitutes productive intellectual labour which is indispensable to production and the creation of surplus value. Since the latter is the lifeblood of capitalist accumulation, and a process that cannot be left to chance, it remains the duty of senior management to control both manual *and* intellectual productive labour.

Technical workers cannot escape this. Thus, although they are unlikely to be subject to the same degree of control as their productive labour counterparts on the shop-floor their relative autonomy will still be subject to considerable constraint. Quite often this will take the

form of ideological control by employers. For example, technical workers can be subject to 'management by expectation' requiring the maintenance of professional standards and performance (McGovern, 1998). They will almost certainly be expected to understand that the idea of 'autonomy' in capitalist firms carries with it a responsibility to comply with the commercial goals of the organization (Randle, 1996).

The preceding chapters have highlighted how the introduction of high performance work regimes catalyzed widespread job instability and resentment in shop-floor and office areas. However, one of the more progressive principles of these regimes, and one to be weighed against other negative outcomes, is the supposed expansion of employee autonomy and discretion via changes to the labour process. One might also expect this more positive change to take root among work groups who have traditionally enjoyed environments of trust and responsible autonomy. In other words, trust can build upon trust. The second focal point of this chapter, therefore, is to investigate the extent to which HPWS really can shift the boundaries of technical workers' autonomy (and in what direction) within the context of the dynamics of capital accumulation.

High performance work organization and social relations in technical work

Compared to their shop-floor colleagues the technical workers at both case studies did enjoy relatively higher job autonomy. This was operationalized in terms of personal influence over decisions related to work tasks balanced against supervisory influence and the impact of task specifications. However, this did not mean to say that autonomy always equated with satisfaction with job content. For example, notwithstanding the claims of some writers that technical workers at the upper end of the occupational scale often seek greater individual control via knowledge specialization (Hodson, 2001; Darr, 2000), a good number of the graduates we interviewed expressed some dissatisfaction with both the demands and career implications of this. These workers preferred to accumulate a broader portfolio of skills and responsibilities. For some, especially younger graduates, this was because specialization was regarded as a barrier to career progression. One young female graduate at *Airframes* felt that:

> ... in a specialist core role it's very difficult to move, it really is difficult. Because you get categorized as well and stereotyped that,

> 'you're a specialist, obviously you don't have any other skills.' So it's really difficult to get other work. I think what you need are rounded engineers who can be engineers but also can handle their own projects and other tasks. You do need multi-skilled engineers, instead of making them so specialist that they actually can't move. (Interview, Aeronautics Engineer, November 2001)

Smith's (1987) case study of technical work in the aerospace industry described engineers' creeping sense of anonymity and alienation that resulted from capital concentration and the bureaucratization of management. This estrangement was a function of the growth in the complexity of firms, the distancing of management and the increasing constraints of budgetary control. As a result, one of Smith's interviewees adopted the familiar refrain of feeling like a 'cog in the wheel' (1987: 230). It is interesting that some of our interviewees used the same phrase in describing their work, partly for similar structural reasons but also in response to the increasing specialization in the division of engineering labour. For instance, one *JetCo* graduate engineer of fifteen years experience in different firms compared his previous work in a smaller engineering firm with the rationalization of design processes in the aerospace industry:

> In my previous job I was involved at a very early stage and because there were very few engineers we tended to be involved much later on as well, you were used in a much wider breadth of the process from initial contact with the customer to the final dispatch of the part to the customer. So you tended to be involved all the way along. Whereas here you are a relatively small cog in a big machine. You tend to do a very small job as part of a huge collective effort. You often find you're just one link in the chain and the other links are rather anonymous to you. (Interview, Mechanical Engineer, June 2001).

The same engineer described in more detail how this rationalization was based on the principle of standardization, risk aversion and slow incremental improvement to existing designs. Such a system placed significant constraints on engineers' real autonomy and creativity, no doubt, partly for reasons of product safety but also in the interests of management control and organizational efficiency:

> The way I worked at my previous firm was I would design the critical details and then I would hand it over to a draughtsman who would design the rest of the product according to standard rules. So if something contained a critical feature I would specify it and calculate what was required and what would meet the customer requirements and then the rest of it was done by designers. At *JetCo* we do it the other way around, designers design the engine according to rules of scaling-up of existing designs so the whole thing evolves as a kind of a stretched or shrunk photocopy of previous designs. And then they hand that to the stress engineers who effectively rubber stamp it and say, yes, this will work …
>
> So there's very little creativity, very little. It's all done by rule of thumb, all done in a proforma way, all done in a tick-box way … you can almost say that there is an active policy of discouraging creativity in inventions. If you are told repeatedly to do things in a repeatable way, to repeatable processes, using standard methods and standard materials then there's very little room to move, especially when you're only influencing a very small part of the product.

These initial observations highlight how, within the context of the dynamics of capitalist firms, assumptions of widespread trust, discretion and 'professional autonomy' in technical workers' labour processes can be problematic (McGovern, 1996; Randle, 1996). This section now explores contrasts within this more troubled employee experience by presenting the case studies in turn.

The case of *Airframes*

Although nearly 80 per cent of *Airframes*' technical workers indicated in the questionnaire survey that they worked in teams, for many, it was the broader organizational framework of staff deployment rather than teamworking itself that had the greatest impact upon the labour process. Some recent studies of teamworking among technical workers have suggested that this form of work organization may have little impact upon organizational performance or labour productivity (Batt, 2001; Lloyd and Newell, 2000). Although some of the reasons for this will be contingent upon specific organizational context, a more general factor may well be that the conversion of traditional sections of workers into teams is often merely nominal since the specialization of technical work creates significant organizational barriers to the principle of multi-skilling within small groups.

However, the new matrix-based framework (described briefly in Chapter 3) did have an effect. The matrix framework comprised different directorates that each managed a generic aircraft type into which were fed staff from additional directorates each responsible for a core engineering process. This facilitated the flexible deployment of non-manual labour beyond the traditional confines of a single project. Technical workers became subject to continual deployment *across* teams rather than *within* them whilst their specialization on a small part for a single project was replaced by specialization on the same part for multiple projects. This change was aimed at securing cost controls and time efficiencies within the design process and it resulted in an enlargement of employees' responsibilities and workloads (a pattern that is confirmed by the questionnaire data presented in the next section). One principal design engineer whose role was to measure and monitor the mass properties of aircraft (that is, their cumulative weight as the design progresses) expressed the impact of such changes on his work routines as follows:

> In years gone by you would have part of an aircraft as opposed to a whole aircraft to look after. Currently I think I've got three! So then again it's just more demands on time and the management of doing what you're doing. I mean I find that more and more of my effort is spent prioritising what I've got to do next rather than actually getting on and finishing it. You're fire fighting all the time, you're just doing the bit that needs to be done to get over the next ten minutes and then you start again and it's getting more intense all the time. (Interview, November 2001).

This form of project flexibility allowed a significant rationalization of technical labour in that the existing pool of labour was spread more thinly across the different design and production support programmes. The outcome for many engineers was, therefore, one of effort intensification. Moreover, this change was accompanied by a growing disenchantment with what was perceived as an increasingly bureaucratized management, a management obsessed with reducing the boundaries of autonomy in engineering work through the imposition of financial controls. Such a shift in senior management objectives confronted the engineers in different ways. One articulated feelings of stress over systematic resource depletion:

> The only thing I can see that the matrix has changed is that the upper management in the engineering department are very busi-

> ness-minded. We have seen that flow down to our levels. Budgets are being cut, they don't understand how much technical work goes in to something and they don't see it as a problem. Designing planes, for us it's a three year job, with them they want it done in months. Call us in to discuss the problem? But no it doesn't work like that and the directives just keep flowing down. Budgets are being cut, it's ridiculous. (Interview, Aeronautics Engineer, November 2001)

Another (non-graduate) engineer highlighted how these new management agendas of cost control can corrupt the creative culture of engineering work. It was also felt that such policy changes can permeate office relationships and become manifest as a form of 'institutionalized bullying':

> The thing about *Airframes* when I first joined I was impressed about how engineering orientated it was. It was basically an engineering company, testosterone-type environment and you got on and did the job and you did the right thing for the right reasons, finding a good engineers' solution to an engineering problem. Now it's basically run by a bunch of pure credit accountants. You're just never allowed to be an engineer, in fact, being an engineer is a dirty word.
>
> What's developed is a feeling that … like I'm always looking at management and thinking, what are you going to complain about now? What have I done wrong in your eyes? And you become so defensive, everybody's basically trying to line up next to have a punch, and it's even gone as far as the directors who are prepared to go out and have a punch. Our department has had enough. (Interview, Quality Engineer, October 2001)

Unlike their shop-floor colleagues, technical workers at *Airframes* were not involved in the company's formal continuous improvement campaigns. Many managers and workers did describe more informal 'methods development' activity where, as part of their day-to-day routines, employees were expected to reflect upon their work and discuss potential improvements to engineering processes with team colleagues. This rarely involved interactions with other departments or production workers. However, the company was beginning to develop a more institutionalized system of group discussion on project developments in the form of integrated project teams (IPTs). This form of interaction has been described as 'geographically distributed work'

(Meil, 2004). Typically, technical workers from different company sites, departments and supplier organizations are organized into teams to discuss specific design or production problems, or, in the case of new products, to integrate the input of different design and production operations at the earliest possible stage. In most cases, IPTs have a clear set of objectives with limited timeframes and their members' responsibilities are additional to their normal work roles.

Meil investigated three case studies of IPTs in the German aerospace and automotives sectors. She found that although these practices provided the potential for employee empowerment, in that key decision-makers within the teams were unlikely to be managers, many of these individuals experienced a contradiction between 'responsibility and authority' and 'responsibility and autonomy'. In other words, many of the leading technical worker participants were given the responsibility to attain team objectives but rarely enjoyed the authority to compel individuals and departments to provide the necessary contribution to this. In addition, since their ultimate responsibility was to help the employer reduce costs, their apparent autonomy within the teams was illusory. They became cost-cutters themselves whilst also experiencing work intensification through their involvement in the teams.

During our interviews with a small number of IPT participants at *Airframes*, the term 'responsibility without authority' emerged a number of times. The types of IPTs involved varied from single site inter-departmental groups to multi-site groups involving external project funders. Most participants felt that their job satisfaction had increased although they also acknowledged that their involvement contributed to a greater overall workload. Unlike Meil's German studies, however, the contradictions between responsibility and both authority and autonomy were based on management's inability to trust IPT participants to work within a cost-cutting remit and, indeed, the reluctance of some participants to accept this remit. As a result, management representatives tended either to lead the IPTs, or constrain their activities and autonomy by limiting their budgets, or, if this failed, ignore the outcomes of IPT discussions altogether. For example, one engineer who had sat on a management-led IPT expressed his dissatisfaction with the company's increasing tendency to concentrate power in the hands of managers rather than engineers:

> I think *Airframes* can push a lot more, give a lot more responsibility to the engineers. I'm sure, talking to some of the longer service guys who have been here for 25 years, they certainly used to have far

> more authority than they have now. It's been taken away from them and now it's just been concentrated in the manager's role.
>
> Well take the IPT groups. They could work. The whole idea of the IPT group was to sit down and have all the different departments and directorates involved so that you can discuss these issues and I think at that point you need to make somebody who's leader, an authority, and then say, right his decision holds. And personally I think it should be an engineering leader. Somebody who has an understanding, rather than just trying to make a short term investment and saving. Somebody who understands the actual problems that you're going to get in the future if you don't do it correctly from the start. And he could have more of an influence on what decisions are made and what equipment is bought. At the moment you haven't got that. You've got responsibility but not authority. (Interview, Avionics Engineer, December 2001)

Another participant expressed his frustration at management's apparent dismissal of IPT outcomes. This was partly a result of the contradiction between engineering autonomy and cost control but also of the limitations of trust when so many managers are not prepared to forgo their sense of senior status:

> We've had a number of instances where we've done a great deal of work, even before the vetting of the cost reduction team and we've made recommendations to a very high level. But they've just ignored it because … I get the impression they didn't want to be seen as having to get information or recommendations from more lowly souls. (Interview, Technical Specialist, November 2001)

Although there were differences of degree, for most technical workers at *Airframes* the overall experience of high performance work restructuring was one of diminished autonomy (or, in the case of IPTs, quasi-autonomy). Moreover, in the context of the imperatives of financial control, the introduction of new working frameworks such as the matrix system of technical labour deployment resulted in task enlargement and managerial demands that engineers assume multiple project responsibilities. Finally, and we will return to this point in the conclusion, the graduate engineers that we interviewed at this plant were no less forthright in expressing disenchantment with the management of change than their non-graduate colleagues in the technical office areas or on the shop-floor.

The case of *JetCo*

As we saw in Chapter 3, a more advanced matrix of business units, each constituted as profit centres, was in operation at *JetCo*. This formed the framework for cost control. Although the division of technical labour into different units did not in itself have a significant impact on the organization of the labour process, it did affect the quality of relationships between managers and technical workers and associated patterns of trust. The quasi-decentralization and fragmentation of the corporate organization added a new dimension to the sense of estrangement that workers in large bureaucratized firms can experience. For example, the creation of different unit-based managerial hierarchies, each responsible for policy implementation and local operations but accountable to a central corporate executive for meeting financial targets, undermined any consistency in the way local managers treated their subordinates. On the one hand, business unit and office managers were expected to foster more co-operative partnership relationships within their departments and on the other hand, this 'soft' HRM objective could not interfere with the overall mission of maximizing unit profitability. The plant's AMICUS-MSF senior representative described this:

> I would say there's a tendency towards a split personality and it's exactly this. You've got these people, and on the one hand they're being told, 'you've got to develop partnerships, people skills etc'. So that's coming down on one command from above but coming down another command route is, 'our profits aren't high enough, they must be increased, we've got targets to meet'. So you've got this almost schizoid approach to things whereas sometimes you get the feeling they want to be nice but they don't feel they can. (Interview, June 2001)

Unlike at *Airframes*, where the matrix of labour deployment was defined essentially by the allocation of technical workers *between* different projects in accordance with the decisions of the program managers, flexibility at *JetCo* was restricted to movements *within* business units. This was because the units were constituted as discrete trading companies each requiring a clear focus on specific engine types, modules or processes. And each required skill specialization and an ensuing employee affiliation to the unit, an affiliation that could be undermined by routine inter-unit flexibility. One director commented:

> I think the driver has been to create separate business units, a series of separate business units, rather than sites, and they've been developed in the key parts of the engine if you like – the compressor, the turbine, the combustion chamber and whatever. And really, that's done for two reasons. One, to concentrate the skills on those particular products, those modules of the engine so that you get the right concentration of skill, and also to create more business focus on the drive for more cost-effective profit. And two, by having separate business units it provides the opportunity of a more competitive market within the company whilst also giving a greater focus on supplying the needs of outside customers. (Interview, Production Director, June 2001)

Task flexibility within these units was partly facilitated by the widespread adoption of computer-aided design (CAD) technology in the design office and integrated computer technology in procurement and production planning areas. In every office we visited, some form of this software technology had been in use for many years and it was now regarded as a normal component of an engineer's skill portfolio. In the context of job cuts, it allowed a speed-up of the design process and greater 'simultaneous engineering' involving more interaction between specialized roles and task enlargement within roles. The plant's engineering director made the following observation:

> The IT stuff? There is no doubt that, we call it integrated product development, things like new computing capability for modelling, the work stations, the speed at which things can be done, has improved … Historically we had the pattern of designers designing things and throwing their designs over the fence to people who complete the detail drawings, the manufacturing drawings. In this day and age there is no doubt the case of why would you need to do things twice? Why doesn't the same person define and detail. That is, just define electronically, press a button down the line to manufacture. (Interview, June 2001)

However, for many technical workers the rationalization of staffing levels was the prime factor that drove task flexibility and increasing effort rates. As we have already described, the plant's manual and technical workforces suffered a series of deep cuts during the 1990s, far more so than at *Airframes*, and this had specific repercussions for the survivors of these downsizing policies. Some technical workers we

interviewed described how the stress and insecurity associated with forced movement between jobs increased with every worker redundancy:

> The real cruelty I think is the moving people around after [a redundancy], you know. They're just getting into a job, it might take a year or two years to really get to the stage where they know the job really well and they're making what they'd consider to be a contribution, and then they're hived off somewhere else. This is happening all the time and it's quite deliberate. Especially in the very technical fields, where, I guess, there aren't enough people who have the specialist knowledge. (Interview, Test Engineer, July 2001)

Another reflected on the implications for task enlargement of major cuts in departmental staffing levels:

> I mean the planning office I work in now there's 20–25 guys in it, when I was on the shop floor 20 years ago, there was more like 120 guys in this office, so it's condensed and it's multi-skilled now. Previously it wasn't multi-skilled, that guy there was a process writer, there were draughtsman at one end of the office and that's all they did, and there were structures engineers and trouble-shooters, all separate. But now we do it all. (Interview, Manufacturing Engineer, June 2001)

One of the few female engineers employed at the plant described the impact of these changes on patterns of workplace stress in her area and the limited utility of so-called 'stress management' techniques:

> The pace today has increased tremendously. The output from what is expected of you has also increased tremendously here … The stress can be lethal and everybody has had their fair share of it. I think the majority of my colleagues have been to occupational health and they have been off sick. I think the sick record has increased with stress and it is now a recognized illness, stress. The management last year in our office were sent on a stress course and how to deal with stress, how to recognize the signs of stress. I haven't seen any positive results from it mind, it's never, 'mind how you are', it's always, 'just when are you going to get the work done?' (Interview, Supplies Engineer, June 2001)

The pattern of technical worker participation in continuous improvement processes was also different to *Airframes* in that there were marked contrasts between the experiences of graduates and non-graduates. The same type of kaizen campaigns that were present on the *JetCo* shop-floor also operated in those technical offices that were closer to production, departments such as production planning and manufacturing support. These were staffed primarily by lower graded, non-graduate engineers. It was notable that we collected similar types of employee reaction to these campaigns as those reported by shop-floor workers. These ranged from indifference to feelings of, 'we could do without this, it's just a glorified clean-up', and '[ideas] just disappear into the ether and dissolve'. There tended to be a different pattern, however, for graduate engineers. Although very few were involved in shop-floor-style kaizen campaigns, two thirds of those we surveyed were participating in IPTs. And unlike the experience of their counterparts at *Airframes* (responsibility without authority), the small number of *JetCo* graduates we interviewed felt that they enjoyed more influence over design process improvements by participating in collective discussions and brain-storming sessions. It was also felt that this influence was achieved by forging a much closer affiliation with management rather than attempting to mark out a more discrete autonomy. For example:

> A lot of the work we do is linking in with manufacturing and design, and work to change the manufacturing process. My boss is very much a process guy so he's continually looking to improve the process and the quickest way you can get from what's in the designer's head to a lump of metal that's sat on the end of the table. So I feed my ideas through my boss. I'm very fortunate that relationships between my immediate team, there are five of us, and my boss are very, very good. I'm not sure what the correct expression is to use, we're very easy to talk to and it's very friendly and laddish if you like. You know, it works very well. (Interview, Principal Design Draughtsman, June 2001)

To summarize, the introduction of a complex matrix of business units at *JetCo* shifted the terms of technical labour utilization. The tradition of employing literally hundreds of designers, stress engineers and draughtsmen and women on multiple projects in large design offices (which is one form of labour flexibility) gave way to a system of task accretion within the confines of more specialized business units (which

is another). Although different management representatives argued that the logic of business units was to align manufacturing and design more closely with customer requirements, the key drivers were, in reality, cost control and labour rationalization. Many technical workers experienced effort intensification and workplace stress as a result. This tended to be a unitary experience irrespective of location in the hierarchy of technical work. However, when it came to task participation (and related employee autonomy), our interviews provided tentative evidence of a degree of polarization of graduate and non-graduate worker experience. The next section investigates this more systematically.

The quality of working life in the technical office

We now focus on the same indicators of quality of working life that we adopted for manual workers in the previous chapter. This takes into account labour intensification, workplace stress and employee autonomy. Considering first labour intensification, we again operationalized this in terms of extensive effort (hours) and intensive effort (the intensity of work) (Green, 2001). Employees were asked to indicate changes in their overall working hours, in the amount of work they completed, and in the degree of flexibility and responsibility involved in their jobs.

The contractual working week for managers and white collar workers at both plants was 37 hours. The typical working week, including overtime, was similar to the shop-floor areas: 41.04 hours at *Airframes* and 42.68 hours at *JetCo*. Forty three per cent of *Airframes'* managers and technical staff worked in excess of 41 hours whilst at *JetCo*, 46 per cent worked between 41 and 48 hours per week and another 12 per cent worked between 49 and 72 hours per week. A good proportion of non-manual employees, especially managers and supervisors, therefore worked an extended day. Table 5.1 shows that mostly managers were subject to increases to working hours over the three previous years.

National surveys and other studies of quality of working life have found that professional and intermediate white collar workers are more likely to report increased work effort than other occupational groups (Burchell, 2002; Cully et al. 1999; Hodson, 2001; Peterson, 2003). This result might be partly attributable to a concentration of more demanding responsibilities in higher occupational class positions (Gallie et al. 1998). Our data on intensive effort, presented in Table 5.1, only partly correspond with these trends. The first point to note is that, just as we saw with the two manual workforces, the high performance work

Table 5.1 Technical Workers and Managers' Assessment of Change in Job Requirements and Work Intensity Compared to Three Years Ago (*Airframes*, n = 436; *JetCo*, n = 329)

	Increased (%)	Decreased (%)	Stayed the same (%)
Change in the number of hours I am expected to work each week			
AIRFRAMES**			
Managers & Supervisors	34	8	58
Graduate Technical Staff	16	15	69
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	15	14	71
JETCO**			
Managers & Supervisors	42	7	51
Graduate Technical Staff	17	3	80
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	16	6	78
Change in the amount of work I am expected to complete each week			
AIRFRAMES*			
Managers & Supervisors	67	2	31
Graduate Technical Staff	53	8	39
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	48	7	45
JETCO			
Managers & Supervisors	86	1	13
Graduate Technical Staff	70	0	30
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	74	3	23
Change in the degree of flexibility required in my work			
AIRFRAMES			
Managers & Supervisors	75	3	22
Graduate Technical Staff	60	3	37
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	67	5	28
JETCO			
Managers & Supervisors	85	2	13
Graduate Technical Staff	77	0	23
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	83	2	15
Change in the responsibility involved in my job			
AIRFRAMES*			
Managers & Supervisors	79	8	13
Graduate Technical Staff	74	7	19
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	64	11	25
JETCO			
Managers & Supervisors	87	4	9
Graduate Technical Staff	73	7	20
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	77	5	18

Table 5.1 Technical Workers and Managers' Assessment of Change in Job Requirements and Work Intensity Compared to Three Years Ago (*Airframes*, n = 436; *JetCo*, n = 329) – *continued*

	Increased (%)	Decreased (%)	Stayed the same (%)
Change in the skill level required for my job			
AIRFRAMES*			
Managers & Supervisors	69	4	27
Graduate Technical Staff	50	5	45
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	57	8	35
JETCO			
Managers & Supervisors	77	2	21
Graduate Technical Staff	73	3	23
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	74	4	22

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

regime is associated with effort intensification. Large proportions of managers, graduates and other technical staff at both plants reported that the amount of work they were expected to work each week, along with the degree of flexibility and responsibility involved in their jobs, had increased during the previous three years. Many workers also reported an increase in skill levels although for some this was experienced as task accretion. There were a number of differences between occupational groups, for example, a greater proportion of managers reported increases. However, the more salient contrast was between the two plants. That is, technical staff at *JetCo* were more likely to report an intensification of effort compared to their *Airframes* counterparts and this was due to the more widespread labour rationalization at *JetCo*. In other words, job loss seemed to be driving technical labour harder.

Comparing these data with the corresponding survey results for manual workers additional differences emerge. First, technical workers and managers were more likely than manual workers to report increases in responsibility, a pattern that corresponds with national surveys of employee experience. Moreover, a greater proportion of non-manual workers and managers at *JetCo* reported increases in the amount of work they were expected to complete each week, an additional indicator of a relationship between job loss and effort intensification at this plant.

The data also provide further evidence of an association between effort intensification and workplace stress. Using Spearman's rho corre-

lation tests we found that technical workers who felt very tired at the end of each work day were more likely to worry about their work outside of working hours, were more likely to report that they never had enough time to complete their work, were more likely to indicate greater workloads and were more likely to report an increase in working hours. Similarly, technical workers who worried about work outside of working hours were more likely to feel that they never had enough time to complete their work, were more likely to report greater workloads, more hours and more work responsibilities. Cross-tabulated results are provided in Table 5.2. The indicators of stress were, in most respects, more marked than the comparable manual worker data. Significant proportions of all groups indicated that they worried a lot about their work outside of working hours whilst in most cases, large majorities of technical workers and managers felt very tired at the end of the work day and indicated that they never seem to have enough time to complete their work. Once again, managers were more likely to report the highest levels of stress. Of the two plants, non-manual worker stress levels were higher at *JetCo*, a result that corresponds with the different patterns of effort intensification. The *JetCo* data therefore provide further evidence of an association between job loss and a deterioration of quality of working life amongst survivors (Murphy and Pepper, 2003).

Recent national surveys do not provide a definitive picture of whether the patterns of work intensification and stress in UK workplaces are gendered. For example, Cully et al.'s WERS98 survey showed that women were more likely than men working similar hours to feel that their jobs were more intense and stressful. By contrast, Burchell's (2002) secondary analysis of the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative data found the opposite, that women in all occupational classes tended to report lower levels of work intensification (although the gender differences were smaller among managers and professional groups). Clearly, further research is required into potential differences, including case study evidence. Our survey of technical staff captured just 42 women engineers of whom 35 were employed at *Airframes*. Although this was a relatively small group, the *Airframes* data do suggest that the women engineers experienced greater work intensification and workplace stress than their male counterparts. For instance, 27 per cent of women reported increases to their working hours (compared to 13 per cent of men), 59 per cent felt that the amount of work they were expected to complete had increased (48 per cent), 79 per cent indicated greater flexibility (63 per cent),

Table 5.2 Technical Workers and Managers' Experience of Workplace Stress (*Airframes*, n = 436; *JetCo*, n = 329)

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
I worry a lot about my work outside working hours					
AIRFRAMES					
Managers & Supervisors	7	28	48	11	6
Graduate Technical Staff	2	23	49	22	4
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	3	24	51	19	3
JETCO					
Managers & Supervisors	13	37	42	7	1
Graduate Technical Staff	9	28	44	9	10
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	5	29	48	13	5
I feel very tired at the end of a work day					
AIRFRAMES**					
Managers & Supervisors	12	57	27	1	3
Graduate Technical Staff	6	46	28	8	12
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	13	46	35	2	4
JETCO*					
Managers & Supervisors	26	42	29	1	2
Graduate Technical Staff	19	38	37	3	3
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	12	57	25	1	5
I never seem to have enough time to get my job done					
AIRFRAMES					
Managers & Supervisors	12	47	34	2	5
Graduate Technical Staff	9	35	48	5	3
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	15	33	44	2	6
JETCO					
Managers & Supervisors	30	45	24	0	1
Graduate Technical Staff	35	31	28	3	3
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	24	48	23	1	4

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

79 per cent indicated increases in their work responsibilities (63 per cent), 29 per cent worried about work outside of working hours (26 per cent), 57 per cent felt that they never had enough time to complete their work (46 per cent), and 71 per cent felt very tired at the end of the work day (55 per cent).

Turning now to the impact of job insecurity on stress (and related employee autonomy) in technical work, current research has tended again to be contradictory in its findings (for a review, see Nolan et al.,

2000). The WERS98 survey found that although managers and professionals were more likely to report that their jobs were intense and stressful, workers of all occupations who experienced job insecurity were equally likely to feel stress (Cully et al., 1999: 173). By contrast, Kuhnert and Vance's (1992) analysis of job insecurity and ill-health found that for manual workers job insecurity was positively associated with a wider range of stress symptoms compared to non-manual workers. We would suggest that an additional mediating factor is occupational difference in the indirect experience of job loss itself; that is, in the feelings of the survivors of redundancy programmes.

At both case studies manual workers had borne the brunt of job losses over the past two decades, an experience repeated elsewhere in UK manufacturing (Beaumont and Harris, 2002). Non-graduate white collar workers, had, however, been increasingly affected by redundancies at the two plants (especially at *JetCo*). The questionnaire results for technical workers suggested that although job insecurity was associated with some aspects of stress, the relationships were weaker compared to the manual workers' data (for these, see Table 4.3, Chapter 4). For most technical workers, job insecurity was not related to such stress indicators as 'feeling very tired at the end of the work day' (Table 5.3). It was,

Table 5.3 Technical Workers' Experience of Workplace Stress, by Job Security (n = 497)

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
I feel very tired at the end of a work day					
Employees who feel secure	12	49	31	2	6
Employees who feel insecure	11	53	30	2	4
My job allows me to take part in making decisions that affect my work**					
Employees who feel secure	16	75	7	1	1
Employees who feel insecure	7	57	26	8	2

	Very satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)	Undecided (%)
How satisfied are you with the amount of influence you have over your job**					
Employees who feel secure	8	68	17	3	4
Employees who feel insecure	3	53	29	11	4

** Chi-square test significant at the 0.001 level.

Table 5.4 Technical Workers' and Managers' Discretion and Control, by Occupational Group and Job Security (*Airframes*, n = 436; *JetCo*, n = 329)

	AIRFRAMES Mean scores	JETCO Mean scores*
Managers & Supervisors	9.14	10.00
Graduate Technical Staff	8.30	9.50
Non-Graduate Technical Staff	7.90	8.03
Technical workers who feel secure	8.31	8.70
Technical workers who feel insecure	7.79	7.81

* Mann-Whitney 2-tailed tests found significant differences on these scores between *JetCo* graduates and non-graduates (p = 0.01) and between *JetCo* workers who felt secure and those who felt insecure (p = 0.01). For *Airframes* differences were not significant in both cases.

however, significantly associated with employees' sense of control at work. This relationship carries an additional importance when we consider which groups of technical workers are more likely to feel either secure or insecure. At *Airframes*, 57 per cent of graduate technical staff indicated that they felt their jobs were secure compared to 47 per cent of non-graduates; at *JetCo*, as many as 84 per cent of graduates felt secure compared to 48 per cent of non-graduates. It is not unreasonable to suggest, therefore, that unlike many non-graduate technical workers, the quality of working life of most graduate engineers was not impaired by any sense of insecurity at work.

Finally, we carried out further investigations of differences in discretion and control within the two technical workforces by utilizing the same five-item scale that was adopted for manual workers (for scale and coding descriptions see Chapter 4). As Table 5.4 shows, a number of salient patterns emerged that have relevance for debates concerning the impact of work restructuring on class divisions within technical work.

First, in both case studies, managers and graduate engineers enjoyed higher levels of autonomy than the majority non-graduate technical workers. The differences were most pronounced (and only statistically significant) at *JetCo*, which confirms the interview evidence of a degree of polarization of graduate and non-graduate worker experience of task participation at this plant. Second, and related to this, there was a pronounced contrast between the graduate engineers' scores at the two plants suggesting that important organizational contextual factors were impacting on employee experience. In the case of *Airframes*, the

graduate engineers' sense of discretion and control tended to coincide with non-graduates whilst at *JetCo* it was proximate to management. Again, this concurs with our interview data. At *Airframes*, matrix-based work restructuring and the new management techniques of financial control had a more uniform, deleterious impact upon the autonomy of technical labour compared to *JetCo* where labour rationalization and consequent effort intensification were the salient facets of change. And third, and just as we saw with the comparable manual workers' data, technical workers' job insecurity is linked to diminished job control. The effect was more marked (and statistically significant) at *JetCo* where job loss among non-graduate technical workers became a recurrent experience during the 1990s and at the time of the research.

Technical labour, collectivism and resistance

Technical workers in Britain experience a more difficult terrain of workplace politics and resistance compared to most manual workers. In the main, their unions have been unable to critically engage with organizational restructuring or exert leverage over changes to the labour process and labour deployment. This is partly because, unlike production workers, employers have rarely imposed bureaucratic boundaries and demarcations that would provide the basis for such influence (Smith and Whalley, 1996). Working within more individualistic office environments, technical workers have also displayed both a lower propensity to take industrial action and a more instrumental approach to trade unionism (Carter, 1988; Smith, 1987; Smith and Whalley, 1996). These weaknesses have been compounded in recent years by the general decline in trade union power along with the promotion of performance pay and an accentuation of career concerns. This is not to say, however, that such industrial relations conditions will inevitably allow the managers of technical work to enforce their high performance work reforms without impediment from labour. As one recent large-scale survey of white collar employees in the banking industry has shown, if the practices of human resource management in the high performance workplace result in, *inter alia*, an intensification of effort, less job security, and less employee autonomy, then these conditions can provide the starting point for an increase in collectivism and militancy among white collar workers rather than their demise (Deery and Walsh, 1999).

The nature of employee responses to the new working conditions at our two case studies differed in certain respects. Predictably, in neither

case did we find any evidence of a shift in attitudes, by union activists and members alike, towards the politics of engagement with work restructuring. The 'management of technical change' was perceived as just that – the provenance of management – whilst technical workers and their unions were more concerned with improving pay and conditions and resolving any individual grievances arising from work restructuring or prejudicial managerial decisions. However, within this context of continuity in the politics of workplace relations clear differences in employee and union reactions did emerge.

