BLACK AND WHITE WORKERS' ATTITUDES IN THREE INDUSTRIAL PLANTS: VIEW FROM THE GRASSROOTS

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L.E. McFarland
Major professor

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ABSTRACT

BLACK AND WHITE WORKERS' ATTITUDES IN THREE INDUSTRIAL PLANTS: VIEW FROM THE GRASSROOTS

By

Gerald Francis Cavanagh

An interview study of samples of more than 300 black and white workers, managers, and community leaders at three electrical industry plants revealed that black workers are slightly less satisfied with their jobs, boss, opportunities for promotion, and the way they are treated by fellow workers. But both black and whites are generally positive on these items.

One-third or more of the blacks were not sure that they had a fair chance for a promotion, although their perceptions have recently become more optimistic. In the locations where there were more blacks in supervisory positions, blacks tended to feel that they had more of a chance. Blacks were still much under represented in the salaried and especially the supervisory ranks. Almost all the whites thought that blacks did have an equal opportunity.

Blacks do at least as well as the average worker in quality and quantity of work, according to their foreman's

estimate. But younger black males, especially those working on assembly lines, have a poorer record on absenteeism and tardiness.

Blacks and whites get along well during working hours on the job. Working together, they have clarified preconceptions toward each other. On their own time, in the plant and outside, blacks and whites tend to gather in racially separate groups.

Hiring practices at each plant are now fair. Both black and white workers acknowledge this. The employment office now makes special efforts to find capable blacks. Until about 1965 a relatively small number of blacks were hired at each of these plants. It seems that blacks were unintentionally discriminated against in hiring. Black workers have more years of schooling than do whites. The plants were ahead of most institutions (e.g. schools, churches, clubs) in racial integration, but they catered to community customs until very recently on the type of work blacks were assigned and especially on black promotions.

The large majority of both black and white workers felt that they got along well with their foreman. Younger black men more often felt they did not have good relations. Foremen of young black workers must have: a personal interest in the worker, effective two-way communication, and honest and fair discipline.

Whites accepted a black supervisor more readily than did many of the blacks. Former black peers gave the new foreman a disproportionate number of problems.

Two plants participated in the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) Job Pledge Program. Official criteria for designating the disadvantaged were easily applied, but were inadequate. Of those who were NABs, most might have been hired anyway; and foreman rated their work performance, especially quality and quantity of work, as good. But the disadvantaged had serious problems of absenteeism, tardiness and turnover. More than the ordinary orientation to the job and to industrial life is needed.

White backlash toward black workers and the disadvantaged was present with only a small, but often vocal, minority. Foremen did often tolerate behavior, especially absenteeism and tardiness, for the new disadvantaged, that they would not stand for in a white. Effective communication of equal employment opportunity policies to workers and foremen tends to counteract backlash.

When blacks felt that they were not being represented in their union, they formed a separate black labor group. In one case the blacks walked out of a plant, stopping production for several days.

Since about 1967, management has taken a stronger stance toward equal employment opportunity within the plant and interracial and community affairs outside the plant.

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Dalton McFarland, chairman of the dissertation committee at Michigan State, provided invaluable encouragement and constructive criticism at every stage of the project. Stanley Stark spent many hours on the manuscript, raised many probing questions and thus helped improve the final version. Winston Oberg also provided continual criticism and encouragement. I owe them all much gratitude. Thanks also go to the Ford Foundation, which saw the importance of the study, and funded a portion of the author's work.

The conclusions presented here are the responsibity of the author. While he is indebted to all of the above

for their help, he bears sole responsibility for any innaccuracies or premature judgements.

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INTRODUCTION

Part one, Chapter I, introduces the reader to the goals of the research, the major questions that will be addressed and offers some conceptual framework for the dissertation. Chapter II treats the means for obtaining the information, and some reasons for accepting the findings as reliable.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this dissertation is to attempt to better understand black and white factory workers, and some of the forces that influence their behavior. The study focuses on these workers and their performance, attitudes, aspirations, and anxieties, especially with regard to race relations. The dissertation presents statistics on attitudes and job performance along with the words of the workers themselves and their supervisors.

The major questions that this dissertation will address itself to are the following:

1. Is there a difference in the way that black and white workers view their jobs, their fellow workers, their boss and their opportunities within the plant?
2. Is there any difference in the way that black and white workers perform their jobs? Do blacks have any special problems?
3. How do blacks and whites get along together in the plant? Is there much association outside the plant?

4. How does one prepare, motivate and keep on the job young, disadvantaged workers? How do they perform on the job?
5. Is there much backlash now in the plants that have hired blacks and disadvantaged? Is there a legitimate basis for this backlash or not? What can be done about it?
6. How well did plant management handle the race situation in the plant in the past? What did they do in the face of community custom? Did they move too fast or too slow on integration and promoting blacks? What problems remain?

This dissertation reports the results of a year of field investigation and interviewing that was done by Theodore V. Purcell and the author. Two of the three locations studied, Middleburg and Metropol, are plants of one large electrical corporation. The third, Port City, is a plant of a competitive company. The names of the firms, their locations and the names of individuals have been disguised throughout this dissertation.

These plants were selected because they represented a variety of plant characteristics. Thus the plants are also fairly typical of many other large manufacturing plants in the United States. In none of the plants is the bulk of the work very skilled, heavy or dirty; the workers are all moderately paid. The racial problems and successes of these

plants can be said to be typical of many plants, especially those with a similar location and type of work force.

The dissertation provided the core of the final published report on racial employment in the electrical industry. In addition to this material, the published volume will also cover: the history and statistics of equal employment opportunity in the electrical industry, a chapter on bringing the disadvantaged into the plant and another on preferential treatment, and finally, additional materials on corporate social responsibility.

In order to better understand the workers, the researchers talked to a sample of 180 black and white hourly employees, 34 foremen and dozens of top managers and community leaders. Since the plants represent a geographical and product spread, and the workers were selected at random, these findings can be generalized to some extent. They are not unique situations, but represent widespread attitudes and problems.

Viewpoint and Need for this Research

A major contribution of this dissertation is that it goes to the grass roots. It finds out how the worker feels about his co-workers and his attitude toward these new equal employment policies and programs. In all the research on black and white attitudes in industry, this has not been done in such detail. It deals with a recommendation at the end of a similar and earlier study on Negro

jobs, "The perspective on equal employment research should shift from an emphasis on studies of company practices to a concern with studies of Negro workers and their experiences with equal employment practices of companies."[1] Without a knowledge of how these practices are accepted at the grass roots, it is impossible adequately to judge their effectiveness.

At present there is a lack of information on the racial attitudes of the workers themselves. The best published information now available on racial attitudes in the plant has been gathered by means of interviews largely with managers.[2] One major parallel study that gathered information by means of interviews with workers used a more directed interview approach. It sought specific items of information and did not give these men and women a chance to express themselves as freely.[3] And that data was gathered in 1964, before the major civil rights crises and before the federal government demand for minority employment figures and local affirmative action plans for hiring and upgrading minority workers.

The material presented here will hopefully give the reader some understanding of the attitudes of black and white plant workers toward each other, and the problems that surround the hiring, training and promoting of minority and disadvantaged workers. Even where the author's findings are not new and they agree with some of the conclusions of

earlier studies,[4] they are here presented in more depth and in a fuller context.

The dissertation does not claim to be a detailed treatment of the company's posture with regard to the larger society; it contains nothing on such problems as pollution, housing and schools. The study did not investigate the economic issues touching on racial discrimination,[5] nor assess costs. Employment and unemployment figures are presented largely as background to understand the specific plant situation. This dissertation does not present a detailed program for employing disadvantaged or minority workers,[6] although it does contain compelling evidence on the necessity of some elements of such a program. And far less does it claim to be a how-to-do-it guide on how to deal with disadvantaged or minority workers, or how to set up a program to hire and train the disadvantaged.[7]

How people get along in the plant and how they view their opportunities influences their job performance and even their ability to hold a job. For some, it is difficult to hold a job. And the lack of a job is one of the most basic causes of disruption and disability in our urban black ghettos. Dilapidated housing, poor schools and broken homes, together with unemployment and underemployment, are a "tangle of pathologies . . . that feed on each other and seem to make matters steadily worse for the individuals and the communities caught up in it."[8]

The unemployment rate for blacks has been twice that of whites for the last 15 years,[9] and there are now no indications that the spread will decrease. Louis Ferman et al. in their recent work, Negroes and Jobs, say: "It is wishful thinking to characterize Negro problems in employment, education and politics as transitory and capable of resolution with time. Many of these problems have become worse over the years and have been strongly resistant to solution."[10] Unemployment for all workers and for blacks especially was on the rise in April, 1970.[11]

Many programs, federally sponsored and private, have been undertaken in the last few years to provide training and jobs for some black ghetto residents. One of these, the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) JOBS Program, is an attempt by industrial leaders to provide 500,000 jobs for men who would not otherwise qualify for work at their plants. Two of the locations studied here Metropol and Port City participate in this program, and their experience will be discussed in detail later (see Chapter X and Chapter IXX). The literature in the field of race, minority employment, and even programs to aid the disadvantaged is voluminous and is growing by the day.[12]

Some Definitions

Some terms will appear throughout this dissertation, so it should help if working definitions are presented at the outset.

Racial Discrimination.--Ferman suggests that there are two different types of racial discrimination: overt and unintentional.[13]

Overt Discrimination.--Overt discrimination is supported by company policy, but seldom is this policy in writing. This type of discrimination may involve intentionally hiring few or no Negroes, the assignment of Negroes to traditional jobs, and by-passing Negroes for opportunities for training and promotion. Overt discrimination often reflects white stereotypes of Negro abilities, and real or imagined resistance of white workers to working with or for blacks. As the case studies will show, overt discrimination is rare now, although it was quite common only a few years ago.

Unintentional Discrimination.--Unintentional discrimination is not consciously anti-Negro. It looks to accepted qualities: for example, high school diploma, good diction, traditional appearance and politeness. It often stems from traditional policy in hiring, testing, promoting, etc. It is supported by assumptions as to how business best gets the product out; it does not rest on verifiable scientific evidence, but rather on past experience and "tried and true" methods. Unintentional discrimination most often is not and cannot be recognized as such by the persons or firms practicing it.

Affirmative Action.--Affirmative action refers to the program for bettering the status of minorities within the plant. An annual written affirmative action plan, which includes a statement of goals, appraisal of past progress and a look to the coming year with specific objectives is now demanded of government contractors by the federal government. Affirmative action means the positive steps that management is now taking to ultimately equalize opportunities for minorities in the plant.

Preferential Treatment.--Preferential treatment is often called "discrimination in reverse." It selects out a special group, and gives that group opportunities, jobs, training, etc. that other groups do not have. The rationale for preferential treatment is that these minority groups have been so discriminated against and deprived in the past that they need the extra boost just to be able to compete fairly.

The New Work Force.--The new work force is a generic term that refers to urban workers under 25 years old, who are not highly skilled or educated. Although often people think of black men as the new work force, it also includes young whites who have much the same background. The new work force is not highly disciplined, is not accustomed to factory work, and expects their rewards (e.g., pay, promotions) rather quickly. These latter characteristics are more pronounced among these young men.

Disadvantaged or Hard Core Unemployables.--Disadvantaged or hard core unemployables are those men and women who would not ordinarily be able to compete for a good job, because of one or more deficiencies. These deficiencies may be in education, experience and often in attitudes. The formal U.S. Labor Department definition of disadvantaged: the new employee must be poor and either unemployed or underemployed. In addition he must be at least one of the following: (1) under 22 or over 45 years of age; (2) a minority group member; (3) less than a high school graduate; or (4) handicapped.[14]

National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) JOBS Program.--National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) JOBS Program is a major manpower effort to enlist greater private participation in hiring and training the disadvantaged.[15] Private industry pledged to have 500,000 disadvantaged placed on the job by the summer of 1971.

Support.--Support refers to special training and especially counseling that disadvantaged usually require and are sometimes given to acclimate them to the plant and to keep them on the job. This support can be given by their regular supervisor or by a special counselor or both.

Backlash.--Backlash is the resentment by whites in the work force because of imagined or real preferential treatment that is given to blacks.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]Louis A. Ferman, The Negro and Equal Employment Opportunities: A Review of Management Experiences in Twenty Companies (Ann Arbor: Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, 1966), p. 153.

[2]See Allen Janger, Managing Programs to Employ the Disadvantaged (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1970).

[3]Ferman, op. cit.

[4]See, for example, Angus Campbell and Howard Schuman, Racial Attitudes in Fifteen American Cities (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), pp. 5 and 7.

[5]For a convincing economic argument that he has widely repeated, see Charles C. Killingsworth, "The Continuing Labor Market Twist," Monthly Labor Review, September, 1968, pp. 12-17. He argues that a macro approach is not sufficient, and that specific programs are necessary directed to the needs of the chronicly unemployed.

[6]Two more recent studies setting out to do this are: Allen R. Janger, Managing Programs to Employ the Disadvantaged (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1970); also Lawrence A. Johnson, Employing the Hard-Core Unemployed (New York: American Management Association).

[7]For a summary of recent government supported research on these practical problems see Manpower Research (Washington: U.S. Department of Labor, 1969), pp. 187-188. Also, Orientation, Counseling, and Assessment in Manpower Programs (Washington: U.S. Department of Labor, 1969); and Supervising the Hard Core (Washington: U.S. Department of Labor, 1969).

[8]Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Employment, Income and the Ordeal of the Negro Family," The Negro American, ed. by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark (Boston: Beacon Press,

1965), p. 151. A. Philip Randolph makes this same point, "The answer is jobs--decent jobs at decent pay. We know that when the Negro unemployment rate dropped during World War II, so did the Negro rate of divorce, illegitimacy, and other indications of family instability." This is from his Forward to Negroes and Jobs, ed. by Louis A. Ferman, Joice L. Kornbluh and J. A. Miller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. vi. The importance of jobs was also underscored in the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), p. 413.

[9] Manpower Report of the President (Washington: Department of Labor, 1969), p. 44. For the record of black and white unemployment since 1947, see the Handbook of Labor Statistics, 1968 (Washington: Department of Labor, 1968), p. 94.

[10] Negroes and Jobs, op. cit., p. 1. Rashi Fein underscores the problem of a job for the black, "Surely, the Negro must feel wry as he considers the debate about the level of unemployment that shall be considered full employment. His employment rate has not reached the 'interim target' of 4.0 per cent a single time in the postwar period." The Negro American, op. cit., p. 114. And Killingsworth insists that instruments that merely increase the level of business activity, while necessary, are not sufficient to get at "structural" Negro unemployment. Rather, more subtle, sharp and directed policies are called for. Charles C. Killingsworth, Jobs and Income for Negroes (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968).

[11] New York Times, May 21, 1970, p. 1.

[12] Some of the best recent work on the economics of discrimination has been collated by John F. Kain, Race and Poverty (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969). There is probably no better introduction to the problems and effect of racism and the ghetto than that of psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power (New York: Harper, 1965). Earlier, Earl Raab, American Race Relations Today (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962) edited a series of articles on race relations, prejudice and ghetto schools. Thomas F. Pettigrew, A Profile of the Negro American (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1964), presents what is still the most complete summary of the results of psychological research on the Negro American.

The history of Negro participation in the labor market in the United States is included in the collection edited by Arthur M. Ross and Herbert Hill, Employment, Race and Poverty (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World,

1967) and in the work of Paul Norgren and Samuel Hill, Toward Fair Employment (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). Herbert R. Northrup and Richard L. Rowan, The Negro and Employment Opportunity (Ann Arbor: Bureau of Industrial Relations, 1965), also present the management point of view of that same history. The history of the black man and organized labor is well treated by Ray Marshall, The Negro and Organized Labor (New York: Wiley, 1965) and in the work edited by Julius Jacobson, The Negro and the American Labor Movement (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968). A more recent compilation of company experience in employing Negroes, along with several dozen case histories, is that of Habbe for the National Industrial Conference Board, Company Experience with Negro Employment (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1966).

Industry's efforts to employ the disadvantaged are also the subject of much current literature. Eight excellent case histories were presented in 1969 to a Harvard conference on that subject, and then edited and published by Peter B. Doeringer, Programs to Employ the Disadvantaged (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969). Already cited on this subject are the works by Allen Janger, Managing Programs, op. cit., and Lawrence A. Johnson, Employing the Hard-Core, op. cit. Any research on the subject of jobs for the disadvantaged must take into account motivation. The new work force has attitudes toward work that are rapidly changing. Walter S. Neff, Work and Human Behavior (New York: Atherton Press, 1968), summarizes the wide body of literature on work, and then adds his own attempt to update our understanding of its meaning. Louis Wirth's, "Urbanism As a Way of Life," American Journal of Sociology, 46 (July, 1938), pp. 1-24, Classic theory of urbanism and its resulting alienation, and the alienation resulting from repetitive factory work treated by Robert Blauner, Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), are still very important. Harold L. Sheppard and A. Harvey Belitsky, The Job Hunt: Job-Seeking Behavior of Unemployed Workers in a Local Economy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966) tie together this theory with their empirical study on unemployed workers seeking jobs, and what motivates them to do so. Valuable as they are, unemployment statistics are not complete; according to a Labor Department report, there are many disadvantaged who are not even listed as being in the labor force. Persons Not in the Labor Force (Washington: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1969).

There have been a number of surveys of the differential attitudes of blacks and whites on racial issues. Angus Campbell and Howard Schuman's work, Racial Attitudes, op. cit., already cited, was based on a survey of attitudes

of more than 5,000 Negroes in 15 U.S. cities. More recently Conant et al., Ralph W. Conant, Sheldon Levy and Ralph Lewis, "Negro and White Attitudes on the Pace of Integration," American Behavioral Scientist, 13 (November-December, 1969), show a sharp difference in perceptions, but they point out that change in racial attitudes often comes after serious social conflict. From a series of surveys in the plant setting in 1944, 1951, 1956, and 1968, Joseph R. Goeke and Caroline S. Weymar, "Barriers to Hiring the Blacks," Harvard Business Review, 47 (September-October, 1969), pp. 144-152, report that the attitudes of black and especially white workers have become more accepting over those years.

Elliot Liebow's, Tally's Corner (Boston: Little Brown, 1967), superb report of his participant-observer work with black men on the street corner gives these attitudes depth and flesh. The present report hopes to give something of the same flesh to what could have been the bare bones of percentages and charts.

The larger research project, of which this dissertation is a part, was undertaken partially in coordination with the series of reports edited by Herbert Northrup on Negro employment in a wide variety of industries. Some of these studies are already published. See, for example, Herbert R. Northrup, The Negro in the Automobile Industry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1968); and Richard L. Rowan, The Negro in the Steel Industry (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1968).

Also very relevant here, both because it looks to the future and because it was published by and for the electrical industry, is the report by General Electric, "The Minority Environment in the Seventies." Ian Wilson, The Minority Environment in the Seventies (New York: General Electric Company, 1970). (This is a semi-private report distributed widely within the company.)

Two articles give a preview of this dissertation: a focused study of a hard core training program by Theodore V. Purcell and Rosalind Webster, "Window on the Hard-Core World," Harvard Business Review, 47 (July-August, 1969), pp. 118-129: and a comparison of two programs for hiring the disadvantaged by Theodore V. Purcell and this writer. Theodore V. Purcell and Gerald F. Cavanagh, "Alternative Routes to Employing the Disadvantaged Within the Enterprise," Proceedings of 22nd Annual Winter Meeting, Industrial Relations Research Association, pp. 66-77.

[13] Louis A. Ferman, The Negro and Equal Employment Opportunities, op. cit., p. 2.

[14]See JOBS '70 (Washington: National Alliance of Businessmen, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 87-88. A much more detailed definition is given here.

[15]For a complete discussion and assessment of this program, see Sar A. Levitan, Garth L. Mangum and Robert Taggart III, Economic Opportunity in the Ghetto: The Partnership of Government and Business (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), esp. pp. 17-45.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

In an attempt to obtain answers to the questions on industrial race relations posed in the first chapter, the author and Dr. Theodore V. Purcell studied workers' attitudes in three plants. These plants represent varied locations work forces, and products (see Table 1).

The principal research tool was the open-ended interview. Dr. Purcell, who guided the design of this research, used the same interview methods in his two previous studies.[1] His reputation and contacts proved essential in "selling" the research to corporate and union executives, and helped him to negotiate a Ford Foundation grant that covered travel and office expenses for the author's portion of the study.

Prior to each plant study, the author and Dr. Purcell made a presentation to the local plant manager, employee relations manager, and superintendents to clarify the objectives of the research and to get their approval. At the suggestion of Metropol top management, they there also spoke to all the foremen.

The researchers made a similar, though less formal presentation, to the union officers in the two union plants.

TABLE 1. Plant and Work Force Characteristics.

	Hourly Work Force				Black Foremen	Black Salaried		Blacks as % of total Work Force*	Product	Union
	Total		Black							
	male	female	male	female		male	female			
Middleburg, Va. National Electric	632	1525	99	238	0	18	11	10.0%	Mobile radios, micro-wave semi-conductors	None
Metropol, Ill. Builtrite Appliances	3208	452	1020	116	4	28	8	25.5%	Refrigerators, Ranges, Washers, Dryers	Sheet Metal Workers
Port City, N.Y. Gaston Electric	2938	831	179	76	2	16	13	4.2%	AC and DC Motors; Industrial Systems & Controls	International Union of Electrical Workers

*Percentages computed on basis of total work force, not just hourly.

Hourly work force figures as of 1 January, 1969.

Dr. Purcell had approached the officers of the international previously in each case.

The company made available lists of hourly and salaried employees, job descriptions, organization charts, their own local "Affirmative Action Program" (equal employment opportunity plans) for the coming year, absentee and turnover data and much other very valuable information. In every case the local management was more than hospitable. The researchers felt that they had relatively free access to any information that would be pertinent to the project. The local union in each plant also provided a list of its officers and stewards, and the researchers attended membership, committee and officers' meetings.

Each city and each community from which the plant draws its employees is quite different. The researchers obtained information on city history, area population, employment, unemployment, and other data.

In Middleburg, Dr. Purcell and the author stayed at a parish just a few houses away from the local Community Action Agency. In Metropol and Port City they lived in the ghetto. Metropol's near west side, Woodvale, was their home in April. This parish is a center of community activities, including the famous Contract Buyers' League.[2] In Port City, they lived in the poorest of the black neighborhoods, where the parish was a center of social and civic activities for the surrounding neighborhood.

Black Poverty Program workers and city councilmen were frequent visitors at these neighborhood centers where they lived. The author learned some of the troubles and the few triumphs of the black community at the dinner table, walking the streets, and talking to teenagers, their parents, and neighborhood leaders.

Announcing the Plant Study

It was essential that not only managers, foremen, and stewards know about the project and have confidence in it, but also the hourly employees. Plans were then made to announce the study in the plant. In every case, both company and union did an excellent job of announcing the project.

Each company newspaper carried an article saying, " . . . a random sample of employees and supervisors will be interviewed as part of a nationwide study of human relations in the electrical industry." (Samples of these announcements are in the Appendix.) The company and the union announcements referred to Dr. Purcell and the author as researchers in industrial psychology and Catholic priests. In the two northern locations, Metropol and Port City, the researchers were pictured in the company newspaper in Roman collars, because the researchers and the plant management there thought it would help establish rapport.

A union handbill announcement ran:

> . . . We would like to assure our membership that the selection of volunteers in this survey will be done by Father Purcell and Father Cavanagh. We would also like to assure you that anything you say will be kept in confidence. If you have the opportunity and decide to participate, we urge you to state your opinion very frankly, regardless of the subject, since this is the only way such a survey can show the true feelings of the people.[3]

There is evidence that the union handbill helped considerably. Interviewees in Middleburg, where there is no union and so no handbill, seemed more reserved in several instances. Because of these announcements, the worker came to the researchers knowing something of them and what they were looking for.