Disenchantment and opposition: the case of *Airframes*

At *Airframes*, our interviews with union activists and all types of technical workers, graduates and non-graduates alike, elicited a picture of declining employee morale based on a multiplicity of factors. They also highlighted employees' determination to respond to this collectively rather than descend into some form of individualized fatalism or personal survival technique. For example, during a build-up to a strike ballot over the annual wage claim in 2001, different employees articulated a resentment of the new management culture that imposed excessive controls on the workforce. Few regarded the fast developing dispute as being solely connected to the wage offer. The plant's AMICUS-MSF senior representative summarized this view:

> People generally speaking have got the hump with the company good and proper. To some degree they have the view now that even if the company doesn't improve the offer, which they probably suspect it won't, so they know it's going to cost us. But it's a bit like eventually losing your temper and giving the bully a poke on the nose. It might give you an even bigger hiding, but it's going to make you feel better because you've done something. That is a weird sort of position for us to be trying to deal with in some areas. Certainly some offices where previously I guess, we wouldn't have had anybody there that's ever been involved in industrial action, people are saying, that's what we've got to do, we're absolutely fed up with it. (Interview, October, 2001)

Compared to organized shop-floor labour these technical workers did not 'do something about it' via the continual skirmishes around job control of the type we described in the previous chapter. Technical workers have no such tradition of this type of resistance. Instead, alternative forms of collective opposition emerged in the quite different

working environment of the technical office. For some groups, where traditionally, trade union-based collectivism could be regarded as alien, this manifested itself as a joint decision to sign up with a union and challenge managerial actions. One quality assurance engineer described how his complete department of twenty young graduates reacted in such a way:

> We all did it together. One of the things about the department is we're a very strong knit community. We'll go out on the town together, get completely bladdered, sleep in each others spare rooms, it's quite a strongly knit bunch of people. We all see things the same way. Nobody backstabs each other in the department because they all know the last thing you need is in-fighting as well as all the other rubbish that gets thrown at us. In the type of world we are, we're like some Indian person listening to people in the mountains, you could feel something is not going quite right. There were different things happening and we thought it wouldn't be a bad idea if we all joined up.
>
> … And what surprised me is that we're all mini managers as well, we're all fairly in touch and we're all realists … you have to be fairly much in the real world in order to survive and yet all these realists decided to join a union which is not a modern concept really, certainly not for graduates. (Interview, Quality Engineer, October 2001)

A number of engineers described with some enthusiasm an example of their own independent – and innovative – rank-and-file activity that eventually became incorporated into a more widespread union campaign. A few months before our fieldwork had begun, like-minded individuals had networked together and decided to draft a shortlist of collective grievances against management with a view to sending this to the local media. Eventually this snowballed into a broader union campaign involving the whole membership. One of the instigators described this:

> We registered about two or three complaints on management's approach to managing people, imposing flexibility, arrogance, that type of thing. And the union registered a complaint on practically everything and suggested going to the press with the new letter to explain exactly what our board of directors are doing here, or aren't doing here. It was a kind of name and shame exercise, we just couldn't see another way of getting the board to listen. So then a

> mass meeting was held to endorse the letter. (Interview, Principal Engineer, October 2001)

AMICUS-MSF representatives eventually used the threat of bad company publicity to extract assurances from management that each grievance would be considered and discussions initiated with the union. This example is one of a number of incidents that reflected a 'spirit of opposition' in the engineering offices. In the context of the relatively limited bargaining leverage of technical workers, but also management's keen desire to secure a highly committed engineering workforce, its distinctive character was based on the creation of alternative and independent collective forms. These technical workers and their union were critically engaging with the 'management of people' if not the management of the labour process itself.

Embracing partnership: the case of *JetCo*

At *JetCo*, as we describe in more detail in the next two chapters, the technical workers' union was attempting to adopt a partnership approach to its relations with management. This did not mean that, as a consequence, all collective expression of employee resistance was suppressed. For instance, although the union had not organized a militant pay campaign for a number of years, it was a leading player in multi-site opposition to the employer's attempt to cut pension benefits during 2002–03. Nevertheless, under the auspices of a partnership agreement signed in 1998, the union's typical approach to organizational restructuring and new managerial initiatives was to 'embrace and change' rather than critically engage with change as Stewart and Wass (1998) have expressed it. This meant that whenever potential points of conflict arose, and during the time of our fieldwork there were a number of these (for example, management attempts to restructure working hours and to eliminate overtime premia), the response of the leading union activists was to criticize management's ability to convince their membership of the need for change rather than mobilize opposition to the proposals themselves. During one of our interviews, the plant's AMICUS-MSF senior representative provided an example:

> The way I approached it when the unit director raised it with us was not to say, 'well we're not having that', even though I knew it would be a hugely difficult thing for the members to accept. But what I did say was, 'you've got to start off with what is the business case for change, and you've really got to convince people there is

> one before you stand a hope of getting them to give up their nine day fortnight or their overtime.' And he never never succeeded in doing it. (Interview, June 2001)

Partly as a result of this union attitude, issues of conflict between technical workers and their managers tended to be deflected towards the union itself. Although workers did not reject the idea of partnership, provided this was between equal partners, they did begin questioning the efficacy of their union representation under existing arrangements. Some even questioned the point of joining the union. As one senior draughtsman put it, 'when things didn't go our way with this overtime thing, I did question why the hell I'm in the union because they're not doing enough, why am I paying for nothing?'

The orientation of *JetCo*'s graduate engineers to independent union organization was an additional factor that weakened the potential for collective forms of technical workers' resistance. In contrast to *Airframes*, and reflecting the evidence elsewhere in this chapter of a bifurcation between the attitudes of graduate engineers and other technical workers at *JetCo*, the graduates we interviewed tended to question why managerial prerogatives should be subject to constraint via union militancy or other means (most were not members themselves). For these workers, whose affinities and aspirations lay closer to management than labour, union strength was regarded as a hindrance to capitalist business objectives rather than a collective basis for independent employee rights. As one engineer put it:

> I think it's a good idea that workforce representatives should work closely with management. I can't see that there's any real reason in theory why that should be a bad thing, surely that's a good thing. On the other hand you could argue that the relationship could be abused. I think that's what a lot of managers, not necessarily here, but across UK industry as a whole, are afraid of. Especially with new European regulations possibly coming, to force management to deal with unions on a lot of issues. Perhaps there are times when you simply want to make a business decision and you don't want that to have it rubber stamped by other people. I think we already have enough rights and enough constraints on industry in this country. (Interview, Stress Engineer, June 2001)

At *JetCo*, therefore, the dissipation of resistance seemed the core characteristic of the micro-politics of technical work. The development of

the high performance regime had generated multifarious grievances linked to job insecurity, work intensification and unilateral changes to employment conditions. However, in opting for partnership the technical workers' union merely attracted rank-and-file criticism of its own performance rather than turn worker discontent against the employer. The potential for office-based solidarity was further impaired by differences in attitudes to trade union influence held by graduates and non-graduates. In these circumstances, individual survival rather than collective contestation seemed the only realistic option available to many employees.

Conclusion

Although there were some differences between sub-groups of technical workers at both case study plants, the most prominent effect of the introduction of high performance work reforms in the engineering office was to bring about a deterioration of quality of working life. Most technical workers were subject to labour intensification with relatively large numbers also reporting forms of workplace stress. At *Airframes*, in the context of incessant cost-cutting agendas and pressures to reduce design-to-production lead times, effort rates increased as task specialization was combined with new multiple-project responsibilities. At *JetCo*, multiple-project working gave way to task accretion within specialized business units, and in the context of severe staffing cuts over the previous decade, technical labour was driven ever harder as a result.

Different forms of job flexibility therefore engendered a unitary experience of degradation of employment conditions. More complex patterns of difference emerged in the shifting boundaries of employee autonomy at work. At *Airframes*, graduate and non-graduate engineers articulated shared feelings of limited autonomy and discretion. This was partly a function of management's desire to prioritize centralized cost control over team-based autonomy and their reluctance to grant subordinates sufficient trust and devolvement of authority. By contrast, at *JetCo*, unlike many of their non-graduate colleagues engineering graduates tended to report greater satisfaction with both management and the scope for discretionary decision-making. This seemed to emerge from their closer alliance with managers; the graduates we spoke to were keen to align their identities and career trajectories with the management structure. These differences of intra-class cohesion, more unitary at *Airframes*, more dichotomous at *JetCo*, both

shaped and reflected further contrasts in employee support for collective action at the two plants. *Airframes*' technical workers tended to unite in their support for innovative collective reactions to perceived management-inspired injustices. By contrast, *JetCo*'s technical workers tended to divide between those (mainly lower grades) who were uninspired by partnership but lacking of alternative collective means to challenge management and discrete groups of graduate engineers who were more likely to identify with management and reject any militant forms of organized labour.

The two case studies therefore suggest contradictory dynamics in the contemporary organization of technical work and its impact on class relations. On the one hand, high performance work regimes can have a deleterious impact upon technical workers' quality of working life. This would suggest a partial proletarianization of technical labour via the shared experience of work rationalization and effort intensification. On the other hand, shifts in the class location of technical workers based on employee autonomy and sense of association with co-workers and managers can be more problematic and dependent on specific organizational factors. For example, the nature of organizational restructuring, shifts in the division of labour, and technical workers' relations with both management and unions. As we have seen, in some work contexts these factors can engender further intra-class solidarity but in others they may reinforce bifurcation between elite engineering graduates and their less qualified colleagues.

6

Workplace Partnership: Management and Union Strategy

In the unionized sectors, partnership is fast becoming the new orthodoxy in British industrial relations. This is partly a function of employer responses to intensified global competition and neo-liberal imperatives. It is also a function of the post-1997 shift in politico-economic conditions and in particular, successive Labour Governments' quest for a 'modernization' of workplace relations. In this context, as Martínez Lucio and Stuart (2002a and 2002b) have argued, partnership is central to a modernizing agenda because it is seen as a means of permanently substituting co-operative relations for class conflict at work. The new co-operative relations are predicated on an extension of employee rights and a commitment by organized labour to work with employers, rather than against them, in the interests of improving organizational performance.

The development of partnership at the workplace level can be especially important for those firms whose capital accumulation strategies are based on the adoption of practices of the type that we described in earlier chapters of this book. In other words, more stringent financial control regimes, organizational flexibility and high performance work systems. Employers that seek improved organizational performance and greater profitability through these means may often place a premium on employee commitment since acceptance of work flexibility and restructuring on the shop and office-floor is regarded as a critical relational component of the high performance workplace. And it is because this commitment may be undermined by traditions of antagonistic relationships between managers and unions that some employers are attempting to recast their industrial relations practices by seeking more constructive partnership relationships (Danford et al., 2004; Haynes and Allen, 2001; Heery, 2002).

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

The key principles of partnership have been widely promoted by such pressure groups as the TUC (1999; 2000) and the IPA (1997). They emphasize the recognition of separate but legitimate interests in the employment relationship, joint co-operation over questions of work organizational change and improvements to quality of working life, and a commitment to enhance 'employee voice' via greater union and worker involvement in organization-related decisions. As we noted in our opening chapter, there exists contradictory research evidence on whether workplace unions can secure gains from partnership. On the one hand, there is a body of work that can be categorized as a 'mutual gains' approach. This argues that, assuming employers play ball, then partnership may bring about increased union participation at work and greater influence over those strategic management decisions that have a direct bearing on the interests and livelihoods of union members (for example, in the UK, see Ackers and Payne, 1998; Oxenbridge and Brown, 2004b; Taylor, 2003; in the USA, see Frost, 2001; Kochan and Osterman, 1994; Osterman et al., 2001). On the other hand, there is a more critical tradition that in various ways does not just deny any substantial gain for organized labour but more pertinently, highlights the potentially detrimental impact of employers' partnership agendas on independent workplace union organization. Amongst the many strands of this critique are those writers who show how uncritical union engagement with partnership can cause a fracture between union representatives and rank-and-file members. They also argue that partnership can bring about a weakening of job control mechanisms (or shop-floor labour standards) that act as constraints against the imposition of managerial prerogatives (for example, Danford et al., 2002a; Stewart et al., 2004; Taylor and Ramsay, 1998; and Whitston et al., 1999). Sandwiched between these conflicting positions are those who take a more pragmatic or contingent perspective. These writers emphasize how different partnership outcomes may be dependent on particular workplace context and the strength of local union activism (Haynes and Allen, 2001; Heery, 2002) or the nature of the relationship between activists and full-time union officers (Geary and Roche, 2003).

In this chapter we engage with these debates by presenting qualitative data governing management's partnership rationale and different trade union responses. We first examine the material and ideological dimensions of management's interest in partnership and how these fit with the case study firms' capital accumulation strategies. We then consider the contrasting strategic positions adopted by the trade unions in the two plants. The focus is on leadership styles, the

relations between union representatives and their members and on the different attitudes to partnership articulated by union activists. Taking these factors into account we also explore the extent to which union influence and union relations change in environments where managers are attempting to develop partnership relationships.

The business case for partnership

We have already described the shifts in the political, economic and market environments in which the two aerospace firms were operating. For instance, the relative decline in UK defence equipment budgets, the increasing customer demands for lower costs and 'value for money' through competitive tendering, and the more intensive competitive pressures of both civil and defence export markets. These factors catalyzed significant changes to the firms' capital accumulation strategies. In order to maintain profitability and remain competitive, both plants underwent programmes of restructuring. This involved the introduction of new financial control regimes based on business unit accountability, a rationalization of capital and labour utilization by the adoption of high performance work practices and the intensification of existing patterns of numerical flexibility by way of employee redundancy, outsourcing and the use of temporary labour.

This organizational restructuring and its constituent raft of 'high performance' management techniques was an incremental process of change that took hold in both plants during the mid-1990s and was still progressing at the time when the bulk of the research interviews were carried out. Management was seeking continual improvements to labour productivity, cost reduction and lead times in order to maintain so-called 'competitive advantage' in the industry's dynamic product markets. Although advocates of the high performance workplace would stress the 'inherent gains' that accrue to workers by way of employee involvement and participation in this management of change, Chapters 3 to 5 provided systematic evidence of a more adverse picture. For many staff employed in the office and on the shop-floor the work reforms had a mostly negative impact on their quality of working life. This was the context in which partnership emerged as a core industrial relations concern.

Much of the current debate on social partnership at work is centred on its relevance to union revitalization strategies in relatively hostile environments for labour organization (for example, Findlay and McKinlay, 2003; Gall, 2003; Haynes and Allen, 2001; Heery, 2002). There is much less debate on an equally important question: the ratio-

nale of employer strategy in the unionized sectors and the interest displayed by some of these employers in the new partnership agendas. As we noted above, there are a number of core dimensions to the British formulation of social partnership which are best embodied in the TUC's six principles. Taken together they can be regarded as an attempt to 'marry efficiency issues with social ones' by requiring workers and unions to accept market imperatives whilst also emphasizing the centrality of employee voice, job security and investments in the quality of working life (Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2002a: 254). The elastic and nebulous nature of these 'soft' codes of conduct suggests that managers working for firms in the innovative, high-skill sector, where employee commitment is more highly valued (Konzelmann and Forrant, 2003), might have little ostensible difficulty in endorsing them. This was certainly the case for the senior managers at *Airframes* and *JetCo*. Many seemed to display genuine enthusiasm for constructing a new sense of trust and mutuality in the employment relationship and some were prepared to reflect openly on their own rejection of the principles of union and employee participation in the past. However, although the patterns of partnership differed between the two firms, the foundation of this interest in promoting participation was virtually identical. That is, partnership with trade unions and their members was not regarded as a process that ceded new rights to workers in accordance with the precepts of industrial democracy. Instead, the participative and co-operative dimensions of the new workplace relations were treated essentially as ideological instruments for closing down the space for employee opposition. Moreover, it was hoped that the politics of resistance would be replaced by new prospects for gaining employee commitment to certain organizational objectives that had the interests of only one party to the employment relationship in mind – the employer.

This management agenda reflected the 'business case' for partnership, an attempt to construct new co-operative social relations in order to secure more 'efficient' business and production methods and to improve business relations in highly competitive environments (Allen, 2001; Collins, 2001). For example, senior managers at the two plants offered very similar views on the role of a management-driven partnership in securing radical workplace restructuring at a pace dictated by the prevailing dynamics of the marketplace. The following comment was typical:

> … it's coming at us like a train, you're going to have to move fast to remain competitive. You're not going to do it fighting with people.

> Even now we spend far too much time bargaining, negotiating, compromising and I think we've got to find the common ground as quickly as possible … And I think the only way you will do that quickly and effectively, and get the biggest benefit is to have the buy-in of the people who are involved in that change.
> (Interview, *JetCo* Engineering Director, June 2001)

In reflecting on the problems of organizational change, another manager emphasized how the development of partnership might secure the workforce's understanding, if not acceptance, of the economics and disciplines of the market:

> I think that, yes, potentially there is a tension between stakeholders but I think that effective partnership will either facilitate that response to change or, you know, if the shareholders and the city say, it's got to be x, y and z and that has a negative impact on the organization, at least if you've had that partnership arrangement, it will be better understood. I'm not saying it will be liked but it will be better understood. That to me would be the major benefit. (Interview, *Airframes* HR Director, October 2001).

As we saw in Chapter 2, industrial disputes were fairly common in the aerospace sector during the later decades of the last century. This pattern applied at both case study plants. These conflicts involved strikes and more frequent official and unofficial overtime bans over such issues as pay, working hours, labour flexibility, new technology and representational rights. The manual unions especially maintained a tradition of strong, independent workplace organization which placed significant constraints on the imposition of managerial prerogatives. At the same time, the employers' traditional approach to the unions was to engage with them when compelled to (over wage determination and grievance and disciplinary issues) but to place less emphasis on union participation in broader organizational decisions. Their attempts to foster a new environment of trust and co-operation with trade unions in this adversarial context centred on the qualitative nature of the interactions between managers and trade union representatives.

This was the key facet of the employer's conceptualization of partnership: management-union relations as *process*. Senior managers at both plants had very clear notions of the qualitative change in management-union relationships that was required for partnership to succeed. Whilst union and worker participation figured centrally, this was regarded as a means of achieving consensus over company objec-

tives governing plant profitability and efficiency rather than a concept as problematic as 'democratizing' the workplace. For example, when reflecting upon the process of union participation, not one manager mentioned the idea that trade unions might come to this 'round table' of consultation with an agenda that placed workers' interests and livelihoods above the employers' interests. Instead, the assumption was that the exigencies of the firms' capital accumulation strategies would confront all worker participants and confine them to an involvement based on acquiescence. The following view was typical:

> I think in simple terms, and we are using this phrase within the company, it's working together. It isn't being in an adversarial relationship, though working together doesn't mean that you always see eye to eye. But it's really behaving, behaviour is crucial in this, it's behaving in a way that no matter what the problem is we have to face, and some of the problems can be very difficult, even unpleasant, but whatever difficulties we have to face, what we're looking at is the common goal of ensuring that we have a surviving business going out into time … And that means if we're growing, then we need to enhance the output per employee not employ more people, because that's how life is. And if there's no growth well we need to achieve the same levels of output with a smaller number of people because again that's how life is in terms of being competitive. (Interview, *JetCo* HR Director, June 2001)

During our discussions with these managers we also faced indifference to the proposition that if there was really any democratic substance to the new partnership agendas then this might involve at least a qualified sharing of power and a dilution of managerial prerogatives. Instead, 'democratic substance' was redefined in narrow, productionist terms. Union-worker participation was conceptualized as participation in the continual improvement of the organization of work within the parameters of the demands of accumulation. It was therefore perceived as a complement to management's 'right to manage' rather than a constraint. One director who displayed a more committed stance than most on the subject of union involvement was also more candid in articulating this profound limitation that lay just below the surface of every one of our management discussions:

> … it's probably an awful thing to say but when I think of partnership it's only partnership up to an extent, because I have to

> manage the business at the end of the day and I want to always retain that role to manage that business ... I do believe, ultimately, someone has to have the final say in it. And do I feel comfortable with the idea of having several of the trade unions sat with me on the management team? The answer, the honest-to-goodness answer at the moment is no, I don't feel comfortable. On certain issues I'm more than happy to work with the trade unions. And I'm not putting barriers on that. I'm talking more in terms of would I feel perhaps better, would I feel comfortable with some of the trade unions feeling like they were part of the management team? Probably not, and I think if you talk to the trade unions they would say the same. (Interview, *JetCo* Operations Director, June 2001)

The micro-institutional context in which the two sets of management sought to introduce their co-operative relationships with the trade unions comprised a mix of formal collective bargaining forums and a more elaborate infrastructure for consultation processes. At both plants, conventional arrangements were in place for the recognition of union negotiating committees which would meet with senior management negotiators on a regular basis to discuss pay and conditions of employment. The consultative processes took place in a variety of separate joint management-union forums. *Airframes* operated a multi-site works council but the most influential forum was a single site-based Company Council of senior managers, union representatives and a small number of staff representatives for non-union areas. This met monthly to discuss both strategic business issues and local grievances. In addition, a Joint Technical Committee of engineering and customer support directors and AMICUS-MSF representatives discussed workload, future projects and staffing levels in these non-manual areas; a 'Manpower' Committee of operations directors and AMICUS-AEEU representatives discussed staffing levels and requirements for sub-contract and temporary labour in production areas; and a series of joint management-union working parties met to discuss specific issues such as new grading schemes and bonus schemes.

At *JetCo*, a Joint Site Committee of up to thirty senior managers and union representatives, met monthly to discuss company strategy, finance, orders and particular business initiatives. This had similar status to the *Airframes* Company Council. In addition, a multi-site Company Forum, comprising company directors and union convenors,

met annually to discuss overall corporate strategy. The company also established a transnational works council in 2000 with the sanguine title the 'National Working Together Forum', although at the time of the research this was still in an embryonic stage of development. It brought together senior managers and senior union representatives from different *JetCo* establishments in the UK, Northern Europe and North America. In a further distinctive development at the *JetCo* plant, a local partnership agreement was signed in 1998 between management and AMICUS-MSF. The agreement enshrined union participation in a five-year programme of senior management working parties addressing such issues as pay systems, reductions in engineering labour time and use of sub-contract labour.

The *JetCo* partnership agreement notwithstanding, many of these different forums for consultation and joint dialogue had operated in some form since the 1980s when employers rekindled their interest in winning the acquiescence – or even support – of their employees and trade unions. In one remarkable case, *JetCo*'s Joint Site Committee had met regularly since its inception in 1944 as a joint production committee. This was one durable example of nearly 5000 engineering-based committees that were adopted by many war-time employers seeking to take advantage of organized labour's apparent enthusiasm for co-operation with capital, a position that was precipitated by the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 (Ramsay, 1977). However, this is not to say that management's use of this consultative infrastructure reflected a mere cosmetic exercise in re-labelling long-established practices as the new workplace partnership. For both sets of management partnership as *process* was deemed far more important than its institutional settings, and process was prioritized over the formality of signing agreements, and indeed, prioritized over any commitment to job security. For example, the following director questioned the relevance of agreements on job protection arguing that it was more honest to 'help' workers and unions to understand that capitalist firms operating in global free markets cannot offer job guarantees:

> If you're having partnership, what is it the company should expect from its employees and what should employees expect from the company? We actually stated that, we've articulated that. One of the points in return for employees is security of employment. But then the acid test is, how do you actually bring that about? I've seen some organizations that have entered into guaranteed security. But who, hand on heart, can actually write that? We've always said

> we're not prepared to do that because we will be signing up to something that we know deep down we couldn't guarantee we could deliver. I think most places would recognize that as an honourable position. (Interview, *Airframes* Avionics Director, October 2001)

Therefore, the different bargaining groups and constituent trade unions at the two plants were faced with a multi-faceted industrial relations challenge. First, their managers were seeking union approval, better still commitment, to new workplace agendas of rapid organizational change. Second, this required a qualitative relational shift between managers and unions involving the substitution of co-operation for adversarialism and requiring constructive union engagement with business discussions. And third, although management publicly eschewed the traditional British 'hire and fire' mentality in that redundancies would not necessarily constitute the first reaction to any impending plant crisis (Morgan and Sayer, 1988), neither would it offer cast iron job guarantees in return for union co-operation. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 3, one inevitable facet of the construction of a high performance workplace was a systemic process of labour rationalization through outsourcing and downsizing.

Partnership and union strategy

The different union attitudes to partnership, ensuing strategies and their impact on management-union relations are summarized in Figure 6.1. These are described, plant by plant, in the following two sections.

Partnership and union strategy: The case of *Airframes*

There had been no formal redundancies at the *Airframes* plant since the mid-1990s (although as we describe below, a large redundancy was announced just after our fieldwork was completed in 2002). Unlike most other aerospace firms in the UK, *Airframes* had enjoyed increasing order books, increasing turnover and rising profitability during much of the last decade. As we saw in Chapter 3, this 'quite astronomical growth' as one senior manager put it, had required an increase in staffing levels, much of which had been covered by the use of temporary labour. However, despite this relative buoyancy, the actions and strategies adopted by the leading activists in the manual and non-manual trade unions were still constrained by job security concerns. Apart from job losses at their own plant in the not too distant past

Figure 6.1 Trade Union Attitudes to Partnership

Trade union bargaining group	Senior stewards' orientation to partnership	Impact of partnership on management-union relations
Manual Group, *Airframes*	• Strong commitment. • Belief that trade union and management agendas can mostly coincide.	• More extensive, co-operative dialogue at senior management–senior steward level. • Integrative bargaining.
Non-Manual Group, *Airframes*	• Critical engagement. • Worker interests prioritized.	• Dialogue but strained relations with management. • Adversarial bargaining.
Manual Group, *JetCo*	• Outright opposition. • Capitalist social relations make partnership impossible.	• Antagonistic relations with management. • Adversarial bargaining.
Non-Manual Group, *JetCo*	• Pragmatic support, agreement signed. • Belief that partnership allows unions to become positive agents for change.	• Extensive dialogue on management working parties. • Traditional, at times adversarial, bargaining relations remain.

they had witnessed relentless mass redundancies in the many aerospace plants in their own region (see Danford et al., 2002b). They had also felt the loss of fellow union activists in these plants. Through their attendance at national union conferences, national sectoral advisory committees and regional councils and committees, the leading lay representatives had been party to debates and union campaigns against the haemorrhage of jobs in aerospace and elsewhere in British manufacturing. This acute political awareness of the job instability in the sector had contributed to what might be termed a 'factory survival consciousness'.

This consciousness was heightened by the geographical location of the *Airframes* factory. That it was by far the biggest employer in its local community – an essentially rural community that most of its inhabitants felt strongly attached to – meant that many workers were subject to a more acute dependency relationship than the norm. This relationship shaped the behaviour of workers and union activists alike. For example, in the context of interview discussions on the pattern of

mass redundancies in the industry, the AMICUS-MSF convenor reflected on the imperatives of factory survival in the following way:

> I will never forget how my father left his employer. He had worked for all of his life at Beesley's in the leather trades. The day he reached his retirement, aged 65, the factory announced it was closing down. This had a profound effect on my dad. He came home that day in a state of shock. It was as if his whole life had amounted to nothing, that it had become meaningless. I've never forgotten that day. And as a senior union representative at this plant I've always been determined that it must never happen at *Airframes*. I see my prime role as doing everything possible to keep this factory running. Because the factory provides good employment for so many people in this town (Interview, October 2001).

For the senior union representatives with longer experience of the management of redundancy this 'factory survival consciousness' was also marked by their memories of the harsh treatment by managers of those workers whose labour power became expendable in earlier periods. This also showed that employees' sense of job security – or insecurity – is not just a function of the present but also of the past. In reflecting on a previous major redundancy, the manual group convenor recollected its impact upon those who were selected and those who were not, and it was the prevention of any repeat of this situation that partially shaped his views on union strategy:

> I believe there are still scars now. I will never forget the fact that people were lined up and taken in and told you've got a job or you haven't got a job, you know like animals. … Destroying people's bloody lives. And those who were told they were okay haven't forgotten it, I was one of them and I know what it felt like. I walked out the gate here that day and saw one hundred people sat on their tool boxes waiting for people to pick them up. (Interview, December 2001)

The prime union concern with factory survival and job security meant that none of the senior union representatives at the plant rejected outright the notion of partnership at work. Notwithstanding their senior managers' reluctance to offer firm job guarantees, they believed that a meaningful partnership was more likely to reduce employee uncertainty and anxiety given the combination of security and work flexibil-

ity that is assumed to be inherent in the partnership 'bargain' (Brown, 2000; Heery, 2002; Knell, 1999; Oxenbridge and Brown, 2002; Sisson, 1999; TUC, 1999 and 2000). However, there were marked differences between the attitudes of the leading representatives. These engendered new tensions between the bargaining groups, and in the case of the manual group, between the plant leadership and the local workshop activists.

The manual unions

The manual group convenor was the TGWU's senior steward and as convenor he represented the majority of AMICUS-AEEU members as well as his own. He was also a leading figure in regional Labour Party politics and a candidate at the 2001 general election. Although he conceded that his party activism influenced the way he thought about union strategy and politics, he felt that the prime contributory factor to his views on partnership was his self-constructed identity as a union 'moderate'. He consistently expressed support for such basic union principles as protecting worker interests through collective organization, however, his *modus operandi* was to adapt – or distort – these principles to fulfil the demands of the company. The convenor's choice of language and ideas differed little from the many managers we interviewed at the plant. It did not take much imagination to predict his likely 'progress' from representative of the rank-and-file to some paid management position, or as Nichols and Beynon (1977: 149) once put it, 'a man out for himself – for the white coat.' His support for partnership was a logical consequence of a clearly articulated rejection of class politics and a preference for a greater degree of influence in the regulation of employment relationship (rather than a new balance of power):

> I think a lot of the partnership initiative comes from me. I saw when the Conservatives were in power, that they just kicked us. In the seventies I wasn't a union rep but I was aware of politics and I saw that the unions were kicking the management and the country then and trying to be political and having too much power. So when they were in power they kicked us, when we were in power we were trying to do the same with them and we were being just as stupid with the use of our power. Now I thought that the only people who are going to change things is us, the unions. Because the management have got so much to lose from power sharing. We've got more to gain. So I've always thought that the initiative

> has to come from us. Yes we're interested in partnership, but it must mean real partnership. (Interview, December 2001)

The convenor also believed that such power-sharing between unions and management operating in partnership should not place constraints on the attainment of company objectives:

> I hope that the directors of the company will see that there is something in this, we are positive, we aren't an anti organization, we're not trying to slow the company, we're not trying to drag it. We're trying to move the company forward. You can't be luddites, you've got to go forward, I know that. I want to be progressive. I want to build that partnership relationship. (Interview, December 2001)

The 2002 annual wage negotiations provided a concrete example of this moderate approach to bargaining relations. The manual group convenor had proposed a change in the style and tone of negotiations that required a suppression of the underlying conflict of interest that is inherent in collective bargaining processes. According with the precepts of workplace partnership, the introduction of a high level of management-union co-operation into wage negotiations would result in a prioritization of the integrative issues of economic and financial management of the enterprise (Bélanger, P.R. et al., 2002; Walton et al., 1994). The management side clearly welcomed this change of approach. It duly offered a wage increase in line with inflation – but less than the going rate in the sector – and also required formal union acceptance of labour flexibility, continuous improvement initiatives and the short-term use of sub-contract labour. In keeping with the new spirit of co-operation, or we might say collaboration, the manual convenor offered acceptance of the whole package in return for an extra third of a per cent.

In many ways, this style of leadership corresponds to a contemporary version of Batstone et al.'s (1977) categorization of the 'representative' senior steward. That is, the type who seeks accommodation with management through 'strong bargaining relations', and, it might now be added, who constitute a microcosm of a co-operative trade unionism that seeks a minimum of conflict with the employer (Müller-Jentsch, 1988, cited in Smith, 2001). Since Batstone et al.'s typology of leadership behaviour much of the re-emerging interest in rank-and-file union leaders has focused on the dynamics of leading activist-member relations and the importance of independent, or participative, or mili-

tant styles (Darlington, 1994; Fairbrother, 1996; Greene et al., 2000; Kelly, 1998; Smith, 2001). Rank-and-file leadership has, therefore, gradually become equated with opposition to management and the ability to mobilize collective resistance. However, as this case study highlights, strong leadership qualities can also be a characteristic of union 'moderates', qualities that involve accommodation to management and a concomitant diligence in constraining the aspirations of the grassroots membership. The manual convenor:

> I think I drove our pay talks in a different direction. We can all sit here and argue, but I suggested that we have some open dialogue, and we had some reasonable management for once … They said all right then and we had four managers, who in my opinion were very positive, and they led us and we led them and we came out of a very tricky situation, where a reasonably low percentage was improved slightly and gave us something that I believe could get us through. Now when we voted, I led it and said, we need to pick this package up because we need to raise our competitiveness, we have to reduce costs and we have to compete in a market place, where it's getting harder. (Interview, October 2001)

In this instance, the members voted in accordance with the convenor's recommendation. During our interviews with the manual workers, it became clear that this was not a popular decision but the tradition of the plant was that the rank and file rarely overturned the advice of the leading activists. This was partly a result of the legacy of trust between the members and their elected representatives but also a function of the politics of factory survival and growing sense of job insecurity that we described in Chapter 3. The members' acceptance did not mean, however, that no tensions or contradictions were present. Whatever personal benefits accrued to the manual group convenor and other senior representatives who participated in the various partnership-style negotiations these did not seem to percolate down to the shop-floor. One reason for this was that, as we described above, although the senior managers at *Airframes* were committed to forging more co-operative relationships with the unions the substance and outcomes of these relationships had to conform to the profit-making demands of capitalist enterprise. In other words, union participation in managerial decision-making was grounded on their ultimate commitment to broad company objectives and the specific operational techniques of capital accumulation. That being the case, it raised the expectation for

managers that, unlike traditional rank and file unionism with its basis on independent shop steward activity and the maintenance of labour standards, the new co-operative trade unionism should place few constraints on the work of line managers whose actions directly shaped the quality of working life on the shop-floor. For these managers, a trade unionism based on partnership meant that their crucial managerial prerogatives remained intact, as did their overriding accountability for plant profitability and efficiency. The end result was that the promotion of partnership by senior managers gave line managers a greater confidence to oppose the rank and file job controls that we described in Chapter 4. This 'local difficulty' for partnership meant that whatever 'softening' of industrial relations took hold at the senior management level adversarial relations remained intact on the shop-floor. Different workshop stewards commented on this, for example:

> The manager who just left was a tyrant who was clean straight out of the sixties. He would shout scream and yell. When we started off two or three years ago, and my stewards and I went on some union courses, we did some role play about this issue. And you know the lecturer was like, 'your bang out of order pal, don't forge this, this is role play, you want to be a bit more realistic.' And I was like, 'that's what it was really like'. And they couldn't believe it. (Interview, aircraft fitter, AMICUS-AEEU shop steward, November 2001)

The contradiction between union participation and management's aggressive insistence on 'the right to manage' engendered tensions in the relations between the stewards and both their members and the plant convenor. The stewards felt that if too many middle managers could not keep to their side of the bargain and showed no interest in compromise then their own positions would be undermined. At the same time the convenor risked becoming completely detached from the membership. As has been noted in other partnership case studies, this disjunction of interests threatened to isolate the plant's union activists (see for example, Danford et al., 2002a; Taylor and Ramsay, 1998). The following comment exemplified this:

> It's starting to come to a stage now where people are saying, 'well the union are saying yes all the time and getting nothing for it'. I mean, take my manager. We'll sit there and if I agree with what he's saying or he can agree with what I'm saying then fine. But we've also had a couple of situations where I've said 'no we're not doing

> that' and he's said 'oh well we'd better get Gary up [the convenor]'. So Gary comes and 'irons out the wrinkles' and in the end the manager gets what he wants. Because Gary says, 'well yes we've got to be a bit flexible'. So I go back to the workshop-floor and they say to me 'what's the bloody point if you were going to turn around and say we're going to do it anyway'. (TGWU shop steward, October 2001)

The final irony of the manual group convenor's developing partnership relationship, an event that increased the prospect of his isolation from rank and file members, was played out during the final weeks of our fieldwork research. Fears of a redundancy announcement swept through the *Airframes* factory following sudden press speculation over a shortfall in orders in December 2001. These fears concretized less than two weeks before the Christmas shutdown when the company announced a raft of job losses at different plants across the UK. However, the case study factory appeared to be spared from this, a development that the plant convenor attributed to his new partnership approach. This view was explained at length on the day of the announcement:

> There was supposed to be a redundancy announcement today and they haven't done it. I talked them out of it. Now there was one in Southampton, 600 out of 1000, there was another one down the road here, they've announced redundancies all around the *Airframes* Group apart from here and that's because I've persuaded the company not to do it. I'd like to think that that's because of the partnership. I don't think that we'd have been treated different if we hadn't had that partnership.
>
> I said to them, "This time of year, you announce the redundancy, it effects the community, when *Airframes* sneezes, we all catch a cold in the town … Maybe we'll ruin everyone's Christmas, why do it? When we've always managed no compulsory redundancies in the past, we've got our number through voluntaries. All you do is put your whole work force through the griller of being worried for 3 months while your talking about it, and by the end of it you've got it through voluntary means. Let's try and do it the other way round. let the voluntary people go and then see what the problem is afterwards. They've listened to that logic and I got a press statement, and I have to agree with the company, it's only a few words, but you can see that there's community and social responsibilities in

> there and I like to think that I pricked the company's conscience. I appreciate their trust. That goes a long way with me, the fact that maybe I was listened to for once. (Interview, December 2001)

Early in January 2002, just after the Christmas break, the company made a second announcement. There would be a further 1000 redundancies of which 600 would fall on the case study plant. It says much about the harsh reality of partnership that despite the heightened job insecurity at this period and growing perception that some job losses were inevitable, the size of the redundancy came as a complete shock to the workforce and unions, and presumably to the manual group convenor.