The general announcement did not make explicit the racial focus of the study, so as not to bias attitudes and also not to foment unnecessary conflicts. Some of the plant management looked on plant race relations as quite fragile and sometimes even on the verge of crisis. One local police chief was quoted as saying that the plant is his city was like a tinder box; it could blow up at any moment.

All of the interviewing was done by Dr. Purcell and the author, each doing roughly one half the total. Dr. Purcell did the formal interviewing of the plant managers, but otherwise there was no special selection for the interviewers. The author had full access to Dr. Purcell's interviews, and this dissertation is built on all the interview material.

The first group interviewed were the hourly employees. By the time the researchers saw the foremen, they had already learned the hourly worker's attitudes toward the foremen and something of their problems. This enabled the researchers to quickly and knowingly raise key issues, in many cases unique to the plant or the foreman's work group; and it made these interviews more fruitful.

Near the end of the month's plant study, the researchers interviewed the top officers: plant manager, employee relations manager, etc. This was not the first meeting, so little time was lost on exchanging courtesies or providing elementary information. It was possible to go immediately to the core issues as they had emerged from more than 100 interviews in their plant.

The Sample

In each of the three plants, using a table of random numbers, the researchers selected a sample of 60 hourly paid employees from payroll check numbers to be interviewed.[4] The sample was stratified so as to contain 30 black and 30 white employees. At Metropol Builtrite, 25 blacks, 25 whites, and 10 Spanish-speaking workers were interviewed. To insure some male representation because of the large number of women at Middleburg, the researchers stratified both black and white samples to include 10 males and 20 females. Since there were few women workers, there was no need to stratify for sex the Metropol or Port City samples.

The eight to ten foremen interviewed at each plant were also selected randomly, as were the union stewards. At each plant the researchers interviewed a dozen or more extra hourly employees or foremen for various reasons, for example: National Alliance of Businessmen pledges, absentees, articulate leaders, etc. But these "specials" were not included as part of the random sample for the purpose of analysis of plant attitudes; they are not included as percentages in the tables. The researchers also interviewed key management and community leaders (see Table 2).

The size of the total workforce, and specifically, the size of the black and white workforce, varied in each of the three plants. The smallest sample was 30 out of a population of 3869 in the white hourly workforce at Port City. Even here, when the attitudes of the white and the black workers are separated by at least 19 per cent, there is only one chance out of 100 that this difference in attitude is a chance occurrence.[5]

Place For the Interview

At each of the three plants, the researchers interviewed on as neutral ground as possible: away from the front office, and in a familiar place near the plant floor, for example, in a general meeting room or a utility room off the cafeteria.

It was important to talk to the workers in a spot that was: (1) familiar--so the interviewee was not inhibited

TABLE 2. Interviews Done at Each Plant.

	Hourly Sample				Foreman Sample	Salaried (Black)		Union Stewards and Officers	Manage-ment	NABs	Com-munity	Special	Total
	White		Black										
	male	female	male	female		male	female						
Middleburg, Va.	10	20	10	20	9	9	4	---	15	--	4	8	110
Metropol, Ill.	18	7	22	3[a]	9	8	1	9	14	6[b]	3	15	119
Port City, N.Y.	23	7	23	7	8	7	4	6	7	8	6	11	111

[a]A sample of 10 Spanish-speaking of a plant population of 826 was taken to investigate their attitude toward blacks.

[b]Fell into hourly sample.

in his responses by the carpet, long paneled halls or rows of salaried people staring at him, and (2) quiet--because the interviews were recorded. The researchers interviewed a few community leaders in their homes, but they saw all of those in the samples in the plant. This made scheduling much simpler. They found that five interviews at one hour and fifteen minute intervals was about the maximum that could be done in one day by one person.[6]

In the first study at Middleburg, Va., both researchers did all the interviewing in shirt and tie or open shirt (the latter especially on the less formal second and third shifts). The shirt, as opposed to clerical garb, was chosen so as not to overemphasize the clerical role, and so hopefully to minimize bias. This was especially true at Middleburg in order not to antagonize Southern fundamentalist whites (many of whom have never had a high regard for the Catholic cleric--especially since the Selma and Birmingham civil rights marches). The author elected to continue to use shirt and tie in Metropol and Port City for the above reasons and to remain consistent. Dr. Purcell decided to vary the garb, and at times interviewed in his Roman collar, feeling that this would give him better rapport with the blacks and the many ethnic white Catholics in both plants.

Notifying the Worker

Each employee was asked if he would participate in the study by means of a letter addressed to himself and

sent through his foreman (see Appendix). The letter explained that his name was picked at random--"like out of a hat," and that the conversation would be kept in strict confidence.

It was necessary to send the letter through the supervisor in all three plants because: (1) it was the only system for delivering messages in the three plants, and (2) it was necessary that the foreman, too, know of the appointment, so that he could reschedule the man's work.

Even though word came through official channels, no one was coerced into coming to see us. Eleven exercised their freedom and did not come in: nine whites and two blacks.

The Interview: Person-to-Person Communication

The ideal in the depth interview is to obtain information from the person that is an accurate reflection of his real attitudes.[7] The knowledge and skill of the author improved as he went along. Fortunately, the issues during the earlier interviewing at Middleburg were not as complex as at the northern locations. As will be seen later, attitudes and loyalties in this smaller city were more predictable and less subtle.

The interviewer had several objectives: (1) to explain the purpose of the study and the interview; (2) to

motivate the respondent to give as full and complete responses as he could; (3) to ask pertinent questions; and (4) to probe where necessary for fuller responses. In each of these efforts, the interviewer must be sensitive enough to "pick up the interviewee where he is." He must be able to sense the person's need for information, motivation, for further questions, and to adapt his approach accordingly. This was especially true in these longer, non-directive interviews.[8]

The researchers did not interview with a list of questions on a clipboard in hand, noting down the responses after each question. It was far more relaxed and open-ended, and also more time-consuming, thus more expensive.

Better information came from the longer interviews. After the introduction and a few crucial questions coupled with an interested attitude on the part of the interviewer, the respondents usually relaxed and expressed themselves quite freely and in detail; from that point on little prodding was usually required. Then it was necessary to ask only a few follow-up questions to insure that all the items on the schedule were sufficiently covered.

Meeting the Worker

The interviews were generally quite relaxed. Before turning on the recorder, the interviewer would try, in a friendly manner, to put the person at his ease, again explaining who he was and what the whole project was about.

To alleviate any anxiety as to why he was called, the interviewer would assure the worker that he was picked at random. The company newsletter and union announcement were always on the desk, and the researcher explained that he had the support of both union and company in doing the study, but that he was not working for either. They were assured that what they said would not get back to their foreman or union steward.

The interviewer told each person that he did intend to write up a report on each plant, but that the respondent's name would not be used in that report. He then tried to impress the interviewee with the importance of his speaking openly and straightforwardly, that what he said would be kept in confidence.

Although repeating these items each time could get tiresome to the interviewer, it was essential that this five to ten minute introduction be done for each person. A humorous comment would usually help to lighten the atmosphere and relax the interviewee. The first items covered in the interview would be less controversial, only later moving into the racial issues.

The interviews were usually about 45 minutes to an hour in length. A few key questions were asked, and the person was encouraged to express himself in his own way and words. A few workers were taciturn. With them it was necessary to focus the interview and to ask more

questions. However, in most cases the person felt at ease and expressed himself freely. Asking blacks about their work, boss, fellow workers, chances for promotion, and even about a black foreman was not difficult. It required more tact to ask whites about their racial attitudes: How did blacks and whites get along? What did they think of the local program for recruiting blacks? What would they think of a black foreman?

Most workers enjoyed the interview. A mechanic's comment was typical, "I'm glad I came. I enjoyed talking to you."

To complete the picture, after the worker left, the interviewer dictated onto the tape any observations or insights that might be relevant: physical appearance, unusual characteristics, whether nervous or at ease, etc.

Preparation, Microphone and Pre-Test

Dr. Purcell and the author obtained from the personnel office the following biographical data on each person that they saw: age, sex, education, work history, marital status, dependents, place of birth, job with skill level and rate of pay. (See the Appendix for the data form.) They went over this before the interview, so they already had a good idea of the person's background before meeting him.

The interviews were recorded, after obtaining the interviewee's permission. Only three out of a total of 437

interviewees said that they did not want their comments recorded. The microphone did not seem to inhibit the hourly employees.[9] Some management men were more conscious of the recorder. In the first few minutes of their interview, they might have been a bit self-conscious and pedantic, but almost all, before long, forgot about the microphone.

The researchers pre-tested the interview questions, interview style, and coding form in the summer of 1968 with several interviews at the Raytheon Company in Waltham, Massachusetts. This pre-test enabled the researcher to substantially alter and improve the instruments.

Coding the Interview

Three independent coders analyzed the taped interviews back in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Personal data obtained from the personnel office provided the basis for coding seventeen biographical items. Forty attitudes were scored from the recordings.

The coders had a background in social science and had read the classic literature on race and personnel relations. An orientation in Cambridge included: (1) discussions with the research team on the objectives and hypotheses of the project, (2) a visit to an electrical industry plant where they spoke to employee relations and employment men along with black and white workers, and (3) a day with the two electrical industry corporate executives charged with executing equal employment

opportunity. They came to the job with knowledge, interest, and yet the necessary detachment.[10] In addition to coding the interviews, they helped to select and organize quotations.

The coders rated interviewee attitudes on a six point scale that included: very favorable, favorable, neutral, unfavorable, very unfavorable, and no response. They looked for the employees' attitudes toward: their jobs, boss, training, employment process, a promotion, seniority, black and white fellow employees, whether boss racially discriminated or gave preference, an existent or possible black foreman, and relations between black and white workers (see the Hourly Coding Form in the Appendix).

The coders rated the sample of first line supervisors on the same scale ranging from very favorable to very unfavorable on their attitudes toward: their own job, their chances for further promotion, recruiting blacks, anticipated reaction of his own work group to a black foreman, preferential treatment and relations between black and white workers. The coders also rated the foreman's judgment on the relative performance of his black and white employees on: quantity and quality of their work, absenteeism, tardiness, accepting responsibility, discipline at work, ability to learn jobs and the relative performance of the previously hard core unemployed (see the Foreman Coding Form in the Appendix).

The coder rated these attitudes not only from a single response, but from the overall attitude of the respondent on that item. Check-coding found a high reliability among the three coders; they agreed in more than 95 per cent of the items. The final score on each item was the consensus or average of the three coders.

The researchers chose the interview over the questionnaire as the principal instrument of data-gathering because:

1. They were attempting to obtain not only facts, but also the subtle attitudes and feelings of the workers. These could best be found by an open-ended, but structured, interview.[11]

2. In a questionnaire the information obtained is limited to the prearranged questions. The interview provided greater flexibility. The interviewers could pursue particular questions as the need arose: e.g., description of a particular job or foreman, education and family life of a formerly hard core unemployed worker, reasons for absences, etc.

3. Some of the people in the sample were functionally illiterate; they were not accustomed to reading and answering detailed attitudinal questions. Several could not read at all, and some who could express themselves clearly and consistently orally in the interview, could not adequately answer a questionnaire.[12]

4. Returns from questionnaires are low, usually varying from 20 to 50 per cent. Interviewing provided a better sample of the plant population with fewer "no responses."[13] Of the 240 interviews in the hourly sample, only nine declined.[14] Most of the people talked to were willing and even anxious to express themselves. For many it was the first time they had been asked what they thought of the job, foreman, training, etc. Thomas Ramsey,* 34, Mississippi-born 15 year veteran assembler in the Metropol plant, had some excellent insights and he said at the end:

> It's unusual for me to have different ideas because I'm usually quiet, don't talk too much. I didn't even realize that I would be picked out. I've been reading about the survey, but I didn't realize that I would be picked. I didn't even know it. . . .

5. In a face-to-face meeting, greater rapport can be developed. The level of rapport and honesty can be estimated at the time far better than in a closed-end interview, and a fortiori a questionnaire.

Rapport and Bias

In most cases the rapport was good. This rapport stemmed largely from the confidence in, and the personal relationship that emerged with, the interviewer.

Typical were the comments of Hafford Rast, a 52 year old Metropol press operator:

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*All names used in quoted material from interviews are fictitious.

Rast: What I'm gonna tell you is gonna be the way I feel; and that's, it's the truth, and I got reasons to believe it and I don't care.

Cavanagh: And we want you to tell us exactly the way you see it.

Rast: Yeah, yeah, that's what we gotta do--if we don't we ain't gonna get anywhere.

And a 20-year veteran of Metropol Builtrite, now a foreman, at the end of the interview: "Okay, I'm glad to be able to speak to you. I hope I didn't steer you in the wrong direction."

An ex-hard core unemployed in Metropol, when he was asked at the end of the interview if he had anything else to add, said: "Well, Father, I wish I did have more to tell you, but you know the truth is the truth."

The researchers did influence responses. However, "to say that we want an interview without interviewer influence is a contradiction in terms."[15] The role of the interviewer is a delicate, sensitive one. But the sensitivity, perceptiveness, and involvement of the interviewer can be directed to obtaining full and adequate responses.

Judging the reliability and validity of measurements is much more difficult when we are dealing with attitudes than when we are seeking factual information. In addition to the fact that attitudes are far more difficult to get at, categorize, and measure, they also change over time. A man's perception of his foreman, or his chances for promotion

may be influenced by his wife's smile that morning, the traffic on the way to the plant, or the job that he has just been assigned. His attitude may be quite different tomorrow. So it is not surprising that the literature is filled with "amny studies which show persistent and important differences between interview data obtained when respondents are reinterviewed."[16]

Where bias exists, it is generally in the direction of the attitudes of the interviewer, according to the literature. The interviewee will tend to pick up clues as to the interviewer's attitude and will attempt to please by agreeing.

Several studies show that black respondents do not give the same responses to black and white interviewers:

> . . . When questioned by a Negro rather than by a white interrogator, Negroes mentioned higher educational aspirations for their children, more often agreed that changes must be made 'in the way our country is run,' and more strongly approved of the student sit-in protest demonstrations and school desegregation. . . . Not only did Negro respondents again evidence less militancy to white interviewers, but they also admitted to fewer feelings of racial victimization.[17]

Ferman had black and white interviewers separately interview the same blacks, and he found that the responses of the black interviewee were quite different in each case.[18] The graphic disparity illustrated here is tempered somewhat by Ferman's letter to the author:

> . . . there is no telling exactly whether the second interview was not influenced by 'interview learning.' We were quite crude in our comparison and wanted only to see if disparity existed. The interviewers were

> not very experienced; they tended to be young, and we gave them a crash course in training.[19]

The above evidence seems to indicate that a black interviewer will get different, and presumably more honest responses from a black interviewee. Indeed, several authors state explicitly that if we are seeking responses on racial subjects, blacks should interview blacks.[20]

The differences Pettigrew and Ferman show in the responses to black and white interviewers does not in itself establish that the black interviewers were obtaining a valid measurement of black attitudes. In fact, a more recent report concludes, "Negro respondents gave higher quality responses to white interviewers than to Negro interviewers in a personally sensitive area."[21] Trying to please, black workers might well exaggerate their racial attitudes in the opposite direction to a black interviewer.

The evidence is still mixed and inconclusive. However, it seems wise not to so stereotype the black man as to maintain that only another black man can adequately communicate with him.

In a study such as this, with heavily racial hypotheses and methodology, there was a danger of looking at the black man primarily as black. This posture in itself can bias responses. The black man can sense that he is being talked to as black, and may respond accordingly, exaggerating his racial attitudes. It is essential to meet people as individuals.

The author agrees with Katz and Cannell that the personal relationship established is far more important than the color of one's skin:

> Experience shows that the atmosphere which the interviewer sets for the interview process, his reactions to the expressed attitudes of the respondent, and his technical skill are in most cases far more important than his background characteristics. These characteristics have importance primarily as they affect first impressions, while the basic skills of the interviewer have deeper and more enduring effects upon the interviewer-respondent relationship and therefore on the product of the interviewer.[22]

First impressions are more important in a fact-seeking interview, which is both briefer and less personal than our longer, free-flowing, open-ended interview. The author's experience was that, after a few minutes and once rapport was established, the black person was open and straightforward with the white interviewer.

The researchers' role as Catholic priests also influenced the interview relationship. They were announced as priests and pictured as such in the company newspaper in Metropol and Port City. Although they did not emphasize the priest-role, and generally did not wear the Roman collar during the interviews, the workers knew who they were. It was quite clear to the interviewee that the researchers were from the outside, working for neither the company nor the union. There is evidence that the respondents, because the interviewers were priests, felt freer to express themselves openly, trusting that what they said would be kept in confidence.[23]

Dr. Purcell and the author recognized that the interviewer, " . . . must be essentially nonevaluative in his reactions to the content of the interview. He is, for the period of the interview, almost amoral in this sense."[24] Their previous experience as counsellor and priest taught them that there is no quicker way to hinder communication, than to indicate in any way that he or his attitudes are unacceptable.

Reporting the results of his study of the parochial school as a social system, sociologist Joseph H. Fichter comments on the potential bias introduced into the interview by a priest interviewer, "It is significant that the respondents seemed to have about the same amount of trust in both the lay and clerical interviewers."[25]

Another source of potential bias is whether the interviewer is liberal or conservative in his racial views. The author did find that often he was able to establish rapport more quickly with those who had more liberal racial views. But, although it sometimes took a longer time, rapport was eventually established with almost all the interviewees.

The author recognizes that the interview is a fallible instrument. It contains many potential sources of bias. A personal approach, when potential bias is recognized and compensated for, can lead to a much more open, human, and honest response. A real person-to-person

relationship, with genuine interest shown in the interviewee, can uncover a depth of feelings and information that never could be approached by a more structured research methodology.

Almost always during the interview, usually near or at the end, the p erson would say: "I'm glad you picked me to talk to you." "This was a good chance for me to get a load off my mind." "You gave me a good chance to say a lot of things I've been thinking for a long time." "If you had more questions, I would like to answer them." And a foreman, "And I'm not saying it because this is the thing to say, because I really, basically believe this."

The researchers, the coders and several other objective observers believe that the interviewees were generally quite honest and open. In this dissertation, they speak for themselves. The author thinks that the reader will note the ring of sincerity in these men and women.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

[1]The Worker Speaks His Mind on Company and Union (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); and Blue Collar Man (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

[2]See, for example, The Wall Street Journal, Jan. 2, 1969, p. 1; the New York Times, March 29, 1969, pp. 1, 23; and an editorial in the Chicago Daily News, Dec. 7, 1968, p. 10. The Contract Buyer's League helps blacks negotiate for fair terms on purchasing a house.

[3]Handbill of the International Union of Electrical Workers, Local in Port City. See the Appendix for a copy of the various company announcements and union handbills.

[4]Leslie Kish, "Selection of the Sample," in (ed. by Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz), Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), pp. 175-242.

[5]John R. Stockton, Business Statistics (Cincinnati: South-Western, 1962), pp. 237-239.

[6]To stay alert and interested during five one-hour intent conversations (occasionally, on the third shift, lasting until 3:00 a.m.), was a challenge. Once the interviewer became tired, it not only damaged his ability to ask the right questions and follow up leads, but it also undermined the necessary rapport. It would become obvious to the interviewer that he was not emotionally involved in the discussion, and this kept the relationship at arms length and responses cagey and perfunctory. This did happen a few times.

[7]The interview has been used recently and effectively for a variety of parallel purposes, from data gathering and evaluation by a personnel function in industry [See Donald L. Grant and Douglas W. Bray, "Contributions of the Interview to Assessment of Management Potential," Journal of Applied Psychology, 33 (1969), pp. 24-35.] to determining the racial attitudes of Negro and white children and adults [Robert Coles, Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967)].

[8]The non-directive interview has its origins in a type of psychotherapy in which the person is encouraged to express his feelings without directive suggestions or questions from the therapist. See Carl R. Rogers, "The Non-directive Method as a Technique for Social Research," American Journal of Sociology, 50 (1945), pp. 270-283.

[9]"Fortunately, experience shows that the presence of a microphone is seldom a deterrent in an interview." Robert L. Kahn and Charles F. Cannell, The Dynamics of Interviewing (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957), p. 240.

[10]Doris Muehl, ed., A Manual for Coders (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 12.

[11]"The interview is the more appropriate instrument for revealing information about complex, emotionally laden subjects or for probing the sentiments that underlie an expressed opinion," Claire Sellitz, Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), pp. 242 and 240. For much the same position, see also Fred N. Kerlinger, Foundations of Behavioral Research (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

[12]Several times the interviewee was asked to fill out the coding form, as if it were a questionnaire. In one case an elderly man took a very long time to fill out the form. He left three items blank, gave contradictory answers to four questions, and misconstrued two items. His attitudes on these same items could be coded rather easily from his interview.

[13]Sellitz, et al., Research Methods in Social Relations, p. 241.

[14]Those who decided not to participate were two white and one black hourly women in River City, a man and a woman hourly white and one Spanish-speaking male hourly in Metropol, and three hourly white men in Port City. In addition, and outside the hourly sample, one foreman and one hard-core in Port City declined. In almost all cases the supervisor of the person in question was asked if he had any idea why the person would have turned us down. In most cases the foreman thought that the refusal was for personal reasons, for example, because he was very shy and inarticulate. In only one case did the supervisor say that the white person who declined was prejudiced, had guessed our purpose, and did not want to discuss it.

[15]A research project at a well-known Boston University. His co-worker, Jean LaVaux, did a critique on the methodology of that project. Both also helped as typinc-coordinators for this project.

Mr. Hughes commented on the greater degree of rapport achieved here over the other interviews. He thought that these interviews were really getting at a person's true feelings.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Thomas F. Pettigrew, A Profile of the Negro American (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1964), p. 50. See also Herbert H. Hyman, et al., Interviewing for Social Research (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954) for a review of the research on interview bias.

[18]Louis A. Ferman, The Negro and Equal Employment Opportunity: A Review of Management Experiences in 20 Companies (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), pp. 162-163.

[19]Letter from Louis A. Ferman, Research Director, Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Michigan-Wayne State University, September 12, 1968.

[20]Kahn and Cannell, The Dynamics of Interviewing, p. 198. Also Ferman's letter to the author.

[21]Leonard Weller and Elmer Luchterhand, "Interviewer-Respondent Interaction in Negro and White Family Life Research," Human Organization, 27 (Spring, 1968), p. 53.

[22]Kahn and Cannell, The Dynamics of Interviewing, pp. 198-199. See also the same two authors' briefer and earlier "Collection of Data by Interviewing," by Charles F. Cannell and Robert Kahn in (ed. by Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz), Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), especially pp. 354-361.

[23]Thanks to Dr. Winston Oberg for first pointing this out. His insight is supported by the comments of a 44 year old Buffalo machine operator on his first real job:

Cavanagh: How did you happen to come out here to get the job?

Brown: Well, through the police. This is what happens with talking to a man of the cloth. I have to be truthful.

[24]Kahn and Cannell, The Dynamics of Interviewing, p. 200.

[25]Joseph H. Fichter, S.J., "Priests as Interviewers," Social Order, 9 (June, 1959), pp. 275-279.

PART II

A NORTHERN FIRM IN A SMALL SOUTHERN CITY

INTRODUCTION

The questions posed in the first chapter are here raised in the context of a specific full plant environment. The specific questions that will be addressed here are:

1. Is there a difference in the way black and white workers view their jobs, their fellow workers, their boss and their opportunities within the plant?
2. How do blacks and whites get along in the plant? Is there much association outside the plant?
3. How well did plant management handle the race situation in the plant in the past? What did they do in the face of community custom? Did they move too fast or too slow on integration and promoting blacks?
4. What influence has the plant and its management had on the local community? Have management been active and effective in community and racial programs?
5. What racial problems continue to face plant management?