The non-manual unions

The non-manual bargaining group's attitude to the idea of developing partnership was, in many respects, quite different to that of the manual group leadership. Although the non-manual unions welcomed the potential of greater involvement, both the AMICUS-MSF convenor and the local staff representatives felt that management's partnership agenda placed excessive emphasis upon business interests. These activists sought an alternative partnership, something that centred more on the promotion of independent worker interests. In 1997, the non-manual unions had launched their own partnership initiative. Succeeding in appropriating the company's own business rhetoric, the unions established a new forum entitled, '*Business Improvement Through People*'. This was initially supported by senior management and required union representatives and company directors to discuss collective membership concerns outside of the traditional bargaining framework, concerns such as employee morale and workplace stress. However, although these discussions did generate one or two examples of new company policy, the forum atrophied as managers began to lose interest and prevaricate over policy implementation. As one ACTSS representative put it, 'it became in our opinion a talking shop – you would find one month the same thing would be discussed, what we were going to do, what we weren't going to do, but nothing ever was done about anything.'

By the time of the research, the non-manual unions' position on partnership was far more cynical, shaped by a belief that management's accommodating rhetoric in fact obscured widespread resistance to notions of meaningful union or employee participation. For example, despite his wish for positive dialogue with the company as a

means of prioritizing the long-term job security interests of his members and their local community, the non-manual group convenor articulated his intense dissatisfaction with management's attitudes to the union:

> I think there is this bloody arrogance within management that says quite clearly, all the clever people are in management therefore nobody below management level can possibly have anything useful to offer. And if you extrapolate that on to, say, where do unions fit in this then the position is even worse … I think we certainly feel very frustrated in terms of the lack of what we've been able to deliver. (Interview, October 2001)

Just as we saw with the manual group, the non-manual union representatives faced substantial managerial resistance to any weakening of their prerogatives. Collective bargaining over pay and conditions was regarded as legitimate, union influence over changes to the labour process or staff deployment was not. This was partly a function of historical patterns of weaker white-collar union leverage at the point of production (Carter, 1988; Danford et al., 2002b; Smith, 1987; Smith and Whalley, 1996). The implication of 'modernized' industrial relations in white-collar areas was that just as partnership was supposed to weaken rank and file job controls on the shop-floor, in the office environment it was supposed to pre-empt any signs of their emergence. The non-manual group convenor again:

> Take the simplest of issues. We're currently debating with the company issues concerning mobility and flexibility of labour. But everyone focuses on the fact that our management team can't be trusted, won't operate that in a sympathetic and sensitive way. They'll operate it in the way that says, 'well I'm bloody fed up with talking to you about looking for someone else, I'm bloody moving you Monday and you can lump it whether you like it or not.' (Interview, October 2001)

Unlike the position of the manual unions, we discerned few points of tension or conflict between the non-manual union leadership and office-based representatives and members over these issues. The different union representatives were united with their convenor in aspiring towards a form of partnership that might offer meaningful participation for an independent workplace union – and united in their various

experiences of a dismissive management. The following view was typical:

> Basically, for me partnership means that you should be treated as an equal partner. And that's the important thing, because the feeling at the moment is when they talk about partnership, we're very much a junior partner. There's a feeling that when consultation is considered it's a case of, 'we'll talk about it but we won't necessarily do anything about what you say.' That's not a partnership. (Interview, AMICUS-MSF Rep, Technical Authors, October 2001)

A further factor that distinguished the non-manual unions from their manual counterparts was the contrasting nature of union leadership. This had repercussions for management's attempt to develop partnership as well as leader relationships with rank and file members. As we described above, the convenor of the manual bargaining group displayed a moderate style of leadership that led logically to an uncritical support for the principle of partnership. This created significant tensions with his shop stewards and members. In contrast to this, the style of leadership of the non-manual group convenor tended to be more participative. Democratic accountability to the rank and file was regarded as paramount. Although direction and guidance were applied where necessary, the overriding principle that governed the social action of the convenor and his lay activists was mass membership involvement through systematic communication and debate. The importance of such participative leadership styles for maintaining a robust, collective labour organization has been noted by Darlington (1994) and Greene et al. (2000). The ability of leading activists to use the formal and informal democratic structures of a workplace union in order to frame issues and collectivize worker discontent is also central to questions of agency and process in mobilization theory (Kelly, 1998; Taylor and Bain, 2003). The implications for workplace partnership were that such a style of leadership contradicted management's demand for responsible union partners who might unquestioningly work with the company. An example of this was the unions' response to the important partnership principle of treating shared, confidential company information with due caution and secrecy (Martínez Lucio and Stuart, 2002b; Stuart and Martínez Lucio, 2002). The convenor:

> I think what is the saving grace for MSF is that ever since I've been involved, we've tended to work very much on the basis of no secrets

> and I think we're as open and honest with our members generally in terms of what we communicate as any organization could be. Very rarely is anything communicated to us that we don't communicate on … because if it's communicated to us on the basis of it's going to impact on our members then we're going to share it with them, then that's that. If I can't pass it on then don't tell me. (Interview October 2001)

The non-manual unions' opposition to management's version of partnership eventually created new tensions between the two bargaining groups. These manifested themselves in a number of ways during the period of the research. For example, our management interviews elicited the common view that the manual group leadership was far more supportive of management-led change compared to their 'difficult' and 'more distrustful' non-manual counterparts. Although the two bargaining groups traditionally worked together and co-ordinated their actions, by the time of the research this had reduced to a more pragmatic co-operation constrained at times by mutual suspicion. During our interviews, the manual group convenor referred to the tensions caused by partnership, 'that my union is very positive on it, whereas MSF have a bigger problem with it but their culture's so different, what they see as important and what we see as important'. Similarly, the non-manual convenor said, 'I wouldn't say our relationships with production staff in terms of every day conversations are as good as perhaps they've been in the past.'

The 2002 annual wage negotiations provided a clear example of this. The negotiations were marked by a clear fracture between the two bargaining groups. As we described above, fairly early in the negotiating period the manual union convenor persuaded his members to accept a moderate pay increase. This was without reference to the non-manual group. By contrast, the non-manual union leadership strongly recommended rejection on the grounds that the pay offer was insufficient and that it was linked to unacceptable preconditions. These preconditions included a weakening of non-manual employees' flexi-time benefits and management demands for total flexibility in staff deployment across the site. The leadership's recommendation was overwhelmingly endorsed at a series of mass meetings. The more oppositionalist stance of the non-manual bargaining group eventually prevailed when management offered an extra half a percent during union preparations for a strike ballot and all preconditions to the offer were withdrawn.

Partnership and union strategy: The case of *JetCo*

The *JetCo* workforce had experienced recurrent mass redundancies during the 1980s and 1990s. From a peak of 13,000 workers in 1978, site employment had reduced to 4300 by the year 2001. Although both manual and non-manual occupations were adversely affected by these reductions, the manual areas suffered disproportionately with less than 2000 workers employed by the time of the research. The manual workplace unions (the AEEU and MSF Craft, now AMICUS-AEEU, and the TGWU) had also experienced a more draconian reduction – and victimization – of their activists. For instance, 50 out of the plant's 70 AEEU shop stewards lost their jobs during a redundancy in 1991–92.

By 2001, the activist networks had largely been reconstructed and the ratios of union members to lay representatives had recovered to their former levels. That the survivors of this rationalization process were able to rebuild their union organization was testament to the resilient trade union consciousness and collective culture in the plant. Theories and models of rank-and-file leadership place much emphasis upon those who are able to articulate grievances and to foster member participation (Darlington, 1994; Kelly, 1998). However, in contexts of plant and union survival it is quite often the attributes of plain fortitude and commitment that count. Two representatives commented on this:

> But, then in between 1994 and 97, we embarked on a plan of approaching a lot of different people with the view of rebuilding the trade union … First of all we obviously wanted somebody that clearly showed any interest and of course it was very difficult because people didn't want to put their heads above the parapet. And again we recognized that with some trepidation because we were exposing people to risk. But nevertheless, we did have a measure of success and gradually over the period of time we managed to build it up. Not at first to the levels we were in 92, but nevertheless we got stewards … we had a mixture of some of the old people who'd let other people take the reins up and of course they came back to help us but we also had some new younger people come up and they'd take a role up. (Interview, AMICUS-AEEU Convenor, June 2001)

Another:

> We lost the shop steward Tommy Briggs because he felt, 'I'm going to be targeted, I have got a wife and kids', and he went. Shortly

> after, probably about 12 months, we held a meeting in that section and asked them, we desperately need a shop steward. Somebody came forward, in his early 50s, the like of which we didn't know what he had done for the last 20 years, he had never been prominent at a mass meeting. But obviously had all the gut trade union within him, came forward, 'Yes, OK I'll do that' and he is now significant in our organization. (Interview, AMICUS-AEEU Shop Steward, July 2001)

Compared to *Airframes*, the *JetCo* unions were, therefore, subject to much greater pressures of plant survival based on their concrete experience of job loss. However, although it would be misleading to suggest that job insecurity did not feature in the unions' positions on partnership, the ideology of plant survival was not as significant for shaping the different union strategies. Perhaps this was because the union activists had become so hardened to the effects of redundancy and, indeed, cynical with regard to management intentions. The more important factor governing union discussions was their assessment of the merits of competing organizing strategies for realizing greater union power at work, an assessment that was inevitably mediated by personal experience of management and the acute imbalance of power in capitalist social relations. In the context of the co-existence of conflict and co-operation in the employment relationship, the activists recognized that the corollary of the pragmatics of union bargaining was a degree of overlap between different tactics. Nevertheless, their overall strategies were grounded on a dichotomy between partnership and opposition. And in this regard there was a pronounced difference between the approaches of the manual and non-manual bargaining groups that was a mirror image of the situation at *Airframes*. These contrasting positions will now be explored.

The manual unions

In the main, *JetCo*'s leading manual union activists did not deny that co-operation in the employment relationship, including the co-operation of shop stewards, was an important facet of maintaining the viability of the factory organization. Different stewards felt that despite the new buzz words of partnership and industrial harmony, facilitating workplace change through collective bargaining processes had always been a key component of their union role. Nevertheless, their lived experience of the inherent conflicts of interest that are inherent to the dynamics of capitalist enterprise caused the stewards to reject the pos-

sibility that a new, more inclusive management might render conflict and struggle redundant. Quite often this was attributed to management's lack of trust when dealing with unions, a microcosm of a more widespread pattern in British work establishments (Bacon and Storey, 2000). Many shop stewards we spoke to dwelt upon this. For instance:

> You can't get honesty out of them. In a company this size, they won't tell you anything other than what they want to tell you. Any partnership you have has got to have a certain amount of trust and honesty between the partners, and I can assure you that in this place you have got none of it. (Interview, TGWU Shop Steward, July 2001)
>
> How can you have a partnership when you have been told that you are never going to be guaranteed a job, you could be sacked at any time I decide, but I want you to be a partnership? (Interview, AMICUS-AEEU Shop Steward, July 2001)

It should also be noted that these stewards tended to feel that pervasive low trust relations were a symptom of the implausibility of partnership rather than its cause. The real source of this implausibility was something that was quite transparent. That is, the problem of low trust and the ordering of management's priorities arose from the fundamental dynamic of the capitalist employment relationship itself, the exploitation of labour power for the generation of value, surplus and profit. For example:

> No I don't think it will ever happen. I'm a believer that the company is driven now by the shareholder more and more, profit is becoming more and more paramount and the customer is also supposedly key. And then the third part of that triangle is the employees and they always come last. And I believe they will always come last in a capitalist system. (Interview, AMICUS-AEEU Convenor, June 2001)

Another:

> I have not seen any shift or change in [management's] attitude in 25 years and I can't imagine it changing given the profit motive here … It's the profit motive. It leads to confrontation unless you take out that profit motive. I mean I would love that we were making civil engines so that all workers could go to Barbados for a

> fortnight for a year. But we are not doing that. We are making civil engines to charge people money to go somewhere and do things. And there is the rub. The company are in it for a profit and we are in it for a living. I have no confidence in changes whatsoever. (Interview, AMICUS-AEEU Senior Steward, July 2001)

Analysis of the style of manual group leadership at *JetCo* was complicated by the fact that, unlike the single convenor arrangement at *Airframes*, the leadership comprised a site executive made up of a plant convenor and a number of senior stewards who were responsible for shop stewards and members in their own business units. The leadership orientation of this site executive was shaped by a variety of political affiliations. These ranged from in one case, the Socialist Workers Party, in others, the old Bennite left, in others, just 'Old Labour', and in one case, a form of apolitical pragmatism that was still prepared to adopt militancy where this was deemed necessary. Despite this plurality in 'left' political orientation, the executive cohered in terms of a joint commitment to the same form of workplace unionism that we saw with the non-manual unions at *Airframes*. The convenor and senior stewards saw it as their job to lead the members, and to lead them in opposition to management where required, but never to leave the members behind. This was a leadership style that tended towards 'representative' democracy (Darlington, 1994). The required member-activist interaction was accomplished via the informal processes of regular steward patrols of the shop-floor in order to discuss points of concern with individual members and small groups and through the traditional collective forum of the mass meeting. As one senior steward said, 'we have sectional meetings and we have mass meetings, we don't make the decisions – yes we lead, yes we guide, yes we put forward propositions, but it is the members who make the decisions.'

Moreover, just as we saw with the non-manual unions at *Airframes*, this participative form of workplace unionism regarded the interests of the rank-and-file as paramount. It could not countenance the principle of divorcing itself from its rank and file base and working with management as a 'partner', for example, by sharing confidential information solely with management. This was because such practices were seen to place at risk the crucial relationship of trust between steward and worker that makes independent trade union organization possible. In one respect this was because, as the convenor put it, such partnership practices would inevitably mean that 'people would fail to come to you and worst of all, would see the union as a sop to the manage-

ment.' And, perhaps more fundamentally, it was because confidential information-sharing of this nature broke the ethical codes of democratic conduct that cemented the trust relations of rank and file trade unionism.

An example of this was provided at the time of the research. The senior manual group stewards had obtained an unauthorized and confidential company policy document entitled 'Operation Prairie'. This had proposed outsourcing the machining and fabrication work for engine combustion sub-assemblies, one of the core areas of engine manufacturing. The document indicated that the company intended transferring the work to a new conglomeration of companies based in Europe, the USA and Japan. If the policy was implemented then more shop-floor jobs would be lost. And yet the inference of partnership is that the new 'social partners' are expected to be co-operative with such long term company strategies through clandestine discussion rather than opt for confrontation through the open involvement of those who have most to lose from the strategy. The point to be made here is that, notwithstanding the much-heralded new transparency associated with partnership, democratic, rank and file participation is incompatible with it. The manual group convenor:

> A shop steward is elected by the membership to do a job for the membership. And if he doesn't do that then he's failing in his duties. I think it's absolutely essential. It is our policy not to hide anything from the membership. This Operation Prairie I talked about is a typical example, the day we got that we shared it with the membership. I think that's important. People should know. After all, with people setting up families, buying homes, taking out huge mortgages and staking their future and their families' future on that question then they should know, morally they should know … And I think that's one of the roles of the trade unions, to make sure that that information does go back to the membership. (Interview, June 2001)

The non-manual unions

The non-manual bargaining group, or at least its dominant constituent, was supportive of partnership. The group comprised two trade unions. AMICUS-MSF was the more powerful organization with around 1700 technical, engineering and supervisory staff members whilst the APEX section of the General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB-APEX) had just 120 clerical and ancillary staff.

The AMICUS-MSF convenor was a far-left member of the Labour Party during the 1980s. However, his political orientation began to shift at the end of that decade as a result of the formation of the MSF union, a merger between the Association of Scientific Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS) (his own union) and TASS. A powerful *Broad Left* organization within TASS was highly successful in running slates for regional and national elections and for controlling policy conference agendas. This *Broad Left* was dominated by the Communist Party and was hostile to any influence sought by members of alternative political groups that might question this dominance. As a result of this exclusion, some left activists sought refuge in *MSF for Labour*, an organization created by supporters of Roger Lyons, an Assistant General Secretary who campaigned against *Broad Left* and Communist Party influence and who would eventually become General Secretary of the new union. The eventual raison d'être of *MSF for Labour* was not to support political pluralism but instead to promote former ASTMS members in union elections (Carter, 1997). As a result of this underlying rivalry between old ASTMS and TASS activists, and his increasing involvement in the national politics of the union, *JetCo*'s AMICUS-MSF convenor became a strong supporter of Roger Lyons and underwent a gradual transformation from militant campaigner to New Labour trade unionist, albeit one who could take a critical stance at times.

However, the convenor's more positive attitude to partnership did not automatically follow New Labour policy or the creeping pragmatism of the national union. This provided an important contextual factor but what was equally significant was the convenor's feeling that the workplace union might extract more influence from a management that was prepared to develop partnership compared to the barren years prior to New Labour's election victory in 1997. The convenor felt that political change directly informed better relations between management and MSF which in turn engendered the conditions for partnership:

> You could almost feel the change, in the run up to the '97 elections when the whole mood of the country was changing. And then after the '97 election there was powerful change in the way [management] approached us. You've had significant change at a high level, with some of the previous old-style, Tory class warriors being replaced by the current lot who are much more akin with the spirit of the times. Blairite-type people in many ways. So it's definitely a lot better than it was. (Interview, June 2001)

This changing management attitude crystallized as more formal partnership relations in 1998, not long after the general election. At the beginning of that year, *JetCo*'s engineering director decided to launch a partnership initiative with MSF following his attendance at Government industrial relations forums and a visit to the exemplar partnership company of the time, Blue Circle. The director had a number of private meetings with the MSF convenor and agreed to his suggestion to bring in a management consultant and 'partnership facilitator' that had been used elsewhere by MSF and other trade unions. The consultant set up a number of separate management and union workshops that were supposed to act as cathartic, brainstorming sessions. An HR manager explained:

> 'You all think it's a good idea to go into partnership, what are you looking to get from partnership? What have been your worries?' He [the consultant] got it into a situation where people were able to put up everything that they feared or worried about, or, for management, what were their hang-ups about unions, if they had any. Have they got battle scars from the past? He got a lot of that stuff out, he did the same then on a couple of days where he took the union reps away and got them to bare their souls about their views and who they trusted and who they mistrusted and what they thought had gone well, what they thought had gone wrong. Some of those battle scars go back years. (Interview, June 2001)

A further series of workshops was arranged, this time on a joint management-union basis, to discuss the types of organizational issues that partnership might resolve. As a result of these, later in 1998, a partnership agreement was signed between management and MSF. The agreement attempted to formalize a new framework for partnership relationships rather than replace any procedural agreements or provide either management or the union with guaranteed undertakings. In particular, as the convenor put it, 'it didn't go into chapter and verse but it just said we have a commitment to work together to achieve certain things and to develop partnership'. The principal objectives comprised a number of key themes. For example, improving the operation of teamworking, improving company communications, and reducing engineering time without recourse to compulsory redundancies. Under the auspices of the partnership agreement different working groups comprising managers, union representatives and employees nominated

by AMICUS-MSF were then established in an attempt to resolve these issues.

Although the office-based AMICUS-MSF representatives displayed more cautious attitudes to partnership than their convenor, nevertheless, they were not opposed to participation in the management of work organization via these new working group techniques. In the context of the legacy of many years of union exclusion many of these representatives felt that influence through partnership, even if problematic, was preferable to no influence at all. However, by the time of the research in 2001–02, a good degree of scepticism had crept into their views. This was a result of ongoing staff redundancies and job insecurity and a tendency for some joint working parties to peter out. The representatives were also aware that partnership relations with some senior managers did not necessarily percolate throughout the management hierarchy because of the direct pressures of maintaining high performance on the shop-floor and in the design office. For example, one AMICUS-MSF engineering representative observed:

> I think with partnership you require two partners, and whereas from our point of view, and the employees' point of view, if we agree to do something then we continue to agree to do that. Now from management's point of view they have a lot of different influences which change month by month, personnel changes, business changes, etc, and basically I think it is they who have a problem with partnership because they cannot necessarily deliver on what they have promised to do. (Interview, June 2001)

As we suggested in our analysis of management's case for partnership, the AMICUS-MSF convenor also felt that deep divisions and a 'level of distrust' between the plant's senior managers and line managers resulted in a situation where senior managers would talk positively of the need for partnership whereas line managers were accountable only for results and implementing change programmes without hindrance. Indeed, although the convenor believed that the role for his union had changed in that 'we've become an agent of change as opposed to an opposer of change', he also conceded that this role lacked real substance when line management, those who implemented change at the point of production, were not prepared to countenance any weakening of their prerogatives (Interview notes, June 2001).

Although the respective partnership orientations of the *JetCo* manual and non-manual bargaining groups were the reverse of their *Airframes* counterparts, very similar schisms emerged. This was partly a function of the legacy of traditional 'them and us' feelings between manual and non-manual workers but it was further exacerbated by political differences over the challenge of management's developing partnership agenda. For instance, the senior stewards of the manual bargaining group conceded that whilst manual unions have traditionally viewed white collar unions with some suspicion because of perceived weaknesses in their capacity for militant struggle, there was, nevertheless, a good deal of de facto co-operation and co-ordinated campaigning between the two bargaining groups. However, the manual leadership felt that their contrasting positions on partnership had acted to weaken this co-operation and exacerbate a latent mutual distrust. As the convenor put it, '[the non-manuals] believe in partnership because they haven't got the structure we've got and they tend to have what I would consider a cosier relationship, even clandestine relationship, with the company.' (Interview notes, June 2001).

Conclusion

The first point to note from these studies of 'modernized' industrial relations is that they do not constitute sites of management indifference to partnership, or 'superficial partnership'. Management in both plants thought long and hard about the desirability of partnership relations with their trade unions and developed coherent rationales for their attempts to adopt new participative practices. However, the studies also emphasized how management intentions rarely coincide with trade union agendas of democratizing workplace relations.

The 'business case' for partnership in these high performance work contexts was based on a definition of 'organizational objectives' that embodied primarily the interests of capital and that sought to suppress structural antagonisms between capital and labour. The imperatives of capital accumulation and maximizing profitability were grounded on three key areas: increasing labour productivity, reducing design and production costs, and improving the efficiency of the long run process of design-to-build. Improvements in these had to be continual through a combination of incremental change and more radical work restructuring. In the context of the increasingly dynamic and competitive aerospace markets, management sought a greater room for manoeuvre and the ability to reform work practices more expeditiously than hith-

erto. However, neither company was keen to impose change on its workforce nor to become embroiled in time-consuming bargaining processes with trade unions. Management's interest in partnership was, therefore, to develop more sophisticated ideological supports for work reorganization that involved reducing the scope for worker resistance. The first facet of this was to legitimize agendas for change that were essentially management-controlled by giving workers a sense of participation rather than real influence (we explore this further in the following chapter). The second was to secure union commitment to, or at least acceptance of, the same agenda by inducing a shift in the qualitative nature of management-union interactions. The intended outcome was to replace antagonistic management-union relations with co-operative relations and only then to allow union participation in some (limited) aspects of organizational decision-making.

The trade union response to these management agendas was marked by internal contradictions and conflicts based on different ideological and pragmatic concerns. At *Airframes*, the leadership of the manual bargaining group adopted a position that bordered on passionate support for partnership, tempered only by rank-and-file experience of their managers' refusal or inability to weaken their local prerogatives, or to accept enhanced union bargaining over organizational change. By contrast, the critical stance of the non-manual group was based on a more participative leadership style that placed a much higher premium on rank and file trust and involvement. It would only endorse a definition of partnership that prioritized worker interests above business interests. At *JetCo*, the contrasting union positions were a mirror image of this. More than any other union group at the two plants, the *JetCo* manual unions were ideologically opposed to partnership on the basis of a complete mistrust of management intentions and a belief that it could not paper over the immanent conflicts of interest in the social relations of capitalist production. On the other hand, the dominant union in *JetCo*'s non-manual group, AMICUS-MSF, adopted a more supportive stance anticipating that new co-operative relations with management might re-vitalize a union influence made fragile by the legacies of two decades of Thatcherism.

Management's 'modernization' agenda did partially succeed in recasting relations with the two union groups that supported partnership. Through a combination of voluntarism and gradual incorporation the rank-and-file leaderships of both groups came to participate in a more co-operative dialogue with senior management over a range of workplace issues, albeit always on management's terms. However, it

was difficult to discern any advantageous material outcomes for their members. For example, both union groups had little to no influence over decisions governing staffing levels and job loss whilst their union counterparts who adopted a more oppositionalist approach were able to lever more influence over wages (at *Airframes*) and supervisory prerogatives (at *JetCo*). A related problem was the reconstituted role of the line manager. One of the purposes of organizational restructuring and decentralization was to make line managers more accountable for unit profitability and performance. As a result, many managers quite naturally demanded a strengthening of their prerogatives and came to regard partnership as a means of further reducing union influence rather than fostering independent union participation. Another significant change was the emergence of potentially damaging new fault lines in intra- and inter-union relations. At *Airframes*, these were between the manual and non-manual unions and between the leadership and local stewards of the manual union group. At *JetCo*, similar tensions were manifest between the manual union group and the dominant non-manual AMICUS-MSF. These divisions clearly undermined the prospects for union solidarity that is a key ingredient of any cohesive opposition to otherwise unfettered managerial action in multi-union plants. They also raised the possibility that for union relations the key question is not whether partnership at the workplace level can either bolster the influence of union full-time officials at the expense of so-called 'displaced activists', or alternatively, lead to enhanced influence for union organization and workplace activists alike (Geary and Roche, 2003). Instead, the divisions in union relations reported in this chapter may reflect a more fundamental contradiction between the democratic rhetoric of partnership and the reality of rank and file experience, creating what might be termed a 'displaced rank and file'. It is to this issue that we turn next.

7

Partnership and Worker Participation: Voices from the Floor

In one of the more influential pieces of business analysis to emerge towards the end of the twentieth century, Walton (1985) argued for a fundamental rethink of the management of workplace relations. Incorporating a managerial philosophy of multiple stakeholderism, Walton championed a proposed shift from direct employee control to employee commitment via the channels of reward strategy, job security and, most notably, worker participation in organizational decision-making. This was swiftly followed by a plethora of studies, based mostly in manufacturing, that have postulated positive associations between employee participation, employee commitment and company performance (for example, Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1990; Wagner, 1994; Womack et al., 1990). Although Walton's conceptualization of a commitment strategy reflected primarily the indispensable demands of capitalist enterprise, with its emphasis on marketization, 'stretch' objectives for employee performance and continuous improvement (1985: 81), this did not prevent the principles of participation and commitment becoming central to a supposed 'democratization' of workplace relations. And, by the turn of the century, worker discretion and the opportunity to participate in decision-making came to define the essence of a so-called 'democratic corporate culture' in high performance firms (Parks, 1995: 19).

Contemporary analysis of the extent to which employee participation mechanisms actually deliver greater influence for workers has been dominated by managerialist agendas. Much of the work is characterized by surveys of managers to establish firm characteristics, policies and practices and then to assess any association with different indicators of organizational performance (for example, Black and Lynch, 1999; Guest et al., 2003). These agendas also adopt a 'systems-fit'

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

approach by emphasizing that firms can only achieve their high performance objectives when different employee participation techniques are used in a mutually-reinforcing amalgam. For instance, both Boxall and Purcell (2003) and Sisson and Storey (2000) observe that a combination of direct and indirect employee voice systems is linked to better firm performance. Similarly, the central characteristic of a partnership company for Coupar and Stevens is that direct communication and indirect consultative techniques are coherently linked so that 'it is not always clear where communication ends and consultation begins. Companies typically use a very wide range of differing activities to develop the mix needed to gain staff commitment and achieve success in the marketplace' (1998: 151).

The primary research that has adopted this agenda has provided little consistent evidence of inevitable positive outcomes for workers, or indeed, employers. Although some of the USA-based research tends to be optimistic about this, recent survey work in the UK provides a more cautionary picture. Guest et al. (2003) found no positive association between the use of 'bundles' of participatory HRM practices and a firm's performance over time; Gallie et al. (2001) detected significant employer resistance to extending workers' scope for decision-making; and whilst Ramsay et al.'s (2000) evidence did support an association between the use of high performance work systems and organizational performance, this was not attributable to positive worker outcomes.

This chapter attempts to cast new light on some of these questions by adopting an agenda that prioritizes the interests of labour rather than using the latter as a mediating factor for the measurement of organizational performance. The two aerospace case studies might be expected to offer fertile ground for the emergence of a supposed new workplace 'democratization' since as a number of studies have found, the practice and process of participation are most commonly located in high skill, high technology environments (Gallie et al., 1998; Hodson, 2001). A wide array of direct and indirect participative practices were, indeed, well embedded at both plants. What follows is an analysis of worker experiences of these practices structured around a conventional multi-themed conceptualization of participation at work.

The most common forms of employee participation are direct, indirect and financial (Marchington et al., 1992). Of these, we focus upon those processes that are supposed to offer employees more tangible input into different facets of organizational decision-making – namely, direct participation primarily through two-way communication and indirect participation through joint consultation and through union

representation and collective bargaining (Hyman and Mason, 1995; Sisson and Storey, 2000). The analysis will consider the extent to which workers in high performance work settings do derive benefits from these processes. By benefits we mean real employee influence over a sufficient breadth of strategic issues that affect quality of working life and employee futures and of the necessary depth that allows meaningful leverage (Collom, 2003).

However, there is a further element to our agenda. It has been argued that what distinguishes employee gains from partnership – as opposed to gains from traditional bargaining relations – is the notion that employees secure favourable outcomes from the *process* of partnership itself. That is, the benefits of both influence over management and real involvement in governance processes (Findlay et al., 2002). A number of writers have noted that we have insufficient understanding of how the participative mechanisms of partnership work in practice, or more precisely, what consultation actually means for its participants (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2003: 353; Terry, 2003b: 494). Our priority in this chapter, therefore, is not to measure the impact of employee participation on managerial and organizational performance but instead to consider an alternative set of interests and outcomes. In other words, to explore workers' experience of participation in organizational contexts where management were promoting more co-operative workplace relations.

Direct worker participation

Direct participation normally involves face to face or written communication between managers and subordinates (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2003). This includes employee involvement in teams and problem-solving groups of the type that was analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5, that is, task participation. However, our interest here is in the extent to which employees have a say in broader organizational decision-making through direct communication techniques. This communication can come in a variety of forms: team briefings, presentations to a whole workforce, company videos, newsletters, and so on. They often constitute the organizational means by which management information is cascaded down to a workforce. Consequently, the practice of direct worker participation is normally associated with downward communication. The advocates of partnership often employ the discourse of human resource management to raise the prospects of employee 'empowerment' through these communication processes. It

is argued that the provision of more extensive information regarding work and organizational futures equips workers with sufficient so-called 'social capital' to allow their participation in decisions that go beyond the narrow parameters of task or work routine. Direct communication is supposed to provide the necessary data that not only engenders amongst employees a greater appreciation of managerial logic and a sense of allegiance to the firm but also a greater confidence to articulate their own standpoint to management. For these reasons, more extensive management–employee communication, incorporating systematic two-way interactions (often without union mediation), has become one of the central characteristics of organizational participation in partnership-based, high performance firms (Ackers et al,. 2004; Appelbaum et al., 2000; Coupar and Stevens, 1998; Freeman and Rogers, 1999; Wood and de Menezes, 1998).

The substantive basis of these empowerment claims has of course been questioned by a number of critical HRM writers. For example, Ramsay (1997) has argued that direct employee participation techniques can offer management the means of culturally shaping employee attitudes so that the emergence of an apparent consensus is based upon the acceptance of objectives that are defined by management rather than an independent employee will. Analyzing these processes in greater depth, Townley (1994) has conceptualized employee communication along two interlinked dimensions. These are communication as a process of education and communication as a strategy of commitment. It is argued that the emergence of the 'enterprise culture' in British workplaces during the 1980s and 1990s was accompanied by attempts to bolster the legitimacy of managerial decision-making by using direct communication techniques to elicit employees' understanding of the new economic environments in which their firms operated. Workers required instruction in business and market 'realities' so as to minimize feelings of 'them and us' and to encourage a sense of mutuality or cohesion between the interests of shareholders, management and the workforce (p.612). Townley also contended that this educative rationale could be more easily sustained by winning employee commitment to workplace change rather than mere compliance. It is in this sense that employee communication contains an additional rationale involving a commitment strategy. Based on the understanding that securing normative compliance requires engaging with employee interest at the wider organizational level as well as at the level of the task or job, communication as a strategy of commitment seeks to encourage employee attachment to the

organization. This is by such means as informing employees about future plans and the implications of these for the organization and the workforce (p.616).

These themes of communication, commitment and control were explored in the two aerospace case studies. The first point to note in investigating the pattern of direct participation at *Airframes* and *JetCo* is the broad range of communication practices adopted by both plants. At *Airframes*, these comprised regular team briefing sessions, an annual managing director's address to the workforce, an intranet-based question and answer system, regular communication bulletins and newsletters, a newsflash cascade system, periodic employee attitude surveys, and an array of communication boards that provided information on plant, departmental and team performance. *JetCo* followed a similar pattern: weekly team briefing sessions, monthly business communication sessions with unit directors, annual presentations by directors, periodic employee attitude surveys, regular distribution of separate company and business unit newsletters, and the same array of communication boards.

This high utilization of communication practices was in some respects quite predictable. Survey research on employee commitment in the UK has shown how 'communicative involvement' is most strongly associated with large, high skill, high technology work organizations (Gallie et al., 1998; see also Cully et al., 1999). However, when we compare the pattern of communication in the two case studies with national surveys, and indeed, with practice in the 'high performance' aerospace industry itself, it is clear that the case studies stand out. For instance, a SBAC-sponsored survey of HPWS practices in British aerospace plants found that 67 per cent of workplaces utilized team briefings, 58 per cent operated information-sharing programmes, 68 per cent provided information about business plans and 41 per cent organized regular employee attitude surveys (Thompson, 2002). All of these techniques were in fairly widespread use at *Airframes* and *JetCo* but the full range of practices and, indeed, the total mass of communication was much greater than this. Both plants could therefore be viewed as exemplar establishments for the provision of direct worker participation and one might expect a pattern of favourable worker outcomes to emerge from this.

In both plants, team briefing was designed as the foremost technique for disseminating company information and engendering dialogue and feedback from employees. In most cases, line managers would meet with their directorate managers each week to receive the latest infor-

mation cascade. This would be fed to team leaders who would then hold a weekly brief with their subordinates. Other communication techniques such as newsflash cascades and newsletters were treated as back-up systems for the team briefings. One *JetCo* director described a typical team briefing routine:

> We'd start with business issues, you know, what's happening in the business as a whole and anything from within the company, and even down to an aircraft crash, you know, 'one of our aircraft crashed in Singapore, we don't know what the answers are to it, we don't know whether it's pilot, engine or whatever – we'll come back to you on that' kind of thing. So we go from business and company issues, down to production performance, down to what's happening locally and if need be the social issues, 'Joe's wife had a baby and they're doing well' and that. (Interview, Production Director, June 2001).

The worker interviews and questionnaire surveys at both firms explored employee experiences of participation through direct communication practices. The first point to note was that although a minority of employees complained of a lack of access to some of these practices the majority view confirmed that the provision of company information had greatly improved compared to previous decades when communication was restricted to management-union consultation. Some employees, albeit minorities, also felt that management was more proactive in seeking their views on change proposals and in involving them in decisions governing local work practices. However, when we investigated the breadth and depth of employee involvement, we found that for many workers, manual and non-manual alike, the acquisition of certain forms of company data and the ensuing dialogue with management had little impact on their ability to influence, or even fully understand, workplace decisions. We first consider this by looking in turn at employee experience on the shop-floor and in the office.

Direct communication on the shop-floor

For the two sets of manual workers, these limitations were partly attributable to the restrictive nature of the communication regime where it was felt that management was concerned mainly with fostering dialogue on production-oriented themes rather than broader issues encompassing future plans for the workplace. The following view was typical in both plants:

> We have communications once a Monday, a team brief. What aircraft is going where, this one's going to paint, this one's going to be loaded, and so on. So that's an aircraft communication. Once a month we also have an assembly hall communication, where each stage can go down to the conference and talk or put their points forward to the Ops Director and he'll answer them there and then or he'll get his sidekick to come and answer them. But as to knowing what's *actually* going on, there is no communication, not really, not in the sense of the group *Airframes*. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, October 2001).

Townley's (1994) contention that management utilizes such communication techniques as team briefings and management presentations for the strategic purposes of education and commitment were only partially borne out by worker experiences on the shop-floor. The productionist agenda of the team briefing system was certainly designed to instil a greater employee awareness of manufacturing problems and the need for organizational effectiveness. Management also anticipated that a new employee attachment to the production process and the wider enterprise might ensue from this. However, committed to their jobs as many workers were, the impact of direct communication was not so much one of subtle 'normative control' but instead a more rudimentary form of direct control. Normative control might be expected to take hold where workers are incorporated into managerial agendas through active participation in discussions and decisions. In contrast to this, many manual workers at both plants described processes by which managers manipulated communication, instilled a wariness in their subordinates against raising alternative employee-centred agendas, and effectively used the direct communication system as an instrument for maintaining supervisory control. The following two workers' comments instantiate this. They describe how line managers maintained control of the process of 'worker participation' – at times involving evasion and concealment – in order to preserve their own prerogatives and the discipline of production on the shop-floor:

> We have a lot of meetings and briefings and stuff like that and there's always questions no problem, but it always seems as though they either don't answer it directly or they just steer around it and get to the point they want to get to anyway. You never get a direct answer. And they've all been on the management courses and they know all the background so they know when to bring it around to

> their point anyway, don't they? You just never get a direct answer for a question. (Interview, *JetCo* Maintenance Engineer, June 2001)

Another:

> Well on the shop-floor we get a briefing every week which would be following the management meeting. But I've seen both sides because I worked in the office a while ago, and I had to sit in on these supervisor meetings and it was strange seeing the stuff that was held back from us when I was on the shop-floor. The things that they talked about with us and what was said in there. Things like future orders or what was coming up, or what work they had to do that week, the shift patterns or whether there would be any overtime. It was very political I would say. I'm not saying that some of these things were not communicated to the shop-floor. But the information in the office was just more in-depth really. I mean I can see why they keep things back like future orders and overtime. I've worked on the mass projection schedule which is future orders and I was told when I started working in there that that was to be confidential and not talked about on the shop-floor. I mean obviously they've got their reasons. They're afraid the shop-floor will slow down. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, October 2001).

In addition, a number of workers described the personal risk and threat to security that can be inherent to direct, individualized forms of employee voice (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). Put bluntly, this was an articulation of a sense of fear of having one's 'number marked' if workers were seen to publicly question management's rationale. An ex-shop steward at *Airframes* summarized this:

> Some guys will speak their mind but immediately you're earmarked aren't you? As a shop steward, I acted as spokesman, so they usually asked me to ask the questions so that individuals won't be singled out as having an 'attitude problem'. But there is definitely a thing there that guys are afraid to speak out. (Interview, Aircraft Fitter, November 2001).

The main exception to this pattern of negative reaction to management communication was at the 'greenfield' *Wasp* assembly unit in the *Airframes* plant (described in Chapter 4). In this case, many assembly

workers displayed much greater satisfaction with both the production-oriented dimensions of the communication agendas and the form of manager-worker dialogue. This view was partly a function of their armed services backgrounds where communications are accepted rather than questioned (indeed a good number of the *Wasp* team leaders and line managers themselves had higher rank armed services records).

Direct communication on the office-floor

The pattern of attitudes to direct participation by non-manual employees was in many respects similar to the manual worker experience despite a difference in the content of the communication agendas. Understandably, there was less emphasis upon immediate production themes. Instead, team and departmental briefings concentrated on such issues as business unit and company performance, project issues, and changes in management staff. Although, unlike the shop-floor areas, there was little indication of managers using the communication practices to tighten direct control and discipline in their areas, neither was there evidence of processes of normative control taking hold. A good number of non-manual employees felt that their senior managers failed to display sufficient trust in their subordinates and refrained from generating the necessary dialogue that might engage employee interest. Indeed, it could be argued that normative dissonance rather than normative control is a more apposite conceptualization of worker participation outcomes in such low trust settings.

For example, the following two *JetCo* engineers articulated a widely-held view that the communication system was of little utility because the management teams that controlled it were so detached from the office-floor. Many writers might treat this separation in terms of status difference, which at its most tangible it is. But the more pertinent separation was one of interests:

> From higher up the general overview we get is, how can I put this, it's like a great big gearbox. You know, we've got this little flywheel spinning up here, which is the top management, and we get fed from them but by the time all the gears have turned, you know, the little shaft at the end, which is us, is just tickling around. So that's the feeling. Do you know what I mean? It's just that sometimes these big things they talk about – very little seems to happen. (Interview, Production Engineer, June 2001).

The second engineer explained this gearbox metaphor in more depth:

> There is a lot of potential for two-way communication but a lot of the time you don't get an opportunity to communicate properly … a lot of the time it's more a process of management simply telling you what's relevant to them at a higher level. It's not really you communicating on what's relevant to you. I think management don't really realize what communication people actually want. They're not really bothered about management changes at a very high level at other sites, they're not really bothered about what the senior management thinks of them, what they are bothered about is things like whether their friend is going to be made redundant down the corridor. (Interview, Stress Engineer, June 2001).

Such employee experience starkly contradicts the aspirations of those who support the new workplace partnership where both the recognition of legitimate differences of interest between partners and an injection of a degree of trust and respect are crucial to more co-operative employment relations (IPA, 1997; TUC, 1999). In both plants, it amounted to a suppression of any alternative sets of interests that do not coincide with corporate agendas. The consequence of this for many employees – manual and non-manual – was a feeling that they could influence very little beyond the sphere of task, craft or work routine. The following view summarized this:

> I don't think we influence anything. Certainly not senior management bods. I don't think they see us as being in the know or we're not clever enough to work it out. I mean it's strange because most people in *Airframes*, we've all been through higher education, we're not dummies by the very nature of what we do. But I think management see it as being, 'nothing to do with you, you just get on with your job and leave it to us'. (Interview, *Airframes* Design Engineer, November 2001).

Direct participation and workplace democracy

In different ways these employee experiences exemplify a contradiction between the rhetoric and reality of partnership and indeed of human resource management more generally (see for instance, Legge, 1995; Sisson and Storey, 2000). However, what is of greater importance for workers themselves is the implication of this contradiction for

employee influence over work and livelihoods. This issue was explored more systematically at both plants by considering the extent of employee involvement in decisions governing two critical management initiatives that impacted upon longer term employee futures. Both were described in our analysis of organizational change in Chapter 3. At *Airframes*, the initiative was the creation of a joint venture between the company and an Italian aerospace rival (given the pseudonym *Agricola*), and at *JetCo*, it was the transfer of work away from the case study site.

Notwithstanding the claims of senior managers that employee understanding of, and direct involvement in organizational decision-making was the central component of their continuous improvement agendas, we uncovered patterns of worker disempowerment over both critical issues. The partnership principles of transparent information, meaningful consultation and taking account of employee concerns were all virtually absent from the key decision-making processes. In the case of the *Airframes-Agricola* joint venture, despite its implications for future workload and security, virtually every manual and non-manual employee we interviewed articulated a sense of profound alienation from the process of consultation. For example, one engineer described the company's adoption of emotional blackmail to excuse the lack of employee involvement:

> Plenty of communication, but absolutely no say in the matter. It suddenly occurred that the board of directors felt that we needed to merge with another company in order to ensure the future of the company. Which is a grand opening statement. And their way of saying that, 'if we don't do it, you guys are going to go bust and have no jobs'. So it was a very subtle piece of blackmail! We had no chance to feed our views in. It was more a case of we're going to start the due process with *Agricola* and we'll let you know when it's going to happen. (Interview, *Airframes* Customer Operations Engineer, October 2001).

Another highlighted the contrast between the abundance of local communication and the paucity of higher level consultation:

> Very poor, very poor again. Locally, departmental communication is very good. Take it up higher through the ranks it's extremely poor. The first time you hear about *Airframes* getting an order is on the news. You put the telly on, it's on the news. I didn't know about

> that. Or there will be some cameramen out on the gate, 'what do you think of such and such?' … 'I don't know, didn't know we had it.' Very poor. We don't know what *Agricola* is doing, we don't know how they fit in to the grand scheme of things, we don't know what we're building, we don't know what they're building. Communication's poor. (Interview, *Airframes* Flight Test Engineer, November 2001).

At *JetCo*, a similar pattern of employee exclusion was evident of which the issue of work transfer was just one example. Despite the discourse of partnership and co-operation that was integral to management rhetoric, the viewpoints and interests of the very workers who were directly affected by proposals to transfer work away from the case study site were systematically disregarded. For instance, one manual worker described how the decision to outsource engine gear manufacture to China came to the workforce's attention through fortuitous informational leaking rather than a more honest and transparent consultation:

> Yeah, the outsourcing of the gear work just happened. I think it was a leak, someone saw it on a website that said the work's going to China. So then they had to tell us then. If we hadn't had the leak they wouldn't have told us. There's a mole on the management side, I think. So no consultation at all. (Interview, *JetCo* Gear Grinder, June 2001).

Another worker explained how employees' attempts to challenge such proposals and offer constructive alternatives that defended their own long-term employment interests were often met with a dogmatic rebuttal:

> There was no dialogue whatsoever. As far as I am concerned nothing. We have been told it's going no matter what you say or do. 'Yes, the decision has been made.' We have been told that time and time again. Question: 'what if we did … ?' Answer: 'no matter it's going.' Question: 'what if … ?' Answer: 'no it's going.' Question: 'can't we … ?' Answer: 'no it's going.' So there is no consideration of alternatives at all … they want us to stand back and let them take all our work away leaving us with nothing to do, they expect us to stand back and just roll over. And they get all funny when you say you are taking our livelihoods away. (Interview, *JetCo* Sheet Metal Worker, July 2001).

The extent and scope of direct worker participation through the different communication techniques were also investigated by the workforce questionnaire surveys. Different sets of questions adopted by the WERS98 employee survey (see Cully et al., 1999) were used to elicit views on management performance in providing information on workplace change, responding to employee suggestions, involving employees in decision-making and consulting employees on a broad range of workplace issues. The results of these survey questions are presented in Tables 7.1 and 7.2.

To varying degrees, the data indicate a considerable democratic deficit in direct worker participation outcomes, a pattern that confirms the interview findings. Given the significant increase in the mass of direct communication at both plants we might have expected a favourable employee assessment of management performance in keeping workers up to date with changes at work. Although sizeable minorities of the different employee groups gave their managers positive ratings, the majority view in every case – except *JetCo*'s own managers – was negative (Table 7.1). For developing partnership agendas an equally important question is the extent to which managers listen to their subordinates and involve them in decision-making. In both plants, larger majorities of non-manual and manual employees felt excluded from these processes. This was especially the case for manual employees. At *Airframes*, 66 per cent of shop-floor workers thought their managers were either poor or very poor at responding to employees' suggestions and 65 per cent indicated the same about managers involving employees in decision-making. At *JetCo*, the corresponding figures were higher, at 72 per cent and 77 per cent respectively.

Table 7.2 provides a picture of the scope of direct worker participation. The four themes of employee consultation on future plans for the workplace, staffing and redundancy issues, working practices and pay issues provide an indication of the extent to which management allowed worker participation to move beyond the limits of narrow productionist agendas. The data confirm the interview findings that this consultation was decidedly limited at both plants. With the exception of the management groups, majorities of manual employees, and in most cases non-manual employees, felt that they were hardly ever, or never, consulted on these themes. The negative results were particularly acute for future plans, staffing and pay, broader business issues that might be regarded as central dimensions of a participative workplace partnership agenda (Bélanger P.R. et al., 2002b; Tailby and Winchester, 2000; TUC, 1999). However, responses from non-manual

Table 7.1 Employees' Assessment of the Extent of Direct Communication and Involvement (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Very good (%)	Good (%)	Poor (%)	Very poor (%)	Undecided (%)
How good are your managers at keeping everyone up to date about proposed changes at work					
AIRFRAMES					
Managers & Supervisors	2	36	44	16	2
Non-Manual Employees	5	32	40	18	5
Manual Employees	4	35	39	20	2
JETCO*					
Managers & Supervisors	5	49	37	6	3
Non-Manual Employees	2	44	43	10	1
Manual Employees	2	31	38	24	4
How good are your managers at responding to suggestions from employees					
AIRFRAMES*					
Managers & Supervisors	2	32	46	10	10
Non-Manual Employees	3	28	42	12	15
Manual Employees	1	28	47	19	5
JETCO*					
Managers & Supervisors	0	55	40	4	1
Non-Manual Employees	1	30	48	12	9
Manual Employees	1	20	50	22	7
How good are your managers at involving employees in decision-making					
AIRFRAMES*					
Managers & Supervisors	3	38	41	13	5
Non-Manual Employees	3	32	44	12	9
Manual Employees	1	30	45	20	4
JETCO*					
Managers & Supervisors	2	53	38	7	0
Non-Manual Employees	2	33	43	18	4
Manual Employees	1	16	51	26	6

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

employees at *JetCo*, the one group who were covered by a formal partnership agreement, did tend to be slightly less negative, reflecting perhaps a shift in attitude and performance by some line managers.

Finally, there were two distinctive patterns to these data that problemitize the 'social cohesion' dimension of partnership. By social cohesion we refer to the existence at work of employee autonomy, participation and equal treatment irrespective of role or responsibility. When present together they are assumed to cause an increase in employee commitment, a process that is intrinsic to partnership rela-

Table 7.2 Employees' Assessment of the Scope of Direct Consultation (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Frequently %	Sometimes %	Hardly ever %	Never %
How often do managers ask you for your views on future plans for the workplace				
AIRFRAMES**				
Managers & Supervisors	19	42	27	12
Non-Manual Employees	5	31	36	28
Manual Employees	2	30	31	37
Temporary Employees	6	20	24	50
JETCO**				
Managers & Supervisors	38	35	21	6
Non-Manual Employees	9	39	31	21
Manual Employees	2	27	37	33
How often do managers ask you for your views on staffing issues and redundancies				
AIRFRAMES**				
Managers & Supervisors	18	32	24	27
Non-Manual Employees	2	14	31	53
Manual Employees	2	13	28	58
Temporary Employees	0	9	26	65
JETCO**				
Managers & Supervisors	28	29	25	19
Non-Manual Employees	3	25	34	37
Manual Employees	2	11	33	54
How often do managers ask you for your views on changes to work practices				
AIRFRAMES**				
Managers & Supervisors	19	45	27	10
Non-Manual Employees	8	38	30	25
Manual Employees	4	37	33	26
Temporary Employees	4	22	30	44
JETCO**				
Managers & Supervisors	34	45	15	6
Non-Manual Employees	11	47	26	17
Manual Employees	4	36	35	24
How often do managers ask you for your views on pay issues				
AIRFRAMES**				
Managers & Supervisors	5	23	35	37
Non-Manual Employees	0	12	32	56
Manual Employees	0	10	25	65
Temporary Employees	0	13	20	67
JETCO**				
Managers & Supervisors	17	28	34	21
Non-Manual Employees	1	15	36	48
Manual Employees	1	12	29	58

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.

tions. The first point is that the data in both tables highlight a class dimension to the democratic deficit of partnership. Manual workers tended to feel more excluded from participation compared to their non-manual counterparts as, in most cases, did both groups compared to their managers and supervisors. Differences between the three occupational groups were statistically significant in almost every case. The second is that the relatively large numbers of temporary workers employed by the *Airframes* plant experienced a greater degree of marginalization from the process of direct participation. Much larger proportions of these temporary workers were hardly ever or never asked for their views on future plans, staffing issues and changes to working practices (Table 7.2). This result corresponds with broader patterns of non-standard workers' exclusion from organizational decision-making processes in the UK (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003).

Indirect worker participation (1): The joint consultative committee

Indirect worker participation via representation on forums such as joint consultative committees and works councils is often regarded as a more powerful form of employee voice. Providing that systems are in place to ensure the accountability of employee representatives to their local constituents, and that senior managers take joint consultation seriously (in terms of the range of organizational issues covered and their willingness to listen to representatives' viewpoints), then this form of participation is assumed to offer more systematic employee input into strategic decision-making processes (Boxall and Purcell, 2003; Coupar and Stevens, 1998; Hyman and Mason, 1995).

Although there is reliable survey evidence that employers' support for joint consultation has declined in recent years it is still common in large organizations (Cully et al., 1999; Gallie et al., 1998). Moreover, in the context of the employers' renewed interest in securing more co-operative relationships between managers and their subordinates (and representatives), the practice of consultation, with its associated discourse of employee rights and responsibilities, is regarded as 'lying at the heart of partnership' (Terry, 2003b: 492). This is partly because the machinery of joint consultation provides opportunities for employee representatives to articulate their constituents' grievances to senior managers in a less adversarial environment than that offered by collective bargaining processes (Marchington et al., 1992). The significance, therefore, of joint consultation for partnership is that a renewal of such forums as joint consultative committees and works councils may help

to minimize the risk of conflict between employers and organized labour as distributive collective bargaining gradually takes backstage to more routinized joint decision-making (Heery, 2002).

However, there is one element that is missing from this institutional focus. That is, the viewpoint of those whose interests are being indirectly represented. In this section we concentrate on this dimension exploring the effectiveness of joint consultation through the lens of employee experience.

The previous chapter outlined the different indirect consultation practices that were adopted at the two case study plants. Although both plants operated single site committees (company councils) and embryonic multi-site works councils, at the time of the research the management and union representatives we interviewed felt that the single site committees were the more salient and influential for discussions on company strategy. For the purposes of the discussion we refer to these as Joint Site Committees (JSCs). The committees had been operating in some form or another for a number of decades. They comprised senior managers and union representatives who met monthly to discuss a wide range of business and site issues. The various union representatives that we spoke to had different views on the utility of the JSC. That is, although most believed that the dialogue between senior representatives and senior managers was useful for exchanging information and discussing company issues in some depth, some felt that any agreed understandings rarely impacted upon managerial action outside of the confines of the committee. Nevertheless, those stewards who were more supportive of partnership had greater confidence in the accountability of joint consultation, both between union representatives and their member constituencies and between senior managers and the consultative committee itself. For instance:

> I think it's important to have it because it helps you raise issues that would not normally get raised. It has a way of getting issues resolved, because the MD [Managing Director] takes them on board because he's got the power. He would chase somebody up, whereas we might have been frustrated by it … We get minutes of the company council and we do raise issues. We communicate, we spread our minutes round to everybody. (Interview, *Airframes* AMICUS-AEEU Convenor, December 2001)

Our principal line of enquiry was whether employees felt any sense of 'ownership' of the consultation machinery (in terms of demon-

strable input into management-union discussions). The workforce interviews and questionnaire survey investigated the extent of employees' awareness of the JSC, the extent of representative accountability, and employees' overall evaluation of the utility of joint consultation.

The questionnaire survey data are presented in Tables 7.3 and 7.4. Despite the longevity of both JSCs, there was an enduring lack of awareness of their existence. At *JetCo*, where joint consultation had been originally established in 1944, three quarters of manual and non-manual employees had no real knowledge of the JSC compared to just over a half of the site's managers and supervisors. The position was better at *Airframes*, nevertheless, half of the workforce were ignorant of its existence. A typical interview response was:

> Joint Site Committee? No. Sounds a bit like a masons type thing, is it? Bit old fashioned isn't it? (Interview, *JetCo* Experimental Assembly Fitter, July 2001)

Table 7.3 also provides a picture of the lack of accountability between JSC representatives and their member constituencies. For instance, on the *Airframes* shop-floor, 60 per cent of workers did not know who represented them at JSC meetings whilst only 22 per cent believed that their concerns were raised at JSC meetings. In the non-manual areas and in *JetCo*'s manual and non-manual areas the position was even worse. In most cases, less than one in five employees were aware of who represented them at JSC meetings and a mere one in ten employees believed that their interests were represented at meetings. Again, the following view was typical:

> I know we have a company council. I can remember voting for somebody to go on the company council at one point. But thinking about it, I don't get any feedback. Thinking about it, nothing at all comes out of the company council. (Interview, *Airframes* Business Support Officer, November 2001)

The different groups of employees were also asked to rate the effectiveness of the JSC (Table 7.4). Only 23 per cent of the manual workforce at *Airframes* believed that their JSC was either very or quite effective whilst only around one in ten of all other employees at both plants did so. The lowest rating came from the one group which was covered by a formal partnership agreement – *JetCo*'s non-manual employees. Those

Table 7.3 Employees' Awareness of the Joint Site Committee (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't Know (%)
I am aware of the Joint Site Committee (JSC)			
AIRFRAMES*			
Managers & Supervisors	50	50	–
Non-Manual Employees	45	55	–
Manual Employees	58	42	–
JETCO**			
Managers & Supervisors	53	47	–
Non-Manual Employees	28	72	–
Manual Employees	24	76	–
I am aware of who represents me at JSC meetings			
AIRFRAMES**			
Managers & Supervisors	18	82	–
Non-Manual Employees	20	80	–
Manual Employees	40	60	–
JETCO*			
Managers & Supervisors	26	74	–
Non-Manual Employees	11	89	–
Manual Employees	15	85	–
My representatives put forward my point of view at JSC meetings			
AIRFRAMES**			
Managers & Supervisors	10	41	49
Non-Manual Employees	13	46	42
Manual Employees	22	33	45
JETCO			
Managers & Supervisors	13	41	47
Non-Manual Employees	7	44	50
Manual Employees	9	46	45

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

interviewees who commented on this question displayed a predictable degree of cynicism:

> No, I've never heard of it. I can't imagine that working either. It's company and trade unions, it's business people telling trade unions what to do. The trade unions won't like it so they say what they don't like, they haven't got a better way of doing it but they won't like it. So the company will say, 'this is what we'll do' but the

Table 7.4 Employees' Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Joint Site Committee (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	Very/Quite effective (%)	Very/Quite ineffective (%)	Undecided (%)
How effective is the JSC in representing your views to management?			
AIRFRAMES**			
Managers & Supervisors	13	14	73
Non-Manual Employees	12	17	71
Manual Employees	23	26	51
JETCO*			
Managers & Supervisors	16	15	69
Non-Manual Employees	6	20	74
Manual Employees	7	23	70

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level.

> unions will say, 'we don't like it so do it another way.' So you're getting back into committee donkey–camel again. It will never work, no chance, it's got no chance. (Interview, *JetCo* Manufacturing Engineer, July 2001)
>
> I think that probably it's not very effective. It's probably more like a chit-chat. I don't really know too much about it to be honest. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Assembly Team Leader, October 2001)

Such patterns of limited employee influence over the mechanisms and process of joint consultation are not unusual. Other case studies of its operation in lean production settings have uncovered similar degrees of ignorance of the existence of consultative machinery and its modes of representation, and similar degrees of dissatisfaction of, or disinterest in, its effectiveness (for example, Broad, 1994; Tailby et al., 2004). More systematic survey work has also found that employees view this machinery as having little influence over organizational issues and corporate strategy (Gallie et al., 1998; Kessler et al., 2004) whilst their representatives have voiced dissatisfaction with the scope and quality of information and consultation (Waddington, 2003; see also Labour Research Department, 2004). There are two corollaries of this. The first is that few British workers seem to be interested in works councils and other forms of joint consultation as the principal means of representing their interests (Bryson, 2003; Kessler et al., 2004; Lloyd, 2001). The second is that the 'distancing' of employees themselves from the process of indirect consultation raises serious questions of this form of

workplace 'democratization' that has become central to the promotion of workplace partnership.

Indirect worker participation (2): Union representation and partnership

In the UK, trade union organization and collective bargaining often provide the strongest form of worker participation. Through the democratic practices of workplace representation employees can exert (indirect) influence over matters concerning the regulation of the employment relationship. Although recent national surveys have provided powerful evidence of a decline in union influence and joint regulation at the workplace and a commensurate expansion of direct employee involvement (Cully et al., 1999; Gallie et al., 1998), it has also been suggested that a *combination* of these forms of employee voice can significantly improve management-employee relations (Bryson, 2000). This latter point is reflected in the arguments adopted by the advocates of HPWS and partnership who emphasize how positive organizational outcomes are contingent upon the integration of a mix of different participation techniques (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Coupar and Stevens, 1998). Indirect worker participation through partnership-based union representation is regarded as a key component of this mix. It is assumed to foster an environment of non-conflictual industrial relations that reinforces the broader employee input into managerial decision-making that is so cherished by the partnership writers. This final section considers these arguments in the light of different employee attitudes towards the principles of partnership.

Attitudes to partnership on the shop-floor

Interestingly, despite the contrasts between the positions adopted by the manual unions' leading representatives at the two plants, there was less difference between the rank-and-file members' attitudes towards partnership. The dominant theme to emerge from the worker interviews was that although the principle of management and unions working together in an *equal* partnership was generally endorsed, there was little faith expressed in management's readiness to listen to the unions let alone engage with independent union agendas. Many shop-floor workers recognized the importance of union involvement in partnership-based discussions concerning such themes as work reorganization and job protection because these themes profoundly reflected their own employment interests. But we also detected an

underlying pessimism, in the context of an awareness of a relative decline in union influence at the point of production, and more broadly in society, that management would use partnership to further diminish the traditions of autonomous, independent workplace unionism. For instance:

> Well we do get the feeling sometimes that [the unions] are in management's pockets. But this is how times change, I mean maybe they have to go along with the management now I don't know … I think it should be more 'them and us' but it seems to be more 'them and them'. (Interview, *Airframes* Production Teamleader, October 2001)

These sentiments also prompted concerns about partnership's potential to recast management-union interactions and its consequent threat to rank and file union democracy. In particular, such views centred on how new co-operative relations and the expected proximity of management and union positions might put at risk the bonds of accountability and trust that have long characterized the social relations of workplace unionism for British manual workers (Beynon, 1984; Hyman, 1975). The following two comments exemplified this:

> Well, all you've got to look at is, who's our union leader? Bloke called Gary Connors. What is he? He went up as a local MP this time, right? He's got his little cronies that sit at his little table … I think that when they go to some of their top echelon meetings with the upper crust, they tend to drop their hats and push their noses up there. That's the impression I've always got. (Interview, *Airframes* Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)
>
> Partnership would depend on who you've got in the union – they could easily be bought, couldn't they? That's a bad thing to say, but that's the way of the world, isn't it? … It might sound good, 'yeah, unions work with management, and let's try and get everything hunky dory, let's have no lies, let's have no back hidden agendas.' But it'll never work like that. (Interview, *JetCo* Machinist, June 2001)

The feeling of job insecurity was an additional factor that mediated the two sets of manual worker attitudes to partnership. This was particularly salient at *JetCo*. Although previous chapters have highlighted how employee pessimism over longer term job tenure was pervasive at both plants the manual workers at *JetCo* had the greater experience of real

job loss. Since the late 1980s, they had witnessed wave after wave of mass redundancies in their own work areas. Consequently, many of our interviews highlighted how job insecurity can engender a number of manifest contradictions within partnership's ideology of enterprise competitiveness and survival. These workers came to realize that the notion of 'survival' was not necessarily inclusive of every participant covered by a partnership arrangement. The following comment from a *JetCo* manual worker typified this feeling:

> You have got a situation here where on the one hand, people are driven for more and more and more profit and on the other, the only way this company knows how to make more and more profit is to get rid of them, the people. Therefore I don't see how partnership can work. It's a very nice idea, I would love it to be able to work, but I cannot see how it can. And I think the company have said they're interested in it because it sounds nice, it sounds 'pally', but they don't want to do it. (Interview, *JetCo* Sheet Metal Worker, July 2001)

The corollary of this was twofold. First, the *JetCo* manual workforce generally felt that the seemingly constant environment of labour rationalization and job instability had weakened rank and file confidence and diminished the material base upon which independent workplace unionism and collective action relies. Second, the cynicism, uncertainty and feeling of disempowerment that such an environment can engender meant that for many workers partnership was not a *real* option either; it would remain an abstract entity. Instead, the reality of the employment relationship in the high performance workplace was one of continuing worker exploitation and profoundly unequal social relations between managers and their subordinates. In this context, increasingly alienated shop-floor workers sought to distance themselves from any managerial overtures to the idea of working together in a unified fashion. This was particularly the case at *JetCo* where the manual group leadership had opposed partnership. For example:

> Well you can talk about a partnership relationship but it still comes down to the 'them and us' thing. People are very, very, wary still. And I think no matter what management proposed, somebody is always going to fight against it, for the sole reason that management or *JetCo* as a company, suggested it. And people have still got the way of thinking that, 'I am just here to earn a wage and I don't want to be friends with the management, with *JetCo*. As long as they

> give me my £500 at the end of the week I don't want to be forming relationships/partnerships.' (Interview, *JetCo* Machinist, July 2001)

Attitudes to partnership on the office-floor

Although there were variations between some occupational groups, in the non-manual work areas we discovered surprisingly similar patterns of distrust. This was particularly the case at *Airframes* where the non-manual unions had displayed a more critical approach to partnership. Here the tendency to discriminate between 'us' (technical workers) and 'them' (senior management) was a remarkably consistent theme to emerge during the interviews. It contributed to a cynicism about the plausibility of partnership that was in some respects equal to the attitudes detected on the shop-floor. A typical view was:

> I think partnership is very desirable but I think you need to change both the union and the management attitudes because there is still a great deal of 'them and us'. What it comes down to is, pay and conditions, the right to move people around, the right to make them redundant. They are going to be 'them' and we're going to be 'us'. The management's business is to make the business profitable and the union's business is to protect their members. So you're always going to have a clash on those points. (Interview, *Airframes*, Design Engineer, October 2001)

For many, the promotion of partnership was unlikely to have any significant impact upon such fundamental characteristics of the capitalist employment relationship. Moreover, these workers' own immediate experiences of management performance in the provision of worker participation led to a widespread pessimism that most managers were unlikely to countenance any re-balancing of power relations through the inclusion of the viewpoints of subordinates and those who represent them. For instance:

> If only the company could be made to see how successful partnership could be … If I felt that they wanted to know the truth, that they wanted to know the voice of the people, I'd be happier. I can think of other people that are happy to give them their views, but I think until management actually want to hear that, good or bad, right or wrong, including the ones that just moan, the ones that are too frightened to say anything, until they actually want to hear that then I think there's going to be a battle. (Interview, *Airframes* Data

> Analyst and AMICUS-MSF Departmental Representative, November 2001)

Compared to *Airframes*, non-manual employees at *JetCo* tended to articulate a more sympathetic disposition to partnership. This may well be partly attributable to the AMICUS-MSF partnership agreement that defined management-union relationships for this group although very few of the interviewees displayed any awareness of its process or outcomes. As a result, it was impossible to discern the extent of satisfaction – or otherwise – with the agreement. However, many employees did raise a number of caveats. Not the least of these was the consistently cited contradiction between working more co-operatively with managers whose central agenda was to cut labour costs. Many of these technical workers also felt that an equitable partnership required a quite different industrial relations environment to the one they had experienced hitherto. Central to this was a more powerful trade union organization and greater mutuality in the regulation of the employment relationship. The following view was typical here:

> I think the way that we ought to be moving now, in this day and age, is much more towards saying, 'yeah, we all of us have got an interest in the company being healthy, strong, profitable, and we want this company to have as big a share of the world cake as possible.' But then the unions should be fighting to say, 'yeah, but okay, having got a big share of the world cake, we want the larger share for our people, and then we'll fight you, the company, for how we share it out, not actually just fighting over the crumbs that remain.' … I think this needs a partnership, but without actually one partner being too subservient to the other – I think it relies upon both sides being relatively strong. (Interview, *JetCo* Business Analyst, June 2001)

Perhaps the most instructive observation from this one group that was subject to a formal partnership agreement came from a technical worker who had participated directly in the partnership process. As we described in the previous chapter, one of the central components of the *JetCo* agreement was the introduction of union participation in a programme of senior management working parties. These addressed a variety of employment and work organizational issues. The AMICUS-MSF workplace union was allowed to nominate those amongst its membership who had the requisite technical knowledge to participate

in these discussions. We interviewed one of the union nominees, an engineer who had sat on a number of these working parties. He described how he developed a growing sense of cynicism and alienation from the partnership process which culminated in his eventual resignation. This was partly attributable to his line manager's reluctance to countenance his absence from normal work duties and consequent expectation that he complete his normal duties in his own time. However, he also encountered a resistance from senior management that had a more damaging effect on his initial interest in partnership:

> [Management] didn't really want you to go there. I was thinking back to these partnerships and one of the impressions I remembered was that the management people there struck me as being sort of prejudiced and bigoted, and as management people, slightly arrogant and superior. It was like they were the managers, they manage these people, so they were obviously superior and intelligent. They wanted to preserve that distinction in a way. (Interview, *JetCo* Technology Engineer, June 2001)

The process of 'joint working' at *JetCo* failed to dissipate such managerial attitudes. Instead it served to remind this worker that, despite the inclusive rhetoric of partnership, the subjective class differentiation of 'them and us' on the shop and office floors in capitalist society is just as likely to be reciprocated and reinforced by management.