The material that follows will attempt to answer these questions. Chapter III gives the setting and some background on the local community. The next chapter describes National's move to Middleburg, their early hiring policies, and black and white reactions to these policies and practices. Chapter V presents the promotion policy and especially the satisfaction that black and white men and women find in that promotion policy. Chapter VI describes the relations of blacks and whites on the job. Chapter VII relates the attitudes of blacks and whites toward each other off the job, and summarizes.

The setting for this section is the National Electric plant in Middleburg, Virginia. It began operations only in 1957; it is a division of a large northern based firm, and most of the top managers are northerners.

CHAPTER III

MIDDLEBURG COMMUNITY

The city of Middleburg, Virginia was founded more than a century ago. Although it is now one of the more industrialized centers in Virginia, it is remote from the other business centers.

The present population of the city is under 75,000, and 80 per cent are white. Ninety-nine per cent of its citizens are native born Americans. It is a wealthy city, with one of the highest per capita incomes in the state. It is a quiet city. At the time of the study it had not had any recent school disturbances or serious racial confrontations.

The two local daily newspapers are owned and edited by the same family. Both newspapers are quite conservative. Most Middleburg citizens feel that these two newspapers dominate the public forum. The attitudes of the owners and editor are more intransigently conservative than most Middleburg citizens, but both their dominant position and the deep historical roots that they represent, indicate that a closer look at their policies and influence is in order.

It is the policy of both newspapers to oblige Negroes to run obituaries as paid, classified advertisements, whereas whites are given free obituaries. Marriages are listed separately as either Negro or white. All Negroes are specifically referred to as Negroes, such as "John Jones, Negro, was arrested." If a black commits a crime, it is usually printed on the front page; but a favorable item about a black is buried, if it is printed at all.

Several attempts of the community to force a change in the papers' policies have, for the most part, failed. The editor forthrightly exposes public and private corruption, and he looks on his newspaper as the conscience of the community. He insists that he will never yield to any outside pressure or intimidation; it is a matter of the highest principle with him.

In 1967, a number of the city's most prominent citizens, including the General Manager and the Manager of Employee and Community Relations of Middleburg National, sent an open letter to the people of Middleburg. The letter deplored the subjecting of Negroes to "repeated indignities" by the papers and accused them of contributing to the "frustration and bitterness" which is developing in the Negro community.

In an editorial appearing on the same day in both papers, the editor denounced the letter as "scurrilous" and the signers as "frightened dupes." Eventually the

papers relented to the extent of printing some news about the local black high school and an occasional integrated photograph. But generally their policy has not changed. The consensus seems to be that the newspapers have an unusual influence on the attitudes of the people of Middleburg. According to a local college political science professor, the newspapers "quite literally monopolize the public forum. . . ."

> They tidy up their racism in verbiage and call it 'race preference.' They praise law and order and then attack our national government with the harshest language; they praise God and then condemn ministers who speak out, as Jesus did on social affairs; they laud the value of education and lump college professors together under the 'socialist-communist' label.

One of the top manufacturing managers at the National plant, Guy Littman, when asked about the future and the newspapers:

Littman: Very bleak. Nothing is going to improve there until the editor dies, would be my guess.

Purcell: Do you think the newspaper has much influence on the city?

Littman: Yes, it goes out of its way, of course, to present the other side. I look at the letters to the editor every Sunday and he prints every crackpot from Sacramento on east.

Another manager, Edward Loder, in Employee Relations, When asked how much influence the newspaper has:

Loder: I would say that the newspaper is very, very important. And I won't recount the problems we've had with the newspaper.

Purcell: I know the letter, the open letter.

Loder: The open letter, the Dunbar incident and the refusal to publish anything of achievement that they had accomplished. And I think that this is one of our big stumbling blocks now.

A black political leader, Ellis Ryder, says: "The white community here lives under terror of the newspaper." He and other community leaders feel that the newspapers intimidate public and private figures with the lurking question: "What will the newspapers say about me?"

The majority of the citizens of Middleburg are themselves conservative. The newspapers provide information and editorials to support this already conservative stance; they do not help the local citizens to adapt to changing times.

The one local "white" high school, E.C. Glass, has been integrated only in the last few years. Dunbar, the all-black school, is much smaller, and academically inferior. According to Ella Walker, who works on assembly at National Electric:

> Years ago, you know, our schools weren't like your schools, so therefore you shouldn't expect me to know what you know, I mean, it's a fact. A lot of people don't want to own up to it, you see. I know, 'cause I put my daughter in the white school here in junior high and my two boys graduated from Dunbar and now she's a senior at E.C. Glass. Well, I know the difference in her work, and I know how much more she knows than they do, the two boys.

The grammar schools are de facto segrated, largely because the neighborhoods are segregated. There has been some effort to put some of the better black teachers into White schools.

Middleburg's blacks are not united. Many of the bright would-be leaders have gone north. There is no SNCC, CORE or even Urban League; and the local chapter of the NAACP in the estimation of some of its own officers is an ineffective organization.

For three consecutive elections, Negro candidates for City Council have been defeated. Certainly the newspapers hurt the black candidates with their slanted negative articles. Nevertheless, the black community did not fully support their own candidates. Pretty rivalries and jealousies are rampant. The haves often look down their noses at the have-nots. And the have-nots are envious, and sometimes cut and slander the haves.

Another reason for the defeat of those black candidates was apathy. James Chamberlain, a second-year scholarship student at Princeton says: "Middleburg is a place of political inertia." Ella Walker, a National employee recently arrived in Middleburg:

> But it seems like the colored people here in Middleburg got a bad habit of sittin' there grumblin' and that's all they do. You know, the city has been run like this for, well I guess for 50 years. They don't do anything about it. And I'm a newcomer; these people have been here all their lives.

Conservatism and isolationism is strong in the black as well as the white community. Newcomers from the north seem to rapidly assimilate, thus continuing the status quo. As 41-year-old James Bailey, a technician at Middleburg National put it:

> We first integrated the Episcopal Churches here in Middleburg. And we went to Grace Church and no one ever said anything directly to us. But the white people who were friends of ours that invited us to come, they really intimidated them quite a bit. One of them was an employee relations man from National. Many of them say: 'Well, I'm from the North and I feel different.' They don't do anything so what we say is that they are all in this barrel and after a while it rubs off. So we leave the status quo as is.

The fear of not being accepted by other whites is a deterrent to meeting blacks outside the plant, even aside from any public interracial activities. The native-born southerner was born and expects to live his life in the south; he has much to lose. The northerner, who does not expect to live his entire life in Middleburg, has less to lose; although it is a risk, since his promotion depends on his success not only in the plant, but also in the community.

Younger blacks are not so patient. A 21-year-old machine operator says:

Buford: We were talking one day an' this white girl passed by, and this colored fella he was lookin at her an' all, you know. Then they got into a conversation of colored an' white datin'. This guy spoke up and said any white girl who'd go out with a Negro is low down. And that started a big argument among the guys in the back. One guy said somethin' about Martin Luther King one time an' a couple the colored boys were about ready to jump him.

Cavanagh: I'll bet they were.

Buford: I told him, I said look, I know these boys, an' they live on one of these old back streets and all, and they don't mind beatin you. Now you know, when you say somethin' about Martin Luther King, you askin' for a fight.

And later:

Buford: Now Virginia, this woman who works down here with me, she can't stand the North. Hates the North. And she's never been there. Now she spoke up and say, Now I haven't voted in 27 years, but I'm going to vote for George Wallace this year. To me, that's dumb. And the way people talk, I mean, a vote for George Wallace is a vote against me. The way they talk.

The same young black man concludes:

Buford: Actually now, I feel the trouble really is not so much the younger people, but it's the parents who are the ones who start all this stuff. I've got a lotta white friends, and when they throw parties, they'll come outside and tell us 'I don't mind you comin' in, but my mother's here and she'll get upset or get mad or something if I let you in.' So I really don't think it's so much young people as the parents.

There are signs of change in community racial attitudes in Middleburg, the high school is now integrated, the younger people have cooperated on inter-racial projects; and major industry is hiring numbers of blacks.

CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL ELECTRIC MOVES TO MIDDLEBURG

This chapter will discuss National moving to Middleburg and its early hiring. It gives a profile of the black and white work force, and outlines the criteria used in hiring and how these criteria effected blacks.

In 1957 National Electric moved its instrument business from its original site into a new plant on the outskirts of Middleburg. At that time the city had a large labor pool and low prevailing wages. The plant now employs the largest work force to locate in Virginia since World War II. It is also the largest employer in the area, with more than 3,500 on its payroll.

Middleburg still is considered to be a desirable labor market. 1966 figures show a national average hourly earning for manufacturing workers of $2.72; for Virginia: $2.21; for Middleburg: $2.07.[1] Turnover and personal injury rates in Virginia are below the national average.

Unemployment is low at 2.2 per cent, according to the 1966 figures of the Virginia Employment Commission.[2] But quite noteworthy, though perhaps not surprising, is the 1968 finding that in six target areas in the poorer neighborhoods of Middleburg unemployment is 23.4 per cent!

Seventy-three per cent of the people in these target areas are black, although only about 20 per cent of the city's population is black.[3] Black people tend to be congregated in the poorer areas of the city, and their rate of unemployment here is ten times that of the official state average.

Before the arrival of National Electric, and subsequently of Babcock and Wilcox, H. K. Porter and other northern companies, there was little industry in Middleburg. The employment opportunities were rather limited for everyone, and especially for blacks. Melvin Warlick, a chemical technician at National, describes the job situation in Lynchburg at that time:

> For years and years, the only thing you had here was Craddock and Terry Shoe Co. and the Foundry. And the two families there intermarried, so they controlled just about all Middleburg. They worked the people hard and paid them low wages. Actually the Negroes were only given the most unskilled jobs in both places, and there was nowhere for a Negro to go to advance himself. He could work and exist and keep his family existing, but to really make a living, there was no advancement for him.

At Middleburg industry expands, it dips deeper into this pool of previously unemployed or underemployed poor and blacks.

National Electric, because of the sheer size of its labor requirements and also because of the civic involvement of some of its officers,[4] has been responsible for some improvement in the racial picture in Middleburg. But how far should a northern-based company go in intentionally affecting social conditions in a small southern city? Can

it set out to better the lot of the black man? Edward Cummings, one of the top management team of National Middleburg tries to answer these questions:

> I'm not conscious of being in a crusader role, I feel that I'm doing only those things, that are necessary so the city of Middleburg can stay a healthy community in which to run a competitive business. I know that I don't really feel at all like National Electric can come into this community and has a job to do to remold this community into a new way of life. It has a job to do: to run a business in behalf of the share owners. Now, in order to do that job, it will have to operate in a community in which it can get labor of all colors, of all skills. It is going to have to be a community that is rational in regards to labor relations and is going to have a people that are dedicated to good work, too.

New Approach in a New Plant

Ever since the openers of the Middleburg plant, it has boasted several innovations: (1) a performance appraisal system for every employee in the plant, and (2) a counselor who is available on any problem the employee wants to talk about. The counsel has the ability to override a decision of a foreman, but he rarely exercises this right. David Slater, a high-ranking employee and community relations man, explains why these innovations were brought in:

> They decided they would try to start off a plant in a kind of unique way, like here's a golden opportunity to start off something the way you'd like to see it go. For example, in the appraisal system and the counseling system.

Although the founders looked on the Middleburg plant as a ready-made opportunity to forge ahead with experimental managerial practices, they did not see their way clear at

that time to take the same innovative and strong position on the employment of the black man.

National Electric opened its Middleburg plant in 1957. Contrary to local custom there were no signs "White" and "Colored" on the doors of the rest rooms. However, in keeping with the local custom, the black and white employees themselves began to use separate rest rooms. And management made no attempt to alter the pattern. Before too long, a white man, finding it more convenient to use the "Colored" men's room on the first floor, rather than walk all the way upstairs, violated the barrier, and the rest rooms were integrated. George Logsdon of employee relations explains how there would be separatism:

> Oh, just more or less the word of mouth. In other words, I'd be told: Well, we're keeping this room for blacks. And it really was in one way segregated facilities, although there was nothing in print or anything else. In other words, we weren't about to start breaking down barriers that's been a history for years and years . . . . They finally fell apart themselves. So I thought that is worked out very well.

Regarding the company cafeteria and social clubs and outings, National Electric has never provided for racial separation. However, the employees themselves generally continue to separate themselves in the cafeteria and in most of their social contact.

National Electric employed Negroes from its very first days in Middleburg. However, the number of Negroes was scant. This was partially due to the fact that few

Negroes considered applying, and National Electric made no attempt to broadcast their "non-discrimination" policy to the black community. Other Negroes who did apply were never notified. A 35-year-old welder, Grant Davidson, explains how he applied for a job at the plant in 1958, but was not accepted until 1966:

Cavanagh: How did it happen that you first came to get your job here, Mr. Davidson?

Davidson: Well, I had been tryin' to get on for a long time, actually ever since the plant moved here. I just put application in, and I wasn't lookin' to hear from it,'cause I had tried so much and hadn't succeeded. Then the lady called from National for me to come take my examination . . .

Cavanagh: Do you think there's any discrimination in hiring?

Davidson: Well, I did think that. 'Cause I mean I put in my application and I never did get a chance a' the job.

Cavanagh: What do you think now?

Davidson: Well, it seems to be real fair now. You see as many Negroes, I mean not as many either, but you see a lot of Negroes workin' aroun' here now.

In those early days, it was only the really persistent Negro, like Paul Holmes, who got on at National:

> I decided that I had to have a job, so I would come out every other week and the other week I would call. So this went on from June to October, when I was hired. Chester King's wife was a secretary down here and I talked to her. She said: 'Well, Mr. Holmes, we just don't have any openings.' So I said: 'Well, will you please look and see if you still have my application on file.' So she's lookin' and she says: 'Oh, yes, we've got it on file.' So I said: 'Well, if you had thrown it out with the trash I wanted to put in another one. I'll call you next week.' She said: 'Oh, no, please don't call me. If we have anything I'll call you.' And don't you know that she called me that evening?

Pretty and light skinned Diana Gilbert, who was hired early, in 1960, says:

> When I first came here I think I was the fourth Negro girl here. Four or five, and it stayed that way for a while, you know. They'd hire maybe one or two every six months. Then all of a sudden these past two years, they've been flooding them in.

Jake Duncan, a college graduate who has been working at the plant since 1959, compares National's attitude toward blacks then and now:

> At one time, when I was starting out, I would say the opportunity for black people definitely was not here. But now, it's my feeling that the opportunity is here, if they are prepared, if they prepare themselves.

Thomas Hall, one of the Managers of Employee and Community Relations for National, corroborates the impressions of the work force:

Purcell: When did the plant first actively attempt to increase its Negro work force?

Hall: We've had some Negroes here right from '56 or '57. But it seems to me that we've made only moderate progress until like '63 or '64. And I'd say it's the last five years that we've really had the heat on to make a strong conscious effort. And of course the numbers have gone up dramatically. I think the statistics of the last four years--50 per cent of the total net gain of employment has been Negro--is a pretty dramatic example of that.

National Electric was cautious in selecting its first Negro employees. Rather than asserting their influence as the primary employer in the city of Middleburg, they seemed almost to fear the reactions of their white employees. Wynell Bennett recalls his employment interview in 1961:

> When they called me in to interview me for the job before I was hired, I came in and I thought I was in court, this table. And they said, now look, we're going to tell it to you straight, now you're the first we hired here, now these are the exact words, 'You are the Jackie Robinson of the Micro-Wave Section.' They as much as told me that what you do will determine whether we hire any more. So when I first came to work here, and not being interested in the racial thing anyway, it sort of put a strain on me. And the thing that really put the cork on it was, they said, and they emphasized this, 'Don't bother the white women.'

National Electric showed more strength once a black was finally hired. When they placed a Negro on a job, they stood their ground, despite frequent protest from white employees. Edward Loder, one of the Employee Relations managers, tells of one of these early attempts:

> Shortly after I came here we hired some female assemblers. All of a sudden a spokesman for the white females (they'd apparently held their little kangaroo court somewhere) came up to the foreman and said, 'I'm sorry, but we cannot work. We are not accustomed to working with Negroes in our work group and we don't want them here.'
>
> The foreman had been told what the proper answer was if this situation happened. So, he said 'I'm sorry. You are all good workers, and so is the colored lady. We are going to all work together and if you find it unacceptable because of your principles, then I have no choice but to very reluctantly put through a removal from payroll for you and the other girls.'
>
> At that time our rates were maybe 70 cents an hour more than they could get making shoes, overalls, or children's clothes. They thought about it and they decided that 70 cents an hour was more compelling than to abide by their longstanding principles of not working with colored people.
>
> Now I think we could have fumbled the ball, we could have placated these early people and said, 'Well, we'll put her in another area.' But I think we would have had the problem even today if we had taken that route.

Hiring and the Black Work Force

A job at National Electric is one of the best paid, most sought after and even most prestigeous jobs in the Middleburg area. To be able to say "I work at National" often clinches a request for credit. The plant is new, bright, air-conditioned, and attractive, and the work is light and clean. So National is able to pick and choose its employees from a much larger number of applicants. It can and does demand higher qualifications of the men and women it hires.

It has always been the policy of National Electric, since its beginning in Middleburg in 1957, to hire employees without regard to race, creed or color. But it is only in recent years that the percentage of Negroes in the plant has grown dramatically: from 3.4 per cent in 1962 to 10.0 per cent at the end of 1968 (see Table 3). The local 1968 Affirmative Action Plan's long-range goal is 11 per cent; 20 per cent of Middleburg's citizens are black. Recently National has sponsored visits to the plant and talks on employment for the students of Dunbar, the local black high school. So, it is no surprise that 95 per cent of the whites and 92 per cent of the blacks in the plant feel that now there is no racial discrimination in hiring.

In spite of the rapid increase in the number of blacks in the Middleburg National work force, there is as yet no sign of white blacklash, either on the part of the

TABLE 3.--Number of Blacks at Middleburg National.

Year	Blacks	Total Employees	Percentage
1962	121	3512	3.4
1963	146	3441	4.2
1964	120	3099	3.9
1965	175	3241	5.4
1966	252	3828	6.6
1967	231	3150	7.3
1968	379	3782	10.0

foremen or white fellow workers. Not one of the foremen we talked to thought that blacks were being given preferential treatment in either hiring or promotion, or that a black foreman would not work out. Every one of the foremen in the sample thought that blacks and whites get along well on the job, and all but one thought that it was a good idea to recruit more poor. The foremen all agreed that blacks perform as well as whites on quantity and quality of work, their personality at work, and ability to learn their present job. However, 22 per cent of the foremen sample thought that blacks were not as well disciplined at work and that they found it more difficult to learn a higher job and hence were not so promotable.

During the business slowdown at the Middleburg plant in 1967, it was necessary to lay off nearly 300 employees. About 20 per cent of these were black. Plant statistics on those returning show that while 68 per cent of the whites laid off returned when recalled, 87 per cent of the blacks came back. While this probably merely indicates that a white person has more job options open to him in Middleburg, nevertheless, it also shows that the black employee saves money for National. His greater recall rate lowers the cost of hiring and training new employees.

Almost three-quarters of the hourly work force, both black and white, are women (see Table 1). And there are very few blacks in the heavily male salaried ranks.

There are therefore more than twice as many jobs for black women at the plant than for black men. A community employment director, Frank Gill, complains "a Negro woman always has a better opportunity for work rather than Negro men." Henry Boyd, an articulate technician at the plant, claims that this causes the black man to become frustrated because his wife has a cleaner and better paying job than he does. This undermines the man's sense of importance, his manhood. And it leaves the family hanging together by a slender thread, if at all.

Even though National tried not to discriminate in the past, still whatever effectiveness their non-discriminatory policy had depended on the supposition that Negroes would come out to the employment office to apply for work. For a number of reasons, few blacks in Middleburg did make application at National until recent years. One of the main reasons for this was the belief that it would be simply a waste of time. Many Negroes had become so used to being turned down for a job, some even at National, that they were no longer willing to make the attempt to expose themselves and risk yet another "failure." National Electric did not advertise itself as an "Equal Opportunity Employer" and no efforts were made to seek out black employees until about 1965. Therefore, little was done to dispel the idea that blacks were not welcome at National Electric. Audrey Whalum feels that many of the older Negroes have just given up:

> I believe that some of the older Negroes got so used to never havin' a good job or so used to never havin' anythin' that they are just in a rut. Just in a rut, and they just figure that there is just no way to look up.

Lois Livingston, too, feels that many of the Negro men have become discouraged and given up hope:

> . . . I say men 29 or 30, you know, are older, have just been from place to place tryin' to get these jobs and say well, I'll call you back, or laid off and not called back, and they just get discouraged, and say well, I'm just not goin' to do it. Or I won't get on there.

There were some Negroes employed at the plant from its earliest days, so it must have been obvious to at least some of the black community that National was not a totally white plant. But many Negroes, even knowing this, were under the impression that the work was difficult and complex and required great skill and education. Brenda Withers, who has been at National since February of 1968, says:

> About ten years ago, when I was working over at Middleburg General, I think that's what held me back, I mean I don't come in sooner. A lot of the girls would say, you all, you have to have so much this and that before you can get in at National and really, I was afraid to even try because I, the way they talked you had to be way up there, you see, to get anything, and I think that's why I didn't come in sooner than I did.

Ella Walker, who has been at the plant since 1967, comments:

> We know when the plant first came into Middleburg, but we were under the impression for a long time that the work was extremely difficult. You had to have a certain amount of education, which is not true. You have a white girl here with six and seventh grade. Now they don't, but at one time, they wanted all Negroes to be high school graduates.

Although National Electric never had an absolute high school requirement for employment, the diploma was definitely preferred. Whether the high school diploma is in itself a good prediction of job success is questionable. There is at present no adequate data. Says Barbara Fisher, 30-year-old white high school grad:

> I was talkin' awhile ago of soldering and things like that. Well, my little nine-year-old boy could do that, if I showed him how. You don't need an education for that. Plenty of jobs in here you wouldn't have to have a high school education.

Whether or not the high school diploma is a good predictor of successful job performance, it appears from a look at the employment records that the degree was preferred more for the Negro than it was for the white. From the sample, 90.0 per cent of the blacks had their high school diploma while only 56.6 per cent of the whites had finished high school. The men have roughly the same educational background, with 90 per cent of both black and white men with a high school diploma. But among the women, there is a great disparity: 90.0 per cent of the black, but only 40.0 per cent of the white women are high school graduates. Some of the Negro high schools in the surrounding counties up until a few years ago graduated students after eleven years, but in spite of this, the blacks in the plant have almost year more of school than the whites (see Table 4): 11.6 average years completed for the blacks to 10.9 for whites.[5] Even if we concede that black schools are generally

TABLE 4.--Biographical Data on Middleburg Hourly Employees.

	Whites N=30	Negroes N=30
Age		
Men	28.7	32.5
Women	37.7	32.2
Total	34.7	32.3
Years of Service	5.0	3.3
Education in years		
Men	11.8	11.6
Women	10.4	11.6
Total	10.9	11.6
Birthplace		
Middle South	87%	87%
Deep South	7%	0%
Northeast	3%	10%
Unknown	3%	3%
Rate per hour at the plant		
Men	$2.84	$2.50
Women	2.18	2.17
Total	2.41	2.28

Averages are means, unless otherwise noted.

not so good academically as white, nevertheless, more years of school and a high school diploma on the part of blacks are at least an index of motivation. And perhaps motivation is as good a predictor of successful job performance as any.

From the evidence, it would seem that the requirement of a high school diploma was applied more strictly to blacks than to whites. The employment interviewer would perhaps unconsciously look for a better educational background and expect more of a black person in order to be considered for a job at National.

The black employees in the plant sensed this, says Audrey Whalum:

> . . . High school isn't much but to get a job like this and to be a Negro does make a difference. Now that is one thing that I noticed over here. The average Negro that you will talk with or will see, they have finished high school to work out here. But the average white girl--well, they get married at 15 or so. So they couldn't finish high school. . . . So I know that that's particularly true over here. It really is. Very few Negro girls over here don't finish high school. In fact, I can't think of but one. So a high school education it <u>is</u> required.

Diana Gilbert says that this was certainly true when she was hired back in 1960. However, she feels that this has changed in recent years, and that there are Negroes employed at National today who do not have a high school education:

> Well, when I first came here I had to have a high school education and all the Negroes did. And there

> were a lot of the whites that did not have a high school education. I mean, it was really mandatory fo' a Negro to have this. Like George Logsdon was saying that he interviewed this woman for something and he had found out that she had only, this was a white woman, that she had only completed the sixth grade. He wondered how she managed to get over here . . . now I know there are Negroes out here that haven't finished high school, you know, just like there are whites out here who haven't finished high school. So--it's better, you know, than it used to be.

When asked about the educational requirements, Thomas Hall of Employee Relations says:

Hall: I'd say that the educational requirement has definitely come down.

Purcell: You don't have a high school requirement?

Hall: No.

Purcell: You never did have?

Hall: I guess that's right.

Purcell: I'm not sure.

Hall: I guess that's right. Not as a rock-bound requirement. We preferred it for many number of years, and now we don't even prefer it, any more.

Another reason why Negroes have frequently been disqualified for work at National is because of bad credit ratings. It doesn't seem to make any difference to the company why their credit was bad or how long ago it was that the credit was bad. Says Frank Gill, a local black employment officer, who has placed many poor people:

> I find that in talking to a place like National Electric, they run a credit report on them first. This is why a lot of them were losing jobs. They wouldn't hire them because I guess a place like National Electric like any other place didn't want

> to be bothered with garnishes and messing up their paper work so to speak. But I explained to them that the people cry to me: Hey, how can we get out of debt unless people give us a job to go to work? And I'm not praising National Electric all the time. This is what happened to a girl--a woman--by the name of Mrs. Hardy. They wouldn't hire her because of her outstanding credit report but it was all medical report as I explained to Henry. Her husband had some kind of almost chronic type of illness and really just ran up $1,000 worth of medical bills. It wasn't--you know--just being contrary or going down and buying lots of televisions and things like that, knowing you can't pay for it and refusing to even explain that to Personnel.

Audrey Whalum had difficulty getting on at National because of bad credit. She finds that whereas a good credit record is required of Negroes, this same requirement is not applied to whites:

> Like when we first got married I couldn't work because we were havin' children, you know, one right after the other. We had some bills get ahead of us and whatnot. Now over here--I don't know if this holds true for whites or not--you could never have had any bad credit. Well, in the course of that time, we paid off all our bills as soon as I could go to work. Well, I told you that I couldn't work when the children were small. We got everythin' in tip-top shape. But when I was called over here, I knew myself that I passed that test, and I said that well, this is the only thing that must be holdin' me out of this place, you know. So then I wrote them a letter, they hired me. But then again, since I've been here, there are girls whom you might work right beside whose husbands have been taken into bankruptcy last year. Or such and such a one, she couldn't get any credit if she had to. And I listen to these things but I never say anythin' at all, you know. I'm just wonderin' how they could have gotten a job when I had to go through so much, you know.

A key manager of Employee Relations agrees that the norms on credit checks have changed. "On reference checks, we may be taking more risks than we did five years ago, certainly more than ten years ago."

Recall that Brenda Withers did not apply at National earlier because she believed the work was too difficult. When she did apply in 1966, she was pleased with the selection process and orientation:

Purcell: The employment office--are they fair in the way they give their tests, and the way they select workers?

Withers: I believe so because, let's see, I believe there were seven in all and four were white and three were colored and we were in the same class and everything together. We got the same treatment, the same tests, and everything. I think they really were, they really tried to be as fair as possible. I believe you'd be able to get whatever, you know, they think you qualify for. But me, not knowing anything about factory work, you see, I think they did pretty good in placin' me.

Black, 34-year-old assembler, June Gordon, came to National Electric from doing household work. She says:

> I went up to the employment office and took the test and she told me I did well on the National test . . . the Virginia Commission, you know. And of course she asked me did I want an application and I told her, yeah. I didn't have anything to lose because I was looking for a job. . . . Within a week they called me . . . one, two, three, I was hired.

Another Negro assembler, Madeleine Anderson, came to National Electric Middleburg from the Middleburg Hosiery Mill in September 1967. She is considered a good worker. She says, about the employment office selection methods and testing, that:

> I thought it was quite fair. I think about twenty-four of us came in together at that time, when they were testin' an' all, and most of them that talked seemed to be right satisfied in the group that I was with, you know. I'm sure I'm satisfied.

Finally, here is Shipp Buford, an assistant painter who came out to National Electric directly from high school.

Cavanagh: Do you think the testing and interviewing and all that you did when you first got your job with National is all that fair, would you say, to everybody? Do you think everybody is given a fair chance at a job?

Buford: I thought the test was easy mahself. But I don' know. Different people have different ability. Actually I finished first. I think I was the first one out of the group to get a job as far as after the test.

Community Action Employment Program

One of the primary sources of Negro referrals in 1968 was the Community Action Program (CAP),[6] of Middleburg, founded federally by the Office of Economic Opportunity. The CAP staff went out into the neighborhoods to find qualified men and women who might not realize that they had a chance for factory jobs--at National and other plants. It presented a new alternative to people who had grown up thinking in terms of part-time jobs and domestic work.

Some of the people that have gotten jobs at National Electric feel they would not have been able to get those jobs without the CAP director's assistance. Says 30-year-old high school grad Lois Livingston, who got her job at National through the help of CAP:

Purcell: What do you think of the Community Action Program?

Livingston: I know at least 25 different people. I know they wouldn't have gotten a job unless Mr. Gill had gone into these plants, talked to these people about hirin' 'em and really gone out and worked to get these people.

Purcell: How did he do it?

Livingston: He brought them in, and there was 35 of us, went to take this test. It was open to anyone that had a high school education. And they went from house to house askin' anybody who had high school who wanted to take the test.

The CAP was also responsible for getting a job for Edgar Watkins, a 24-year-old former hustler who had dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and had been on the streets without steady work for three or four years:

> Well, I needed a job and I went to this poverty program thing that they had, about gettin' a job. I mean not that that was the way I wanted to do it, but if I could have done it on my own, you know, if there was any way I could have got in to talk to people on my own, I'd a come on in and done that. But really, the reason I went down there was so I could explain my wants of a job.

Right now, Watkins is an exception; there are very few of his background who have come in through the CAP. The personnel managers realize that National has not yet begun to dip into the real "hard-core" unemployed. But there may be greater effort to hire the "unemployables" in the future. Up to now Gill has performed a service for National Electric. Most of the people whom Frank Gill has brought out to National are high school graduates. Many are people who might have gotten a job at National on their own, had they come out to apply. So the CAP provides a service not only to the person getting the job and to the community, but also to National. Thomas Hall, a manager of Employee Relations, agrees:

> I want to give real credit to the Middleburg Community Action Program, which has been a direct

> communication link with potential people, either unemployed or underemployed. And by and large I think the quality of those people has been tremendous.

Frank Gill gives National Electric much credit for cooperating with the Community Action Program and taking on a large number of blacks--around 200, although no accurate records are kept.[7] He says that, while they were not the first to take referrals from CAP, they have now hired a larger number of CAP people than any other Middleburg firm. Even the critical employee Henry Boyd agrees: "I suppose that along those lines National Electric does a good job. Give the Devil his due. They hire a lot of these people."

There is evidence of some racial discrimination in hiring in the early days of National Electric's operation in Middleburg. Many blacks feel that educational requirements, credit checks were applied more strictly to blacks than to whites. The plant made no attempt in those days to communicate to the black communities that it had jobs available and they seem to have looked for the overly qualified Negro. They were concerned that he not fail.

Current hiring seems to have overcome these above obstacles. Attitudes of blacks and whites and the evidence seems to indicate that hiring of blacks is now fair. And the plant is now making considerable efforts to obtain more black employees. The Community Action Program has aided these efforts.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

[1]Figures from U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics and Virginia Department of Labor and Industry. Letter of Central Virginia Industries to "Member Company Heads and Personnel Managers," March 29, 1968.

[2]Manpower and Training Needs Survey, Sept., 1967. Richmond: Virginia Employment Commission, Jan., 1968, p. 4.

[3]Profiles of Poverty: Report of a Survey of Community Action Agency Target Areas, College Research Center, July, 1969, pp. 8, 51 and 52. This survey of 3148 households and 10,112 persons is estimated to have covered 90 per cent of the people in the poverty target areas and 67 per cent of the city's black population. It was done in the summer of 1968.

[4]The Plant Manager is chairman of the local school board and the United Negro College Fund. The legal counsel is chairman of the Community Action Program (and is also a director of the local country club). The Manager of Employee Relations is chairman of a committee overseeing the new community college in Middleburg.

[5]In our sample no black woman had less than an eleventh grade education. There were two white women who had finished only eighth grade, three finished only nine years, and five completed only 10 years in our sample of 20 white women.

[6]The CAP is a Federally funded division of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

[7]Middleburg is not an NAB city.

CHAPTER V

PROMOTIONS FOR BLACKS

Promotion policies have always been a difficult area of personnel relations and are likely to become more so. Increasingly, blacks and whites alike are eager to advance and are critical of what they consider deadend jobs or a slow pace for promotions. Yet promotion naturally depends on the availability of jobs at a higher level, on plant expansion, or turnover. This chapter will investigate promotion policies and practices at Middleburg National. And it will be especially attentive to the attitudes of black and white men and women toward those policies and practices.

The Middleburg National plant is a bright new facility, and the work force is young (average age is 34) and generally happy and contented. Monthly "round tables" are held with the foremen and his work group to discuss safety, new products, quality, or, in 1968, the campaign of two unions--the International Union of Electrical Workers (I.U.E.) and the United Electrical Workers (U.E.)--to organize the Middleburg plant. Of 1900 votes cast in the September election, the company received 73 per cent, thus defeating both unions. The voting seems to indicate both a happy work

force and effective communications. There were no racial overtones in the 42-month organizing campaign, nor were there any discernible racial patterns in the voting.

Typical of the attitude of the white women in the plant is 28-year old mobile radio assembler Rosa Lee Kramer:

> We have a place to eat--a big cafeteria. We have ten-minute breaks twice a day, thirty minutes for lunch. So really I guess it's a good place to work. I make a lot more than I did. I didn't make but a dollar an hour where I worked before, so that's a big jump. Really you can't complain, I guess. You think of all the people's makin' a whole lot less.

Another assembler, Madeline Anderson, goes a step further:

> National is a nice place to work. And it's a challenge and you can learn so many different things--so many different things to learn to do.

The women in general appear to be quite satisfied. One reason why the women feel satisfied may be that there really are very few possible promotions to be had. There are many semiskilled, operative positions for women, but one, is being upgraded, one is unlikely to feel that she is not being treated fairly.

Diana Gilbert Says:

> But women they are at a--rilly, standstill after they get to a certain level. The men, you know, they come here and they stay two or three months and they get a promotion. They don't have too many jobs, you know, open for women at higher rates.

Linda Newell, a newcomer to Middleburg, feels that National Electric appears good only relative to the other industries found around Middleburg. Most of the employees are natives and have never known anything better:

Nine tenths of the women in this plant are native Middleburgers. They worked at the shoe factory and these garment factories that does not pay anything. National pays more than any of these places. And they've never known any better. Yes, they're making more money right here than they ever made in their life.

Hazel McClintock is about 45 and has been with National for six years. She had a ninth grade education and is an assembler in the mobile assembly section. She is generally a very well satisfied white employee.

Purcell: Have you moved up since you have been here?

McClintock: No. You take it, so many girls have been here so much longer than I have and it goes by the years you've been here.

Purcell: I see. And you'd have to wait until they move up, huh?

McClintock: That's right, and really, I mean, I'm satisfied where I am. The higher you go the more responsibility you have. . . . If your name comes up for a high job they give you a chance for it if you want it. You can turn down if you don't want it. They give you a chance.

Another young white woman, Shirley Haight, is an assembler in the Assembly Section and has been five years with the company. She is well rated by her foreman and is generally a satisfied employee. About her only complaint is that the lead girl in her own department will not take a promotion elsewhere so as to make room for others to come up. But on promotion she herself feels:

Haight: Well, I just won't have a chance, not for quite a while. They go strictly and usually by seniority.

Purcell: Do the colored girls out there, do they all get the same chance as anybody else on promotion?

Haight: I think so. That's one thing I found. That over there they are treated equal to us and they are pretty wonderful people to work with really. Very much so. I've worked with them close at different times and I've never had any problems with them, whatsoever.

Most of the black employees in the plant are also happy with their job and their personal relationships with white workers. The black women are generally more contented than the men.

The cause of greatest dissatisfaction is the issue of promotion for black men at Middleburg National. While 95 per cent of the hourly whites felt that blacks have an equal chance for promotion to a better paying job, only 45 per cent of the blacks felt they had a fair chance. Among the men the cleavage was even more obvious: all the white men thought that blacks had an equal chance, whereas only 40 per cent of the black men thought the same. Of the nine black salaried men sampled, only one said that blacks have an equal chance for promotion and he has the shortest service of the group.

Black Men Disappointed

Negro men, especially the long-service men, have seen younger fellows, fellows who have come to the plant after they did, rise rapidly at National Electric, while their own progress has been limited. One half of the black men interviewed but only one of the white men felt that they personally did not have a fair chance for promotion. This creates sharp dissatisfaction and resentment. These

men can point out numerous instances of alleged discrimination. Says Todd Chisholm who has been with Middleburg National almost from the beginning:

> . . . And my foreman now, he was interviewed for the job that I was interviewed for. I had more seniority and I had a high school diploma and he didn't. Yet he got the job I was interviewed for. That's been six years ago. Now he's my foreman. So you can tell how I feel about things.

Every employee is rated several times a year on his work by his foreman. His ability to learn the job is an important element in that performance appraisal. But it may be that blacks do not always get the same informal help from co-workers as do whites. At the plant 88 per cent of the whites, but only 47 per cent of the blacks in the sample, said that their fellow employees helped them to learn their job. This may be a subtle form of discrimination. If it takes a black person longer to learn how to do his job, he will not be judged to be so quick or adept, and thus not so promotable. Thus the rate at which he is promoted will probably be slower.

Wynell Bennett, a technician with two years of college, wasn't looking for discrimination, but after more than three years of being passed by for no other apparent reason, he had to recognize its existence:

> We have a new manager that came in and he recommended me for the job. He asked me what did I think about it, and I told him I don't know, I hadn't given it much thought. So then he asked me what do you mean. I said I hadn't been interviewed for any jobs for quite a while--three years or longer--and there were jobs

> opening up all over the place, you see, and I was just being passed over. If I had been given a good reason for it, well, then I would have been satisfied, but I'm not racially oriented as you might say, myself.

Frequently, the reason given for not promoting a Negro is his lack of education. He is encouraged to attend night classes in electronics at E.C. Glass High School or the new Community College. In our sample, admittedly small, the black and white men had roughly the same educational background. And, even though the white men were younger on the average, they had a bit more seniority and they were making considerably more money than the blacks: $2.84 per hour to $2.50 (see Table 4). It is surprising that the hourly white men in the plant are younger than the blacks, since they were hired in larger numbers and earlier. The reason may be that the older whites have already moved out of the hourly into the salaried ranks.

Paul holmes is an eleven-year veteran who has been considered for a foreman's job several times but never chosen. The last time he was turned down because it was a second shift job, and "There would be no top-and middle-management people around to support him on second shift." He comments on the black man's opportunities for promotion:

> Well, frankly, up to a point I should say the opportunities have been fair, I would say and--particularly being in the minority group, I don't think that they are anything as well as they should be. I feel that the Negro has to be about twice as good as the white person to get the same job. In many cases, he just doesn't get the job, period, although he is better qualified.

Walter Moses, another ten-year veteran technician feels that the black must be better than the white and that the selection process is often a charade:

Moses: I have found that in most cases, 90 per cent of the time, that for the average Negro to move up, he's got to be three times as good as the man, the average white man he's runnin' against to get the job.

Cavanagh: Is that right? Is this true even recently?

Moses: Oh, yeah, even more so, because sometimes, I don't care how good you are, you aren't goin' to get the job if they don't want you to have it. Let's face it, that's the way it is.

Cavanagh: Okay, and . . .

Moses: And I'll bet you on any average salaried job you go to, the first thing that they'll holler--if they don't give you the job--is that you didn't sell yourself.

Cavanagh: Is that right? And that's what you've been told?

Moses: You don't sell yourself. How do you sell yourself to a man who's prejudiced to start with? You might be sellin' but he isn't buyin'.

Cavanagh: That's right.

Moses: Because he knows what he wants. When you walk in there and sit down, when he gets your folder and he's looked at your folder, he knows what he wants. And he's made his decision. I haven't been told this, but a lot of them have been told that I've already picked out the man that I want, but I'm just interviewin' because I have to. So, why waste my time? I mean, why give me all those tests for somethin' I'm not goin' to get? Might as well just wrap it up there.

Upgrading of blacks <u>has</u> improved in recent years, but this has been almost exclusively into technical positions. James Bailey gives National credit for this advance but feels that the same progressive effort should be made in supervisory positions:

> Now one thing that they do--and I must give them credit for this--that the fellow that wants to be a technician, he will progress along these lines--yes!--because of one thing: Here again, you don't have a social problem, or any of the other things--but he can get beside a little oscillator or whatever that little thing is called, and he can get into his little corner and he isn't bothering anybody, so therefore he's allowed to progress. The boy will go to school for a couple of years, and they'll let him begin on the ground floor and be a tester. That's all right. But the same should be true in the other jobs. That's what I'm talking about. I mean what are you going to do--have all the black people here testers? This is our (laughs) job.

Thomas Hall of Employee Relations admits that promotion is a delicate and troublesome issue. It is very difficult to set up fair standards for promotion:

> If you take a look at 20 personnel practices of various types and you were to poll the troop here, I think you'd get almost a unanimous vote that the whole promotion thing is the Achilles heel of the whole batch of practices, as compared with layoff, recall, hiring, testing, you name it.

The problem is more acute when it comes to the promotion of blacks:

> The bombshell here can relate to service. In other words, at December '64 about a hundred people [blacks], today four hundred. But the promotions are going to people with about 1960 service, therefore only a hundred of the four hundred minorities have any reasonable chance to move upward, so there's the timebomb.

Hall then went on to point out that these issues were being researched at the National home office. When the headquarters people asked for suggestions, Hall and the other Employee Relations people responded: "Please, research the whole upgrade area, we need help desperately."

Black Foreman

In January 1969, there were no black supervisors at Middleburg National Electric. One of the stated goals of the plant's Affirmative Action Plan is to have at least one and possibly two black foremen by the end of 1969. One manager questioned whether his peers were really serious in that goal: "I think we'll make up every imaginable excuse not to have a black foreman for a long time."

Most of the employees felt they could work well for a black foreman: 96 per cent of the blacks and 77 per cent of the whites. Significantly, 100 per cent of the men, both black and white, felt favorably toward a black foreman. Only one black and three white women thought they would have some difficulty.

On the issue of whether a black foreman would finally work out at the plant, almost 90 per cent of both blacks and whites thought that he would work out.

There are some talented men in the Middleburg plant, who might well prove to be good foremen. Middle managers complain that most black prospects lack education or experience. But in the case of Melvin Warlick these explanations seem invalid:

> Well, I know two fellows in particular that started about the same time that I did, who moved into management several years before I was even considered for management, and incidentally, each of the fellows that was interviewed for this job as a foreman when I was interviewed for a foreman's job, have since become foremen. I have since got a

> promotion, but it's not direct responsibility over the people. Like when I was in manufacturing, I was working for a manager. He had told one of his white employees that they were opening up a new job, and he told this employee that he would be given the job and he was interviewing people for his job. I had more seniority, more qualifications, more schooling, and everything of this nature, and so I went in and sat down and had a little talk with him, and I said, 'now, you know, what's, what's . . .' Now, so the first thing he said was that 'now this man has been with the company longer than you have.' I said, 'well, you get both of our folders on your desk in front of you,' I said, 'if you look you'll find that I have more time and grade.' So he looked at it and he said, 'okay, yeah, you've got six or eight months, that isn't a great deal.' I said, 'okay,' I said, 'now how about qualifications, let's go back to that,' so this man had only finished high school, and since I had come to work . . . And I had also taken company-sponsored courses here. So I sort of backed him into a wall on everything that he came up with. So he finally said, 'look, Melvin, let's face it, you just don't see Negroes supervising a bunch of white women.'

Admittedly, the first black foreman would probably have to be more qualified than the average white foreman. Claude Proctor, himself a foreman, feels that any new foreman in an area has to establish credibility with his work group. For a black foreman, establishing credibility would be that much more difficult:

> Possibly people would be a little more prone to pick at--see the flaws. You don't know how they're going to react to various things, you know. The foreman would be coming from outside the group, and he wouldn't have the credibility established. And trying to build this credibility if there was a flaw in the way he did it or if it were considerably different from the person ahead of him, he would meet an awful lot of opposition. Now, any new foreman when he walks into the area. That's just like when I came into this job. I've gone on a number of new jobs. You automatically see the opposition when you go in there and it's up to you to get around this. I think that the colored foreman will have more trouble getting

> around it. I think that that would be. Let's face it, the people feel that way, and it's up to the foreman and manager to dispel all this feeling.

Daryl Clinton, a technician would like the challenge of being the first black foreman at the plant. Like any innovation, he feels it would take a while for the workers to accept it:

> People would do little things, would say little things; it would take a strong individual that would put up with these things. You just have to outlast it really, for a period of time. You gradually see it dying out.

As mentioned above, National Middleburg top management felt that its white employees would not yet accept a Negro supervisor. Although there had never been a black foreman at the plant, there is one Negro lead girl, several Negro technicians with authority over white workers, and a Negro who acted as temporary foreman over an integrated work group during the regular foreman's vacation. Each of these people was accepted by at least the majority of the work force. Walter Moses, a black technician with authority over a group of workers, finds that a few may give him difficulty:

> Okay, let's say that they have 25 operators. I would say that I will find roughly maybe 3 or 5, let's say 15 or 20 per cent that may be a little hard, okay? But it's not as bad as one would think it is. In the area I work in now, I know that there are certain operators that are prejudiced towards me 'cause I'm a Negro. I know it. I know which ones they are. I know which ones they are not. I treat them all the same. Regardless of the fact how that operator feels towards me as an individual, I say okay, you feel the way you want to feel. I say if you feel that I shouldn't have this job, that's okay, that's your feeling. You're an individual, you're entitled to feel

> the way you want to feel. But I'm gonna to do the job. I'm not tellin' her this, I'm just thinkin' this way. So that is the way I do it.

Irene Brewer was pleasantly surprised at how readily the white girls in her group accepted Stuart Campbell when he acted as temporary foreman in her department:

> Take Stuart now the week that our foreman was on vacation, he worked. It worked out just fine. In fact it surprised me because the ones that I thought might make it kind of hard for him--you know, like sometimes you know what the answer is but you'll put it to him--we'll see what this one knows, you know--you didn't find any of that. They were pretty nice. In fact, they really surprised me that two weeks that he worked at our foreman's place there. And he didn't have any trouble at all.

Top management's fear that the white work force would not accept a Negro as foreman appears exaggerated. Most of the white workers in the plant seemed to feel that a few of their co-workers would have some initial difficulty accepting the change, but that they would eventually get used to it. The strongest personal reaction to the idea of a black foreman came from Suzannah Penton, who'd never thought of it before and was a bit stunned:

Cavanagh: I wonder what would happen if there were a colored foreman.

Penton: Oh, I don't know. I hope that never happens! I don't know. I don't know how it would work. I never thought of that. You don't think there'd ever be one, do you? I don't believe there will. I don't know though.

Cavanagh: How do you think the other girls in the group would feel about it?