Trade union influence – a partnership factor?

The questionnaire survey complemented the worker interview data by providing a more systematic picture of the quality of union relations and union influence at the two plants. Following the assumptions of the partnership writers, our initial hypothesis was that employees working in those areas where unions and management were jointly supporting the development of partnership might be expected to report more co-operative industrial relations and greater union influence over management decision-making. We would expect the latter because, notwithstanding objections that rank-and-file job controls may be weakened (Taylor and Ramsay, 1998; Whitston et al., 1999), one of the central tenets of partnership is that the ambit of union representation is broadened to allow greater union input into those facets of corporate governance that concern worker interests (Bélanger P.R. et al., 2002b; Heery, 2002).

Table 7.5 Union Members' Assessment of Management-Union Relations (*Airframes*, n = 538; *JetCo*, n = 450)

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
Good relations exist between management and unions					
AIRFRAMES**					
Non-Manual Group (OP)	1	24	52	9	14
Manual Group (SP)	3	50	27	6	15
JETCO**					
Non-Manual Group (SP)	0	59	25	3	13
Manual Group (OP)	0	32	47	10	11

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.
'OP' denotes members belonging to a bargaining group that opposed partnership. 'SP' denotes those belonging to a bargaining group that supported partnership.

To investigate any differences between the two groups of manual and non-manual workers' perception of management-union relationships, the questionnaire asked employees whether they agreed that good relations existed between management and unions. Table 7.5 presents the results for those who might be expected to have a greater awareness of this: non-management employees who were trade union members. An interesting pattern emerges here. In the areas where management and senior union representatives were supporting partnership, that is, the manual areas at *Airframes* and the non-manual areas at *JetCo*, employees tended to report good relationships between management and their unions. By contrast, workers tended to report the opposite in the areas where their unions were more critical of partnership, that is, the non-manual areas at *Airframes* and the manual areas at *JetCo*. This is a significant finding because it suggests that whether or not trade union members are distanced from the process and outcomes of attempts to develop partnership they do have a general awareness of the impact of contrasting union stances on the quality of management-union relationships.

Trade union members' assessment of the degree of influence their unions were able to exert over management was explored by posing four questions. The first two governed union leverage over pay and working conditions specifically. The second two questions considered the potency of workplace unionism more broadly by asking members whether they felt their unions were taken seriously by management

and whether they made a difference to what it was like to work at the two plants (both were used by the WERS98 survey). In addition, we asked members whether they felt loyal to their trade unions. The immediate pattern to emerge (Table 7.6) was that although our worker interviewees provided a fairly despondent picture of a *relative* decline in union influence over recent years, this did not mean that they regarded their unions as characteristically weak (which is the underlying assumption of some partnership commentators who use this as a basis for promoting non-adversarial union renewal strategies). Assessments of influence over working conditions and whether the site unions were taken seriously by management and made a difference at the two plants were broadly favourable. Although union influence over pay was lower, and this is more likely to diminish during periods of low inflation, members of the anti-partnership *JetCo* manual group gave this a significantly higher rating.

Table 7.6 also shows that, in most respects, the unions that had adopted a supportive approach to partnership were not seen by their members as exerting greater influence than the more critical unions. Moreover, the most oppositionalist union group of the four, *JetCo*'s manual unions, outscored both the (pro-partnership) manual union group at *Airframes* and the two non-manual groups on three of the four union influence questions (two of these were statistically significant). The one exception was the members' assessment of whether their unions were taken seriously by management. In this case, the pro-partnership union groups scored higher. This might well reflect rank and file awareness that partnership relations can change the qualitative nature of management-union dialogue (which was the employers' objective). However, when we take into account the other 'hard' indicators of union influence (pay, conditions, and 'making a difference'), and indeed, the mostly pessimistic reactions to partnership in the employee interviews, then the data suggest that being 'taken seriously' by management does not necessarily translate into more union influence. Overall, the data provide little evidence that positive union engagement with management's quest for partnership will inevitably provide employees with a greater sense of collective influence at work. This impression is supported by the union loyalty results: members in the oppositionalist bargaining groups were significantly more likely to express loyalty to their union than those in the pro-partnership groups.

Table 7.6 Union Members' Assessment of Union Influence at Work (*Airframes*, n = 538; *JetCo*, n = 450)

	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	Undecided %
Unions have a lot of influence over pay					
AIRFRAMES					
Non-Manual Group (OP)	6	27	51	8	8
Manual Group (SP)	5	32	41	9	13
JETCO					
Non-Manual Group (SP)	2	26	52	6	14
Manual Group (OP)	5	40	38	3	14
Unions have a lot of influence over working conditions					
AIRFRAMES					
Non-Manual Group (OP)	6	59	22	1	12
Manual Group (SP)	7	58	24	3	8
JETCO					
Non-Manual Group (SP)	5	60	26	0	9
Manual Group (OP)	6	68	17	1	8
Unions are taken seriously by management					
AIRFRAMES					
Non-Manual Group (OP)	3	43	38	5	11
Manual Group (SP)	4	49	31	6	10
JETCO					
Non-Manual Group (SP)	3	55	28	1	13
Manual Group (OP)	4	44	35	7	10
Unions make a difference to what it is like to work here*					
AIRFRAMES					
Non-Manual Group (OP)	8	67	15	0	10
Manual Group (SP)	7	65	17	4	7
JETCO					
Non-Manual Group (SP)	9	69	11	0	11
Manual Group (OP)	14	64	11	2	9
I feel loyal to my trade union*					
AIRFRAMES					
Non-Manual Group (OP)	10	63	11	4	12
Manual Group (SP)	10	55	19	5	11
JETCO					
Non-Manual Group (SP)	7	54	20	3	16
Manual Group (OP)	15	57	16	3	9

* Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.05 level. ** Significant at 0.01 level. (Tests were performed for the four sets of bargaining group frequencies to explore inter-group differences).

Conclusion

For the public policy-makers, and those who attempt to influence this, employee participation has become the defining characteristic of the high performance workplace. Equally, a renewal of employee participation at work is perhaps the central theme of the employee-centred dimension of workplace partnership (DTI, 2003 and 2002; TUC, 2003a and 2003b; IPA, 2002). This is partly because participation is regarded as a 'good' in its own right but more fundamentally because it is assumed to contribute positively towards improving job satisfaction and labour productivity.

Although there exists a wealth of published material governing the breadth and depth of participatory practices in UK workplaces, we have much less understanding of participation as *process*. Consequently, we have insufficient insight into workers' real experience of this form of 'democratization' including their own assessment of management performance. By adopting this alternative labour-centred agenda in the two case studies that were, ostensibly, exemplary participatory organizations, a pattern has emerged that leads us to question the 'mutual gain' that might be expected from developing partnership at work.

There were three facets of this. First, despite an enlargement in the techniques of communication and mass of information at both plants, the prevailing worker experience of direct participation was one of disempowerment. Few were able to exert any meaningful influence over managerial decision-making whilst for many, direct communication translated into an instrument of managerial control. On the shopfloor, despite management's rhetoric of inclusion and involvement, manual employees experienced the process of participation as one characterized by a restrictive productionist agenda that sought to reinforce both supervisory prerogatives and the discipline required by capitalist production. In the technical office areas, management curbed any employee aspirations for extending real participation. Although nonmanual employees at both plants experienced broader communication agendas, these remained essentially one-way and top-down in their delivery. As a result, 'organizational objectives' were defined solely by management within a system of direct worker participation designed to dampen employee demands for independent influence at work. The development of partnership-based management-union relations in different areas of the two plants (described in Chapter 6) seemed to exert only a very limited countervailing effect over this negative employee experience. Moreover, in contradistinction to the argument that part-

nership can promote social cohesion at work, a more clear-cut pattern emerged of relative exclusion from the assumed benefits of direct participation on the basis of class (manual workers) and contract (temporary workers).

Second, there was very little evidence of favourable employee experience of indirect participation through joint consultation. As we noted above, a shift from antagonistic free collective bargaining to the more integrative processes of joint consultation is regarded as one of the central political concerns of partnership (Brown, 2000; Heery, 2002; Oxenbridge and Brown, 2004b; Terry, 2003b). Although not all of these writers are confident that this shift can deliver favourable returns to labour (for example, Terry suggests that managerial unilateralism will be inevitable without statutory support for independent union organization) there is, nevertheless, an institutionalist focus on the interests and social action of managers and trade unions. The voice of the collective worker is left silent. The two case studies show, and they are by no means alone in this, that when employee concerns are taken directly into account then the use of joint consultation as a means of democratizing the workplace contains important limitations. Specifically, despite the fact that at both plants the machinery of consultation was extensive and very well embedded, the consultative process itself had become disengaged from the typical worker. This was marked partly by insufficient awareness of the practice and content of consultation, and inadequate lines of accountability between employee representatives and their constituents. More fundamentally, the proposal that joint consultation in high performance work regimes might somehow contribute to a renewal of democracy at work just did not register with these workers. Joint consultation was either treated with indifference or regarded as an ineffectual means for the collective articulation of employee interests.

The third facet of discontent concerned indirect worker participation through partnership-based union representation. For many advocates of the high performance workplace co-operative relations between management and unions is supposed to provide the important micropolitical environment that fosters social cohesion and a more comprehensive process of direct and indirect employee participation at work (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bélanger J. et al., 2002; Bélanger P.R. et al., 2002; Freeman and Rogers, 1999). Again, the results from the two case studies do not obviously fit with these assumptions. This is partly attributable to the contradictions and tensions between the different meanings of partnership. Although many employees at both case

studies supported some form of partnership in management-union relations, their conceptualization of this differed markedly from the employer's. Rather than adopting partnership as a vehicle for legitimizing and expediting workplace change the version preferred by most workers was one that upheld a set of independent worker interests that were likely to conflict with managerial agendas. That is, a stronger union organization bolstered by an environment of job protection, a fairer balance of power between the employer and the union, a retention of the direct democratic link between membership demands and union activity, and an elimination of the fundamental status differences between those who manage on behalf of capital and those who labour beneath them.

The two cases studies show how worker participation in the high performance workplace can constitute an attempt by management to further subordinate labour primarily by ideological means. Equally, the case studies instantiate the denial of meaningful employee voice rather than the beginnings of a new workplace democracy. The evidence presented also suggests that this agenda of management control was hardly successful. Many employees, whose aspirations had been raised by the new partnership discourse of 'transparency' and 'involvement', became both frustrated and cynical of management intentions and performance. However, the essentially collectivistic provision of 'employee voice' was not the only means by which management sought to enhance employee commitment. In the next chapter we consider a more individualistic facet of this: the management techniques of career development and reward.

8

Training and Development for High Performance: Supporting Partnership or Elites?

Work participation, flexibility and regular skill acquisition together constitute the core employee dimensions of the high performance workplace. Systematic skills training and career progression are therefore important facets of the necessary development of human capital in these work contexts (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Chaykowski and Gunderson, 2002; Parks, 1995). Training and development practices have sometimes been regarded as sources of enrichment and empowerment at work in that, to adopt a paraphrase 'learning is power', well-funded, structured training programmes can generate more autonomous, polyvalent knowledge workers and can catalyze shifts in the power imbalance between managers and employees (Keep and Rainbird, 2000). It is for these reasons that the concept of 'lifelong learning' (and the provision of opportunities for personal development through skill acquisition) has also become central to workplace partnership (TUC, 1999). In this chapter, we investigate the character of training and development at the two case study plants and the extent to which different groups of employees do gain a sense of empowerment. We focus on three main themes: training policy and its take up by different occupational groups; employee appraisals (and in one case, the application of performance related pay); and the extent to which women and contingent workers have access to training and development schemes.

Taking the first of these, a number of studies have found that although, in the past, British firms have been parsimonious in providing formal (off-the-job) and informal (on-the-job) training to employees, the record has been steadily improving since the 1980s (Gallie, et al., 1998; Keep and Rainbird, 2003). Research has also uncovered a consistent pattern of unequal distribution of training across the occu-

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

pational hierarchy. Employees who receive the most intensive training provision are likely to be those who also possess the highest formal qualifications whilst manual workers, skilled and unskilled alike, tend to receive the least (Cully et al., 1999; Gallie, et al., 1998; Keep and Rainbird, 2003, 2000; Westwood, 2004).

Appelbaum et al.'s (2000) quantitative study of steel, clothing and medical electronic sector workplaces in the USA discovered that although the provision of informal training was generally low, formal training was more common and workers in participatory, high performance work environments were more likely to be in receipt of it. They do not provide any insight, however, into how much formal training employees received over specific time periods, the nature of the training offered, or whether there was any variation between occupational groups. These are important questions because they can highlight any significant organizational barriers to learning at work. For example, whether employers require multi-skilled workers or multi-tasked labour trained to work within tightly defined procedures; whether managers are prepared to devolve responsibilities to better trained subordinates; or whether they prefer to take the option of pushing labour harder to maintain competitiveness (Keep and Rainbird, 2000; see also Dench et al., 1998).

The nature of employee appraisal procedures is our second theme. Bach (2000) has argued that, notwithstanding concerns about the potentially demotivating outcomes of employee appraisal processes, their use has grown substantially over the past two decades. They are fast becoming a feature of performance management for all layers of the workforce. This development is partially confirmed by the WERS98 survey data which showed that although appraisals were more common among professional workers and managers, 65 per cent of workplaces that conducted appraisals did so for all non-managerial employees (Cully et al., 1999). In the UK's aerospace sector itself, a recent survey found that 58 per cent of firms had appraisal systems in place for more than two-thirds of the non-managerial workforce (Thompson, 2002).

Why are they used? Much of the management practitioner literature emphasizes the developmental dimension. That is, appraisals can facilitate discussions governing individual career objectives and associated training requirements. Equally, however, the process may be adapted to ensure that employees become more accountable for their performance at work, or to motivate them into improving their performance. For some systems, this accountability dimension may be incentivized by the adoption of performance related pay techniques.

It is this question of performance control that has formed the basis for a sustained critique of employers' use of appraisal systems. From a point of departure of assessing whether the adoption of performance appraisal can increase management control, much of this work, often in the field of critical management studies, has taken a Foucauldian turn towards reification (for example, Ezzy, 2001; Townley, 2003). In other words, as Bach's (2000) overview of these developments argues, the potential of appraisals to provide managers greater influence over employee performance, and hearts and minds, has somehow metamorphosed into a situation of total control via new forms of personal surveillance and disciplinary techniques. The concern here is that reification of proposed managerial objectives rarely takes into account the problem of human agency. For instance, Bach notes how the contradiction between short-term performance assessment and longer term developmental orientation can account for much criticism of appraisal systems within the practitioner community itself. He also highlights numerous academic studies of managerial ambivalence based on their experience of inevitably subjective outcomes which can engender widespread employee resentment. Other studies have found that the use of performance assessment techniques does not always provide managers greater control over subordinates in all work organizational contexts. For example, McGovern's (1998) case studies of technical workers in multi-national firms in Ireland found that individual performance management processes were inevitably constrained by the indeterminacy of technical work. Targets and objectives could never be set with the same precision that might be expected in shop-floor production environments. To this might be added the problem that there is insufficient research of the impact of individualized performance appraisal on the shop-floor itself. Setting individual objectives around production output and quality might make more sense in technical terms but we require greater insight into the effect such management control techniques might have on the traditions and politics of collective workplace relations.

Similar concerns have been directed towards the use of individual performance related pay (PRP) systems. Kessler (2000) argues that two types of objective underpin employers' decisions to use such systems. The first is related to staff recruitment, retention and motivation. The second is more ideological in that the adoption of PRP may be seen as a means of individualizing the employment relationship, marginalizing trade union influence over wages but also sending out a signal that employees' attitudes and performance need to be more closely aligned

with organizational objectives (2000: 281, 282). Although research suggests some employees may support the principle of rewarding individual performance (Marsden and Richardson, 1994) these managerial objectives clearly raise potential points of conflict for workers over issues of managerial objectivity, fairness and erosion of morale and team spirit (for a review of research evidence see Kessler, 2000; 1994). Again it should be added that, to date, we have insufficient evidence of the impact of the use of modern PRP systems (as opposed to piecework) in shop-floor manufacturing environments despite the fact that related training and competence-based pay issues are increasingly falling within the ambit of trade union collective bargaining processes (Keep and Rainbird, 2003).

Finally, our third theme connects these training and development issues with equal opportunity concerns in the high performance workplace. We have already noted that training provision tends to be unequally distributed across the occupational hierarchy in many British workplaces. There is also evidence to suggest that contingent workers, such as temporary staff, may suffer marginalization in the form of lack of access to training as a result of employers' concentrating their human capital investment on core workers (Gallie et al. 1998; Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003; Parks, 1995). In addition, as Bach (2000) observes, the increasing use of contingent workers in the UK raises the question of whether they are covered by appraisal processes to the same extent as core, permanent workers. Survey evidence suggests that fixed-term contract workers tend to be excluded.

Patterns of women workers' access to training and developmental support are more complex than this. A good deal of survey research shows that the historical gap between men's and women's receipt of training in the UK has narrowed over recent decades (for example, Gallie et al. 1998; Green and Zanchi, 1997). However, discrimination becomes more apparent when both gender differences within the contingent workforce and the concentration of women in non-standard employment contracts are taken into account. In other words, for many women, non-standard employment is strongly associated with discrimination in access to training and development at work (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003; Keep and Rainbird, 2000).

Our case study analysis in this chapter will therefore focus on a number of specific research questions. What is the nature and form of training policy in these high performance, high-skill work contexts? What access do different workers have to formal training programmes and do they regard them as sources of upskilling and job enrichment?

What is the form of employee appraisal in non-manual and manual work areas and what is the balance between developmental outcomes and performance control? What is the impact of individual appraisal and reward techniques on the traditions of collectivism on the shop-floor? And finally, in the context of the partnership discourse of inclusion and cohesion, how do women and temporary workers fare in the application of training and development policies? Do they have access to the same career options as their male/permanent counterparts?

Skills training

As might be expected from high-skill work organizations, both aerospace plants adopted training policies that were supposed to benefit all employees. However, access to formal training tended to be skewed towards management and graduate employees. In the case of *Airframes*, the basic structure comprised what was designated an 'Engineering Skills Development Programme' available to all employees; an 'Integrated Management Development Programme' available to graduates, supervisors and managers; and an open learning centre. The Engineering Skills Development Programme provided specific skills training, for instance in software skills or communication, whilst the management development programme provided different modules in the areas of financial awareness, project management and interpersonal development. The open learning centre was open to any employee after normal shift times or to those who could secure time off from their work. It offered computer skills training, foreign language teaching plus access to a number of non-work related courses. The training provision at *JetCo* was similar in that the more structured modular programmes were provided for graduates and managers whilst a wide range of specific bespoke courses for computer skills, new software and other new technologies were made available to all employees. Graduates and managers also passed through an assessment centre to establish their training needs and abilities and whether they 'lean towards a people person or a process person' as one manager put it. Other employees had access to a learning centre although manual workers could only visit this during slack periods or in machine downtime.

Another point of similarity between the two plants was the link between training and grade progression on the shop-floor. Both operated competency-based grading schemes that allowed workers to progress from a basic skilled grade to higher grades via the acquisition

of different sets of new skills. Any worker who required additional competencies to carry out their existing role could apply for training to recognized National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) levels whilst those who aspired to progress through the grading scheme could apply for different modules in skills from occupations other than their own. Thus, notwithstanding the still pervasive class snobbery in British industry that allocates 'careers' to non-manual employees but 'jobs' to manual labour, these manual worker grading schemes, on paper at least, provided a structure for career progression that demanded as much training as any other employee in the two firms.

However, the extent to which manual workers enjoyed real parity in their access to formal training is another matter. Table 8.1 provides results from the questionnaire survey. The first feature to emerge is that despite the importance of training for grade progression, manual workers at both plants had less access to training than other occupational groups. At *Airframes*, 55 per cent of manual workers attended less than two days off-the-job training over the previous year compared to 43 per cent of graduates and 47 per cent of technical and administrative staff. At *JetCo* the pattern was more marked: 52 per cent of manual workers had attended less than two days training compared to 19 per cent of graduates and 32 per cent of technical and administrative staff. At both plants, manual workers were more likely than other groups to have received no training at all and less likely to have received ten days or more training. It is also interesting that the differences between graduates' access to training compared to managers and other technical staff follows a similar pattern to the class locational differences described in Chapter 5. In other words, at *Airframes*, graduates' training access was similar to their non-graduate white collar colleagues whereas at *JetCo* it was closer to management's.

Our interviews with different manual and non-manual employees provided further confirmation of disparities in access to formal skills training. At both plants, graduates and managers were more likely to articulate satisfaction with training provision, along with the appraisal processes that supported this, compared to other non-manual and manual employees. At *Airframes*, for instance, although many non-graduate employees were aware of the company's training policy and felt that on paper it was exemplary they also contended that managerial resistance to the practicalities and costs of comprehensive access meant that only workers who had the confidence and disposition to argue and lobby for their own particular case were likely to receive support. One technical worker described this:

Table 8.1 Days of Formal (Off-The-Job) Training During the Previous 12 Months, by Occupational Group (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

Occupational group	No training (%)	Less than two days (%)	Two to less than five days (%)	Five to less than ten days (%)	Ten days or more (%)
AIRFRAMES					
Managers & Supervisors	19	15	25	11	30
Graduate Employees	25	18	26	17	14
Technical & Admin Employees	25	22	21	14	18
Manual Employees	27	28	21	13	11
JETCO					
Managers & Supervisors	4	9	32	32	23
Graduate Employees	3	16	34	25	22
Technical & Admin Employees	12	20	30	20	18
Manual Employees	23	29	29	11	8

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.

> I started college in September to do my HND but that was only after three interviews and going up to see the Managing Director. I saw the Engineering Director in the end. I had to fight literally every inch of the way to get what I wanted. But it's not supposed to be like that is it? You should have your training identified and you should get a yes or a no. So the system only works for people who are more pushy. There's two kinds of people aren't there? The ones that will just plod along and think, well okay never mind maybe next year, or people like me who tend to push. And those that push tend to be those who get it. (Interview, Non-Graduate Engineer, November 2001)

On the *Airframes* shop-floor, some workers painted a similar picture of management-inspired constraints against the acceptance of individual training needs. And again these generated tensions between the imposition of line managers' prerogatives and those subordinates who were prepared to challenge these:

> I've had about two weeks in a classroom all the years I've been here. And I'll give you an example why. We have an annual company meeting where we go over with the MD over at the sports club. A few years ago I got up and asked a question about training. I'm not worried about me but for the young lads coming on behind, some of our apprentices are really struggling on some phases of the aircraft because they haven't got the right training. And I asked for some training for us all. So the next thing my boss calls me in the office and says, 'what the hell do you think you're up to?', and I said, 'you're not giving us any training', and he said, 'yes, but you don't need any training', and I said, 'yes I do', and he said, 'no, you're one of my top men', you know, usual bullshit. Okay I'm not arguing for me, I'm on about the young lad who's just out of his apprenticeship … and straight away I was told that I wasn't allowed to leave his office until I agreed I didn't need any training! (Interview, Aircraft Fitter, November 2001)

At *JetCo*, as Table 8.1 suggests, the overall provision of days off for training was higher but the pattern of discrimination in favour of managers and graduate employees – and against shop-floor workers especially – was more marked. The following comments from two technical workers typified the contrast in experience of training access between graduate and non-graduate staff:

> Some of the training initiatives are very good. Because I did a degree in Metallurgy and French I had a shortfall in awareness of stress and how structures work. But they regularly get professors in from Swansea University and give us three day lectures on this. That sort of thing is excellent really, so I have no problems with company training at all. (Interview, Graduate Engineer, June 2001)

> I believe that there are not enough opportunities for formal qualifications. It seems to be that you only get to do things such as part-time degrees if you are management or already a graduate. Sometimes I feel you are classed as a second-class citizen if you are not a graduate and you have no opportunity to become one. (Questionnaire comment, female non-graduate technical worker)

On the *JetCo* shop-floor, although some workers expressed satisfaction with the availability of informal, on-the-job training, there existed more widespread frustration over the lack of more structured training programmes. Many workers regarded this as yet another manifestation of 'them and us' class inequalities between manual and non-manual employees. For instance, one sheet metal worker (a shop steward) felt that unlike office staff his production colleagues could rarely secure approval for training that was not narrowly task-specific. And few were able to take advantage of the company's off-line training resource centre because managers would not countenance the consequent reduction in labour utilization:

> Well, when it's suiting the management to train someone it's brilliant. But if we want any extra training which ain't particular to your job we haven't got any chance at all. That's always a constant uphill battle. I don't think that's right. I mean, there's a wonderful resource centre up there which is vastly under used by the hourly paid, and you can go up there and get all the figures and they'll gladly give you them, but the staff are up there all the time. To get training which isn't actually specific to what I do I haven't got any chance on company time … . Whereas the staff have. But I mean it's the same story isn't it? When I'm off the bench I ain't making anything and that shows at the end of the day don't it? After an hour, if I haven't filed anything, nothings moved on has it? And it's the same old story isn't it. The further away you are from where anything's made, the better off you are. (Interview, Sheet Metal Worker June 2001)

Overall, therefore, despite the two companies' adoption of formal and detailed training policies in these high-skill, high performance work settings, the notion of worker empowerment via real organizational learning and partnership was problematic. Although employees near the apex of the hierarchy did seem to benefit from more generous training provision the same could not be said for the majority of workers. For the latter, especially manual workers, empowerment via skills training was resisted by cost-conscious managers who tended to support only those training programmes that were designed explicitly to facilitate short-term production objectives.

Employee appraisals and control

Although their objectives were not always the same, some form of appraisal system was used for all employee groups at both plants. At *Airframes*, non-manual workers' training needs, potential career paths and role performance were discussed in an annual personal development review. The plant's manual workers also attended an annual appraisal. Ostensibly, this was designed to review solely training needs although some managers did also raise the question of role performance. At *JetCo*, non-manual employees attended an appraisal mostly once a year although graduates were offered twice yearly sessions. Non-manual employees were also expected to maintain a development diary which comprised a manual record of accumulated skills, job successes, training courses and career trajectories. Managers were expected to discuss these diaries with individuals more regularly outside of the formal annual appraisal. *JetCo*'s manual workers were subject to a quite different appraisal system designed explicitly to measure individual performance and attitude and to reward this via a performance related pay supplement. This 'Individual Contributions' scheme created considerable dissonance on the shop-floor and it is analyzed separately below.

The questionnaire survey invited employees to assess the purpose of their annual review by asking whether they had attended one during the past 12 months and whether the review was used to establish training needs, to help with career development and to monitor work performance. *JetCo*'s manual workers were asked a separate set of questions dealing with their views on the Individual Contributions appraisal scheme since our management interviews established that this was used to solely to measure individual performance.

Table 8.2 Employees' Assessment of the Purpose of the Annual Appraisal, by Occupational Group
(*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

	Yes (%)		Yes (%)
Attended an Annual Review in the past 12 months		***Annual Review was used to establish my training needs***	
AIRFRAMES**		***AIRFRAMES*****	
Managers/Supervisors	85	Managers/ Supervisors	74
Graduates	89	Graduates	80
Technical & Admin	79	Technical & Admin	72
Manual	57	Manual	50
JETCO		***JETCO***	
Managers/Supervisors	83	Managers/ Supervisors	65
Graduates	89	Graduates	71
Technical & Admin	83	Technical & Admin	63
Manual	–	Manual	–
Annual Review was used to help me with career development		***Annual Review was used to monitor my work performance***	
AIRFRAMES**		***AIRFRAMES*****	
Managers/Supervisors	58	Managers/ Supervisors	75
Graduates	58	Graduates	84
Technical & Admin	55	Technical & Admin	69
Manual	39	Manual	32
JETCO		***JETCO***	
Managers/Supervisors	55	Managers/ Supervisors	65
Graduates	68	Graduates	68
Technical & Admin	49	Technical & Admin	68
Manual	–	Manual	–

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.

The results are presented in Table 8.2. These show that apart from a large minority of manual workers at *Airframes*, most workers and managers had attended at least one appraisal meeting with their line manager during the previous 12 months. Although there were some slight differences between the two case studies, many non-manual employees felt that the appraisal was used to establish training needs and to help with career development. Graduates were most likely to report this. The data also highlight a potential contradiction in that large proportions of non-manual employees at both firms felt that the appraisal was used to monitor work performance as well as allow discussions on developmental issues. Finally, the results show that

significant numbers of manual workers at *Airframes* believed that few of the ostensible objectives of the appraisal system applied in their case. This suggested the existence of a good deal of scepticism on the shop-floor.

Predictably perhaps, we found very little evidence of employees at either case study becoming subject to sophisticated forms of personal surveillance by these appraisal techniques. Or, as Ezzy (2001: 632) has put it, to normative control via a 'colonization of the self' by pro-company culture. Some non-manual employees did welcome the opportunity to discuss with their managers their current work performance and future career trajectories primarily because they were committed to their work rather than being completely attached to their employer. This was particularly the case for engineering graduates who seemed to command far greater managerial attention to their developmental needs than other employees. One *JetCo* graduate engineer said typically:

> I actually chose this design department to move into because it was absolutely clear when I sat down and had an initial chat with the chief design engineer that they had a very good appraisal process and were keen on operating quarterly reviews as well. So you actually assessed your work every 12 weeks or so. You knew that they knew what you were up to all the time and how well you were doing so you had an incentive there to do the work well and not skimp and shy away … . It gives you an opportunity to say where you want to improve yourself, that sort of thing, and improve your job and it gives you a formal way of doing it instead of feeling that you are asking for a favour and going to somebody outside of it. (Interview, Design Engineer, June 2001)

Nevertheless, for many employees, appraisals were regarded with some cynicism, as events that were merely perfunctory for managers and subordinates alike. Compliance was necessary to placate senior managers who were concerned that human resource development procedures were *seen* to operate. For these workers, appraisals constituted neither a threat to individual autonomy nor a means of empowerment or self-actualization:

> The problem with the annual PDRs [personal development reviews] is that they're very stale, once a year snapshots like an MOT test on a car. You can drive your car out of the MOT station and get a stone

> chucked at the window and it's immediately an MOT failure. It's only a snapshot. PDR is a very fabricated event. (Interview, *Airframes* Quality Engineer, November 2001)

> PDRs are like wedding anniversaries … they happen once a year. You get in big trouble if you forget them, but they're pretty pointless. It's as if upper management have to get all their PDRs done so that they get a big tick in the box, too. Maybe it's linked to their bonus? Nothing ever happens about them. I think they're a complete waste of time. (Questionnaire comment, *Airframes* Technical Worker)

Another worker, this time from the *Airframes* shop-floor, felt that appraisals were ineffective because too many managers lacked the necessary people management skills to discuss employees' developmental concerns in a constructive and supportive fashion. As a result, although these systems were partly designed to foster training and development, what might be called the architecture of 'organizational learning', outcomes were more dysfunctional than this:

> … maybe I'm a bit naive, but I think the 'man management' skill level of our management is nil, to be quite honest with you. I don't think a lot of them know how to speak to people properly or how to get the best out of people. Everybody's different. You should be able to read people and be able to say, this guy needs a bit of encouragement, this bloke would have been better off with a kick up the ass. I think a lot of them can't distinguish between the two and they're kicking the wrong ones and trying to talk to the wrong ones. (Interview, Inspector, November 2001)

At their most cynical, these negative attitudes constituted a form of employee opposition to performance management. Further confirmation of this was provided by the questionnaire survey results (Table 8.3). All employees (including the shop-floor sample at *JetCo*) were asked to provide their overall assessment of the utility of their appraisal system. Managers at both plants along with *JetCo*'s graduates were the only groups to provide a mainly positive assessment although large minorities of these indicated dissatisfaction with their appraisal systems. By contrast, although sizeable proportions of all other employees at both plants did express some satisfaction, the most common response in each case was negative.

Table 8.3 Employees' Overall Evaluation of the Annual Appraisal Process, by Occupational Group (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

	Very satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)	Undecided (%)
AIRFRAMES					
Managers/ Supervisors	7	45	26	15	7
Graduates	2	35	23	25	15
Technical & Admin	3	36	31	14	16
Manual	4	29	31	25	11
JETCO					
Managers/ Supervisors	10	46	24	15	5
Graduates	3	54	20	23	0
Technical & Admin	4	34	41	12	9
Manual	2	15	29	49	5

** Pearson's Chi-Square, significant at 0.01 level.

This pattern does suggest that management's application of performance and developmental appraisal systems was at best uneven and in many instances problematic. Nowhere was this more the case than on the *JetCo* shop-floor. As Table 8.3 shows, nearly 80 per cent of manual workers in this plant expressed dissatisfaction with their Individual Contributions appraisal (almost 50 per cent felt very dissatisfied). The reasons for this stark result were multiple. The prime factors were first, the use of appraisals to determine the distribution of individual performance related pay. Second, a widespread feeling that managers who performed the assessments were highly subjective in their approach. Third, and most importantly, the implementation of the appraisal system constituted an undisguised attempt to individualize employment relations in a traditionally collectivist work environment. This conspicuous management attempt to foster 'partnership relationships' with individual manual workers through the use of financial incentives will now be scrutinized in more detail.

Appraisal and individualization on the *JetCo* shop-floor

The Individual Contributions system was introduced during the autumn of 1998 as a component of the annual pay negotiations. The

principle of sanctioning individual appraisals linked to performance related pay supplements engendered a good deal of discord within the workplace union organization culminating in a temporary breakaway by some business unit convenors. Nevertheless, in the context of ongoing redundancies and the unions' decision to prioritize resistance to these rather than fight a battle on multiple fronts, Individual Contributions was eventually accepted. The system comprised annual employee performance appraisals using weighted criteria of 'satisfactory output', 'satisfactory quality', 'attitudes to flexibility', 'preparedness to take on new responsibilities', 'relationships with peers and supervisors', and 'ability to think and act creatively'. Each employee would be scored on these criteria and in a typical year the top fifth of the workforce received a two per cent pay increment on top of their annual pay rise, the next three fifths received a one per cent increment whilst the bottom fifth received nothing. Different senior managers we spoke to were well aware of the potential difficulties involved in introducing this method of dividing up individuals in a shop-floor environment where a strong collective consciousness existed. One adopted the well-worn metaphor of the football team to explain both the logic and the challenge:

> One of the greatest forms of teamwork to me is a football team. And in a football team, you don't pay the lead striker the same as you pay the full back. And I think, if you're careful on the differentiations of pay, and you've got it so that it doesn't become divisive, and you reward good performance, and it's seen to be fair and practical, then it can work. But I think it has to work hand-in-hand with the good teamwork structures as well. But I think also, you've got to recognise that we've moved the people from being equal for many, many years, to now giving them what they call 'the opportunity to be unequal'. And they don't like it, it's alien to them. (Interview, Production Director, June 2001)

By the time of our fieldwork research three years after the implementation of the scheme, it was clear that this form of individualization was still alien to the shop-floor. Although the principle of paying for good individual performance was not in itself rejected, its use within a capitalist work environment of exploitation and low trust meant that many workers came to see it as an affront to their sense of collective morality and dignity. Virtually every worker we interviewed denounced the system and this was irrespective of whether or not they had ever

received a performance increment. For some, the critique centred on managerial subjectivity and favouritism:

> I think in principle it is not a bad thing. In practice, I think there are far too many loopholes in it, there's far too much of a blue-eyed boy syndrome. They said there shouldn't be, but there is. At the end of the day it is all down to an individual's feelings about you. If your boss don't like you it doesn't matter how good you are. I am sure a lot of people feel that way, a lot of people to be blunt don't deserve the extra bits of cash which blow about, they don't do the work, but also I am sure there are a lot of people who do deserve it, but they don't get it. It has caused a massive uproar in my area. (Interview, Sheet Metal Worker, June 2001)

We posed this question to a number of cell managers responsible for implementing the appraisal system. Predictably, they rejected the charge of favouritism. But equally, a good number articulated their own dislike of a process that compelled them to make false distinctions between workers, and indeed, degrade them, on grounds that were mostly spurious. One cell leader felt that:

> The IC system forces a distinction between people. It forces some people to end up at the bottom even though you can tell them you might be at the bottom but you're extremely good and you're getting extremely good scores. But that counts for nothing, absolutely nothing. And the fact that someone who is considered quite good and may be very good is at the bottom of the list, well they feel vulnerable and exposed, I believe that they feel a little bit humiliated to suddenly find that they are the lower regarded people. (Interview, Development Assembly Cell Manager, July 2001)

Just as this supervisor suggested, the main worry for the majority of workers we interviewed was that Individual Contributions threatened to fragment 'team spirit' on the shop-floor. By this, they did not mean the sense of group-working that might emerge from managerial definitions of teams, but instead something more fundamental: the feeling of collective solidarity that provides workers with the necessary confidence to mark out and defend their own separate sets of interests at work. One worker described this concern:

> When I say divisive and counter productive you actually have situations again, you have got a guy in my area who has been marked very badly. He's turned around and looked at his work-mates – who were mates! – and he's thinking, 'he's been given far more than me, what's he doing different from me? I will now watch him and make a daily record of what he does and doesn't do.' That to me is divisive and counter productive and turning worker against worker, because while you are fighting each other you are forgetting what the management is doing. (Interview, Mechanical Inspector, June 2001)

Our questionnaire survey results confirmed these interview findings. They also highlighted a stark contradiction between workers' support in principle for performance-based rewards and their rejection of its practical implementation. We asked *JetCo*'s shop-floor workers whether they felt it was right that good performers should receive extra pay. Seventy four per cent of respondents agreed with this. However, when we then asked whether they felt that the Individual Contributions award was distributed fairly in their work areas, 87 per cent disagreed. Equally, 85 per cent felt that the Individual Contributions review damaged employee morale and the same proportion felt that the review damaged team spirit.

This case study of an employer's attempt to both shape and engage with individual employee aspirations – at the expense of egalitarian concerns – constitutes an example of the potential fracturing of collectivism in contemporary workplaces (Bacon and Storey, 1996). The profoundly negative nature of worker reactions makes it hard to envisage, however, how Bacon and Storey's subsequent argument can be sustained. That is, the appropriate trade union response in such circumstances is to promote both the individual development of members and partnership relations with employers (1996: 77–72). A good number of the workers we interviewed voiced their frustration that their unions had become involved with negotiations over the introduction of the appraisal scheme whilst the idea that the ensuing outcomes might constitute an example of the potential of partnership would, no doubt, have been regarded with some dismay. In fact, many groups on the shop-floor mobilized different forms of opposition in order to reimpose their own collectivist values. For example, one senior manager described how workers refused to play the 'individualistic game' of concealing their performance ratings from colleagues. Instead they employed the humour of self-mockery that is common on the shop-floor both to ensure transparency and to provoke their managers:

> You would have a scoring system. You would have so many scores, and I'd call you in and say, 'right Phil, we've assessed you and we've marked you down, we've assessed you at number 67.' And then it ended up like scores on doors. There was quite a lot of mickey taking on the shop-floor. Guys were saying, 'I'm a number 67 what are you?', ' I'm a 59er and oh, he's a 63.' And some of the guys were calling themselves by their scores and not by their names. And some of the managers did not handle it too well. (Interview, Operations Director, June 2001)

In a similar vein, the following worker compared these types of shop-floor action to the traditions of self-interested reticence in white collar areas:

> Of course it works with the staff. My father was here for 30 odd years. He was an engine designer, and he used to tell me that their system, Merit Rises they called it, when the rises were handed out no one ever talked about it. The first year they did it with us, everyone got given letters and we put them all up on the notice boards. Everybody knew what everyone else had, and I think that is what caused the problem. If we had said nothing you would not have had anything near the trouble. (Interview, Sheet Metal Worker, June 2001)

Finally, the most radical form of opposition came from *JetCo*'s Engine Test unit, which, as we saw in Chapter 4, was notable for its militancy and tight union control. In this area, the union had begun a cell-by-cell campaign urging workers to disclose their Individual Contributions payments and then, on each pay day, to donate these to a collective pool which would be redistributed equally to every worker in the cell. At the time of the research, two out of the five Engine Test cells were carrying out this action (Interview notes with shop stewards and workers).

Gender, contract and employee development

The third theme of this chapter considers women's and temporary workers' access to their firms' training and development policies. As we noted in our introduction, national survey evidence suggests that non-standard workers are more likely to suffer discrimination in this area whereas the gender gap in access to training and developmental support has narrowed in recent years, at least for women on permanent contracts. In the context of the rhetoric of inclusion that forms

part of the partnership agenda our specific interest lies in whether traditional patterns of discrimination are likely to diminish in these high performance work environments.

The gender balance at the aerospace plants was typical of traditional British manufacturing in that both were male dominated. Of the 1482 responses that we received for the questionnaire survey, 173 were women and 153 of these were from the *Airframes* plant. Table 8.4 shows that of these women, 23 per cent were either managers or supervisors (although only one woman occupied a senior management position), 25 per cent were either graduate or non-graduate technical workers and 47 per cent occupied an administrative/clerical role. Very few were employed on the shop-floor.

Taking these gender-occupation patterns into account we compared women's and men's access to formal off-the-job training by using only the manager and non-manual staff data since the responses for manual workers, overwhelmingly men, would distort the overall result. Table 8.5 shows that significantly more women than men had less than two days of formal training over the previous year although more or less equal proportions had five days training or more. Occupation partly explained this pattern in that female managers and graduates were more likely to receive longer periods of training than women in other occupational

Table 8.4 Employee Occupations, by Gender (*Airframes*, n = 878; *JetCo*, n = 604)

	Managers/ Supervisors	Graduates	Technical	Admin & clerical	Manual
Women (%)	23	7	18	47	6
Men (%)	18	7	28	4	44

Table 8.5 Days of Formal (Off-The-Job) Training During the Previous 12 Months for Managers and Non-Manual Staff, by Gender (*Airframes*, n = 542; *JetCo*, n = 353)

	No training (%)	Less than two days (%)	Two to less than five days (%)	Five to less than ten days (%)	Ten days or more (%)
Women	22	24	17	11	26
Men	16	17	28	19	20

Chi-square test significant at the 0.01 level.

groups. On the other hand, female managers, non-graduate technical workers and clerical staff were less likely to receive training than their male counterparts.

The few interviews that we were able to carry out with women workers at each plant highlighted how, notwithstanding this uneven picture of training access, many women had to struggle to receive parity with their male colleagues. Two *JetCo* employees reflected on this. One production supervisor described a typical environment where her male subordinates would sub-consciously question her right as a woman to both work with and manage men on the shop-floor:

> If you ask the guys, how do you feel about working for a woman boss, a female, I think the normal reaction would be, it doesn't bother them. But I think if you ask them deep down, they would want to know why I am here and why I am doing a job that a man can do, and why I'm taking a man's job. That's not my problem, that's their problem. I have had people say to me, 'what is the point of you doing this job because in a few years' time you will be leaving to have children?' (Interview, Female Cell Leader, July 2001)

A technical worker, who had previously described receiving excellent appraisal ratings for a number of years, articulated a sense of the macho culture, and related assumptions governing who has the 'right' to a career and who does not, that equally applies in male-dominated white collar work areas:

> Despite the company thinking that this is an equal opportunities organization, there's very little recognition of my skills or promotion on the basis of merit. Women here tend to get moved sideways. I'm not saying that all women want promotion … . But women like me who do want to offer more, who do have the skills and experience necessary to take on greater responsibility are just never considered for promotion. This is a male-dominated company and the assumption is always that management is a male role and that women are not interested or should not take over men's management positions.
>
> … But its not only that I'm a woman in a male-dominated culture. It is that but it's more than that. It's the old boy network. For example, if you want to get on in this place in many areas it helps if you play golf. Do you see what I mean? And frankly I don't want to play golf. (Interview, Female Supplies Engineer, June 2001)

Table 8.6 Days of Formal (Off-The-Job) Training During the Previous 12 Months for *Airframes* Managers and Non-Manual Staff, by Permanent/Temporary Contract (n = 537)

Occupational group	No training (%)	Less than two days (%)	Two to less than five days (%)	Five days or more (%)
Permanent Staff	21	19	23	37
Temporary Staff	35	31	21	13

Chi-square test significant at the 0.01 level.

Although compared to men, a higher proportion of women at the two plants were temporary workers, in absolute terms there were more male temporary workers employed. As we described in Chapter 3 the vast majority of these worked at *Airframes* where the use of temporary labour had become integral to the firm's flexibility measures. Our questionnaire survey of *Airframes* employees included 52 temporary workers employed in non-manual areas. We were also able to interview a number of these.

The questionnaire results reflected the patterns of discrimination established by national surveys. For instance, these have shown that contingent workers tend to be excluded from employee appraisal processes (Bach, 2000). At *Airframes*, we found that only 25 per cent of temporary workers had attended an annual review in the previous twelve months compared to 75 per cent of their permanent colleagues. Moreover, although temporary workers were by no means completely excluded from the firm's skill development programmes, they received much less formal training than permanent staff. As Table 8.6 indicates, 66 per cent received less than two days training over the previous year (compared to 40 per cent of permanent workers) whilst only 13 per cent received five days or more training (compared to 37 per cent of permanent workers).

The predominant experience among the six temporary staff and sub-contract workers we interviewed was that although they sometimes received training that facilitated the completion of specific tasks, they would nevertheless be excluded from anything that might benefit their longer-term careers. One sub-contract worker disclosed how, in the engineering sector, this form of discrimination placed both the risk of job loss and responsibility for maintaining employability solely on the shoulders of the employee:

> I mean there is no career in contract working. It's a job not a career. And the key thing is that you need to keep up to date as a craftsman because if you didn't learn it all somehow then these days you wouldn't have a job because no one's doing drawing on the drawing board any more. And there's a Catch 22 there, because if the company doesn't train you up then you've got to go and do it yourself. In fact one of the contract men in our office paid one thousand pounds of his own money to go to Warwick university to go on a CAD course, because you know, if he doesn't get this then in five years time he won't get a job. (Interview, Sub-Contract Engineer, December 2001)

Another female temporary worker who had been employed at *Airframes* for a number of years on rolling contracts that could be extended by a month, or by three months or sometimes by a year, described how despite this 'permanently temporary status' she would not receive the same developmental support as her permanent colleagues:

> You become frustrated because the work requires a degree of skill and you're not given company training to do it. But you have to meet all the demands that they set. And you have to do it in your own time. Because I'm engineering I wasn't used to sitting and using a computer, so I've now become computer literate. But it's off my own back and not through the company. I went to college on a Friday afternoon and I came in on Saturday to make up my hours. And it was a course I believe that was going to benefit the company anyway, it wasn't gardening or sewing, it was engineering. And in the end when it became a full day, I asked my boss if this was okay and he said no. Somebody higher up said no, we can't justify having you as a temp if your having one day out, even if I was working a Saturday to make it up. (Interview, Temporary Customer Support Engineer, December 2001)

Overall, therefore, we found little evidence of any erosion of the characteristic UK patterns of discrimination based on employment contract, and to a lesser extent, gender, in the area of employee training and development. This was despite the inclusive rhetoric of partnership in these 'high performance' workplaces that were relatively rich in skills training resources.

Conclusion

The case study data highlight a number of problems governing the principle of equal access to off-the-job skills training and developmental support. Both plants adopted formal policies that offered structured training programmes and appraisal systems to all employees; and as befits firms that require high skill levels in design and production operations, significant proportions of managers and employees received five or more days off-the-job training in a typical year. Nevertheless, some groups benefited from these policies more than others and we found little evidence of the discourse of partnership and inclusion acting to diminish these inequalities. For example, although the effect was greater at *JetCo* compared to *Airframes*, the predominantly skilled manual workers at both plants received significantly less training than higher qualified employees in non-manual areas, particularly graduate engineers. This was despite the fact that additional skills training was an integral component of competency-based grading schemes in the shop-floor areas. Again, with the exception of many graduates (and managers), there existed a good deal of cynicism and dissatisfaction with the utility of employee appraisal schemes and their effectiveness in promoting personal development. Nowhere was this more the case than on the *JetCo* shop-floor where the incentivization of individual employee performance via a PRP scheme engendered dysfunctional outcomes in the form of widespread damage to employee morale, conflict between peers and mounting collective opposition. In addition, too many of the minority women workers in these plants, again particularly those who were non-graduates, faced an uphill struggle to secure equal access to training and the same long-term career paths as their male colleagues. This was due partly to the patriarchal assumptions that helped underpin the male-dominated management regime. Finally, at *Airframes*, where the employment of temporary staff had become integral to the firm's flexible employment policies, the formal inclusion of these workers in training and development policies did not prevent, in many cases, their actual exclusion from company-funded training courses and realistic dialogue on career prospects.

The source of these problems can be traced to the competitive conditions faced by many British manufacturing enterprises. Just as other researchers have found in similar Anglo-Saxon economic settings (see Ackroyd and Procter, 1998; Buchanan et al., 2002 in Buchanan et al., 2004) the lack of more comprehensive skill formation in these firms can be attributed to the structural changes that we have described in

various parts of this book. That is, shifts in national markets combined with intense global competition to catalyse forms of organizational restructuring and a recomposition of the labour process that required a higher utilization of existing skills (and driving labour harder) rather than any significant investment in skill formation. Although the new 'elites' within these firms (graduates and their managers) tended to be shielded from these pressures, the reality of partnership-style personal development for most workers, both manual and routine non-manual, was one of narrow task-based training and appraisal procedures that were at best perfunctory and at worst profoundly divisive.

9

Workplace Partnership: A Question of Interests

It has been our argument throughout this book that, in the final analysis, the conflict of class interests that is inherent to capitalist dynamics at work will inevitably frustrate and, in time, invalidate attempts to create partnerships between employers and labour. In reading the different analyses of the proponents of partnership and high performance work systems one could be forgiven for losing sight of the fact that these new developments in work organization and employment relations are components of a *capitalist* labour process. The seductive rhetoric of 'high commitment' and 'mutual gain' too easily glosses over the role and condition of those who labour under high performance regimes, workers whose labour power, like any other in capitalist society, is subject to the command of capital. The new management techniques that we have discussed in previous chapters did, in part, attempt to incorporate the currently fashionable agendas of employee and union participation in organizational decision-making but their prime role was to further the generation of profit. In other words, partnership and high performance work systems are just the latest developments in the real subsumption of labour under capital in which the labour process is constantly refined in pursuit of the accumulation of value. This core underlying factor may well upset the sensibilities of those who strive for consensual solutions to conflict and to those who abstract their analyses of workplace relations from the process of capital accumulation. In this regard it is instructive to remember Braverman's still pertinent account of the many attempts of the 'professions' to habituate workers to the capitalist mode of production. Rather than confront directly the degradation of men and women in capitalist work organization, personnel consultants, industrial psychologists and some sociologists (to which might be added a plethora of

A. Danford et al., *Partnership and the High Performance Workplace*

business school commentators) have only ever concerned themselves with the 'management problem' of control and how to deal with worker reactions to that degradation (1974: 141).

The implications of this political economy have been recognized by some of the more critical theorists. For instance, Godard (2004) has argued that the 'mutual gains' objectives of the high performance workplace are always likely to founder on the rocks of an inherent lack of trust that characterizes the exchange relation between the buyers and sellers of labour power. Workers who enter into an employment relationship legally subordinate themselves to the exercise of employer authority (2004: 366). Although we would endorse this approach, we would argue that trust, or the lack of it, is only a manifestation of a deeper contradiction, of the irreconcilable conflict of interests that arise from this social relation. The question of interests does constitute either a core or implicit theme in most formulations of partnership. It is our contention, however, that in too many cases the optimistic accounts of partnership rely on conjecture – rather than hard evidence – when it comes to assessing the prospects for securing a manageable congruence of interests between capital and labour at the point of production

For many proponents of partnership in the high performance workplace the generation of trust and co-operation between employers and workers forms a central dynamic in the management of change. For both parties, 'mutual gains' outcomes are dependent on workers and their unions committing themselves to the economic objectives of the firm whilst employers are expected to share the fruits of these economic objectives and to invest profits to promote long-term job security (Kochan and Osterman, 1994: 46). The more specific employee dimensions include new responsibilities via creative work systems, substantive employee participation, high skill formation and incentive pay. These are critically dependent on the development of more co-operative workplace relations involving mutual trust and the re-imagining of labour as 'stakeholders' in the enterprise (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Konzelmann and Forrant, 2003). The idea of joint interests at work, which has always existed formally in the sense that employers require productive labour whilst workers need secure, adequately paid employment, moves to a different level under the high performance regime. That is, employers increasingly require highly skilled, flexible and motivated labour and workers' interests undergo a shift towards personal investment in skill development, problem-solving and active participation in organizational decision-making for reasons of job satisfaction.

This potential coincidence of interests becomes most apparent when considering the role that partnership is supposed to play in legitimizing the introduction of HPWS. The 'systems fit' approach that underpins the more managerial treatments of HPWS places great emphasis on the need for supportive human resource management practices the core of which comprises the development of partnership relations with trade unions and their members. The TUC's (2000; 1999) six principles, which to date remain the protocol for partnership practice in the UK, clearly embody the idea of joint support between employers, unions and workers for the introduction of high performance management techniques. And more fundamentally, they make salient, but also attempt to minimize, the contradictions between different interests in the employment relationship. Without doubt the more powerful rhetoric contained in these principles is that of mutuality. Effective partnerships are seen to be built on a shared understanding of, and commitment to, business goals; on support for flexibility and best practice ideas; on a commitment to employment security; on a sharing of information with a commitment to listen to alternative plans; and on mobilizing in-house talent and employee contribution in order to improve organizational performance. Only one of the six principles requires partnership to recognize quite legitimate differences of interest between the parties although it is again the emphasis upon reciprocity in the form of mutual 'trust and respect' that is expected to resolve such differences (TUC, 1999: 13).

Current academic commentary has differed over how the partnership approach to industrial relations departs from old-style, unitarist HRM in its engagement with the conflicting interests at play in the employment relationship. Some analysts contend that compared to the threat of union marginalization under HRM, partnership is distinguished by its focus on the mutual legitimation of different interests and, indeed, the belief that the interplay between these interests can be managed within organizational contexts of extant union strength and autonomy (Haynes and Allen, 2001; Taylor, 2003). By contrast, others have argued, and we would tend to agree here, that the most distinctive conceptual feature lies in the processes by which employers attempt to draw trade unions and workers into new relations of trust and reciprocity (Guest and Peccei, 2001). Partnership's defining theme becomes, not mutual legitimation, but mutuality itself. The corollary of this, from the employer's perspective, is that the principle of recognizing differences of interest may well give way to an insistence by management that trade unions eschew adversarial attitudes and

instead adopt a stance of 'compliant engagement' if they wish to enjoy any influence at work at all. In other words, the subordination of one side's interests (which just happen to be labour's) to the greater good, which just happens to correspond with capital's interests.

However, there are two major weaknesses in these partnership debates. The first is that the exact nature of labour's interests in contemporary work contexts is rarely subject to any detailed analysis beyond the rudimentary premise of co-existent conflict and co-operation in the employment relationship. In one recent exception to this, Heery (2002; see also 2004), following Hyman (1997), attempts to map out the extent to which formal partnership agreements focus on the employment-centred interests of union members. These are categorized in terms of employment security, worker entitlement to training and development and such 'qualitative needs' as employee involvement and communication. Heery argues that, notwithstanding evidence of a degradation of employment conditions arising from changes to the labour process, partnership does at least hold out the prospect of a positive agenda at work in its attempt to engage with these worker interests by broadening the scope of union representation and traditional collective bargaining. Our concern here, however, is that these categories of interest are insufficiently problematized. For instance, although employee interest in security at work seems self-evident, the terminological slippage from 'job security' to 'employment security', which is now the norm in partnership discourse, has the effect of shifting the risk management of job tenure from the employer to the worker. As Levitas (1998) has observed (see also Grimshaw et al., 2001; Terry, 2003a), the notion of long-term job stability with a single employer has subtly given way to an expectation that workers themselves are obliged to seek any opportunity to retrain and acquire new skills in order to maintain individual employability within different labour markets. Partnership employers may continue to downsize whilst impressing on their workers that it is in their 'interests' to take sole responsibility for their career futures. Another example is that a worker's 'need' for participation in decision-making may require something more substantive than partnership agendas allow. The concept of participation only becomes meaningful in terms of interests and practice if it is based on a sufficient breadth and depth of influence that provides employees a powerful voice on strategic issues governing the organization of work, employment and long-term job security (Collom, 2003).

The second weakness is that labour's interests are rarely subject to the same degree of direct assessment (by way of eliciting employees' viewpoints and experiences) as those of employers. Too many accounts of partnership in the high performance workplace have considered the employee's perspective through the lens of managerial assumptions, or indirectly via the attitudes of trade union officers and representatives, or worse still, through the voice of managerial research subjects. It has been our contention that a more reliable understanding of employees' needs and interests requires a direct engagement with the multiple voices from the shop and office floor. Taken together, these viewpoints constitute the interests of labour, the demands of the collective worker. In the following concluding section we use the case study analysis to summarize these interests, to explicate their underlying incompatibility with the employer's interests, and to explore the implications of this for the micro-politics of partnership.

The reality of partnership: conditions for mutuality or discord?

When abstracted from the real environments in which capitalist firms operate, the TUC's six partnership principles read as a laudable set of objectives for the management of employment relations. Few commentators or practitioners would disagree with such inoffensive ideas as 'joint commitment', 'building trust and respect' or 'transparent decision-making'. The problem of course, is that the principles become mere platitudes when moved from the factitious worlds of policy documents or management toolkits to the more complex, conflictual terrain of capitalist work relations. The two aerospace plants that we have described in this book offered, on paper, exemplary participative work contexts and an array of 'progressive' management practices that more than fulfilled the textbook definitions of partnership and high performance work systems. That the worker outcomes were not quite what management desired, or indeed, what the many proponents of these new workplace relations would expect, was not just the function of a yawning gap between managerial rhetoric and reality. Instead we would argue that these outcomes embodied the inevitable contradictions and conflicts that characterize the organization of the labour process in neo-liberal market economies. Although particular manifestations of conflict – and co-operation – may vary in different work contexts, our contention is that the underlying dynamic of irreconcilable interests remains constant.

To explore this in greater depth it is useful to return to each of the TUC's six partnership principles and to consider their relevance to the different interests of employers and workers. Figure 9.1 provides an outline of these relationships.

Principle one: commitment to success of the enterprise

In some respects this first principle represents a mere continuation of conventional practice in many management-union procedural agreements in that both parties are expected to formally confirm their joint commitment to the enterprise. However, in reality, such statements are often drafted and signed in a perfunctory way. Partnership is different in that worker and union commitment is constructed not just as a formal objective but as a process of change. In other words, commitment includes 'support for flexibility, and a willingness to embrace Best Practice from outside' (TUC, 1999: 13). If we consider how these rudimentary ideas relate to the employer's and labour's independent agendas then profound conflicts of interest emerge.

From the employer's side, the quest for joint commitment must be viewed in the context of the exigencies of capital accumulation within Anglo-Saxon economic regimes. As we described in Chapter 3, one of the core factors impacting upon the corporate strategies of the two aerospace firms, like most others in British manufacturing, has been the predominance of shareholder value and the short-term interests of the City. Although such a factor is hardly novel in the case of the UK, it has been argued that the relationship has intensified. Shifts in the dynamics of capital accumulation have seen the emergence of a financialized economy where capital markets behave as regulators of a firm's behaviour rather than mere intermediaries (Thompson, 2003: 366; see also Froud et al., 2002; Williams, 2000). The impact on manufacturing firms, and the employer's interests, is that their consequent transformation into 'new flexible firms' (Ackroyd and Procter, 1998) requires them to seek joint commitment with their workforces to a specific form of 'flexibility' and 'best practice'. This involves the adoption of new financial control techniques that impact primarily on labour costs. In other words, greater labour control via team accountability, a more efficient consumption of labour power via task flexibility in teams, and the use of outsourcing and temporary labour to facilitate a more 'flexible' and 'spatial' management' of overall labour costs.

However, labour's view on commitment does not quite accord with this. Terry (2003a) notes that most workers and unions could be expected to offer commitment to firms that are seen to be successful

Figure 9.1 Partnership and Employers' and Labour's Interests

TUC's SIX PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES	EMPLOYERS' INTERESTS	LABOUR'S INTERESTS
1) ***Commitment to success of the enterprise.*** Shared understanding of, and commitment to, the business goals of the organization. Includes support for flexibility and Best Practice ideas from outside.	*Support*. The imperatives of neo-liberal political economy and the 'new flexible firm'. Financial control measures: continual flexibility improvements, viz: task flexibility in teams, outsourcing and use of temporary labour.	*Oppose*. Commitment cannot be open-ended. Maintenance of labour standards governing limits on flexibility and arbitrary supervisory decisions. Unions must critically engage with partnership.
2) ***Recognizing legitimate interests.*** Legitimate differences in interest and priorities may exist between employers and unions, Partnership will embody a degree of trust and respect that should aid their resolution.	*Oppose*. Employers seek a shift in union policy orientations towards management agendas, positive union engagement with management, and union participation in the continuous improvement of work organization within strictly defined parameters.	*Oppose*. Workers seek job protection, an equal balance of power, independent unions, and an elimination of status differences at work. Unions that recognize employers' partnership interests are unlikely to secure these objectives.
3) ***Commitment to employment security.*** Enhancing flexibility must not be at the expense of workers' security. Employers must adopt measures that maximize employment security.	*Oppose*. Shareholder interests and imperatives of capital accumulation require employers to seek continual improvement in cost reduction, labour utilization and flexibility. Labour rationalization is integral to the HPW regime. Joint agreements on staffing levels are opposed.	*Qualified Support*. Job security is a core worker interest and QWL indicator. Workers need investment in jobs rather than 'employability' measures. Unions that support partnership have little real influence over staffing levels.
4) ***Focus on the quality of working life.*** Partnership must deliver concrete improvements to the quality of working life. This should include investment in skills training and promoting personal growth.	*Oppose*. Training and development policies are geared primarily towards the immediate demands of production. High performance in firms must inevitably involve increasing effort rates and for some, higher stress levels.	*Support*. Training systems must promote job enrichment rather than performance management. HPWS drive labour ever harder. A real partnership would place limits on this by generating more acceptable staffing levels.
5) ***Transparency.*** Information governing employee futures must be openly shared with unions at an early stage. Workers must have the opportunity to express their views. Employers must be committed to listen to alternative plans. For some information unions may have to accept conditions of confidentiality.	*Oppose*. Drawing up business strategy is management's prerogative; consultation with unions and workers can then follow. More extensive dialogue is welcomed and alternative plans may be tabled but the employer's policy will prevail. Sensitive information will only ever be disclosed if the unions guarantee confidentiality.	*Qualified Support*. Future plans governing job security and the quality of working life must be discussed at the earliest stage. Workers' interests must be integral to policy formulation. Joint consultation must become 'democratized' via greater worker involvement and a prioritization of unions' alternative plans. Sensitive information must be openly shared.
6) ***Adding value.*** Partnership should tap into sources of employee motivation, commitment and resources to improve performance. E.g., via systems of task participation.	*Support*. Employee participation in teamworking and continuous improvement is aimed at cost reduction and improving work efficiency and quality.	*Qualified Support*. Participation must be based on prioritizing employee interests in work design, working conditions and quality of working life.

and which are willing to offer a measure of job security and favourable employment conditions. But this commitment is unlikely to be unconditional. Not only will the continual threat of redundancy in itself undermine the type of commitment that employers seek but workers also develop their own independent interests based on establishing certain labour standards at work. As Stewart et al. (2004) have argued, these labour standards run contrary to the employers' quest for new financial control measures. They seek to create spaces for employee autonomy and fair treatment by placing limits on the imposition of task flexibility and other managerial prerogatives. Workers' ability to secure and maintain these standards will be partly contingent on trade union strategy and the extent to which unions engage with partnership in a critical and oppositional way.

The partnership principle of joint commitment thus makes little sense in the context of, on the one hand, the employers' financial control agenda and, on the other, workers' need for protective labour standards. The idea of joint commitment merely attempts to obscure rather than resolve this fundamental conflict of interest.