Penton: Well, I don't know, we just never had a, we've had colored boys to work with us, and they do some

Penton (Cont.): testing and whatnot and everybody seems to get along very well. But I don't know how it would be if they got a foreman's job. I just don't know what they'd be like. I don't know. As long as I've been here, they're just testers and they have one that writes processes. As far as I know there's no colored foreman here. If there is, I don't know anything about it.

But Suzannah Penton is almost alone in her shock and surprise. More typical of the white reaction to the idea of a black foreman is that of Shirley Hiaght. Before coming to National, she'd had prejudices against black people. But she has since become accustomed to working with them and feels that she would rapidly get used to them supervising her also. In fact, they might even do a better job than the whites!

> I don't think it would make any difference, I really don't. At one time I had feelings against the colored because of the way I was brought up. But since I've been working with them, it's a lot different, and I don't think that having a colored foreman would make one bit of difference, and I think he would show less partiality to the people too. I really do. I'm sure they have some intelligent fellows out here that could handle the job.

Until manager Ken Drumlin recalls a young black college graduate who was brought in as a chemical technician. He was only with National about six months, but when he first came on:

> He had to be over a chemical inspector which was a white girl--work with her and direct her. And she just flatly refused to work for him. So I tol' her then: If you refuse we'll just take you off the job. And we demoted her right back from where she come from. Well, she didn't think that this was quite fair at the time. But we had no choice. And it was the real right thing, the moral thing, too.

> In the six months he was here, he won everybody's heart down there. It wasn't the men he was fightin'--it was the women.

Drumlin's boss several levels up, Guy Littman, a manufacturing manager, describes the attitudes of some of his subordinates and the influence of National policy on them:

> Purcell: How do you feel about the Negro foreman situation, John?
>
> Littman: We'll never move as fast as we really should. But I've had a couple discussions in the staff meeting and as you might expect, I have people on my staff that were born and bred in the South, and of course while they will give lip service to this thing, deep down it's awfully hard for them. People are so darn funny in this respect. All you can do is keep the pressure on--a little bit. Take Harker, he's a Georgia boy, and I'm sure the fact that National has an official posture on this thing relieves him of a lot of anxiety. I think that was a real big step: that we could get such an officialtype atmosphere coming down.

Littman went on to describe how the two southerners on his staff were adamantly opposed to putting a black foreman over white women; they felt it just wouldn't work. Others on the staff had seen it work at other National locations.

Georgia-born Mark Harker, who Littman referred to above, is tall, bright, articulate and a very honest man. With some uncertainty, he looked forward to the time when he would have a black foreman. He was looking for a brave subordinate who would appoint a black man to the foreman job: "I'm looking for a unit manager, or a subsection manager who is a little bit game." He said that in not

considering blacks for certain jobs, "vast resources are not getting a chance to help the community or themselves."

Just a few months after we left, Daryl Clinton, who up to that time had not been interviewed for a foreman's job, but who had told us unequivocally: "I want to be a foreman in this plant," (see above, p. 86) was promoted to foreman.

When Clinton was made foreman, a large number of white women wanted to transfer out of his department. The company took a firm stand that this was not a sufficient reason for a transfer. In spite of threats, there were no resignations.

Clinton was promoted from within Middleburg National Electric, even though he had been with the company only five years. Whether bringing four black "outsiders" in will allay the disappointment, anxiety and even bitterness of the black men who have been with the company 10 years of more and never advanced to responsibilities over a group, remains to be seen.

CHAPTER VI

BLACK AND WHITE ON THE JOB

The National Electric plant provided many of the citizens of Middleburg with their first extended contract with members of another race. After the initial breakthroughs, the strangeness and newness of working together wore off, and many of the superstitions that one race held about the other were dissipated. In this sense, National Electric functioned as an integrator. Charles Seevers compares the situation at National Electric with his first contact with Negroes in the military service:

> I mean, I never was around any Negro people until I went in the service. I didn't know what they were like and I was kind of scared to associate with them. I got over that real quick. Some of my best friends were Negro people. I expect, you hear some people like I was, that haven't had the chance to be around them and just reject them maybe. I don't know, it seems all of us back there working together, we're pretty aware of the situation so we don't throw anything up against each other.

A 25-year-old white utility man who had not been in the military was more surprised when asked how the races got along at National "Pretty good. Better than I thought they would. Look like everybody get along good." A ten-year veteran at the plant, Rima Dahlberg, explains her pleasant surprise:

> When they first came in, I maybe felt a little funny about it. But as the colored come in and they're friendly and nice. They're not bigoted. They're easy to get along with. Well, you don't hear anything, and we just go right along together.

The Plant as an Integrator

Assembler Shirley Haight tells about the change that took place in the attitude of one black girl that came into her group. After a disagreement:

> My foreman came to me and wanted to know what it was all about. He finally straightened it all out. She was a very bitter person, and now she's one of the sweetest people you'd want to meet, really. But at first, when she came to work here, she was real bitter.

From her side, Madeline Anderson tells of some of the misconceptions she held about whites that have been broken down by working together with them at National:

Anderson: When you work with a friend, you find out you learn more about each other. And I think you learn to understand each other better.

Cavanagh: What would you say you've learned?

Anderson: I have learned that they really aren't as selfish as maybe I had thought they were. And that all of them really didn't feel towards Negroes the way I had thought they did. It makes you feel better that you have been wrong, and I'm hoping they have found the same thing about us. I was happy to find out that I was wrong, and I found it out for myself just from working with them.

Dora Arnolds, who was among the first Negro woman hired at National, feels very strongly that the company has been instrumental in changing race relations and attitudes in Middleburg from what they were previously:

Arnolds: I think this company has done more to improve the relations in this community than any other company. I really feel this way. I think it's opened up more jobs in even downtown, and places like that.

Cavanagh: How has the company done that, do you think?

Arnolds: Well, I think, before that, in a lot of industries that they had here, they didn't have very many Negroes in the type of work that we're doin' together. They had different type jobs, little separate jobs that they done. And I think since we've come here, they've learned to live together and to work together. And I think a lot of thoughts and superstitions, after they've come to work together, they just realize that this is not true. It's gotten around to other different companies, and I think they see that people can live and work together.

Ninety-seven per cent of the sample of white and 86 per cent of the black National Electric hourly employees feel that blacks and whites get along well, at least while they are on the job. Wynell Bennett feels that the company is a neutral ground, where personal prejudices do not enter in:

> Here at National Electric, the people seem to me to--a little bit more mature than they are at some places. Although they may not like for you to tell them to do something, they are responsible people and they'll go ahead and do it. They sort of leave their personal likes and dislikes outside in most cases. And this plant here, whether they realize it or not, this plant has done a great deal toward helping white and colored understand each other.

Paula Crawford, a contract specialist at National, says: "Here I don't even know that I belong to a race, you know, I'm just a person." Randall Chafee speaks of the girls in his group when he was foreman on the conveyor:

> I think it was two colored girls and eight white girls on the conveyor. If you couldn't see 'em and just listened to what went on out there, you would never know there was any difference at all. I mean they treat each other just like they did everybody else.

David Slater, a counselor at the Middleburg plant, tells of an instance when a white woman even went against her white co-worker in defense of a Negro man:

> So one girl made some obscene remarks to him, and he was quite upset about it. But the thing that I was pleased to see was that other white women in the area were equally upset by the remarks and quickly came to his defense, you know, and came up to talk to me about it. One of them even came forward and accused the girl to her face in support of this boy. That's very heartening, to see them accept him just as any others, which is the way we prefer to see it.

In the early years, the relationship between the races was not as relaxed as it is today. The fact of race is not as central today; it has been neutralized. But this has not always been so. The same Wynell Bennett, who now feels the company is without much personal prejudice, tells of how he was harassed by the white employees back in 1961:

> . . . I worked on the bench there and they'd all gang up about, say six or seven of them would come, they'd walk around. All of a sudden they's let out with a big HEE HAW! . . . I never even mentioned it to the supervisor, I just keep right on working. But you see what they didn't realize that I had been around and experienced at the very thing. They wanted me to explode, you see, but I just kept working, but after a year or so when they saw that I wasn't going to get rattled they stopped.

Even today there are some instances of harassment in a generally friendly plant. When asked how blacks got

along with the whites in their work group, a perceptive and successful Middleburg-born foreman, Ken Drumlin, says:

> They get along well. They're most likable, most of 'em. Mingle well--no problem there. And most friendly and cooperative, the ones I've had. In fact, sometimes the aggressiveness of their white counterparts will cause conflicts that they would never get into.

A former local hustler, who came into the plant through the Community Action Agency, and who is now doing well as a machine operator, agrees, "I never seen people get along so well . . . we used to get together and have a few beers. It was never no hard time. I mean, they were coming to my house, just as quick as I would go to theirs. I never had no hard time with none of them. . . ."

Georgia-born foreman Patrick Posner was surprised to find out how well blacks and whites got along at the plant:

> I found very little resentment toward 'em or any racial overtones whatsoever. An' I was a little surprised at this because--from the part of the country I am--I think we have a different class of colored people, a lot more low incomes.

But as Drumlin pointed out, there are still some cases of pestering or harassing. Walter Moses encountered this when he moved into the salaried ranks:

> Moses: The other technicians were hangin' their coats up, and there was nothin' said, so I started hangin' my coat there. All of a sudden, one day, I came in and found this big note, 'No factory workers' coats in the office.' I didn't say anything, I just kept hangin' my coat there, because there was no signature on the note, so I couldn't question it.

Cavanagh: That's right, what good is it?

Moses: So one day I came in after lunch, and all the hangers were gone except the ones that had coats on them, so I simply reached into the manager's office and took an excess hanger off his rack, and hung my coat up. When I came back at four o'clock, I found my coat layin' in the corner on a box. So I marched around to Personnel. I said, this is the end. To avoid anyone gettin' hurt for puttin' hands on my personal property, I'll bring it to you. So that was the last I heard of that. I continued to hang my coat in the office.

These instances of harassment occur especially when a change of some sort is made. But once the stand is taken, the work force seems to adapt quite readily. Outside of these few incidents, the work relationship between black and white employees at National Electric appears smooth and relaxed.

Whereas integration appears to have occurred quite naturally over the years in the work areas, segregation has tended to continue in the social lives. Fifty-eight per cent of the blacks and 71 per cent of the whites in the hourly sample agreed that blacks and whites did not socialize together on their own time in the plant in the cafeteria, at lunch or on breaks. Thomas Hall, one of the Employee Relations managers at the Middleburg plant estimates attitudes that are very close to what we found:

> I think 99 per cent accept the day-to-day working relationship very well. But I think that in social relationships even as simple as going to a break together or having lunch together and so on, the walls tend to rise in a hurry.

Separation of the races in the cafeteria is the rule. It is an exception to see whites and blacks eating together, although this does occur on occasion. The author received many long stares from whites one lunch time when he had lunch with Shipp Buford and some of his black friends. Shipp Buford comments on his experience in the National cafeteria:

> I would be sittin at the table all by myself and the resta the cafeteria's full. Some woman come down, standin' at the table lookin' all around for a place to eat at this great long table an she won't sit down.

Salaried blacks may be more sensitive to this sort of thing as they mentioned it more often: "Maybe you and two other fellows on the other side of the table, and then I come to sit there, and then they move." Or, another: "You sit down and somebody pops up and moves, you know."

A 34-year-old assembler, Irene Brewer, when asked if blacks and whites eat together in the cafeteria:

Brewer: We don't rilly. But now we've got this one white girl that sits at the table with us. I was trainin' this girl. She's new. And they talk about her like a dog because she sat with us. Rilly, they do.

Cavanagh: What do they say?

Brewer: Well, they more or less turn their nose up. Nobody wants to be bothered with her, and they have all kinds of things to say about her. So on the next break she did sit down with the whites. One white lady said, "If she sits at this table again on another break, I'm gettin' up."

Cavanagh: Is that right? She wouldn't let her sit down?

Brewer: She didn't want her to sit there. So to keep all that down, the girl just stayed on at our table.

Workers may learn to work side by side, but on their own time, most still refuse to associate with blacks. Whites in Middleburg are still very ill at ease in speaking about racial matters with a black. Bill Tigert, a technician who has been in the plant for more than ten years:

Tigert: It's a funny thing, the people I work with would never talk about racial problems. I thought that was rather odd.

Cavanagh: They won't? You mean in the office or break time?

Tigert: They talk about it among themselves, you know. You can tell when they are talking about it.

Cavanagh: And they'd never talk to you about that? Why is that?

Tigert: I don't know, I have not yet been able to understand it, as far as the southern white person is concerned. Because they're not really used to being that close to Negroes.

Separation has also continued to be observed by the employees at social events. Melvin Warlick tells of one such instance:

> As far as the relations go with the people at work and right at the stations, I would say it's fair. It's okay. Other than that I don't think it's real good. Like if they have a Christmas party or something for the area. Maybe the people in the area will get together and exclude the Negroes. In engineering, it's a little better. Course we had the occasion there where they had a picnic and Paul Holmes put his name down. You know, they send a slip around. So they decided that, well, now we feel like, we work with Paul. We know Paul's okay and this and that. But we are afraid that the other people there might dislike it and there might be an incident. So they didn't want to go along with the

> picnic. At which point Paul wrote them a letter and told them that he would take his name off. I think he also sent a letter to Mr. Hall who told him that this sort of thing couldn't continue in the plant. He took the position that if the picnic was given, and if it was a company picnic, then Paul couldn't take his name off. He could, he should go. But I think the picnic folded and they didn't have it.

It seems strange that people seem to get along so well on the job at one moment, and the next moment they are like strangers. Says Daryl Clinton:

> That's a funny thing; you see people laughing and talking and joking around the area. But when they go to the cafeteria, you'll see a group of people here, and then a group of people there, and they act like they don't know each other.

Clinton agrees when Wynell Bennett says that the Negroes tend to eat apart because they are afraid they might be embarrassed by the whites, and they feel more at ease with their own people:

> . . . I'll observe among the Negroes that they just feel that they're not gonna really be accepted and some feel that they're being embarrassed, you see. It's like one of the group was together here not long ago. Someone made some statement about mixed crowds. The guy didn't have no malice in him. He says something about Negroes, Jews and Wops, you see, just out like that. Now to me, it went in one ear and out the other, but maybe someone else would become offended by it.

Daryl Clinton feels that whites don't socialize with blacks simply from fear of what their friends will say:

> The white would say the same thing as the Negroes: if I go over here and I socialize with these people and I go over to his house or I go to his party, if I walk down with this group of people, somebody's going to see me. And he don't believe in this particular thing, so in order to keep peace and harmony and keep mah friends, I can't let him see me doin' it. And I think that this plays a very important

> part. One individual don't want to be the one to pioneer this particular kind of thing. If this individual will do it, I'll do it, but who is going to do it first? Try to decide. This is what I think is the biggest problem.

Linda Newell has become good friends with a Negro girl with whom she works at National, but she too balks at visiting because of her fear of how the neighbors might feel:

> I mean I would try to make her welcome. I don't believe in just you know, social visits, just going to her house just to be going to her house, or her coming to mine just to be coming. What I mean, I think you can get too close. Really I do. But as far as treating her nice if she were to come to my house, I'd be just as nice to her as I could. Course, I might feel a little funny you know, the neighbors see it. Not that, I don't mean that like it sound. But I mean as a social visit I would feel funny. You know because you just don't, that just don't happen, that I know of. Not here.

Many in the plant maintain that the white's fear of integrated socializing is based on his fear of it culminating in interracial marriages. Says Valerie Ford, a native Virginian who has managed to accept many changes which have occurred in race relations since her youth:

> So far it seems like everyone has taken it as it comes, without too much of an argument about it. I don't know, myself, along with most everybody else, hate to see their children going to school with colored people. But, I don't think we should teach our children to look down on them, to work with them. I don't believe in mixed marriages or anything like that and I make that plain. I've got a little girl in the fourth grade now and I got two little girls that will be going to school and I try to talk to them about it. But I don't know how it will be when they do go into school. Who knows? You never know 'cause children will follow the crowd a lot of times. We've had two mixed

> marriages here in Middleburg recently, and one of them, I know the girl's family very well. It was quite a shock, it really was. So it's gradually coming in a little stronger, but I hate to see it, because those poor children are going to suffer.

Some little rejection and even harassment does still occur, and this happens especially when a black is moved into a new position. But on the whole, white workers at Middleburg are now quite open to working with blacks. In a previous section, a large majority even indicated that they are open to working for a black as a foreman. As long as it is within the plant where they feel that management has a right to determine work, working conditions and supervisors, it is acceptable. But, on their own time, either at breaks or more so off the job, there is little socializing between the races.

CHAPTER VII

BLACK LIVING IN MIDDLEBURG AND SUMMARY

Middleburg is a quiet southern city. The racial situation there is peaceful, at least on the surface. David Slater says that he's been told that there is some militancy among the blacks in Middleburg but, from what he's seen, most of the Negroes are against it:

> Well, we are told by some Negroes that they exist, but they have not been able to get enough to side with them. And so we have not had any race problems here as such. We have not had any marches. We have not had anything of this nature. Most Negroes that you talk with--that I've talked with, that we have at National are frankly against it. They don't understand what they read in the papers as transpiring in other cities.

James Chamberlain, a native of Middleburg, currently studying at Princeton University in New Jersey, feels that Middleburg is not nearly as militant as Northern cities, but that racial tensions are increasing and if the problems are not resolved, within 15 years, Middleburg too will erupt:

> But I think Middleburg is, really, is a typical Southern town. It's very conservative. But it's got massive, growing, northern-type problems. And it's going to be that much harder to solve in the future because of the lack of communication and the basic conservative attitudes to begin with. But I really think that in this town in say 15 years you're going to see <u>real</u> problems, believe

> me. It's going to be really bad. . . . I'm trying to think it's going to have to get bad, it's going to get much worse, before it gets better.

Audrey Whalum, who has lived all her life in Middleburg, has just recently become aware of the discrimination that has been practiced against her. The birth of black consciousness means also the birth of expectancy, says Diana Gilbert:

> Because now it seems so strange here to go into the stores and have two little Negro girls waitin' on you. It's just different. And then I think back. I don't know why I never felt any prejudice against me. You know, you had to sit in back of the bus? . . . Then it didn't matter. . . . I don't know when they stopped that. But at the time, when I graduated from high school, you sit at the back of the bus; there was a sign in the bus: 'White in the Front; Colored in the Rear.' Oh, it rilly didn't seem like anythin' at all. You know, you were told to go there and that's that. But now it's just different to sit in the back of the bus. I guess that it's just taken for granted, and then when it is changed it just shocks you, you know.

To Henry Boyd, black militancy is not something that will erupt in Middleburg 15 years from now. Militancy is not a thing of the future; militancy is in Middleburg <u>now</u>. He tells how he took pistols from six armed Negro militants right in the National plant after the assassination of Martin Luther King:

> . . . I took six pistols from six different Negroes in this plant because they had come in here hot as hell. . . . There was much talk that this plant won't be here tomorrow and this type of thing. And I don't agree with this. So I walked out of here with six pistols in my picket. I know that the guard's going to catch me. . . . No, he didn't catch me. And I carried them on out and I put them in the trunk of my car, and gave them back to them about a

> week or two later. They were mad as hell. They played the radio when the Kennedys were shot, but--they killed Martin Luther King--so what. This isn't important enough to turn the radio on. The fact that there were whites that complained--about the fact that they were flying the flag at half-mast when Martin Luther King was killed--openly complained. This is the type of situation that was here, and it was hot. It was boiling. . . . I think that the time is now!

Youth Leaving The City

All at National do not recognize that there is growing Negro dissatisfaction in Middleburg. But some of this discontent is already affecting the employment picture at the plant. More and more black and white youths are leaving Middleburg to seek out what they consider to be better conditions in other cities, leaving a diminished labor supply for National to draw upon. Two years ago, Virginia Governor Godwin complained: "All too many of these young people have been leaving their home communities . . . to find more challenging environments, more job opportunities, more education." Godwin called the exodus "tragic."[1]

Quips Roy Walker, a native of the South, " . . . the tradition here is that the only thing that can hold you in town is to marry a Middleburg girl."

Middleburg is a small town with few cultural or social activities. Says Paula Crawford, a contract specialist at the National plant, who plans shortly to leave Middleburg and go West:

> I'm stifled here in Middleburg. There's too much concern about what you are and who you are. And southerners are really funny people, they're class conscious, race conscious. I don't know what they're concerned with here. Middleburg is a family raising town, that's it. There's more to life than that. There's art, there's theatre, there's music, and this is why I want to go to California. . . .

And she did, within two weeks after the researcher talked to her.

Those who go away to college are the least likely to return to live in Middleburg. This means that the cream-of-the-crop is being skimmed off, and eventually the city will be drained of its brain power. James Chamberlain describes the situation:

> . . . but I really couldn't see living here my whole life. I just couldn't see it. Well, socially and any other way. There's nobody to jam with. There are not too many cultural facilities and activities--you know Fine Arts Theatre, well, you'd dig that. There's really not too much. I personally, I don't think I could live permanently in a town under five hundred thousand. To get everything I wanted out of life. That's me personally. So few black kids who are in college want to come back here to live--it's really, you'd think in a couple of years, you'd just have a bunch of really old, bourgeois, mindless people, in the black community and then you'll have a lot of just deprived people, but no real leaders. . . . It will be terrible really. There's no reason for a kid to come back here.

He goes on to say that it is not only those who go off to college who are leaving the city. Even the youths who stay in Middleburg after high school realize how bad the racial situation is:

> Well, you don't have to leave Middleburg to see racial attitudes. Conservative. Just to find out what other

> people are doing and their attitudes toward race relations. I'd say most of the young people in Middleburg--most people even though they haven't left--know that they don't want to live in Middleburg.

James' brother Fred adds that "Most white parents won't let their kids go to college up north. All the people they'd accept at Harvard are sex perverts, radicals or communists." And Fred's girl friend Betty chimes in: "They bring communist into everything. You'd think the communists are coming to get us. They are coming to get us, you know."

The local college research center studied students at the black high school to find out how so many were going to leave the city. They found that a majority intended to leave although they had few reasons for either leaving or staying.

Not only are the native youths leaving, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract outsiders to the city. Thomas Hall explains why a Negro professional would rather locate elsewhere:

> I think a guy looks at the whole spectrum and he says, well on the west coast they're pretty liberal and I could live in a community that would let my kids associate with other professionals, be they black or white, and at least decent housing and maybe working and living within a framework of a professional black community anyway. And as they contrast that with things back here and taking a look at the newspaper and so on, they say why fight it.

Black Housing

Housing for blacks in Middleburg is segregated and largely poor. Some few school teachers, doctors and professionals live in new expensive homes in the "suburbs," but on segregated streets.

Much of the housing for the poor is substandard. According to a community leader, Ronald Carter, when the subject of housing came up at a City Council meeting, a councilman who is also a landlord said: "Once you rent these people housing, the first thing they want is hot water." Carter continued to describe some poor housing:

> In order to get approval, they'll put up a few planks and then put a bathtub on the back proch. You've now got a bathroom there with a bathtub and water. And you know in ten degree weather, you take a bath in that and you're dead, man.

Another of the goals of the plant's Affirmative Action Plan is to increase the number of blacks in professional positions. But, as Hall pointed out, it is increasingly difficult to attract them to Middleburg. One of the big reasons for this is the housing situation. Says David Slater:

> Some of the professionals that we have attracted in years past, we have lost because of their inability to find adequate housing here.

Wynell Bennett, a black technician who moved to Middleburg ten years ago, describes the difficulties he had finding adequate housing:

> However, I must agree though that housing, decent housing is a problem here. Because when I came

> from Norfolk I had to live in a house, they've torn it down now, but it was the only thing I could find. I could actually see the sun rise through the floor in the morning and that was the only place I could get. And I was willing to pay, but there just wasn't any housing available at the time. But things have changed somewhat now.