Principle two: recognizing legitimate interests

If the first principle of joint commitment constitutes the raison d'être of partnership the next principle of mutual legitimation forms both its underpinning idea and guarantor of long-term sustainability (TUC, 1999: 13). Recognizing legitimate interests means accepting that quite different priorities and concerns between employers, workers and their unions can emerge. For the TUC, an authentic partnership will require mutual trust and respect to enable any differences to be resolved, albeit managers and unions must both accept the need of the other to properly represent the views of their respective constituencies. The problem here is that unlike many trade unions, most employers often pay lip service to this principle. The discourse of partnership agreements tends to be overwhelmingly unitarist (Terry, 2003a) as are management objectives in the many more cases where attempts are made to develop less formal partnership relationships. As we saw with the two aerospace case studies the 'business case for partnership' was not based on mutual legitimation or the recognition of alternative trade union agendas. Instead, the employers sought a qualitative shift in the nature of workplace unionism and of union engagement with management. This we have termed 'partnership as process'. The employer's objective was to promote union and worker participation in the continuous improvement of organizational efficiency within the parameters of the

imperatives of capital accumulation, a process of legitimizing management change programmes. In this scenario, the principle of recognizing different sets of legitimate interests gives way ultimately to a demand for consensus based on the employer's interests. In other words, labour participates but only on management's terms.

The position of labour is quite different to this. Although rank-and-file union leaders may differ in their strategies of supportive or oppositional engagement with partnership, and we have described examples in the two case studies, the underlying interests of the rank and file themselves are more uniform and distinctive. That is, although most workers are unlikely to reject partnership *per se* their perception is that employers are unlikely to engage with a meaningful form of this. That is, a partnership that embodies real job protection, a more equal balance of power between employers and unions, the employer's recognition of independent union agendas, the strengthening of democratic accountability between members and activists, and an elimination of status differences between managers and workers. As we have seen, it is also in labour's interests that intra-workforce status differences be eliminated along with the ensuing differential treatment of workers by management. For instance, divisions on the basis of occupational class, gender and employment contract (the very small number of workers from ethnic minorities employed by the two aerospace firms prevented us from exploring this variable).

It is difficult to conceive how these two quite different conceptualizations of partnership can be reconciled. The 'business case for partnership' is essentially a unitarist demand for consensus around a hegemonic set of business interests, and a process that not only legitimizes managerial authority and power but can increase it. By contrast, the rank and file version reflects a desire for independence, autonomy and union protection from the employer. In many respects, therefore, the second principle of partnership amounts to little more than a fanciful attempt to deny this underlying feature of contemporary employment relations.

Principle three: commitment to employment security

Ostensibly, this third principle is the one that is most likely to attract workers and unions to partnership. The TUC's aspiration here is that there should be no trade-off between the adoption of flexibility measures and employees' security. It is argued that a range of policies should be introduced to effect this, policies such as limiting the use of compulsory redundancies, ensuring joint agreements on staffing levels and investing in training to improve the employability of workers.

We have already noted earlier how the substitution of 'employment security' for 'job security' in partnership discourse can be to the detriment of rank and file interests. However, there is a more fundamental structural problem that this discourse completely disregards. The advocates of partnership tend to assume that the high performance workplace embodies a 'high road' company strategy that, amongst other 'progressive' management practices, offers employees long-term job security. In reality, so-called 'high road' firms in the Anglo-Saxon economies are just as likely to adopt 'hire and fire' policies as any other firm. Indeed, the practice of continual downsizing can be integral to the competitive strategy of the high performance regime in that outsourcing major work packages and stripping out labour remain prime means of reducing costs and maintaining shop-floor discipline (Biewener, 1997; Thompson, 2003). The employer's interest is therefore one primarily of employee cost rather than employee security. This factor was reflected in the strategies of the two aerospace firms. Their financial control agendas demanded continual reductions in the cost of design and manufacturing labour involving greater flexibility, more efficient labour utilization, recurrent staff redundancies, the outsourcing of core work packages and, in one case, the use of temporary labour to manage fluctuations in product demand.

Labour's interests are diametrically opposite to this. The workers in our case studies were no different to any other in their need for stable jobs and incomes. But for many, job insecurity rather than 'employment security' was the predominant experience and this had a powerfully negative impact upon their quality of working life and on their sense of involvement in, and commitment to, the firm. Their overriding interest, articulated by many, demanded that the employer begin investing in the workforce as a long-term competitive strategy rather than continually resort to different means of labour rationalization in a short-sighted process of factory survival. These workers also discovered that despite the rhetoric of a mutual gain 'bargain', involving security in return for flexibility, the idea of rank-and-file support for a partnership-based trade union strategy was not in their interests. Unions that supported partnership in reality had no more influence over the employer's staffing policies than those adopting an oppositional stance.

Principle four: focus on the quality of working life

This states that effective partnerships must move beyond mere statements of intent by delivering favourable concrete outcomes such as the

betterment of employees' QWL. For the TUC, apart from the focus on employment security the key aspect of QWL that is expected to improve is personal development. This includes investment in training and the promotion of genuine personal growth opportunities for all groups of workers. In researching this QWL theme, we adopted a more conventional, broader approach by also incorporating such factors as changes in employee effort rates and their impact upon stress levels at work.

The employers' prime interest in partnership as a means of delivering higher performance outcomes places them in opposition to this principle. If we first consider the question of employees' personal development then we might well expect many employers to advocate the need for improvements in training and job quality to facilitate the mobilization of skills and knowledge. However, the extent to which they match such rhetoric with real investment in high skills training and development is often limited. In the context of Anglo-Saxon neo-liberal economy, and the incessant pressures to cut costs, many British firms pay little more than lip service to the employee development agenda of the high performance workplace (Keep and Mayhew, 2001; Lloyd and Payne, 2004). Things were little different in the two aerospace firms where training objectives were geared to short-term production objectives rather than longer term developmental needs. Moreover, the case studies highlighted how partnership's egalitarian ideal of personal development for all workers can be problematic even in firms that operate in high skill environments of so-called 'organizational learning'. The two aerospace firms had developed quite detailed human resource development policies but it was those working close to the apex of each organization, such as managers and graduates, who were the prime beneficiaries of these. Manual workers, those in the lower technical grades, (especially women) and temporary workers were far more likely to number among the excluded.

From labour's viewpoint, the partnership principle of enhancing QWL was of course to be welcomed and this again placed it in opposition to the employer. Most workers did aspire to greater skill formation as a means of personal enrichment and as an avenue towards career advancement. But for many, their employers' policies were regarded as highly restrictive or elitist and aimed primarily at performance management rather than acting as enablers of career development. The same conflict of interests was manifest in our second QWL theme: the pace of work and its control. As has been confirmed by many other studies of recent changes to the manufacturing labour process, manual

and non-manual workers at both aerospace firms experienced a significant intensification of effort as a result of organizational restructuring and labour rationalization. This in turn generated patterns of workplace stress, an outcome that was further mediated by feelings of lack of control at work and of job insecurity. Although a few managers we spoke to acknowledged that overwork was a problem in their areas the majority regarded this as a non-issue or looked at the questioner with some perplexity, as if we were challenging their longstanding assumption that 'stress can be good for you'. The reality, as articulated by many workers, was that workplace stress was undesirable and was a corollary of a work system that delivered 'high performance' by recurrently downsizing its workforce and driving remaining labour ever harder.

Principle five: transparency

This concerns the provision of more effective 'employee voice' via robust systems of communication and consultation. Of all the partnership principles, transparency perhaps best embodies the idea of labour as a key partner or 'stakeholder' in the management of an enterprise. In the TUC's formulation, transparency means that information governing future employer strategy must be discussed with union representatives at the earliest opportunity, that consultation processes must include a commitment to listen to alternative union plans, that as 'partners' unions must be prepared to accept that some company information remains confidential, and that rank and file members must be regarded as active participants in processes of two-way communication.

Although many employers might support some of these ideas to a degree, in that systems of more extensive communication can be shaped to foster greater employee commitment, they are likely to oppose any form of real democratization at work. By this we mean the creation of structures that allow the independent voice of labour to be heard and which recognize the legitimacy of rank and file challenges to prejudicial managerial actions. The underlying employer interest in new employee voice techniques reflected its promotion of mutuality at work (see Principle Two above); that is, better dialogue with unions and workers was supposed to facilitate the legitimation and continuous improvement of business and production methods. Therefore, for many firms, the transparency principle has certain limits. As the two case studies showed, employers may well be willing to concede a greater degree of information-sharing, or post hoc consultation, but they will not risk involving unions or their members in the conception

stages of strategy formulation. Neither will they be willing to grant any legitimacy to alternative business plans tabled by trade unions. In capitalist firms, business strategy will always remain within the confines of managerial prerogative. Similarly, employers will not release sensitive company information to unions unless there is some guarantee that this will remain confidential. But if employers are also expected to recognize the separate, independent interests of labour, a de facto acceptance of a conflict of interests, then how can they be certain that such guarantees will hold?

Labour's interests are in support of meaningful democratization at work and against the employer's conceptualization of participation (Collom, 2003). Moreover, most workers are unlikely to be fooled by managerial attempts to provide them a mere *sense* of ownership and control in their work (Rothschild, 2000). Their interest and active participation in organizational decision-making are likely to be based on the promotion of core concerns: job security, adequate incomes and continual improvements in the quality of working life. Thus, in the two case studies, although they were denied this by the employers, manual and non-manual workers wanted these core interests to be placed at the centre of the firms' strategic discussions. This required direct and indirect employee participation in decisions governing such issues as staffing levels, workload and the location of work. It also required a democratization of the process of negotiation and consultation. For instance, existing consultation practices were regarded as too remote from the rank and file and most workers had no real awareness of their content or outcomes. A meaningful renewal of these processes required structures that fostered more active worker participation and an environment that allowed sensitive issues to be openly discussed whilst also providing the space for discussions on alternative proposals.

Principle six: adding value

The final partnership principle gives support to different practices of task participation, a defining concept of the high performance workplace. Adopting a post-Taylorist rhetoric, it is argued that firms will gain competitive advantage when they succeed in mobilizing the 'in-house talent' (that is, employees' skills and knowledge) in projects that aim to improve organizational performance. By this is meant worker participation in job reforms via such problem-solving techniques as teamworking and kaizen groups.

Both employers and labour may ostensibly support this principle but for contrasting reasons that may again bring their interests into

conflict. As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, the introduction of teamworking and continuous improvement campaigns needed to be understood in the context of specific capital accumulation regimes. Neither aerospace firm adopted work reforms in order to empower workers or to enlarge their scope for autonomy. Instead, the underlying dynamic of these changes was the intensification of the extraction of surplus value whilst particular techniques were shaped by the demands of financial control. Thus, teamworking was primarily aimed at creating the organizational conditions for both enhancing management control and reducing unit costs. Similarly, employee involvement in continuous improvement was aimed solely at improving organizational efficiency rather than addressing independent worker concerns. Workers, on the other hand, whilst regarding themselves as best placed to suggest improvements to work design, only supported this if they felt they would be treated as equal partners in the participation process. This meant that suggestions governing such issues as investment in plant and improvements to working conditions and QWL should take precedence over the employers' cost-cutting agenda. The underlying irony here is that the craft tradition in both aerospace firms, with its connotations of 'expertise' and 'pride in the job', meant that most workers were quite used to drawing on their extensive knowledge and experience to improve a task or product. For many, the core HPWS concept of mobilizing 'in-house talent', what Appelbaum et al. (2000) refer to as the mobilization of tacit knowledge and worker discretion, was to be resisted because it replaced real autonomy with imposition, pride in the job with rationalization, and discretionary effort with driving labour ever harder.

Conclusion

Our analysis begs the question, whither partnership? In contrast to the underlying assumption of the promise of consensus between capital and labour, we have argued that these partnership principles cannot mask irreconcilable conflicts of interest that are prime characteristics of capitalist workplace dynamics. The summary in Figure 9.1 shows that labour's interests are directly opposed to the employer's in four of these principles. And whilst their positions seem to coincide in the remaining two, their joint support (adding value) and opposition (recognizing legitimate interests) are based on incompatible concerns. It is also the case that when we cast aside the seductive, 'soft' rhetoric of partnership, we find that the employers' 'hard' interests, based on the

realities of current capital accumulation regimes, are opposed to four out of the six principles. Similarly, although labour's interests appear more congruent, in fact, the categories of 'support' and 'qualified support' can be read as ciphers for a radically different conceptualization of partnership to that offered by the TUC and other advocates.

The UK partnership model seems, therefore, ultimately untenable. As a basis for a strategy of union renewal it may also constitute a blind alley, a possibility that many general secretaries of Britain's most influential trade unions are increasingly coming to realize (Upchurch et al., 2004a). This is because, as we have demonstrated in our case studies, where employers arrive at a position of endorsing partnership, this will be based mostly on a 'business case' that even sits at odds with the somewhat managerialist principles outlined above. The business case for partnership is one that is shaped solely by employers' interests and amounts to little more than a social process of legitimation for continuous workplace reforms that intensify the accumulation of capital. This conceptualization rejects any notion of independent union interests and concomitant rank and file practices of job control or defence of labour standards. In his assessment of the role of partnership in union revitalization strategies, Terry (2003a: 467–468) admits as much in his judgement that, 'partnership reflects, primarily, a managerial view of trade unionism – as business-focused, consensual organizations that perceive their members' interests as best served by the pursuit of corporate success.' Where we would disagree with Terry is in his pessimistic conclusion that from their position of current decline, unions may have little choice but to accept a weakening of their role as representatives of rank-and-file interests in return for a degree of 'institutional centrality' at work via partnership (2003a: 469). This line of argument follows a similar path to the 'neo-pluralist' position adopted by Ackers and Payne (1998) and Ackers et al. (2004). The problem here is that if this is really the only realistic route to organizational renewal, unions as legitimators and as mediators between management and workers as Terry puts it, then who or what is left to represent labour's collective interests? In this scenario we are left with a solitary union form, divorced from the needs and concerns of rank and file members (and most likely from their membership subscriptions) and relying for its legitimacy on employers' discretion – employers who, over the years, have been noticeably fickle in their willingness to engage with any form of trade unionism in the UK.

We would argue that there is an alternative. Those who labour under high performance management regimes, like any other form of capital-

ist work organization, possess collective interests and concerns that require robust representation from independent, democratic and, where the situation demands, militant forms of union organization. This alternative is not easy. It is subject to systematic hostility and aggression from employers and the state and involves struggle with likely (short-term) costs for union members and organization alike. But that has always been the case. There is very little evidence to suggest that partnership strategies offer anything better, indeed, longer term outcomes are more likely to be to the detriment of union organization and union influence at work. For instance, as Kelly (1996) has argued, partnership merely institutionalizes the demise of collective bargaining and reduced union influence whilst offering little prospect of membership gains compared to more militant unionism. His more recent analysis of partnership agreements in the UK shows no significant association between partnership and either union density or union influence over wages and conditions whilst the most tangible outcome is that partnership agreements seem to prove highly effective in helping employers to manage workforce reductions (Kelly, 2004).

Similar patterns of contradiction and negative outcome were present in our case studies of management attempts to develop partnership relations at work. The extent to which management was successful in securing a qualitative change in union engagement was partly contingent upon the characteristics and attitudes of the rank and file leaderships. In two cases, they encountered more supportive leaders and in two others they faced opposition. These differences between four discrete bargaining groups enabled us to measure variations in employee assessment of both personal and union influence over organizational decision-making. Despite the democratic rhetoric of worker participation in the high performance workplace, personal influence was found to be generally low whilst there was no significant partnership effect on union influence (neither did partnership grant the more supportive unions any greater foreknowledge of planned job losses). Moreover, our research design allowed an assessment of an additional dimension of the partnership process that is systematically neglected by its proponents. The different conflicts of interest that we have presented are not heuristic, abstract formulations but sources of concrete antagonism that gave rise to a variety of types of employee resistance. As we have seen, in some instances these took the form of overt cynical attitudes towards new managerial culture and practice. In some technical areas, groups of workers with little previous union consciousness began to embrace union membership and organize innovative anti-company

campaigns. And on the shop-floor, a tradition of robust defence of protective labour standards was mostly maintained. That this resistance seemed more manifest in the non-partnership bargaining areas was not an index of the 'success' of partnership since the different patterns of negative worker experience of the high performance workplace were spread more uniformly. What did seem to be the case was that the developing partnership relations in two bargaining areas was one factor among a number in helping to suppress overt resistance. Other factors included the innovative exploitation of engineering labour markets (such as the employment of ex-military labour at *Airframes*) and intra-class divisions in work areas (for instance, where engineering graduates experienced different class affiliations compared to other technical workers).

Perhaps the dominant theme which embodies the question of interests in the high performance workplace is the employee's quest for greater autonomy and security at work. It was this concern that underpinned so much of the negative employee experience we encountered. The irony here is that although autonomy and security constitute defining characteristics of the new organizational discourse, the reality of current management control strategies is to deny their fruition. The factors that gave rise to the predominantly negative patterns of employee experience should not, therefore, be regarded as imperfections or constraints against the emergence of an alternative, 'authentic', high performance management regime. Instead, the short-termist emphasis on maximizing profitability and shareholder value – the central dynamic of British manufacturing capital – means that greater management control and reduced employee security are both *inherent* features of the high performance workplace. We should not be surprised, therefore, if management-labour relations in these so-called 'participative' work contexts continue to be problematic and conflictual, rather than unitary. In this context, trade union strategies based on support for partnership are likely to prove unsustainable in the face of growing rank and file antipathy to the idea of accommodation with the source of their degradation at work.

References

Abdullah, S.R.S. and Keenoy, T. (1995) 'Japanese Management Practices in the Malaysian Electronics Industry', *Journal of Management Studies*, 32(6): 747–66.

Ackers, P. (2002) 'Reframing Employment Relations: The Case for Neo-pluralism', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 33(1): 2–19.

Ackers, P., Marchington, M., Wilkinson, A. and Dundon, T. (2004) 'Partnership and Voice, with or without Trade Unions: Changing UK Management Approaches to Organizational Participation', in Stuart, M. and Martínez Lucio, M. (eds) *Partnership and Modernization in Employment Relations*, London: Routledge.

Ackers, P. and Payne, J. (1998) 'British Trade Unions and Social Partnership: Rhetoric, Reality and Strategy', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(3): 529–50.

Ackroyd, S. and Procter, S. (1998) 'British Manufacturing Organisation and Workplace Industrial Relations: Some Attributes of the New Flexible Firm', *British Journal of Industrial Relations,* 36(2): 163–183.

Adler, P. (1993) 'Time and Motion Regained', *Harvard Business Review*, January–February: 97–108.

Allen, M. (2001) 'Stakeholding by Any Other Name: A Third Way Business Strategy', in Giddens, A. (ed.) *The Third Way Global Agendas?*, Cambridge: Polity.

Almeida, B. (1997) 'Are Good Jobs Flying Away? U.S. Aircraft Engine Manufacturing and Sustainable Prosperity', Working Paper No. 206, The Jerome Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, New York.

Anderson, R. (1994) 'Matrix Redux', *Business Horizons*, November–December: 6–10.

Appelbaum, E. (2002) 'The Impact of New Forms of Work Organization on Workers', in Murray G., Bélanger J., Giles, A. and Lapointe, P.A. (eds), *Work and Employment Relations in the High-Performance Workplace*, London and New York: Continuum.

Appelbaum, E., Bailey, T., Berg, P. and Kalleberg, A.L. (2000) *Manufacturing Advantage*: *Why High Performance Work Systems Pay Off*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Appelbaum, E. and Berg, P. (1997) 'Work Reorganization and Flexibility in Job Design', in Lewin, D., Mitchell, D. and Zaidi, M. (eds) *The Human Resource Management Handbook*, Greenwich: JAI Press.

Appelbaum, E. and Batt, R. (1994) *The New American Workplace: Transforming Work Systems in the United States*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University/ILR Press.

Armstrong, P. (1987) 'Engineers, Management and Trust', *Work, Employment and Society*, 1(4): 421–440.

Ashton, D. and Sung, J. (2002) *Supporting Workplace Learning for High Performance Working*, ILO.

Atkinson, J. (1984) 'Manpower Strategies for Flexible Organization', *Personnel Management*, August: 28–31.

Bach, S. (2000) 'From Performance Appraisal to Performance Management', in Bach, S. and Sisson, K. (eds) *Personnel Management. A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Blackwell. Third Edition.

Bacon, N. and Blyton, P. (2003) 'The Impact of Teamwork on Skills: Employee Perceptions of Who Gains and Who Loses', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 13(2): 13–29.

Bacon, N. and Storey, J. (2000) 'New Employee Relations Strategies in Britain: Towards Individualism or Partnership?', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(3): 407–427.

Bacon, N., Blyton, P. and Morris, J. (1996) 'Among the Ashes: Trade Union Strategies in the UK and German Steel Industries', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 34(1): 25–50.

Bacon, N. and Storey, J. (1996) 'Individualism and collectivism and the changing role of trade unions', in Ackers P., Smith C. and Smith P. (eds) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*, London: Routledge.

Bain, G.S. and Price R. (1980) *Profiles of Union Growth*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Barnett, C. (1986) *The Audit of War: The illusion & reality of Britain as a great nation*, London: Macmillan.

Batstone, E., Boraston, I. and Frenkel, S. (1977) *Shop Stewards in Action*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Batt, R. (2001) 'The Economics of Teams among Technicians', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39(1): 1–24.

Batt, R. and Appelbaum, E. (1995) 'Worker Participation in Diverse Settings: Does the Form Affect the Outcome, and If So, Who Benefits?', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 33(3): 353–378.

Beaumont, P. and Harris, R. (2002) 'Examining White-collar Downsizing as a Cause of Change in the Psychological Contract', *Employee Relations*, 24(4): 378–388.

Beck , T. (1974) *The Fine Tubes Strike*, London: Stage 1.

Beckett, F. and Hencke, D. (2004) *The Blairs and Their Court*, London: Aurum Press.

Beder, S. (2000) *Selling the Work Ethic. From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR*, London: Zed Books

Bélanger, J., Giles, A. and Murray, G. (2002) 'Towards a New Production Model: Potentialities, Tensions and Contradictions', in Murray G., Bélanger J., Giles, A. and Lapointe, P.A. (eds), *Work and Employment Relations in the High-Performance Workplace*, London and New York: Continuum.

Bélanger, P.R., Lapointe, P.A. and Lévesque, B. (2002) 'Workplace Innovation and the Role of Institutions', in Murray G., Bélanger J., Giles, A. and Lapointe, P.A. (eds), *Work and Employment Relations in the High-Performance Workplace*, London and New York: Continuum.

Beynon, H. (1984) *Working for Ford*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Second Edition.

Biewener, J. (1997) 'Downsizing and the New American Workplace: Rethinking the High Performance Paradigm', *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 29(4): 1–22.

Black, S. and Lynch, L. (1999) 'What's Driving the New Economy: The Benefits of Workplace Innovation', *NBER Working Paper 7479*, National Bureau of Economic Research.

Black, S. and Lynch, L. (2000) 'What's Driving the New Economy: The Benefits of Workplace Innovation', *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 7479*, Revised Version: October.

Black, S. and Lynch, L. (2001) 'How to Compete: The Impact of Workplace Practices and Information Technology on Productivity', *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 83(3): 434–445.

Blackley, J., AUEW, Convenor Rolls-Royce (1975) 'Rolls-Royce New Pay Structure' in *Bristol Socialist*, July/August.

Blyton, P. (1992) 'Flexible times? Recent Developments in Temporal Flexibility', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 23(1): 26–36.

Boxall, P. and Purcell, J. (2003) *Strategy and Human Resource Management*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braddon, D. (2000) *Exploding the Myth? The Peace Dividend, Regions and Market Adjustment*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Bradley, H., Erickson, M., Stephenson, C. and Williams, S. (2000) *Myths at Work*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braverman, H. (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, New York: Monthly Review Press.

Bristol City Council, University of Bristol and CSEU (1989) *BAe In Bristol – What Future?*

BSECSSC (Bristol Siddley Engines Shop Stewards Combined Committee) (1969) *The Aircraft Industry and Workers' Control: A Discussion Document*.

Bristol Survival Plan (1982) Rolls Royce Ltd.

British Labour Statistics Year Books (1960–76) Department of Employment, HMSO.

Broad, G. (1994) 'Japan in Britain: The Dynamics of Joint Consultation', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 25(1): 26–38.

Brown, W. (1973) *Piecework Bargaining*, London: Heinemann.

Brown, W. (1993) 'The Contraction of Collective Bargaining in Britain', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 31(2): 189–200.

Brown, W. (2000) 'Putting Partnership into Practice in Britain', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(2): 299–316

Brown, W. and Walsh, J. (1991) 'Pay Determination in Britain in the 1980s; the Anatomy of Decentralisation', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 7(1): 41–59.

Brown, P. and Lauder, H. (2001) *Capitalism and Social Progress. The Future of Society in a Global Economy*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Bryson, A. (2000) *Have British Workers Lost their Voice, or Have they Gained a New One?* Policy Studies Institute Discussion Paper, No. 2.

Bryson, A. (2003) *Employee Desire for Unionisation in Britain and its Implications for Union Organising*, Policy Studies Institute Discussion Paper, No. 12.

Brzoska, M. (2001) 'The Future of Defence Production – Europe's Chances, Choices and Conduct', in Sefati, C., Brzoska, M., Hagelin, B., Goudie, I., Skons, E., Smit, W. and Weidacher, R. (eds) *The Restructuring of the European Defence Industry. Dynamics of Change*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, COST Action A10.

Buchanan, D. (2000) 'An Eager and Enduring Embrace: The Ongoing Rediscovery of Teamworking as a Management Idea', in Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (eds) *Teamworking*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Buchanan, J., Watson, I. and Briggs, C. (2004) 'Skill and the Renewal of Labour: The Classical Wage-Earner Model and Left Productivism in Australia', in Warhurst, C., Grugulis, I. and Keep, E. (eds) *The Skills That Matter*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Buchanan, J., Briggs, C. and Evesson, J. (2002) *Renewing the Capacity for Skill Formation: the Challenge for Victorian Manufacturing*, A Report for the VLESC/MICC. Melbourne (www.det.vic.gov.au/otte).

Burchell, B. (2002) 'The Prevalence and Redistribution of Job Insecurity and Work Intensification', in Burchell, B., Lapido, D. and Wilkinson, F. (eds) *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification*, London: Routledge.

Cappelli, P. and Neumark, D. (2001) 'Do "High-performance" Work Practices Improve Establishment Level Outcomes?', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54: 737–776.

Carter, B. (1988) 'Trade Unionism and the New Middle Class: the Case of ASTMS', in Armstrong, P. Carter, B. Smith, C. and Nichols T. (eds) *White Collar Workers Trade Unions and Class*, London: Croom Helm.

Carter, B. (1997) 'Adversity and Opportunity: Towards Union Renewal in MSF' *Capital and Class*, 61: 8–18.

Chapman, H. (1991) *State Capitalism and Working Class Radicalism in the French Aircraft Industry*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chaykowski, R. and Gunderson, M. (2002) 'North American Labour Policy Under A Transformed Economic and Workplace Environment', in Murray G., Bélanger J., Giles, A. and Lapointe, P.A. (eds) *Work and Employment Relations in the High-Performance Workplace*, London and New York: Continuum.

CIPD (2004) Information and Consultation. From Compliance to Performance, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, February, www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/empreltns.

Clift, B. (2000) 'Third Way or Realisme de Gauche? The New Social Democracy in France', *Radical Philosophy*, May–June.

Collins, H. (2001) 'Is there a Third Way in Labour Law?' in Giddens, A. (ed.) *The Third Way Global Agendas?* Cambridge: Polity.

Collom, E. (2003) 'Two Classes and One Vision? Managers' and Workers' Attitudes Towards Workplace Democracy', *Work and Occupations*, 30(1): 62–96.

Conley, H., Heery, E., Delbridge, R. and Stewart, P. (2001), 'Representing Fixed-Term Workers: The Anatomy of a Trade Union Campaign'. Paper presented at the Work, Employment and Society Conference, Nottingham University, 11th–13th September.

Cook, N. (2002) 'US Push Provides Sudden Take-Off', *Financial Times Survey*, Aerospace, Monday, July 22.

Cooper, C., Dewe, P. and O'Driscoll, M. (2001) *Organizational Stress. A Review and Critique of Theory, Research and Applications*, London: Sage.

Corry, D. (2001) 'Labour's Industrial Policy. A break with the Past?' *New Economy*, 8(3): 127–133.

Coupar, W. and Stevens, B. (1998) 'Towards a New Model of Partnership. Beyond the "HRM Versus Industrial Relations" Argument', in Sparrow, P. and Marchington, M. (eds) *Human Resource Management. The New Agenda*, London: FT Pitman Publishing.

Cronin, J.E. (1979) *Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain*, London: Croom Helm.

Croucher, R. (1982) *Engineers at War 1939–1945,* London: Merlin.

Cully, M., Woodland, S., O'Reilly, A. and Dix, G. (1999) *Britain at Work*, London: Routledge.

Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J., Nitta, M., Barrett, B., Belhedi, N., Chow, S-C, Ishino, S., Lee, T., Lin, S., Moore, W., Mothersell, M., Palthe, W., Ramanand, J.,

Strolle, S., M. and Wheaton, A. (1998) *Knowledge-Driven Work: Unexpected Lessons from Japanese and United States Work Practices*, New York: Oxford Business Press.

Danford, A. (1998) 'Teamworking and Labour Regulation in the Autocomponents Industry', *Work, Employment and Society*, 12(3): 409–431.

Danford, A. (1999) *Japanese Management Techniques and British Workers*, London: Routledge.

Danford, A., Richardson, M. and Upchurch, M. (2003) *New Unions, New Workplaces: A Study of Union Resilience in the Restructured Workplace*, London: Routledge.

Danford, A., Richardson, M., Stewart, P., Tailby, S. and Upchurch, M. (2004) 'Partnership, Mutuality and the High Performance Workplace: a Case Study of Union Strategy and Worker Experience in the Aircraft Industry', in Heery, E., Healy, G., Taylor, P. and Brown, W. (eds) *The Future of Worker Representation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Danford, A., Richardson, M. and Upchurch, M. (2002a) '"New Unionism", Organising and Partnership: A Comparative Analysis of Union Renewal Strategies in the Public Sector', *Capital and Class*, 76: 1–27.

Danford, A., Richardson, M. and Upchurch, M. (2002b) 'Trade Union Strategy and Renewal: The Restructuring of Work and Work Relations in the UK Aerospace Industry', *Work Employment and Society* 16(2): 303–325.

Darlington, R. (1994) *The Dynamics of Workplace Unionism. Shop Stewards' Organization in Three Merseyside Plants*, London: Continuum.

Darr, A. (2000) 'Technical Labour in an Engineering Boutique: Interpretive Frameworks of Sales and R&D Engineers', *Work, Employment and Society*, 14(2): 205–220.

Dawson, P. (1994) 'Total Quality Management', in Storey, J. (ed.) *New Wave Manufacturing Strategies*, Liverpool: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Deery, S. and Walsh, J. (1999) 'The Decline of Collectivism? A Comparative Study of White-Collar Employees in Britain and Australia', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 37(2): 245–269.

Delaney, J. and Huselid, M. (1996) 'The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Perceptions of Organizational Performance', *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(4): 949–969.

Delbridge, R. (1998) *Life on the Line in Contemporary Manufacturing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dench, S., Perryman, S. and Giles, L. (1998) *Employers' Perceptions of Key Skills*. IES Report 349, Sussex: Institute of Employment Studies.

Department of Trade and Industry (2002) *High Performance Workplaces. The Role of Employee Involvement in the Modern Economy*, Discussion Paper, London: DTI, July.

Department of Trade and Industry (2003) *High Performance Workplaces – Informing and Consulting Employees*, Consultation Document, London: DTI, July.

Department of Trade and Industry (2004) *Achieving Best Practice in Your Business. Maximizing potential: High Performance Workplaces*, Department of Trade and Industry, www.dti.gov.uk.

Done, K. and Nicoll, A. (2002) 'Industry Turns to Attack as its Best Defence', *Financial Times Survey*, Aerospace, Monday, July 22.

Doogan, K. (2001) 'Insecurity and Long-term Employment', *Work, Employment and Society*, 15(3): 419–441.

Dore, R. (2000), 'Will Global Capitalism be Anglo-Saxon Capitalism?, *New Left Review*, 6(Nov/Dec): 101–119.

Dunne, P. and Macdonald, G. (2001) 'Procurement in the Post Cold War World: A Case Study of the UK', in Sefati, C., Brzoska, M., Hagelin, B., Goudie, I., Skons, E., Smit, W. and Weidacher, R. (eds) *The Restructuring of the European Defence Industry. Dynamics of Change*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, COST Action A10.

Edgerton, D. (1991) *England and the Aeroplane; An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation*, London: Macmillan.

Edwards, P., Geary, J. and Sisson, K. (2002) 'New Forms of Work Organisation in the Workplace: Transformative, Exploitative, or Limited and Controlled?', in Murray G., Bélanger J., Giles, A. and Lapointe, P.A. (eds) *Work and Employment Relations in the High-Performance Workplace*, London and New York: Continuum.

Edwards, P. and Scullion, H. (1982) 'The Local Organisation of a National Dispute: The British 1979 Engineering Strike', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 13, 57–63.

Edwards, R. (1979) *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, London: Heinemann.

Employment Gazette (1980) Department of Employment, December 1980.

Ezzy, D. (2001) 'A Simulacrum of Workplace Community: Individualism and Engineered Culture', *Sociology*, 35(3): 631–650.

Fairbrother, P. (1996) 'Workplace Trade Unionism in the State Sector', in Ackers, P., Smith, C. and Smith, P. (eds) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*, London: Routledge.

Fearon, P. (1979) 'Aircraft Manufacturing' in Buxton N.K. and Aldcroft D.H. (eds) *British Industry Between the Wars: Instability and Industrial Development 1919–39,* London: Scholar Press, 216–240.

Ferrie, J. (2003) 'Privatization and Downsizing in the U.K. Public Sector: Labor Market Change, Job Insecurity, and Health', in Peterson, C. (ed.) *Work Stress. Studies of the Context, Content and Outcomes of Stress*, New York: Baywood Publishing Company Inc.

Financial Times, 8 & 11 September 1979; 3 August 1984; 2 October 1984.

Findlay, P. and McKinlay, A. (2003) 'Organising in Electronics: Recruitment, Recognition and Representation – Shadow Shop Stewards in Scotland's "Silicon Glen"', in Gall, G. (ed.) *Union Organising. Campaigning for Trade Union Recognition*, London: Routledge.

Findlay, P., McKinlay, A., Marks, A. and Thompson, P. (2002) 'Mutual Gain or Mutual Strain? Exploring Employee Attitudes to Partnership,' 20th Annual Labour Process Conference, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 2–4 April.

Fishman, N. (1995a) *The British Communist Party and the Trade Unions, 1933–45,* Aldershot: Scholar Press.

Fishman, N. (1995b) ''The Most Serious Crisis Since 1926: The Engineering and Shipbuilding Strikes of 1957' in Campbell, A., Fishman, N. and McIlroy, J. (eds) *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: Volume One The Post-war Compromise, 1945–64,* Aldershot: Ashgate, 242–268.

Freeman, R. and Medoff, J. (1984) *What Do Unions Do?* New York: Basic Books.
Freeman, R., Kleiner, M. and Ostroff, C. (2000) 'The Anatomy of Employee Involvement and Its Effects on Firms and Workers', Working Paper No. 8050, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Freeman, R. and Rogers, J. (1999) *What Workers Want*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
Friedman, A. (1977) *Industry and Labour. Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism*, London: Macmillan.
Frost, A.C. (2001) 'Reconceptualising Local Union Responses to Workplace Restructuring in North America', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39(4): 539–564.
Froud, J., Johal, S. and Williams, K. (2002) 'Financialization and the Coupon Pool', *Capital and Class*, 78: 119–151.
Gall, G. (2003) 'Conclusion: Drawing Up a Balance Sheet', in Gall. G. (ed.) *Union Organising. Campaigning for Trade Union Recognition*, London: Routledge.
Gallie, D., Felstead, A. and Green, F. (2001) 'Employer Policies and Organizational Commitment in Britain 1992–1997, *Journal of Management Studies*, 38(8): 1081–1101.
Gallie, D., White, M., Cheng, Y. and Tomlinson, M. (1998) *Restructuring the Employment Relationship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Garrahan, P. and Stewart, P. (1992) *The Nissan Enigma: Flexibility at Work in a Local Economy*, London: Mansell.
Geary, J. (2003) 'New Forms of Work Organization: Still Limited, Still Controlled, but Still Welcome?', in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations. Theory and Practice*, Oxford, Blackwell.
Geary, J.F. and Roche, W. (2003) 'Workplace Partnership and the Displaced Activist Thesis', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 34(1): 32–51.
Giles, A., Murray, G. and Bélanger, J. (2002) 'Introduction: Assessing the Prospects for the High Performance Workplace', in Murray, G., Bélanger, J., Giles, A. and Lapointe, P.A. (eds) *Work and Employment Relations in the High-Performance Workplace*, London and New York: Continuum.
Godard, J. (2001), 'Beyond the High-Performance Paradigm? An Analysis of Variation in Canadian Managerial Perceptions of Reform Programme Effectiveness', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39(1): 25–52.
Godard, J. (2004) 'A Critical Assessment of the High-Performance Paradigm', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 42(2): 349–378.
Gospel, H. and Pendleton, A. (2003) 'Finance, Corporate Governance and the Management of Labour: A Conceptual and Comparative Analysis', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(3): 557–582.
Gow, D. (2004) 'Airbus Rejoices at Boeing's Defeat', *The Guardian*, Friday, January 16.
Graham, L. (1993) 'Inside a Japanese Transplant. A Critical Perspective', *Work and Occupations*, 20(2): 147–173.
Graham, L. (1995), *On the Line at Subaru-Isuzu: The Japanese Model and the American Worker*, Ithaca, New York: ILR Press.
Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, New York: International Publishers.

Green, F. (2001) 'It's Been A Hard Day's Night: The Concentration and Intensification of Work in Late Twentieth Century Britain', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39(1): 53–80.
Green, F. and Zanchi, L. (1997) 'Trends in the Training of Male and Female Workers in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 35(4): 635–645.
Greene, A., Black, J. and Ackers, P. (2000) 'The Union Makes Us Strong? A Study of the Dynamics of Workplace Union Leadership at Two UK Manufacturing Plants', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(1): 75–93.
Gregg, P., Knight, G. and Wadsworth, J. (2000) 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now; Job Insecurity in the British Labour Market' in Heery, E. and Salmon, J. (eds) *The Insecure Workforce*, London: Routledge.
Gregg, P. and Wadsworth, J. (1999) 'Job Tenure, 1975–1998', in Gregg, P. and Wadsworth, J. (eds) *The State of Working Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Grimshaw, D., Ward, K., Rubery, J. and Beynon, H. (2001) 'Organisations and the Transformation of the Internal Labour Market', *Work, Employment and Society*, 15(1): 25–54.
Guest, D., Michie, J., Conway, N. and Sheehan, M. (2003) 'Human Resource Management and Corporate Performance in the UK', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(2): 291–314.
Guest, D. and Peccei, R. (2001) 'Partnership at Work: Mutuality and the Balance of Advantage', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39(2): 207–236.
Harley, B. (1999) 'The Myth of Empowerment: Work Organization, Hierarchy and Employee Autonomy in Contemporary Australian Workplaces', *Work, Employment and Society*, 13(1): 41–66.
Harley, B. (2001) 'Team Membership and the Experience of Work in Britain: An Analysis of the WERS98 Data', *Work, Employment and Society*, 14(4): 721–742.
Haynes, P. and Allen, M. (2001) 'Partnership as Union Strategy: A Preliminary Evaluation', *Employee Relations*, 23(2): 164–187.
Heery, E. (2002) 'Partnership versus Organising: Alternative Futures for British Trade Unionism', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 33(1): 20–35.
Heery, E. (2004) 'Trade Unions and Industrial Relations', in Ackers, P. and Wilkinson, A. (eds) *Understanding Work and Employment. Industrial Relations in Transition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Heery, E., Conley, H., Delbridge, R. and Stewart, P. (2003) 'Agency Partners: Labour-Management Partnership in the Private Recruitment Industry', Paper presented to the 21st International Labour Process Conference, University of the West of England, 14th–16th April.
Heery, E., Simms, M., Conley, H., Delbridge, R. and Stewart, P. (2002) 'Trade Unions and the Flexible Workforce: A Survey Analysis of Union Policy and Practice', Working Paper No. 22, ESRC Future of Work Programme.
Higgs, P. (1969) 'The Convenor' in Fraser R. (ed.) *Work: Twenty Personal Accounts*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Hill, S. and Wilkinson, A. (1995) 'In Search of TQM', *Employee Relations*, 17(3): 8–25.
Hinton, J. (1969) 'Rank and File Militancy in the British Engineering Industry, 1914–1918, unpublished PhD, University of London, 390–394.
Hinton, J. (1995) 'The Communist Party, Production and Britain's Post-war Settlement' in Andrews, G., Fishman, N. and Morgan, K. (eds) *Opening the*

Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural: History of the British Communist Party, London: Pluto Press, 160–176.
Hobsbawm, E. (1981) *The Forward March of Labour Halted*, London: Verso.
Hodson, R. (2001) *Dignity at Work*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hogg, M. and Abrams, D. (1988) *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*, London: Routledge.
Hoque, K. and Kirkpatrick, I. (2003) 'Non-standard Employment in the Management and Professional Workforce: Training, Consultation and Gender Implications', *Work, Employment and Society*, 17(4): 667–689.
Hudson, M. (2002) 'Flexibility and the Reorganization of Work', in Burchell, B., Lapido, D. and Wilkinson, F. (eds) *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification*, London: Routledge.
Huselid, M.A. (1995) 'The Impact of Human Resource Management Practices on Turnover, Productivity, and Corporate Financial Performance', *Academy of Management Journal*, 38: 655–672.
Hyman, J. and Mason, B. (1995) *Managing Employee Involvement and Participation*, London: Sage.
Hyman, R. (1975) *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Hyman, R. (1997) 'Trade Unions and Interest Representation in the Context of Globalization', *Transfer*, 3: 515–533.
Involvement and Participation Association (1997) *Towards Industrial Partnership*, London: IPA.
Involvement and Participation Association (2002) *Towards the High Performance Workplace*. The IPA's response to the DTI's consultation paper. London: IPA.
Keep, E. and Rainbird, H. (2003) 'Training' in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations*, Oxford: Blackwell. Second Edition.
Keep, E. and Mayhew, K. (2001) 'Globalization, Models of Competitive Advantage and Skills', *SKOPE Working Paper No. 22*, University of Warwick.
Keep, E. and Rainbird, H. (2000) 'Towards the Learning Organization?', in Bach, S. and Sisson, K. (eds) *Personnel Management. A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Blackwell. Third Edition.
Kelly, J. (1988) *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*, London: Verso.
Kelly, J. (1996) 'Union Militancy and Social Partnership', in Ackers, P., Smith, C. and Smith, P. (eds) *The New Workplace and Trade Unionism*, London: Routledge.
Kelly, J. (1998) *Rethinking Industrial Relations. Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, London: Routledge.
Kelly, J. (2004) 'Social Partnership Agreements in Britain: Labor Cooperation and Compliance', *Industrial Relations*, 43(1): 267–292.
Kenney, M. and Florida, R. (1993) *Beyond Mass Production: The Japanese System and its Transfer to the U.S.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Kessler, I. (1994) 'Performance Pay', in Sisson, K. (ed.) *Personnel Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice in Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell. Second Edition.
Kessler, I. (2000) 'Remuneration Systems', in Bach, S. and Sisson, K. (eds) *Personnel Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice in Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell. Third Edition.

Kessler, I., Undy, R. and Heron, P. (2004) 'Employee Perspectives on Communication and Consultation: Findings from a Cross-national Survey', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(3): 512–532.

Knell, J. (1999) 'Partnership at Work', Employment Relations Research Series 7, DTI/Industrial Society.

Kochan, T. and Osterman, P. (1994) *The Mutual Gains Enterprise*, Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Konzelmann, S. and Forrant, R. (2003) 'Creative Work Systems in Destructive Markets', in Burchell, B., Deakin, S., Michie, J. and Rubery, J. (eds) *Systems of Production. Markets, Organisations and Performance*, London: Routledge.

Kuhnert, K. and Vance, R. (1992) 'Job Insecurity and Moderators of the Relation Between Job Insecurity and Employee Adjustment', in Quick, J., Murphy, L. and Hurrell, J. (eds) *Stress and Well-being at Work*, Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Labour Research Department (2003) 'Ask the Staff if You Want Productivity', *Labour Research* 92(11): 12–13.

Labour Research Department (2004) 'Employers Increase Workplace Consultation with Unions', *Workplace Report*, Labour Research Department, May, 14: 15–17.

Legge, K. (1995) *Human Resource Management: Rhetoric and Realities*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Levitas, R. (1998) *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Lewchuk, W., Stewart, P. and Yates, C. (2001) 'Quality of Working Life in the Automobile Industry: A Canada-UK Comparative Study', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 16(2): 72–87.

Lewchuk, W. and Roberston, D. (1997) 'Production Without Empowerment: Work Re-organization from the Perspective of Motor Vehicle Workers', *Capital and Class*, 63: 37–65.

Lincoln, J. and Kalleberg, A. (1990) *Culture, Control and Commitment: A Study of Work, Work Organization and Work Attitudes in the United States and Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge Universtiy Press.

Lloyd, C. (2001) 'What Do Employee Councils Do? The Impact of Non-union Forms of Representation on Trade Union Organisation', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 32(4): 313–327.

Lloyd, C. and Payne, J. (2004) 'The Political Economy of Skill: A Theoretical Approach to Developing a High Skills Strategy in the UK' in Warhurst, C., Grugulis, I. and Keep, E. (eds) *The Skills That Matter*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lloyd, C. and Newell, H. (2000) 'Selling Teams to the Salesforce: Teamworking in the UK Pharmaceutical Industry', in Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (eds) *Teamworking*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Lovering, J. (1986) *Bristol Economy: Key Sector Studies, Aerospace, Working Paper 56*, University of Bristol, School for Advanced Urban Studies.

Lovering, J. (1998a) 'Opening Pandora's Box: De Facto Industrial Policy and the British Defence Industry', in Delbridge, R. and Lowe, J. (eds) *Manufacturing In Transition*, London: Routledge.

Lovering, J. (1998b) 'Labour and the Defence Industries: Allies in "Globalization"', *Capital and Class*, 65: 9–20.

Lovering, J. (1990) 'Military Expenditure and the Restructuring of Capitalism: the Military Industry in Britain', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 14: 453–467.
Lovering, J. (1991) 'The British Defence Industry in the 1990s: A Labour Market Perspective', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 22(2): 105–119.
Lovering, J. (2001) 'The "Transatlantic Factor" in the Restructuring of the European Defence Industry', in Sefati, C., Brzoska, M., Hagelin, B., Goudie, I., Skons, E., Smit, W. and Weidacher, R. (eds) *The Restructuring of the European Defence Industry. Dynamics of Change*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, COST Action A10.
Lupton, T. and Gowler, D. (1972) 'Selecting a Wage Payment System' in Lupton, T. (ed.) *Payment Systems*, Harmondsworth: Penguin: 239–277.
Macdonald, W. (2003a) 'Workload and Workplace Stress', in Peterson, C. (ed.) *Work Stress. Studies of the Context, Content and Outcomes of Stress*, New York: Baywood Publishing Company Inc.
Macdonald, W. (2003b) 'Work Demands and Stress in Repetitive Blue-Collar Work', in Peterson, C. (ed.) *Work Stress. Studies of the Context, Content and Outcomes of Stress*, New York: Baywood Publishing Company Inc.
Marchington, M. (2000) 'Teamworking and Employee Involvement: Terminology, Evaluation and Context', in Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (eds) *Teamworking*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Marchington, M. and Wilkinson, A. (2003) 'Direct Participation', in Bach, S. and Sisson, K. (eds) *Personnel Management: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory & Practice*, Oxford: Blackwell. Third edition.
Marchington, M., Goodman, J., Wilkinson, A. and Ackers, P. (1992) *New Developments in Employee Involvement*, ED Research Series No. 2, Employment Department, Sheffield, May.
Marsden, D. and Richardson, R. (1994) 'Performing for Pay? The Effects of "Merit Pay" on Motivation in a Public Service', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 32(2): 243–263.
Martínez Lucio, M. and Stuart, M. (2002a) 'Assessing Partnership: the Prospects for, and Challenges of, Modernisation', *Employee Relations*, 23(3): 252–261.
Martínez Lucio, M. and Stuart, M. (2002b) 'Assessing the Principles of Partnership: Workplace Trade Union Representatives' Attitudes and Experiences', *Employee Relations*, 23(3): 305–320.
Martínez Lucio, M., Jenkins, S. and Noon, M. (2000) 'Management Strategy, Union Identity and Oppositionalism: Teamwork in the Royal Mail', in Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (eds) *Teamworking*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
McAdam, D. (1998) 'Micromobilization Contexts and Recruitment to Activism', *International Social Movement Research*, 1: 125–54.
McGovern, P. (1996) 'Trust, Discretion and Responsibility: The Division of Technical Labour', *Work, Employment and Society*, 10(1): 85–103.
McGovern, P. (1998) *HRM, Technical Workers and the Multinational Corporation*, London: Routledge.
McIlroy, J. (1998) 'The Enduring Alliance? Trade Unions and the Making of New Labour 1994–97', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 36(4): 537–564.
Meiksins, P. and Smith, C. (1993) 'Organizing Engineering Work. A Comparative Analysis', *Work and Occupations*, 20(2): 123–146.
Meil, P. (2004) 'Spanning the Distance: Geographically Distributed Work and Quality of Work Life', Paper presented to the 22nd International Labour

Process Conference, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, University of Amsterdam, 5–7 April.
Meyer, J and Allen, N. (1997) *Commitment in the Workplace. Theory, Research and Application*, London: Sage.
Michie, J. and Sheehan, M. (2003) 'Labour "Flexibility" – Securing Management's Right to Manage Badly?', in Burchell, B., Deakin, S., Michie, J. and Rubery, J. (eds) *Systems of Production. Markets, Organisations and Performance*, London: Routledge.
Milton W.P., Rolls-Royce Production Engineering Manager (1 and 8 July 1975), correspondence to TASS shop steward.
Morgan, K. and Sayer A. (1988), 'A "Modern" Industry in a "Mature" Region: the Remaking of Management-Labour Relations', in Massey, D. and Allen, J. (eds) *Uneven Development*, London: Hodder and Stoughton.
Mort, M. (2001) *Building the Trident Network. A Study of the Enrollment of People, Knowledge and Machines*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
Mowday, R., Porter, L. and Steers, R. (1982) *Organizational Linkages: The Psychology of Commitment, Absenteeism, and Turnover*, San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
Müller-Jentsch, W. (1988) 'Industrial Relations Theory and Trade Union Strategy', *International Journal of Comparative Labour Law and Industrial Relations*, 4.
Murphy, L. and Pepper, L. (2003) 'Effects of Organizational Downsizing on Worker Stress and Health in the United States', in Peterson, C. (ed.) *Work Stress. Studies of the Context, Content and Outcomes of Stress*, New York: Baywood Publishing Company Inc.
Nichols, T. (1986) *The British Worker Question. A New Look at Workers and Productivity in Manufacturing*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Nichols, T. and Beynon, H. (1977) *Living with Capitalism: Class Relations and the Modern Factory*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Nicoll, A. (2001) 'Overcapacity Remains a Problem', *Financial Times Survey*, Aerospace, Monday June 18.
Nolan, J., Wichert, I. and Burchell, B. (2000) 'Job Insecurity, Psychological Well-being and Family Life', in Heery, E. and Salmon, J. (eds) *The Insecure Workforce*, London: Routledge.
Oliver, N. and Wilkinson, B. (1992), *The Japanization of British Industry*, Oxford: Blackwell. Second Edition.
Oliver, N., Jones, D., Delbridge, R. and Lowe, J. (1994) 'Worldwide Manufacturing Competitiveness Study', The Second Lean Enterprise Report, Andersen Consulting.
Osterman, P. (2000) 'Work Reorganization in an Era of Restructuring: Trends in Diffusion and Effects on Employee Welfare', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 53(2): 179–197.
Osterman, P., Kochan, T., Locke, R. and Piore, M. (2001) *Working in America. A Blueprint for the New Labor Market*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
Oxenbridge, S. and Brown, W. (2002) 'The Two Faces of Partnership? An Assessment of Partnership and Co-operative Employer/Trade Union Relationships, *Employee Relations*, 24(3): 262–276.
Oxenbridge, S. and Brown, W. (2004a) 'A Poisoned Chalice? Trade Union Representatives in Partnership and Co-operative Employer-Union

Relationships', in Healy, G., Heery, E., Taylor, P. and Brown, W. (eds) *The Future of Worker Representation*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Oxenbridge, S. and Brown, W. (2004b) 'Achieving a New Equilibrium? The Stability of Cooperative Employer-Union Relationships', *Industrial Relations Journal* 35(5): 388–402.
Parks, S. (1995) 'Improving Workplace Performance: Historical and Theoretical Contexts', *Monthly Labor Review*, May: 118(5): 18–28.
Parkside Bulletin (Rolls-Royce) Issue 108, Oct. 1982, Modern Records Centre (MRC), MSS 390/4/1/89.
Parkside Bulletin (Rolls-Royce) Issue 53, Sept/Oct 1974, MRC, MSS 390/4/1/44.
Parkside Bulletin (Rolls-Royce) Issue 58, Feb/March 1975, MRC, MSS 390/4/1/48.
Parkside Bulletin (Rolls-Royce) Issue 59, March/April 1975, MRC, MSS 390/4/1/49.
Parkside Bulletin (Rolls-Royce) Issue 60, April/May 1975, MRC, MSS 390/4/1/50.
Patterson, M., West, M., Lawthom, R. and Nickell, S. (1998) *The Impact of People Management Practices on Business Performance*, London: CIPD.
Peterson, C. (2003) 'Workplace Changes in Australia and their Effects on Stress', in Peterson, C. (ed.) *Work Stress. Studies of the Context, Content and Outcomes of Stress*, New York: Baywood Publishing Company Inc.
Pike, A. (2001) 'Corporate Retreat and the Abandonment of Host Economies in the Era of "Globalization" of Capital: The Case of Manufacturing Co in the North East Region of England', *Capital and Class*, 74: 31–59
Plowden Report (1965) *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Aircraft Industry, Cmnd 2853,* HMSO.
Price, R. (1986) *Labour in British Society*, London: Croom Helm.
Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (2000) 'Teamworking: Strategy, Structure, Systems and Culture', in Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (eds) *Teamworking*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Procter, S., Rowlinson, M., McArdle, L., Hassard, J. and Forrester, P. (1994) 'Flexibility, Politics and Strategy: in Defence of the Model of the Flexible Firm', *Work, Employment and Society*, 8(2): 221–242.
Pugh, P. (2001) *The Magic of a Name: The Rolls-Royce Story, Part Two: The Power behind the Jets, 1945–1987,* Cambridge: Icon Books.
Purcell, J. (1995) 'The End of Institutional Industrial Relations', *Political Quarterly* 64: 6–23.
Ramsay, H. (1977) 'Cycles of Control: Worker Participation in Sociological and Historical perspective', *Sociology*, 11: 481–506.
Ramsay, H. (1997) 'Involvement, Empowerment and Commitment' in Towers, B. (ed.) *The Handook of Human Resource Management*, Oxford: Blackwell.
Ramsay, H., Scolarios, D. and Harley, B. (2000) 'Employees and High-Performance Work Systems: Testing inside the Black Box, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 38(4): 501–531.
Randle, K. (1996) 'The White-coated Worker: Professional Autonomy in a Period of Change', *Work, Employment and Society*, 10(4): 737–753.
Richardson, M. (2000) *Trade Unionism and Industrial Conflict in Bristol: An Historical Study*, Employment Studies Research Unit, University of the West of England.
Richardson, M, Tailby, S., Danford, A., Stewart, P. and Upchurch, M. (2005) 'Best Value and Workplace Partnership in Local Government' *Personnel Review*, 34(6).

Rinehart, J., Huxley, C. and Robertson, D. (1997) *Just Another Car Factory? Lean Production and its Discontents*, Ithaca and London: ILR Press.

Robinson, P. (1999) 'Explaining the Relationship between Flexible Employment and Labour Market Regulation', in Felstead, A. and Jewson, N. (eds) *Global Trends in Flexible Labour*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Rolls-Royce Negotiating Committee (December 1969), MRC, MSS 390/1/1/2.

Rolls-Royce Negotiating Committee (July 1970), MRC, MSS 390/1/1/3.

Rooney, A. (1968) 'The Aircraft Industry' in K. Coates (ed.) *Can the Workers Run Industry?* The Institute for Workers' Control: Speare Books.

Rothschild, J. (2000) 'Creating a Just and Democratic Workplace: More Engagement, Less Hierarchy', *Contemporary Sociology*, 29(1): 195–213.

SBAC (2000) *UK Aerospace Statistics 1999*, London: Society of British Aerospace Companies.

Seidl, M. and Kleiner, B. (1999) 'Downsizing in the Aerospace Industry', *Aircraft Engineering and Aerospace Technology: An International Journal*, 71(6): 546–549.

Sisson, K. (1999) 'The "New" European Social Model: The End of the Search for an Orthodoxy or Another False Dawn?', *Employee Relations*, 21(5): 445–462.

Sisson, K. and Marginson, P. (2003) 'Management: Systems, Structures and Strategy', in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations*, Oxford: Blackwell. Second Edition.

Sisson, K. and Storey, J. (2000) *The Realities of Human Resource Management. Managing the Employment Relationship*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Smart, T., Browder, S. and Dawley, H. (1996) 'Defying the Law of Gravity', *Business Week*, April 8th: 78–80.

Smith, C. (1987) *Technical Workers: Class, Labour and Trade Unionism*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Smith, C. (1991) 'Engineers and the Labour Process' in Smith, C., Knights, D. and Willmott, H. (eds) *Whitecollar Work: The Non-Manual Labour Process*, London: Macmillan.

Smith C. and Whalley P. (1996) 'Engineers in Britain: A Study in Persistence' in Meiskins, P. and Smith, C. (eds) *Engineering Labour*, London: Verso.

Smith, P. (2001) *Unionization and Union Leadership. The Road Haulage Industry*, London: Continuum.

Smith, P. and Morton, G. (1993) 'Union Exclusion and the Decollectivization of Industrial Relations in Britain', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 31(1): 97–114.

Smith, P. and Morton, G. (2001) 'New Labour's Reform of Britain's Employment Law: The Devil is not only in the Detail but in the Values and Policy Too', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39(1): 119–38.

Smith, P. and Morton, G. (2004) 'Seven Years' New Labour: Management Prerogative and Workers' Rights,' Paper presented to the WES04 Work, Employment and Society Conference, UMIST, Manchester, 1–3 September.

Snape, E., Wilkinson, A., Marchington, M., and Redman, T. (1995) 'Managing Human Resources for TQM: Possibilities and Pitfalls', *Employee Relations*, 17(3): 42–51.

Steijn, B. (2001) 'Work Systems, Quality of Working Life and Attitudes of Workers: An Empirical Study Towards the Effects of Team and Non-team-work', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 16(3): 191–203.

Stewart, P., Lewchuk, W., Yates, C., Saruta, M. and Danford, A. (2004) 'Patterns of Labour Control and the Erosion of Labour Standards. Towards an International Study of the Quality of Working Life in the Automobile Industry (Canada, Japan and the UK)', in Charron, E. and Stewart, P. (eds) *Work and Employment Relations in the Automobile Industry*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stewart, P. and Wass, V. (1998) 'From "Embrace and Change" to "Engage and Change": Trade Union Renewal and the New Management Strategies in the UK Automotive Industry?', *New Technology, Work and Employment* 13(2): 77–93.

Stewart, P. and Garrahan, P. (1995) 'Employee Responses to New Management Techniques in the Auto Industry', *Work, Employment and Society*, 9(13): 517–536.

Stuart, M. and Martínez Lucio, M. (2002) 'Social Partnership and the Mutual Gains Organisation: Remaking Involvement and Trust at the British Workplace', *Economic and Industrial Democracy,* 23 (2): 177–200.

Stuart, M. and Martínez Lucio, M. (2005) 'Partnership and Modernisation in Employment Relations. An Introduction', in Stuart, M. and Martínez Lucio, M. (eds) *Partnership and Modernisation in Employment Relations*, London: Routledge.

Supiot, A. (2001) *Beyond Employment. Changes in Work and the Future of Labour Law in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tailby, S., Richardson, M., Stewart, P., Danford, A. and Upchurch, M. (2004), 'Partnership at Work and Worker Participation: An NHS Case Study', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 35(3): 365–388.

Tailby, S. and Winchester, D. (2000) 'Management and Trade Unions: Towards Social Partnership?' in Bach, S. and Sisson, K. (eds) *Personnel Management*, Oxford: Blackwell.

TASS (1986) Representative Council Conference Report, Bournemouth.

TASS (1987) Representative Council Conference Report, Bournemouth.

TASS News and Journal, April 1984.

Taylor, P. and Bain, P. (2003) 'Call Center Organising in Adversity', in Gall, G. (ed.) *Union Organising. Campaigning for Trade Union Recognition,* London: Routledge.

Taylor P. and Ramsay, H. (1998) 'Unions, Partnership and HRM: Sleeping with the Enemy?', *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 6(2): 115–143.

Taylor, R. (2003) *Social Democratic Trade Unionism. An Agenda for Action*, Catalyst Working Paper, London: Catalyst.

Terry, M. (2002) 'Employee Representation: Shop Stewards and the New Legal Framework', in Edwards, P. (ed.) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice*, Oxford: Blackwell, Second Edition.

Terry, M. (2003a) 'Can "Partnership" Reverse the Decline of British Trade Unions?', *Work, Employment and Society*, 17(3): 459–472.

Terry, M. (2003b) 'Partnership and the Future of Trade Unions in the UK', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 24(4): 485–507.

Thompson, M. (2002) *High Performance Work Organization in UK Aerospace. The SBAC Human Capital Audit 2002*. Report compiled for the Society of British Aerospace Companies, London and Oxford: SBAC and Templeton College, University of Oxford.

Thompson, P. (2003) 'Disconnected Capitalism: or Why Employers Can't Keep Their Side of the Bargain', *Work, Employment and Society*, 17(2): 359–378.
Townley, B. (1989) 'Employee Communications Programmes', in Sisson, K. (ed.) *Personnel Management in Britain*, London: Blackwell.
Townley, B. (1994) 'Communicating with Employees', in Sisson, K. (ed.) *Personnel Management. A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice in Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell.
Townley, B. (2003) 'Performance Appraisal and the Emergence of Management', *Journal of Management Studies*, 3(2): 221–238.
Trades Union Congress (1999) *Partners for Progress: New Unionism at the Workplace*, London: TUC.
Trades Union Congress (2000) *Partnership. A Boost to Business*, London: TUC.
Trades Union Congress (2001) *Partnership in Depth*, TUC Partnership Institute, www.tuc.org.uk/pi/partnership.ht
Trades Union Congress (2002) *The Law at Work. TUC Submission on the Government's Discussion Document, High Performance Workplaces*, Trades Union Congress, November.
Trades Union Congress (2003a) *High Performance Workplaces*, Report, http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-6995-f0.cfm.
Trade Union Congress (2003b) *Welsh TUC Response to the DTI Discussion Document*, Report, http://www.tuc.org.uk/law/tuc-7361-f0.cfm.
UNIDO (2002) *International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics 2002*, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
Upchurch, M. and Danford, A. (2001) 'Industrial Restructuring, Globalization and the Trade Union Response: a Study of MSF in the South West of England', *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 16:100–17.
Upchurch, M., Mathers, A. and Taylor, G. (2004a) 'Opening Up Civil Society: A New Strategy for UK Unions?', *Labour Movements in the Twenty First Century Conference,* Sheffield University, 1–4 July, 2004.
Upchurch, M., Richardson, M., Tailby, S., Danford, A. and Stewart, P. (2004b) 'EU Social Policy and Non-Union Forms of Employee Representation: A Case Study from UK Finance', Paper presented to the 7th European Congress of the International Industrial Relations Association, Lisbon, 7–11 September.
Waddington, J. (2003) 'What do Representatives Think of the Practices of European Works Councils? Views from Six Countries', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 9(3): 303–325.
Wagner, J. (1994) 'Participation's Effects on Performance and Satisfaction: A Reconsideration of Research Evidence', *Academy of Management Review*, 19(2): 312–330.
Wainwright, H. and Elliott, D. (1982) *The Lucas Plan. A New Trade Unionism in the Making?,* London: Allison and Busby.
Walton, R. (1985) 'From Control to Commitment in the Workplace', *Harvard Business Review*, 63(2): 77–84.
Walton, R., Cutcher-Gershenfeld, J. and McKersie, R. (1994) *Strategic Negotiations: A Theory of Change in Labour-Management Relations*, Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.
Watson, T. and Rosborough, J. (2000) 'Teamworking and the Management of Flexibility: Local and Social – Structural Tensions in High Performance Work

Design Initiatives', in Procter, S. and Mueller, F. (eds) *Teamworking*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
Webb, T. (1998) *The Armour-Plated Ostrich. The Hidden Costs of Britain's Addiction to the Arms Business*, London: Comerford and Miller.
Western Daily Press, 28 July 1984.
Westwood, A. (2004) 'Skills that Matter and Shortages that Don't', in Warhurst, C., Grugulis, I. and Keep, E. (eds) *The Skills That Matter*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Whalley, P. (1986) *The Social Production of Technical Work*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
White, M., Hill, S., McGovern, P., Mills, C. and Smeaton, D. (2003) '"High-performance" Management Practices, Working Hours and Work-Life Balance', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(2): 175–195.
Whitfield, R. (1979) 'The Labour Movement in Bristol 1910–1939', unpublished MLitt thesis, University of Bristol.
Whitston, C., Roe, A. and Jefferys, S. (1999) 'Job Regulation and the Managerial Challenge to Trade Unions: Evidence from Two Membership Surveys', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 30(5): 482–498.
Wichert, I. (2002) 'Job Insecurity and Work Intensification: the Effects on Health and Well-being', in Burchell, B., Lapido, D. and Wilkinson, F. (eds) *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification*, London: Routledge.
Wilkinson, B., Morris, J. and Munday, M. (1995) 'The *Iron Fist* in the *Velvet Glove*: Management and Organisation in Japanese Manufacturing Transplants in Wales', *Journal of Management Studies*, 32(6): 819–830.
Wilkinson, F. and White, M. (1994) 'Product-Market Pressures and Employers' Responses', in Rubery, J. and Wilkinson, F. (eds) *Employer Strategy and the Labour Market*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Williams, K. (2000) 'From Shareholder Value to Present-day Capitalism', *Economy and Society*, 29(1): 1–12.
Womack, J.P., Jones, D.T. and Roos, D. (1990), *The Machine that Changed the World: The Triumph of Lean Production*, New York: Rawson Macmillan.
Wood, S. (1999) 'Getting the Measure of the Transformed High-Performance Organisation', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 37(3): 391–417.
Wood, S. and de Menezes, L. (1998) 'High Commitment Management in the UK: Evidence from the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, and Employers' Manpower and Skills Practices Survey', *Human Relations*, 51(4): 485–515.
Yates, C. (1998), 'Defining the Fault Lines: New Divisions in the Working Class', *Capital and Class*, 66 (Autumn): 119–149.
Yates, C., Lewchuk, W. and Stewart, P. (2001) 'Empowerment as a Trojan Horse: New Systems of Work Organization in the North American Automobile Industry', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 22(4): 517–542.
Zweig, F. (1951) *Productivity and Trade Unions*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Index