Melvin Warlick feels that National could break down the problem of housing segregation in the city if it really wanted to:

> I'll tell you what National could probably do to help the community, and that is in the housing situation. They could find housing for them if they really tried to, but they would be in white communities. The housing in the Negro communities are pitiful. And the people who could come in and earn a salary comsensurate with them moving into a good neighborhood. Some of the people have come and they have found housing very hard to obtain. They might get an apartment with somebody or living with somebody, or I think they've got two apartment houses here for Negroes, exclusively. I think if National really encouraged it that they could probably move in with minimal effort.

A man in the Employee Relations Department has been assigned to try to open up new and better rental housing for blacks, especially for professional blacks. He has not met with a great deal of success; he was flatly refused by several apartment owners even though they knew he was speaking for National. He did arrange for an apartment for one black professional, who finally did not take the job offer. Integrating apartments, and more so neighborhoods, is a long and difficult job.

There appears to be another approach that National could use in solving their housing problem: National Electric Realty. National sometimes acts as a temporary

holding company of real estate when employees are suddenly transferred to other plants. Paul Holmes sees this as an easy means of opening housing to blacks, but National has not as yet moved toward this solution:

> . . . they have what is known as the National Realty here. This is a very flexible community, transferring engineers in and out all the time. And I understand that when these engineers are transferred out, National Realty takes over their property. This would be a very good step to let some of these Negro engineers have some of those houses. Then you will not come into this situation of block busting and this type of thing because National could control it. But so far, they haven't taken any steps to do this.

Says Ellis Ryder, a leader of the black communith:

> National could buy a house and sell it in the morning if they wanted to, but you're going to find that National conforms to the patterns of the city.

Roy Walker, in Employee Relations, feels that National has been supersensitive to the reactions of its white employees and to the traditional mores of the Middleburg community. Therefore, they have failed to use their influence to advance equal employment opportunity but have instead merely continued the status quo:

> I think we are supersensitive. This has been my feeling since I've been here, that we've been might shy about it. We mouth and commitments and then we always have the usual list of excuses of why it wouldn't work in this particular instance . . . I think we've been supersensitive about offending the people in the community and appearing to be too, too pushy.

Paul Holmes isn't asking National to crusade for Negro rights. He feels that the company exists to make a profit and that equal opportunity is simply the best means

of pursuing this end. He feels that in Middleburg, National has neglected its own best interests and bent over backwards to appease the white community:

> . . . there really is no problem if management would say: Well, this is the way that we're going. But somewhere the backbone of management isn't where it should be as far as interrace relations are concerned . . . I think that they are afraid that someone is going to say: National is a Negro lover. Well, my theory is that top management, if they can train an ape to do the job--their job is to make money for the stockholders. If they could train an ape to do it, then that would be cheap, you know! I think that this is the general attitude of a big corporation like this. This is the way that it should be. But somewhere in between--the middle echelon, I think--is a little afraid. Well, not a little afraid--real afraid.

Holmes' point is that if National were simply to pursue its own best interests, that is to put the best man in the job, no matter what he looks like, the company would be going a long way toward curing the racial ills of the city. Says Henry Boyd:

> If I've got men working for me for National Electric, the important thing is that I put the man in the job who is going to make the greatest contribution to the company. Doesn't make any difference what color he is or whether or not he has a hairlip or a glass eye or that his skin is black or that his hair is nappy. It doesn't matter. Doesn't matter whether their shoes are shined or not. I give him a good desk job, they wouldn't know if he's got shoes on him. Doesn't matter. You see, the Negroes are lookin' for some things now. National could cure a lot of this ill feeling . . .

Management's Dilemma

The summer of 1969 brought some surprises to Middleburg and to National. Seven charges were filed against the

plant on such issues as: shift perference, job assignment and promotion with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Another local plant, H.K. Porter Company, which has been the first and in many ways the best cooperator with the local Community Action Program received 11 charges. The charges are now pending. Last December, Peter Evans of Employee Relations said:

> I look at these compliance guys' jobs as kinda like auditors that uncover blind spots that you're bound to have because you're so close to the problem. And if they can do this, and do it effectively, then by gosh, then they're good.

The Middleburg Community Action Program sponsored from Federal funds a program for underpriviledged children during the summer at a local grammar school. The sanitary facilities provided by the City and School Board were not sufficient: one toilet for 80 children. An inspection by city authorities resulted in their closing the school "for sanitary reasons" on July 21. Then began a series of daily demonstrations, and threats of worse. The core of the demonstrators were black college students who were home for the summer.

A public hearing of black grievances was held at black Dunbar High School on August 1. Few whites stood publicly with the blacks. But leading the published list and the most prominent of five white supporters who spoke in favor of the blacks at the meeting was National Plant Manager.

The City Council refused to provide funds for sanitary facilities for the 80 children, so Middleburg National quietly allocated its own funds to repair the building to enable the summer youth program to open again.

We recall that Edward Cummings, one of the top management team, felt that National is in Middleburg to make a profit, not to crusade for racial equality. Racial equality is only important insofar as it adds or detracts from the plant's ability to function and to make a profit. He said:

> I don't really feel at all like National Electric can come into this community and has a job to do to remold the community into a new way of life. It has a job to do: to run a business in behalf of the shareholders. Now, in order to do that job, it will have to operate in a community in which it can get labor of all colors, of all skills. It is going to have to be a community that is at peace.

But Mr. Cummings' actions speak louder than his words. With a few of his National associates he did become intimately involved in the community and in the problems of local blacks. Perhaps his thinking has changed in eight months. Perhaps he saw the necessary peace being eroded by blind and intransigent local leaders and politicians. But in any case, it points up industry's dilemma.

Peter Evans, the same high-ranking personnel officer who said, "I'm reluctant to see National become the Almighty in this community," also said, "If National is worth their salt, they're going to have to influence the leading community members to take action and to get involved."

The dilemma is graphically and soberly put by university student James Chamberlain:

> Well, I tell you I'm anti-big business. I'm really skeptical about what they can do. I think it would be great if they could do something, but I just don't think there's a will there to do it. There's no question about it. Industry could do a lot of things, especially if they are willing to get into politics and fight--for what they wanted and what they felt was right. But I just don't think there's a will in big business to do this. Big business is probably just motivated to make profits. Keep the stockholders happy. That's the only responsibility of a businessman. And that's why I don't want to be one.

And later he goes on:

> Black guys, guys at Princeton. They don't want to become 'corporation niggers.' They don't want to become tied up into something that they have no control over, where they have to do their little thing and keep running the impressive machine.

In addition to taking a leading role in local education and coming to aid of flood disaster victims in the summer of 1969, plant management has recently tried to integrate housing and to soften the racial bigotry of the newspapers. In these latter attempts they have met a stone wall. Perhaps National's latest moves mark a new stance the plant will take with the community: as a conscientious citizen with a real stake in the future of the city of Middleburg.

Summary

National opened its Middleburg plant in 1957 on a non-segregated basis. They selected their first Negro employees carefully, at least for jobs where management

felt white resistance would be strong. Blacks came into the plant despite some opposition, especially from white women. Harassment and blacklash were readily handled, when management stood firmly behind its decisions, and did not yield to white pressures. Many more blacks have been hired since 1965.

Blacks began at the bottom of the occupational ladder. And promotion, especially for black men, was slow at first. While most of the black employees are now satisfied with their promotion chances, many of the older black men still feel blocked and frustrated. Although the promotion of blacks into supervision was long delayed, the first black foreman was appointed in 1969.

Blacks in Middleburg, especially the young, share the growing impatience of blacks nationally. They are beginning to speak out on public and racial issues, and they are also trying to elect some of their own to local political positions. There has been some success in these efforts.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VII

[1]*News*, November 2, 1967.

PART III

ETHNICS FACE THE BLACKS: PORT CITY

INTRODUCTION

The major questions of this dissertation that will be raised in this section are:

1. Is there a difference in the way that black and white workers view their jobs, their fellow workers, their boss and their opportunities within the plant?
2. Is there any difference in the way that black and white workers perform their jobs? Do blacks have any special problems?
3. How do blacks and whites get along together in the plant? Is there much association outside the plant?
4. How does one prepare, motivate and keep on the job young, disadvantaged workers? How do they perform on the job?
5. Is there much backlash now in the plants that have hired blacks and disadvantaged? Is there a legitimate basis for this backlash or not? What can be done about it?

The Port City Gaston Electric plant is the second site of this study. The above questions are addressed in this setting. Port City is still strongly ethnic. It is

important to inquire how the Poles and Italians there react to the young blacks coming in as new employees.

What special problems does a northern plant like this have over Middleburg National Electric? Management at Middleburg thought, and to a large extent was correct in thinking, that their situation was under their control. They had good communications and still a relatively docile work force. Communications are not as good at Gaston, and the work force is larger, older and not as docile. How do these characteristics affect racial attitudes?

Middleburg had no program for hiring the disadvantaged; it is not an NAB city. Recently Gaston Electric has hired 42 disadvantaged workers. Are these new Gaston employees really disadvantaged? Would they really not have been hired otherwise? How do the ethnic old-timers react to these young black "hard core?" How do the younger white ethnic workers react to the disadvantaged?

Chapter VIII describes the beginning of Gaston operations in Port City, and gives a description of the community and the present work force. Chapter IX views current hiring practices and black and white attitudes toward them. The next chapter presents Gaston's effort to hire the disadvantaged and the results of these efforts. Chapter XI charts the reactions of the whites and older blacks to these young "hard core" coming in as co-workers.

The view that blacks have of their own chances for promotion is a focus of Chapter XII. It also presents the off-the-job view of blacks and whites toward each other, and finally summarizes this section.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLANT AND ITS BEGINNINGS

This chapter relates Gaston Electric's move to Port City into an already existing plant that had been used for building war planes during World War II. It describes the buildup of the early work force and the backgrounds of the workers. The chapter also provides an overview of the black and white communities in Port City.

The huge Port City Gaston Electric plant is in Huron, a suburb bordering the city. The plant was built during World War II for producing thousands of military planes. As in many other midwestern cities, the aircraft plant was built right next to the manucipal airport, so that as the planes came off the assembly line, they could be wheeled onto the airfield and flown away.

A few months after the end of the war, Gaston purchased the plant, and moved their Motor Division to Port City. They brought in some of their own skilled people, and also hired many of the workers from the previous employer at that plant. A number of both groups were black.

In 1948 another division was moved to Port City. Many workers, including some Negroes, moved north with the company bringing with them their seniority dates. This

TABLE 5.--Biographical Data on Port City Gaston Hourly Employees.

	Whites N=30	Negroes N=30
Age	43	42
(Median)	44	45
Years of Service	13.2	13.2
Years of Service (Median)	15.5	19.0
Average Education in years	10.7	10.7
Birthplace		
North East	96%	33%
North Central	0%	7%
Deep South	0%	60%
Outside U.S.	4%	0%
Shift worked at plant		
First	60%	51%
Second	33%	43%
Third	7%	6%
Rate per hour at plant	$3.25	$3.18

Figures are means unless otherwise indicated.

accounts in large part for the long length of service of many of the blacks in the plant (see Table 5). This is in sharp contrast to the other two plants studied, where the blacks are more recent hires and generally younger than the white work force. Although blacks are still a small percentage of the work force at Port City, many have been there since the plant began (see Table 6).

TABLE 6.--Number of Black Employees at Port City Gaston (1966-1968).

Year	Blacks	Total Employees	Per Cent Black
1966	216	6210	3.5
1967	262	6903	3.8
1968	298	6321	4.7

Most employees work at individual jobs not paced by fast moving assembly lines. The hourly work force is four-fifths men and also about four-fifths skilled or semi-skilled. Although pay is less than many other firms in the area, working conditions are felt to be better. The work is not as heavy, noisy, or tiring. In Port City there is a full scale engineering and office staff. Almost one-fourth of the total employees are white collar.

The Community

Port City is the home for a wide variety of ethnic groups, and sometimes is called "The City of Good Neighbors."

But Port City is also surrounded by all the symptoms of the contemporary urban crisis. It lies on the shores of a lake teeming with debris and industrial waste. The air in the city and some suburbs is choked with red dust from the steel mills which fills the air, and for those living closer, it blows into the house and settles on the furniture and in the lungs.

Port City's central area is undergoing rapid turnover as whites flee to the suburbs close on the heels of industry. The city or Port City also has a declining Caucasian population, and its central, largely black, areas have a low median family income, as much as 30 per cent of its housing considered dilapidated, and a wide crime and juvenile delinquency rate.

Like most American cities, Buffalo was settled by European imigrants, many fleeing from religious and political persecution. The Irish, forced from their homeland by the potato famine of the 1840's, early provided cheap labor. At about the same time the Germans arrived. Since they were mostly skilled craftsmen and artisans, the Germans found good jobs. Around the turn of the century and into the 20 Century the Poles and Italians streamed into Port City. These new citizens determined to guard and nurture their diverse national backgrounds. The result for Port City has been both rich variety and narrow chauvinism. Whenever one group brushed the shoulders of another in seeking employment

and housing, conflict erupted. In the 1940's antagonism between the German and Polish communities was so great that a Catholic priest had to escort Poles through German neighborhoods to their jobs as laborers and unskilled factory workers.

Port City is unique among these case studies in the ethnicity is still a dominant political fact. Unlike others in the following chapter, where the ethnic loyalties are more in memory, Port City has retained the stable, closely knit, ethnic voting blocks that developed around the turn of the century. Political power is still vested largely in the hands of the Italians and Poles, who were traditionally excluded from the commercial and financial interests of the city. A community organizer who was staff director for a Port City ghetto organization, says:

> Italians were forced by the Anglo-Saxons and the Irish into politics, organized crime, and food processing; once the Italians took control of these institutions in their own neighborhoods, they were able to move out into the suburbs. . . . The Poles, 'further behind,' are just now using politics, union posts and lower level management jobs to move out in large numbers often to the suburban enclaves, such as Huron, outside Port City.[1]

In 1966, 17 per cent of the less than 500,000 people in Port City were Negro; this is almost three times the 1950 percentage.[2] Negroes arrived in large numbers during the two World Wars and the boom years of the 50's. Typical of any newly arrived immigrants, they had to compete for housing and jobs with the next most recently arrived groups, the

Poles and the Italians. Consequently resentment by these two groups toward the Negro is still strong as they recall how long they remained on the lowest rung of the social and economic ladder and the discrimination and hostile treatment they received at the hands of the German, the Irish, and the "establishment." In the study of the origins of the 1967 Port City riots, the author says:

> There are almost certainly individuals in Port City of Polish birth who remember living, quite literally, in a barracks because no other housing was available to them. There are men of Polish birth who remember that they were employed because they were willing to work for less than the Germans, and who see or feel the threat of the Negro quite clearly.

This resentment, however, is not a recent development in Port City. In the 1860's the city experienced small scale riots due to combined hostilaty to the Civil War and fear that Negroes would take white jobs.[3] At the time, it was the Irish who lived in the worst slums, and the prospect of the end of slavery merely sharpened the fear that Negroes, providing cheaper labor than the Irish, would steal from the Irish the few economic gains they had made.

The Black Community

In 1960, of 75 census tracts in the city of Port City, 58 had less than a five per cent black population. And the largest concentration of blacks occurred in only three tracts, where they were more than 80 per cent of the population. These areas have a 15 per cent unemployment

rate, and one-third of the housing there is deteriorated or dilapidated.

Sixty per cent of the Negro hourly workers at the Gaston plant live in two of the above three census tracts, with an additional 20 per cent in three adjacent tracts. But the employees are not typical of Port City Negroes. The median age for Port City Negroes is 24.7, while the median number of years of school completed for Port City blacks is about 9 years, while it is 11 for black Gaston workers and 12 for white workers there.[4] The level of education for both blacks and whites is higher than their peers outside the plant, moreso for blacks.

Poor housing, crowded conditions and many children characterize the Port City black ghetto, typical of any large U.S. city. In 1960 when blacks were only one in eight of the Port City population, one baby in four born in the city was black.

Blacks are making some few political gains in Port City. Two black democratic councilmen represent the black community. There are two black newspapers in Port City, and as in most U.S. cities dozens of community agencies organized to fight the problems of unemployment, substandard housing and poor education.

The White Community

The whites who work in the Gaston plant often live in communities not far from where they work. Almost a third

live in Port City within a mile inside the city limits. Sixty per cent live in suburbs and surrounding towns. The plant employees are a microcasm of the city as a whole: as they feel the threat of the blacks moving closer, they move out of the central city, fleeing one step ahead of the ghetto. The result is an even stronger ethnic power struggle than we saw in the early 1900's. James Turesky a 34-year-old skilled wireman describes the situation:

> In this plant, in this community, the ethnic feeling is very, very strong. You have the, if I might use the derogatory language, you have the Dago, the Polack, the Mick, the Nigger. I'm not going to pull any wool over nobody's eyes on that, this is definitely very strong. And you're going to have this coming out in our fall elections this year. You're going to have a racial backlash. . . . Here in Port City, the majority of the registered voters are Polish. We're down to 400 some thousand people. We're having a mass exodus into the suburbs, which is common in every city. But still the majority of the voter is Polish. Number two is Negro, see? So you're going to have this friction. You're going to have this white backlash.

Community leaders are now trying to join forces to promote understanding and reduce tensions. In this, Gaston sees that it, too, shares that responsibility. It must deal with the traditional ethnic communities: they are still the backbone of their plant. But they must also deal with the growing black community in an attempt to help bring a solution to the urban crisis.

The Workers in the Early Days

Gaston's Port City Division is now organized by the International Union of Electrical Workers (A.F.L.-C.I.O.);

they have had bargining rights at the plant since late 1949. The United Electrical Workers (UE) represented the workers for the preceeding few years, until it was expelled from the CIO for being Communist dominated. The officers and organizers of the old UE were quite intelligent, college educated and doctrinaire marxists. But when their union lost the right to represent the workers, they eventually left Port City. The present president of the local union of IUE has held that office for almost 20 years; he is a shrewd politician and a good union man.

When Westinghouse opened its plant in 1946, they were faced with a labor shortage. A veterian in personnal recalls that "if a man could work, he got a job." It is not surprising that a large number of the hourly employees now on the payroll, black and white alike, were hired in the late 40's. During the 50's there were few hires. The employment office was more selective, and it was often the blacks who were screened out (see Table 7). During this

TABLE 7.--Percentages of Present Port City Work Force Hired by Years.

Years	Black	White
1946-50	53%	47%
1951-59	7%	20%
1960-69	40%	33%

period, the then Director of Employment, a hold-over from the older company, was President of the Urban League. But Gaston management join the black community in now feeling that Dennison's espousal of black opportunity and even the Urban League's efforts in those days were more rhetoric than result-producing. Gaston management are now fearful that the plant has an image in the black community of giving mere lip service to equal employment opportunity.

Black applicants at Gaston in the 50's and even the 40's encountered unlikely excuses, "too old," "too short," "no experience." Lilian David a 48-year-old, stator winder, tells of her earlier and unsuccessful visit to the Gaston Employment Office back in 1950:

Davis: She said that you have to have a high school education and plant experience. So I had a high school education. That didn't get it. She said you have to have your birth certificate, which I had. So she couldn't find no other reason, so she just told me that I hadn't been in Port City a year.

Purcell: What difference does that make?

Davis: I don't know. I just walked out after that. And she hired my friend, and that was the only colored girl she hired that day. And that kind of gets a little next to you.

One of the more talented blacks in the plant, an easy-going and quite likable man, who was finally hired into a technical job in 1964, had been turned down twice before when he had applied for factory work in the 50's. Even though he had some college, he was not seen fit to work in the plant. Once he was hired, however, he found no discrimination on the job.

Black Qualifications

Those Negroes that were hired evidently were required to have superb qualifications. Earline Mobley, a 46-year-old veteran stator windor, recalls the disparity between the early black and white hirees:

> Now in the beginning, when I was employed in '46, the word went out to certain individuals: 'Now we will hire a couple of colored girls. We want real nice colored girls. Intelligent girls.' I mean there was a certain requirement, more so for us than there was for the white girls. In '46 the caliber of colored women and men that was employed on the whole was a higher degree than that of the Caucasian. Actually, we have to be to get the same type of job. But now we are getting to the place where they are being selected on the basis: if they are good, OK.

Phillip E. Hughes, manager of employee relations, has been at the Port City plant almost since its inception. He admits that during this same period in the 40's and 50's, the Employment Office had a reputation for being discriminatory. He comments on the woman who interviewed and screened Earline Mobley, and refused a job to Lillian Davis:

> And the girl that brought in most of the hourly and salaried girls in and interviewed them and screened them, was a girl from Pittsburgh. I know she had a discriminatory feeling about Negroes. I know that for sure. She was obvious. I think she was getting over it. But I think in the grain, she had it. And my understanding was that Gaston had a real bad name in the Negro community at that time, being a real tough place for a Negro to get a job.

In those early days, only the low skilled jobs were open to blacks. Charles Tuggle 47, is a 23-year veteran of Gaston. His first job at Gaston was as a janitor, even though he had mechanics training in high school and similar

experience in the service. He came out to the plant in 1946, hoping to put his mechanical experience to use, but he found that this sort of work was not open to a black man:

> Of course, I had my high school diploma, plus I had my service discharge papers. And right then I asked for machine work. Back when I was in school I had taken up machine work, mechanic, you name it and I had taken all that, while I was in school. And when I was in the service I was in engineering, a heavy equipment operator. When I came out, I was hoping to have gotten a machinist job. But at the time I came out--I wouldn't lie to you--the only job they was giving me or any of the other colored folks was common laborer.

Stuart Orkin, subsequently promoted to a better job, bid on an inspector's job in 1948. On the basis of seniority, the job was his; but the company chose to eliminate the job rather than promote a Negro into salaried work:

> Back in '48, they had an inspector's job open. The inspector had died. And one of the girls that worked in the office, I went to school with. So I told her to kind of look out for the old boy, you know, see how I stood on my bid. I was the high bidder by three years; and rather than give me the job, they cancelled the job out. This was my first big disappointment with Gaston--back in '48.

Veteran foreman Len Jodka, agrees with the picture Tuggle and Orkin present. He recalls those early years when Negroes were not even allowed to operate machines:

> Years ago the colored were restricted. It was a bad thing that they've finally overcome. You never took a colored person on the machines 20 years ago. You never did; it was unheard of. Colored person come in, he was a sweeper, or a laborer, or a bench job, or elevator operator or something. You just never took them as a machine operator.

Similarly, black women were largely confined to factory work in the early days. It was not until 1955 that bright, attractive and out-going Mildred Farland was hired as the first Negro clerical worker. Progress for blacks into salaried work, however, continued to be slow, even after the initial breakthrough. Mildred Farland says that only very recently has office work become fully open to Negroes:

> There's quite a few working here now. They have really hired quite a few. Whereas before, I was only one here for about two years. And they brought another girl in. But she had to leave because of illness, and then they didn't hire any more for a while--say maybe the next two years or so. And then they hired another. And then gradually, you know, they began to build it up.

Roscoe Filkins a black veteran in the plant, watched the same situation Farland described:

> There were X number of young Negro girls that came out here during the time that Gaston first come here. And they were by-passing them. And this got to be a point that for office work Negroes just weren't hired.

In the 1950's a few Negroes at Gaston were promoted to more skilled jobs. Sal Patterson, who had been employed as a janitor and supplyman at the plant since 1946, became the first Negro electrician in 1953. He attributes his promotion to his own dogged persistance:

> There was a sign of discrimination when I first bid on this job here, as an apprentice electrician's helper. Quite a few bid on it, and I guess there were some guys they had in mind that would get the job. See, one thing they were lacking in seniority; which I had top seniority. They could not get by me that way. Then they said, we will try it on

experience. But they could not get through on experience, because I had the experience. I took training in school for electrical work, and besides I could put together circuits. And all of this is done under the supervision of experts.

Although Personnel did come to ask me, and one thing I give them credit about. They said, 'You know there is no other colored man that is downstairs in maintenance. You know you are going to have a tough time in maintenance. Those guys could give you a hard time.' I said, 'Well, it would not be the first time. Just as long as they do not put their hands on me. Words do not mean anything to me. Just show me what to do, and I'll do it.' That job was open for months. So they finally said, 'You want this job; we will give you that job.'

The reaction of the work force to this innovation was at first hostile:

When I first went downstairs, it was nip 'n tuck. Some guys thought I should not be there! They said, 'You want the job, you are going to do the job. We are not going to help you.' I said, 'So what? When I ask for your help, then you can help me. Until then, you stay out of my way, that is all.'

But largely because of Patterson's perseverance, things in the department finally settled down:

The guys themselves, they had to give in. They figured I had a complex by being there among white, that I could not take this. But they still did not know my background, because I lived among the white.

There were a lot of Polish people there; they had said a lot of harsh things in Polish. They thought I did not understand. So, one day one of the electricians spoke out of line. And I looked right at him, and I said, 'That is your version, but remember there is more than one language that everybody knows.' So I told him in Polish, 'You watch your own mind and watch your filthy mouth, or else I will hit you in the mouth, see?' And that shook him right up. So he told everybody else that I told him in Polish; he overheard me and he understands what I said. And from then on, the guys got a little more friendly.

Bringing blacks into skilled and salaried jobs was a concern of Gaston as early as 1948. They then felt out the employee and union reaction to the prospect, but it was another ten years before any real steps were taken. Says employee relations manager Phillip E. Hughes:

> The then manager of Industrial Relations asked what kind of reaction would then get from the salaried union, if they hired some Negroes for salaried jobs. Because that goes back to 1948 or so, and it was a long time after that before we really actively started hiring Negro people on salaried jobs. I think he was as determined as anybody that we were going to get Negroes on salaried jobs. He felt strongly that we ought to get started. That would be in the middle fifties. And we didn't do much about it for a long time, probably early sixties.
>
> One of the first people we took in our own department here on the file clerk's job. Really I don't think we had any real problem. Once people made up their minds that we'd better hire some Negroes. We'd need their skills, and I think the resistance dissolved pretty rapidly.

Management initiative in the 60's in hiring and promoting some blacks should be seen in the context of the then recently enacted state laws against employment discrimination, and to the increasing pressure of civil rights groups and the federal government.

Most black workers at Gaston feel that Negroes have made significant breakthroughs into previously restricted jobs over the past few years. Avery Hobbs, a 45-year-old, southern born stockman, remarks on the changes he has seen at the plant, since he began work in 1947:

> Well, the biggest change I've seen here is, of course--I worked here for years and I never seen until six or seven years ago--I'd never seen a

> Negro working in the office here. And now, everywhere you look, you see 'em. They hiring 'em every day. This is probably the biggest change that I've seen out here. . . . I worked here for years and never seen a colored person work a white collar job.

All of the whites and more than three-fourths of the blacks are now convinced that there is now no racial discrimination in hiring. But Negroes are still not proportionately represented in the better jobs, and there are many positions in which there are no Negroes at all. The progress that has been made in promotions, and the attitudes of the blacks toward it will be discussed in more detail later.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER VIII

[1]Richard Harmon, "Split-Level Casbah" (Unpublished paper, Feb. 15, 1969), p. 34.

[2]Social and Economic Conditions of Negroes in the United States, October, 1967 (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 1967), p. 11. These figures are from the special census of Port City taken in 1966.

[3]Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968).

[4]Median figures for the black population of Port City are taken from The Negro Handbook, compiled by the editors of Ebony (Chicago: Johnson, 1966), pp. 262-263, 32-33. The figures for the plant population are taken from the research sample, see Table 1.

CHAPTER IX

HIRING AND TODAY'S WORK FORCE

This chapter describes current hiring policies and practices at the Port City Gaston Electric plant. It presents the attitudes of both black and white employees toward those practices and the new employees coming in. The new employees themselves have some comments on how they are hired and trained.

Many New Hires Black

In the first four months of 1969, 47 of 193 new hires, (22 per cent of total) were non-white. This indicates a new effort, for at the end of 1968, only 4.7 per cent of the plant employees were black (see Table 6). The Employment Office had set a goal for hiring 15 per cent non-white for 1969, in order to bring the percentage in the plant up to the eight per cent in the country. The city of Port City itself had a 17 per cent black population in the last census in 1966, and that percentage is growing rapidly. It will be relatively easy to meet these self-imposed goals for the hourly work force, but they will face the same problem as other firms in that it will be much more difficult to bring in enough trained and competent blacks for the salaried and highly skilled jobs.

A large number of the black workers hired at the Gaston plant are women. As was also true in the Middleburg National Electric plant, black women are a larger percentage of the blacks on the payroll than the percentage of women in the total work force. While the Gaston work force is only 21 per cent women, 32 per cent of the blacks in the plant are women. This may reflect the greater stability of the black woman and the fact that she is more often a head of a household, or it may indicate a subtle sex-race discrimination on the part of employers. In any case, it can also be very discouraging and frustrating to the black man, and can often, in the end, lead him to even less stable and responsible behavior.

Older Workers View the Young Blacks

Young blacks and their attitudes unsettle most of the older men and women at the Gaston plant. They are often eager to learn in order to get a better job, but then are disappointed and frustrated if that promotion does not come quickly. Jerry Meggett, 27, a wireman with two years of college describes a reaction that he finds rather common among young new employees:

Meggett: One I know he's sweeping in the section I work in now. He's constantly asking me to show him how to read these diagrams because he wants to get a better job. Yes, but this is what I mean: How is he going to get this better job? He has no seniority but he wants to learn. Eventually he'll get discouraged.

Cavanagh: And what will happen, do you think?

Meggett: I think eventually he'll get discouraged and just maybe go back to the streets or whatever, you know. He doesn't have the seniority to bid on the better jobs, but he wants a better job.

Meggett himself had bid on jobs as a production clerk, draftsman, and also asked to take the foreman's test and heard nothing on his requests. He also said he saw his foreman, the general foreman, and also personnel but still has not been given the opportunity to take the exam. He, himself, is now also discouraged.

James Winfield is a 38-year-old new employee. He was laid off from his previous job, where both pay and working conditions were better. At Gaston he does the unskilled work of a conveyor attendant. Rodger Putnam, his foreman rates him as "very cooperative. His absenteeism is all right. And there isn't much skill required on his job, but he's very cooperative, he's a nice boy." Foreman Putnam shows little recognition of Winfield's 38 years, when he describes him as a "boy."

Winfield says that racial relations have improved, but he vividly describes the hurt of discrimination.

> After things get a little better, it almost makes you feel a part. Where before, you felt like you were just in a little box. You had your barriers. You couldn't go no farther than here. You only made so much money and you could only have this. And you stand up and look at other kids and families with things, and just dream. And get magazines and you see all these beautiful homes, beautiful things the kids have, the different celebrations. To sit up and see these things come before your eyes on television, and books, and

> knowing that you never would be able to do them, or never be able to go to these places, it hurts you.

Two other older blacks agree that young people come into the plant eager to learn, and that something must be done to meet or to adapt their expetations. Veteran electrical tester, Freddy Dixon, 60, who once worked in the same plant making fighter planes, contrasts present youth with his own generation:

> They all expect more. They're not willing to do like we did--or, I say myself, or the generation that are parents and grandparents now. So the only answer to that is to try to give them more jobs, so they can maintain themselves. And I think it will work out.

Another Gaston veteran, Eric Tunstall, 42, a plater, is not nearly so optimistic as to the outcome. He admires youth's enthusiasm to learn, and is impatient with his own and other older employees lack of initiative:

> The youth come in here for the first two or three years, they're reaching for all kind of opportunity. And then on the other hand, a person's been here 12 or 15 years. They have the seniority, have the union laws behind them. They satisfied doing the same thing day in and day out. There's a certain retardation that happens to the person, and I don't think that he knows that it's happening to himself. They constantly complain and there's frustration, but they never will make a move. And this includes myself. This is what I've observed. It is odd, but this is human behavior, I guess.

Agnes Getek, 42 and at the Gaston plant only six years, agrees with Tunstall, and is very critical of the older workers. She says that it is the youth who show some interest. The older employees feel that Gaston owes them a

living. She thinks that the union rules, and seniority system protect them in these attitudes.

Lack of seniority and the consequent lack of opportunity for advancement, are at least a partial explanation for why the young lose their eagerness to work. To the black and white old-timers, youth's attitude toward work is incomprehensible.

Foreman Edwin Silverman recalled a young black who was a very good worker. He did a good job until one day he just did not show up. Silverman was dismayed and confused as to why he left, but he did admit that he found it difficult to communicate with him: "He's a hard fellow to converse with. He didn't want to say too much."

Speaking of another young disadvantaged worker, Morris Wolodsky, 40, a drill press operator said:

> He's bitter, and I say 'why?' You know, he's a young fellow. How can a young person like that get that kind of feeling, that early in life?

Summing up the perplexed attitudes of many of the older whites at the Gaston plant is 58-year-old foreman Glen Humprey who has been with the company for 22 years:

Humprey: This new generation coming in is a little bit hard to figure out, I'll be honest with you. I don't know what the young people today want. I don't think they do themselves.

Purcell: Are they complaining, less desirous to put in a full day?

Humprey: No. They don't seem to be complaining about the amount of work they have to do. It's just, 'Why am I doing this much work? I'm not getting enough money for what I do do.' They don't seem to have

Humprey (cont.): the initiative that they used to have, of having a little pride in their work, and trying to keep up with the other fellow. They're clock watchers more or less.

Purcell: Would that be men or women?

Humprey: Men and women. I've found it in both sexes. This new generation, they think the world owes them a living, without giving anything in return. Where it's going to end up, I don't know. I shudder to think of what's going to happen.

A bit later, when talking about the black man, Humprey's stereotypes perhaps gives some indication as to why he finds it difficult to understand youth:

Purcell: So the old timers, they're . . .

Humprey: They're steady; they're good workers. Oh, when you're talking colored, you know how colored are: happy-go-lucky type of person. They don't set the world afire, but they'll give you a day's work. You know what I mean, if you keep on 'em. And there's not too many of 'em that's got initiative to be a supervisor, or be a lead man or anything like that. But just do their job, and that's it.

Five or ten years ago, the men used to fight for overtime. Today, says foreman Len Jodka, you're lucky if they'll work five days a week:

Well, I'd say 5, 10 years ago, I had a group of people in there that couldn't possibly make enough money. The more money they made, that's the way it had to be. 'If there's overtime, I want it. Not Joe over there--I want it. I have to check that he doesn't get any more overtime than I do. And I want to work every Saturday. And if you can't get the work load in here, and can't get the authorization for overtime for Saturday work, you're not a good foreman.' And then when you get the class of people that we're starting to get in now, they don't even want five days a week. They're sure not going to tell you that they want a Saturday, or they want overtime.

Those who don't want to work are not necessarily only the blacks. Says foreman John Cipriano; the white today are just as bad:

> Let's not pinpoint it only on the blacks. Now I'm going to be real honest with you. I'm not a lover of Negroes. I don't say I dislike them. I believe that they should deserve the same rights as we have. But let them earn it--that's all I ask. But the whites, are just as bad. Your four basic nationalities that make up Port City are Irish, Polish, German, Italian--they're just as bad.

Cipriano goes on in speaking about the young:

> I wish I could hire people over 45 or 50 years old. The young element is very difficult to handle. You have to be a psychologist, more or less. You have to baby them. You have to get them on your side some way. And, well, if they don't like your looks sometimes, or you speak the wrong way, you've got problems with them.

Whites and older blacks cannot easily understand the attitudes of the young black. Commonly this lack of understanding extends to all "the young element." Much of the resulting fear and resentment of young blacks undoubtedly stems more from the fact that they are young than that they are black.

New Workers Get Little Feedback or Training

Previous studies of the new work force have demonstrated that foreman support and feedback is very important to the new young hire, and that the new man looks for skill training and a broad orientation for his new job.[1] This is true at Port City Gaston also.

Although the vast majority of the whites in the sample (70 per cent) and even more of the blacks (79 per cent) felt that they had received adequate training for their present job and that their foreman or trainer helped them to learn the job, a far smaller number of blacks (50 per cent) and whites (38 per cent) thought that they were getting the sort of training that would enable them to get a better job. The whites at Gaston seem to be even less satisfied with their training than the blacks. It may be that attitudes toward job and work environment correlate better with age than with race.

For new hires, whether they be black or white, the two areas of foreman support and training seem to hold most of the problems and the answers. Recently hired disadvantaged worker, Jesse Byrd, was never told by his foreman whether or not he was doing good work.

> Well, he didn't say anything that I was doing good work. This is what bugged me; he never said anything all the while. I been asking people how long did it take to get their qualifying. This is the Gaston method of increasing a person's budget, or give him qualification for a job. So I began asking other people just to see if I am going slow. Because this kind of gets a person thinking. If he's out here doing good, and hasn't moved an inch, it gets a person thinking what's wrong, you know? So I began asking people, how long did it take them to get qualified. They say it depends on your foreman. But the majority of foremans see that a person is doing good, and they give him the qualifying in less than two months. As far as the work is done, I was doing quite a bit of work. I was doing up to my standard. So I asked him for my qualifying and he never said that he would give it to me. He never said anything about it.

Ironically Byrd's foreman, Bart Resnick, feels that he has let Byrd know exactly where he stands. The foreman complained only about Byrd's missing one or two days in the last month and went on:

> I feel its only justified that we tell a person what we think, so that he isn't thinking he is doing a fine job and actually we are not satisfied. And if you don't tell them this, I think it's our fault.

Somehow Resnick has not communicated this appraisal to Byrd, himself, or Byrd simply is not listening. Whatever the cause, there seems to be a gulf between the two men, in spite of what seems to be the best intentions of both. Are their worlds so different that they have found it impossible to communicate with each other? This will be discussed further in the next section on the disadvantaged worker.

Evidence from other sources seems to indicate that it is often the supervisor who is remiss. Draftsman, Ray Jarvis, tells of a co-worker who was bypassed for promotion. The foreman never bothered to discuss the man's work with him and prepare him for his shock.

> Like one boss will tell you, you're doing good. But he'll say one thing to you and another thing to another guy, you know, instead of being honest with you. I'd rather have a man that tell me, 'Well, you're not doing too good, how about getting on the ball?' We have one guy, he doesn't know his electrical symbols. We try to help him out and the boss doesn't say anything about it. But when the time came for him to be a wireman, they bypassed him. And I mean that hurts, when they bypass you like that.

Jarvis goes on to say that at Gaston, you must assume that if you are not told otherwise, you are doing a good job.

> See, they have a six month probation period on every job. So, you feel that if you go through six months, they can't fire you just like that. You figure, well, you're doing good work, you know. Just one of those things, I guess.

The supervisor is here again caught in the middle between two types of workers. The first group are around his own age and he is used to and more comfortable with them, and their "keep it to yourself" ethics. The older ethnics have strongly internalized goals. They expect the foreman to do his job and tell them what to do, period; and they will take it or leave it. The second group, the young work force, generally expects more support from the foreman. They want orientation, training, and feedback from the boss on how they are doing. They also want a boss who is approachable and open with them. These two groups are really looking for elements in their supervisor that are quite different and may even be conflicting.

Taking both young and old together, 73 per cent of the blacks in the sample and 69 per cent of the whites feel that their foreman is approachable enough to take a personal problem to. But the older workers would never think of actually taking a home or outside problem to their plant supervisor. A higher percentage, (83 per cent of the whites and 87 per cent of the blacks) feel that they get

along well with their supervisor. The minority of the foremen who are not considered to be open to the problems of the employee are generally the same men who are criticized for constantly watching over the shoulders of employees and checking up on them.

Although James Winfield is in his upper 30's he sides with the new work force when he says that the foremen frequently forget that the workers are human beings also. He felt compelled to remind his new foreman of this fact:

> I said, 'If you discipline this man, take him off to himself and talk to him like he's a man. Don't go at him in front of the rest of the guys. You're headed for a lot of trouble, because he's not gonna stand there and let you do that.' He said, 'yeah, maybe right.' So he walks over and talks to him.
>
> But I wonder--reason I asked you about this foreman's school--I was always under the impression that schools like that would teach a foreman how to handle people: not as a tool what they didn't care too much about, but as a human being, as one to another. Now that's no more than right. Sometimes, they come up from the floor themselves. And they should remember that they was in the same place that this man was. And one day they might be back down there. They should treat him like they're people.

The attitudes and problems of the new hires, the younger work force, are much the same as those of the workers formally designated as disadvantaged. Perhaps this is true simply because both groups are young. And they do often come from much the same background. And this similarity of problems highlights the difficulty of trying to decide precisely who is disadvantaged. The next section will present a more detailed look at the Gaston plant's efforts

to cooperate with the NAB program and to bring those who are formally designated as disadvantaged into the plant.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IX

[1]Theodore V. Purcell and Gerald F. Cavanagh, "Alternate Routes to Employing the Disadvantaged Within the Enterprise," Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Meeting, Industrial Relations Research Association, 1969, p. 76.

CHAPTER X

THE DISADVANTAGED AS WORKERS

This chapter focuses on the performance, attitudes and problems of those 42 new employees who were hired and who are formally designated as disadvantaged. That is, they meet the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) criteria (see p. 11). The chapter outlines the efforts of Gaston, their satisfaction with the program, along with a view of the hard core workers themselves.

Gaston had worked with the Port City Urban League for a decade to obtain black employees. But few blacks were referred over those years. Those that did come were excellent employees, perhaps even over-qualified for their Gaston jobs. A personnel officer, Theodore J. Hunt is quite active now in the Urban League and has been chairman of their Employment Opportunity Day for several years.

The National Alliance of Businessmen Program

In the spring of 1968, Gaston joined the National Alliance of Businessmen job pledge program. According to the directors of Port City NAB, the company provided one of the better teams of company officers, whose job it was to convince executives of other corporations of the importance

of hiring the disadvantaged. And, of course, Gaston itself, promised to hire disadvantaged workers during the remainder of 1968. In the following 14 months, Gaston employed 42 formerly "hard core" unemployed. Of this group 28 were still with the company on June 1, 1969, a 67 per cent retention. Most of the disadvantaged came in through and were certified "hard core" by the local Concentrated Employment Program (CEP).

The regular state employment service has also cooperated in this effort, but the retention rate among the referrals from the CEP is much higher (see Table 8).

The CEP services the Model Cities area, which is largely black. Certification as "hard core" or disadvantaged is based simply on residence in the Model Cities Target area. Says Reginald Nichols, a Director of CEP:

> Our qualification for CEP is that you come from a target area. That's the ultimate need; there is no financial critetia. You see, the original criteria that they had for some projects were that if you made over $3,500, you can't participate. This is not realistic.

The referral agencies are also aware of the security regulations at Gaston, which make certain hard core applicants unacceptable. A personnel manager, Theodore J. Hunt describes the sort of applicant Gaston would not hire:

> They know pretty well what our standards are. They know that we've got security regulations, that we've got over 6,000 people here, which is more than the population of the average town in the U.S. And that we will not entertain a murderer, a narcotic pusher, or addict.

TABLE 8.--Biographical Data on Port City Disadvantaged: Stays and Dropouts.

	NAB Dropouts N=14	NABs Who Stayed N=28
Sex	93% male	68% male
Age (Median)	22 years	26 years
Marital Status	50% single	54% single
Education		
Highest grade completed	11.0	11.1
Rate of pay at previous job	$2.56	$2.27
Beginning rate at Gaston	$2.81	$2.71
Arrest record (60% Disorderly Conduct)	8.3%	14.3%
Race	92% Negro 8% White	82% Negro 18% White
Certified NAB by		
Employment Service	72%	14%
CEP	21%	54%
Urban League	0%	7%
Job Corps	7%	0%
Other, not listed	0%	21%

To this extent, CEP and the Employment Service do screen the applicants for Gaston; often a phone call from the interviewer at the referral agency to a personnel director at Gaston will clarify whether a certain person is acceptable. Then, with these certified hard core applicants, Gaston does little further screening. In fact, says Theodore J. Hunt, the purpose of the NAB program is to screen in, rather than screen out, the "substandard" employee:

> Screening has to be very limited. Because, you know, they've been fired here, they've been arrested there. And the whole concept of the NAB program is that these are people who are not good applicants to begin with: people who can't be checked out, or people who you normally would not hire for one reason or another. Now, from the quality of applicants, the very nature of the persons being model cities residents, makes them almost entirely substandard.

"Substandard" for Hunt means that they probably would have been refused employment at Gaston. Until 1968, such people--those with arrest records, high school dropouts--were almost automatically turned down by the Gaston Employment Office.

But there is serious question as to whether these disadvantaged are substandard performers. The researchers talked to their foremen, and asked these supervisors to access their work performance. The foreman's appraisal will be presented in the next section. Here it is sufficient to say that the vast majority of the disadvantaged performed as well as or better than their peers. In fact, two-thirds of the foremen did not even know that the employee was certified

"disadvantaged; and, if told, they were quite surprised at that fact."

Who are those disadvantaged? Some notion of their background can be obtained by a glance at the biographical and employment data on these employees, as presented in Table 8. The data is presented so as to compare two groups: those who are still with Gaston, and those who have left the company. This data will be discussed in Chapter XIX.

Four of the NABs who are still working are deaf mutes. A large and very good school for the deaf is located in Port City, and for many years Gaston has provided job opportunities for these deaf people. There are now about 50 deaf on the rolls. Although it is unusual to have so many physically disadvantaged working, Gaston has found that they tend to be very stable employees. They do good work, and are pleased and thankful to have a job.

Traditional hiring driteria do not always predict good job performance. This is illustrated by two cases of "disadvantaged" employees now working at Gaston who were turned down for a job there when they first applied. Eugene Kelly, 28 tells how he was turned down at Gaston in 1965:

> They were hiring like crazy. I passed their test at that time and got a good score supposedly. I made the mistake, you know, of being honest with them. Well, see when I was a kid, when I was 17, I got into some difficulty. I wasn't living at home. Subsequently I was put in a reformatory.
>
> I had left the question blank on the questionnaire, see. And so I already gotten my work shoes, my glasses and everything. I was going to start work that minute.

> He says, 'Oh, we noticed one question was blank. Would you mind answering that?' I said, 'Sure what was that?' I said, 'Sure what was that?' He said, 'Were you ever arrested for anything other than minor traffic violations?' I said, 'Yes, I was.' And he says, 'What?' And I told him, 'Back when I was 17, I was jailed for--actually, you know, burglarizing a package out of an automobile.' He tells me to wait, and he goes back into the office, and he says, 'I'm sorry we can't use you, Kelly.'

But Kelly is now working for Gaston, and is doing a good job. Men like Kelly, who were hired with the help of the NAB program, could well have been hired on their own, if the hiring standards had been more accurate in predicting good performance.

Another NAB who is now performing well, Jesse Byrd, 22, put in an application on his own several months earlier, and was turned down. After applying through the CEP, and being classified as "disadvantaged" (though he still doesn't know this), he was given a job. Byrd is a high school graduate with a good record, and he doesn't understand why he couldn't have gotten a job on his own:

> There I was on my own, which a person should in getting a job, is come down on his own to try to get it. And that's the only reason I--I hate to go down there (CEP), but I had no alternative, really. So I went down there, and they got the job for me. And I was kind of hurt because I couldn't get it myself.

Byrd asked why does he always have to have someone else make arrangements for him? Byrd says that he now understands why a lot of fellows are still on the street. They can't get a job, and they do find freedom on the street, "I tried . . . , and I didn't make it."

Foreman Evaluations of the Disadvantaged

Sterotyped views of the disadvantaged glut the news media and the literature. Top management and even first line supervisors are not immune from these poorly founded generalizations, and the fears and anxieties that result from them.

Before the first of the NAB hard core were brought into the plant, the subject was brought up with the foreman at a training seminar. The foreman's reaction to these issues in early 1968 is described by Arthur Sanford, a top personnel manager:

> We got some pretty sharp questions. Such questions as, 'Are you going to have special training programs? Are you going to bring in a group and teach them to read and write and this type of thing, or are you going to integrate them into the work force.'
>
> And that raised the question about anxiety. Were they hopeful that we would do this? Or fearful that we might go 'way beyond what we have done with others. And I think the general feeling was one of anxiety rather than hope. Because of the fear that they had about having these disadvantaged, no matter how much training they had gotten, being part of their work force.

A year and a half after the above meeting, and after the hard core had been working for some time, the researchers tried to find out how they were doing. In an attempt to get beyond generalizations to individual evaluations and to get more detailed and comparable information on them the researchers interviewed 12 of the NABs and 11 of their foremen.

In every case the foremen thought the disadvantaged employee was doing an adequate job; 36 per cent were even

judged to be doing better than average on quality and quantity of work. The major reservation and failing was absenteeism: 64 per cent were judged to be poorer than their co-workers on this. On accepting responsibility, ability to learn their job and personality at work, 82 per cent of the group were thought to be adequate or superior. In general the foremen found the performance of these men to be good, and their only major consistent problem was absenteeism.

Two NAB employees who have worked out very well, Zadie Burnett and Lillian Davis, are in the same work group. When asked about their work performance, foreman Joseph Boudreau replies:

Boudreau: Zadie? She's a very good worker. She needs little motivation. She apparently has worked somewhere before, and knows what the meaning of earnest work is. I would rate her as one of my better employees right now. I have no problems with her.

We have a roving instructor that goes from bench to bench. This girl is right now what we call qualifying. She's on qualifying scale right now, and she's rapidly approaching what I would call a standard employee. No disciplinary problems whatsoever. Absenteeism is nil.

Cavanagh: She gets along pretty well?

Boudreau: There's no great personality conflict with anybody. She is fairly quiet. But she is what I would call a good earnest worker. And I'll take ten of her any day of the week. Very good.

Cavanagh: How about Davis?

Boudreau: Davis? She's another very good worker. She's a bit withdrawn. But she is a good worker. No absentee problems, no disciplinary problems. Treats people with respect, myself with respect. Very well satisfied with her.

There is some dispute as to whether the foremen should be informed that his new employees were certified as disadvantaged. But Gaston has decided to tell the foreman sometime after the person is hired. But it is clear that Joseph Boudreau did not know that these two women were NABs:

Boudreau: Oh, I don't know. I don't know if any of these were hard core or not. I mean, certainly, if they were hard core, I couldn't tell you. Were these two people classified?

Cavanagh: Yeah.

Boudreau: They were? Well, I'm certainly surprised, because I haven't had any problems with them.

Boudreau's reaction underscores the problem in telling the supervisor that his new employee is an NAB.[1] That new employee is immediately expected then to act in a certain fashion, and so it could well be a self-fulfilling expectation.

The Foreman and Absenteeism

According to many of the foremen, the only problem with the disadvantaged is their absenteeism. Says foreman Bart Resnick about one of his NAB workers, Jesse Byrd:

> He turns work out like crazy. He's very capable. And he has the intelligence. It's not that he lacks it. He has it. Unfortunately he is the type that money will hit him. After pay day, you can be sure. In fact there were instances on Thursday night; he would ask the foreman if he could leave after lunch for no other reason than just personal reasons. He's got the bug, see? You've heard people having money in their pocket that burned a hole? Well, he's probably the type. But it's unfortunate because he is a

> good capable worker. When he's here, he does a tremendous job. He needs very little supervision, picks up work very quickly, learns very quickly.
>
> There's only one problem. If we could circumvent that, he'd be a good man. But you're left with the feeling, will he or won't he be in? You're never too sure, you know? And there's nothing worse to have the feeling about a person, will he show up or won't he?

Resnick has had this same problem with other hard core workers. He was forced to discharge another NAB employee on account of absenteeism.

A look at the reasons hard core employees have left Gaston (see Table 9), shows that Resnick's experience is not unusual. Thirty-six per cent were fired for excessive absenteeism, and another 21 per cent just didn't show up for work.

TABLE 9.--Port City Disadvantaged Employees' Reasons for Leaving, 1968-69.

N = 14			
Fired		Voluntary Departures	
1. Excessive Absenteeism	36%	1. No Report	21%
2. Fighting on job	7%	2. Resigned	29%
Total	43%	Total	50%
Other			
1. Disability	7%		

Foreman Michael Smoler makes many of the same points about NAB employee, Joseph Palmer, 26, operator of a deburring machine:

> The short time he's been here, he's lost a lot of time. But he's a very good worker. I mean I can't say anything against his willingness and cooperation,

> and as far as the work end of it goes. But we run our shop five days a week. We have to have these people here five days a week, eight hours a day.

A hint of what may be at least part of the problem comes through when Smoler describes Palmer, "He never talks. I have a sorta feeling that he has a sort of a chip on his shoulder. . . . He's negative, very negative." And a bit later, "He's hard to get to; you feel like there's a wall there." Even though Palmer says his relations with Smoler are adequate, it is nevertheless clear that there is very little communication between the two men. Palmer keeps to himself; and his boss, Smoler does not know how to handle the situation.

During the 1950's absenteeism began to rise to 8-10 per cent, in spite of the fact that jobs were not easy to get. It became quite a problem, and the solution for many seemed to be simply to fire the offenders. A superior even received "brownie points" for every man he hired. But this did not solve the problem. After some digging through the records, a personnel man was able to narrow the list of chief offenders down to 19-20 men out of a work force of thousands. The foreman would then call this man into his glass-walled office, pull out the records, point at them, and wave his arms in anger in full view of the rest of the work group. It was only necessary to fire about six of these man, and absenteeism went from almost 10 per cent back to three per cent. This method was planned, dramatic

and effective. But it is doubtful that it would work for the new work force of the 70's.

Back to the present, Edwin Silverman has an absentee problem with one of his NAB employees, Rodney McCoy. Silverman hoped he could straighten it out with patience and a better explanation of what was expected, but he failed:

> And I said, maybe I can straighten him out. So we leaned over backwards and let him put in the 60 days, and then we really had problems with his absences. But still his attitude toward people was good. He wasn't overly ambitious, he got kind of lackadiasical in his work and spending more time away from his machine. But then the Friday before he didn't show up, I said, 'Now Rodney, I'm depending on you. I need you here. This fellow that's working with you is going on another job Monday. You'll be all alone here. Promise me you'll be here every day next week. I need you. You're very important to the company.' I always try to make a person feel that they're important. They are. Because you can't do without them. Let's face it. You put a machine there, and nobody to run it; we're out of luck. So, he said, 'Yeah, I'll be here. I'll be here.' And lo and behold, Monday he didn't show up. He said he'd be late. I said, well, at least he'll be in. So Tuesday morning somebody else called up, said he was sick, wouldn't be in. Well, we haven't seen him since.

Old timer in the plant and foreman for almost 15 years, Terry Marlow, has had several hard core in his unit, "And I'm reluctant to say that all of those fellows I've had to discharge." He told about his last attempt to straighten out a NAB and his absentee problem:

> To me it appears that these fellows like to be paid every day in the week, and come to work whenever they want to come to work. It seems as though there was a pattern to the way they worked. They were off on Friday; they'd be off Monday, and they had more excuses

> why they wanted to be out. I think they just spent more of their time trying to figure out how they could stay out. And they got these jobs, probably, through some agency on the outside.
>
> I did talk to a benefactor of this one boy. He was a nice boy. I was interested in him when he first started. I thought maybe we could get him straightened out. She said that she had talked to him, and told him he had to be aware of the fact that there was a job that he had to do. And if he wasn't there, the job wasn't being done. And she gave him all those facts and everything, and he agreed. But lo and behold, two days later, he's back out again.

Marlow has not been successful in dealing with the disadvantaged. Yet he is a good, conscientious supervisor, who has tried. But one might ask: how much has he really exerted himself to understand, and so to communicate with these men? For example, why did he not raise those crucial questions with the employee himself? Why did he leave it to a third party to build rapport and allegiance for him? Did he feel that he himself couldn't possibly communicate with this new, young disadvantaged worker?

If the disadvantaged are to succeed and stay on the job, the company must supply them with additional support and training, according to veteran black employee and union officer, Roscoe Filkinds:

> Let's say we have four or five kids here that have been in trouble. This company should, if they're really trying to help these individuals, consider having someone here that's like a counsellor over these kids. If there's something wrong, let me know about it. Because first of all, we've got to remember now, we have kids that are, well, we can say they are mentally disturbed in a way of speaking. They're past criminals and what not; they're off the track. Now if we had someone that was here--now, my job is to stay

> with this group here. I make sure that they're here. Like if they're due here at 7 o'clock, now it's my job to see that those kids are there. I want to know the reason why, if Joe wasn't here this morning. . . . I think that if we had someone following these kids up, you would find that we would get along. You would be able to bring a lot more into your society where they should be.

Clarence Nason, an officer in the NAB Program in Port City, agrees that pre-training is crucial to the success of hard core employees. But he finds that many employers, who are willing to hire the disadvantaged, don't want to invest time and money is extra training. He feels that the success of the hard core depends on such a program:

> This is one of the real difficulties: most of the employers do not want to get involved in any extra-ordinary trainins. . . . They want to avoid it, if they can. And many of them say, 'Look I'll take them the way you send them to me, and I'll try to do what I can with them. But I'm not going to sign up for any extra training. Because I just don't have the time to fool with it.' And of course we're saying that the training is necessary for retention, not only so that they can hold the job that they enter at, but so that they'll have upward mobility. So they'll want to stay for that reason, so they know they can grow in the company. Like the other employees in a given company.

Research has consistently pointed out that the retention of the disadvantaged depends to a great extent on his relations with his immediate supervisor.[2] If there is an open, human, understanding relationship, the chances of his sticking with the job are much greater. But the NABs at Port City Gaston are much more estranged from their foremen than are other employees. Only 22 per cent felt that they could take a personal problem to their foreman, and only 36

per cent thought they got along well with their foreman. Compare this with 70 per cent of the work force as a whole who thought they could approach their boss with a personal problem, and 86 per cent who thought they got along well with their foreman.

Gaston once had an elaborate on-the-job training program. Some workers say that it is needed today more than ever, especially for new employees like the hard core. Nevertheless, and perhaps suprisingly, a full 70 per cent of the NABs themselves felt that they had received adequate training for their present job; this is roughly the same as the attitudes of the regular work force toward their training. Also quite high is the 71 per cent of the NABs who felt that their fellow employees helped them to learn their job; 79 per cent of the blacks in the plant and 55 per cent of the whites felt this way.

NAB employee Redell Townsens is one of a small minority of the hard core who feels that the company really didn't care whether he learned his job or not. Townsens, we and a riveter, is dissatisfied with his job and his foreman:

Townsens: They didn't seem to care. They were paying a guy on days a 10 per cent bonus for teaching the job. During the two weeks, he would show me how to set up the machine, started riveting, and he'd go to the john. He'd leave me there. Well, if I learned or not, that's my problem, that's not his.

Purcell: Not much help.

Townsens: That's what they figured was enough. I've been out here for about three months now, something like that.

Purcell: Was the foreman any help in the training at all?

Townsens: No, he was no place around. He just came down to see if I was there, if I was doing good, that was it.

Townsens has a very unhappy personal life in addition; he says that he will probably not stay on this job. Even though Townsens is not typical, he is disadvantaged, and if anyone needs special training, help and support, it is he.

Self-assured and capable 25-year-old black stockman, Wilbert Troy, feels that the company not only could do better on training, but especially could provide a better orientation for new employees:

Troy: There we do have a problem of people who come into Gaston plant do not get the proper instruction on the job. Like coming into a plant, the thing is completely unique to you, the set up is completely unique. You're told your classification, your occupation, 'Go to work.' . . . But as far as actually knowing the work, I think there are quite a few people who do not know the full scope of their work.

Cavanagh: They don't understand what it is they're doing in their work, you mean?

Troy: Oh, now I think that's talking about something different, but I think that's an important point. Myself or any of the people in any of the departments I have worked in, I know for a fact, to fix up an armature, break coil, break shoe, shading coil, we know these things by name. We know them to see them. But actually how they work on a unit or something like that we know nothing about. And actually I think that would help the person's interest towards his work. If he knew exactly how what he was doing was fitting into the full pattern of the work being done at Gaston.

Cavanagh: Is anything like that given in the orientation session. Like explaining how a motor operates?

Troy: No, nothing, nothing at all. I mean as far as interest on work goes, you know there couldn't be too much interest because you don't know what you're doing. You don't know anything about what you're doing.

Some employees felt that the company should again set up training programs for some of the skilled jobs, as it had in the past. Specifically suggested as needing new skilled workers were testers and tool and die men. One talented and popular machinest, Sidney Wolitzsky, pointed out that only four of the machinests in the tool room are less than 48 years old. He suggested that the disadvantaged, who had perhaps dropped out of technical school, could well be trained for this more skilled work, if they had the basic intelligence, even though they may be lacking the formal education.

But all of the top personnel managers at the Port City Gaston plant make it quite clear that they are not in favor of any special "vestibule training program" for the disadvantaged: a program that involves basic education, discussions and attempts to build motivation. Phillip E. Hughes a personnel manager who has been with Gaston for more than two decades, gives some reasons for that position:

> I definitely felt from the beginning that we would try to treat them as much like other employees as we possibly could, not set them aside and make them feel like they're different. And we're quite opposed to classroom instruction, getting together as a group of different kind of employees.

Hughes fears that if they were brought together, they may stay together as a little closely knit group, which would eat together and perhaps even disrupt things. If they are treated as the rest of the employees, they will form their friendships in the ordinary manner with the others in their work group.

Is Special Support for Disadvantaged Preferential Treatment?

The principal stated objection to special support and training for the disadvantaged is that it involves giving one group preference and unfair advantage. The charge of being unfair strikes deep into the American psyche: it seems basically undemocratic and un-American.

The personnel man who has the greatest responsibility for the disadvantaged, Theodore J. Hunt, claims that the union would oppose any sort of special training for the disadvantaged:

Hunt: Look, if you will, at the initial human relations problems. Here are two fellows, brought in the same day. Now one is a trainee, and the other has no training and he works his full eight hours and he gets $2.82 an hour. The other fellow works six hours, and then goes off somewhere and gets some education if you will; and gets his $2.82 an hour. We could no more get this past the union than fly.

Purcell: Preferential treatment.

Hunt: Why certainly. Strelitz (high ranking officer of the Union Local) would never buy this, and I don't want to misquote him but think of the union relations aspect of it.

For a period, it was Gaston policy to hire only high school graduates. In order to hire some of the disadvantaged it was necessary to again drop the high school requirement. Robert Strelitz, capable and politically astute officer of the local of the International Union of Electrical Workers, says that the union was not opposed to lowering standards. But when asked if he thought there was a reverse discrimination he replied:

> They try it but we don't buy it. I don't give a damn what it is. They met off the record discussion, you know, with the national negotiation committee, about getting two measures for hiring, one for the hard core, and one for the situation normally. Gaston policy is to hire people in here with a high school education. We didn't like that; we thought this was rediculous, you know. We're trying to knock it down but they stick to their guns pretty good. And then comes this hard core pressure from the government. All of a sudden they try to become big heroes. I said, if you're going to do it, you're going to do it right across the board. I'm not against it, you're darn right, hire the hard core. But if you lower qualifications to them, you're going to lower everyplace else.

Like Robert Strelitz, union steward James Turesky, 35, a well-paid wireman is opposed to a double standard in hiring:

> Now they come in the front door and say, 'Lower your standards now. These people can't get a job. They haven't got an education. Nobody will hire them.' Fine. Beautiful. I'm all for it. But, on the other hand, if my son doesn't finish high school, I want him to be considered in the same line. Even though he has a bank account and he's not from a hard core area. I think if they lower the standards for one, they should do it for all. In other words, either you have to have a high school education or you don't.

Turesky's argument makes a lot of sense. But he himself did not finish high school, and yet was hired during a period when the high school diploma was generally required. In fact, it seems as though minimum qualifications have never been absolute; he himself benefited from a flexible system.

Now a high school diploma is not even officially required for a job at Gaston. On this issue, there is no double standard. However, it does seem as though preferential treatment is given to black applicants. As indicated earlier, 22 per cent of the new hires in the first few months of 1969 were black, while the percentage concentrated in the city of Port City itself is only 17 per cent. But, says Arthur Sanford, a manager of industrial relations, preferential treatment is largely restricted to initial hiring:

> Now, where we have shown preferential treatment, I think it's pretty much restricted to the recruitment aspects of our hiring program, with some minor let down in attendance, late arrival, and that type of thing. But not a significant change of policy, generally applicable to all employees.

There are complaints from a minority of preferential treatment being practiced on the job: for tardiness, absenteeism, personal conduct and low production. Ten per cent of the whites in the sample feel that blacks are getting special preference for promotions. Karl Krebs, 62, an assembler who has been with Gaston for only four years perhaps represents the 25 per cent of the work force who are not so sure that their own boss is not giving blacks

preference. Krebs says his foreman accepts lateness and insolence from blacks that he would never accept from whites:

> A fellow was late in a department I work in regular, a little colored boy, snotty as hell, thought he was running the place. And where he went down--I heard this from good source, what I mean is it's not hearsay or anything--the foreman told him, he says, 'You got a bad record for being late. If we're going to get along, you're going to have to come in on time.' Then he says, 'I guess we're not going to get along then.' Now if I'd said that, probably he'd a given me three days off or something, you know. I wouldn't think a sayin' it anyway. And nothing was ever done.

Absenteeism is tolerated to a greater extent from the hard core than it is from regular employees. Personnel manager Theodore J. Hunt tells of a salaried hard core clerk who received special treatment:

> She was here January 15, now she was off one or two days, but there came a point when she was off a week. Salaried employees with less than a year's service can get paid up to a week when they're off sick, providing it's medically certified. So there was no question the first time, but then the second time she was off and this time for more than a week. So again we paid her for five more days. And son of a gun, it happened the third time, and this time we decided, this is enough. We would not pay her salary extension. . . . But then she straightened out to the degree that she is still here. Now she still hasn't got her probationary period out of the way. Now, had this been a non hard core . . . cut loose, right. And this is where you get some of your tough cases.

Hard Core worker Redell Townsens was caught writing obscene notes to a white woman. Townsens was given another chance whereas a regular employee would have been dismissed for such conduct. Says his foreman, Donald Jacobs:

Jacobs: He was here maybe three or four days. And he wrote a note to a white woman and propositioned her. The note came into my possession, not to be retained, just to read it. The woman wanted it back. The note was written in gutter language. It was very obscene.

Purcell: Signed by him?

Jacobs: Oh, yes. His name was on it, his method of writing. Oh, absolutely. He never denied it. The union got in on it. The foreman that had it turned it over to the general foreman, and at this point I think that maybe they felt that he should be given another chance. Because anyone else, they would have discharged him for that.

Purcell: They would have?

Jacobs: Oh, yes. Because you certainly have to respect . . .

Purcell: So, in this case you gave . . .

Jacobs: We've leaned over backwards. Yes, absolutely. We've leaned over backwards.

Fred Holmes, 43, a wireman making control panels with 22 years of service at Gaston, complains that many of the blacks spend more time talking than working. And he finds that the foreman doesn't stop them:

> But I've seen it in some sections where two or three colored guys standing there, and the foreman walks right by. And in a half hour he goes by again, and they're still standing there talking. I don't know whether the foreman has a hands off policy on these fellows or what. I don't know.

Veteran foreman Terry Marlow, 58, says that management has made it more difficult to discipline and discharge a hard core regular employee:

> I think in a lot of these cases they're bending over backwards in order to cater to some of these fellows. Like, for example, in this case that I had, with this hard core boy. I feel certain that if he was a white boy, he would have been out long before he was.

> Because we have a program here. When we do get these fellows, any difficulties or any differences that we have are reported to our general foremen; and we're also to call Industrial Relations, and let them know. Well, I had done that on three different occasions with this hard core fellow. . . . So I would say, in that respect, that there is some catering going on.

One reason why the foremen are hesitent to reprimand or dismiss black workers is the fear of being accused of discrimination. Dean Lohr, 43, a long service grinding machine operator, says that the charge "Discrimination" is being used as a threat by the blacks:

> Well, I'd say that they're leaning a little bit backwards. 'Cause, I know some that get away with murder; and they let 'em get away with it, because I used to be a union steward on B line for a couple years. Boy, if I went to the foreman and told him I was going to put a grievance in for discrimination (laughs)--he didn't want any grievance in for discrimination, you know. Of course this was a lever and I think it's being used quite a bit.

Although Holmes and Lohr represent a point of view that must be heard, three-fourths of their co-workers feel quite the opposite: that their boss is not really giving blacks preference.

It is clear that double standards are resented by most of the work force. There is now greater toleration of absenteeism and some leniency for the disadvantaged. Better orientation and pretraining would be aimed at teaching better adjustment, and so should ease not aggravate the problem.

Gaston and the Disadvantaged: Some Conclusions

It does appear that the foremen and management fear that the disadvantaged would be rather poor performers. But when asked about specific hard core in their unit, foremen found them to be more than adequate as workers. This anxiety was not born out in the case of individual disadvantaged workers. Absenteeism does remain a problem, along with all the attitudes and motivations that underly it.

How does one decide who is disadvantaged, eligible to be certified as an NAB, and perhaps eligible for special help and support? The criteria that are used are often criticized as being inadequate.[3] Contrary to expectations, the record shows that a large number of the NABs are excellent workers; their supervisors had no idea that they were "disadvantaged."

On the other hand some unable to qualify as NABs seem to need special help. One afternoon a foreman called personal manager Theodore Hunt to complain about the absenteeism of one of his hard core workers. Hunt replied that the man was not listed as one of the disadvantaged. But that again arises the question: "How do we decide who is disadvantaged?" Merely by means of residence in the model cities area? Or is the fact that the man is having absentee problems a much better indicator that he is disadvantaged, and even in danger of losing his job? Perhaps the foreman's

"gut" definition of disadvantaged is better than that of the National Alliance of Businessmen.

In sum, it seems as though Port City Gaston is still not really sure what its role is or ought to be in employing the hard core. There is no agreement as to what ought to be done for and with the disadvantaged. Some say, "I gave them a chance, it's not my fault that they shoved off." What special treatment has been given to the disadvantaged, has been in the direction of a greater toleration of their failings. There has been little or no positive support or planned efforts at getting through what is sometimes their hard, defensive outer layer. Some individual foremen have succeeded to varying degrees on their own initiative. Most of management are agreed that they want no classroom training programs. They feel that this would be segregation, preferential treatment, costly and a bother. But the problem of bridging that gap is still there. A 67 per cent retention rate is about average compared to other NAB efforts.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER X

[1]The author would not ordinarily have told a foreman that his employees were hard core but Personnel had said that all foremen knew which of their work crew were NABs.

[2]Theodore V. Purcell and Rosalind Webster, "Window on Hard Core World," Harvard Business Review, 47 (July-August, 1969), pp. 118-129; Allen R. Janger and Ruth G. Schaeffer, Managing Programs to Employ the Disadvantaged, Johnson, Employing the Hard Core Unemployed (New York: American Management Association, 1969), p. 166.

[3]Sar A. Levitan; Garth L. Mangum; and Robert Taggert III, Economic Opportunity in the Ghetto: The Partnership of Governmental and Business (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 22.

CHAPTER XI

BACKLASH IN AN ETHNIC PLANT

The work force of Port City Gaston is still made up largely of ethnics: Poles, Italians and even some Germans and Irish who have maintained strong in-group ties. Backlash, or outspoken resentment at what is judged to be unfair favoritism given to another group, might be expected to be found in the plant among these whites. This chapter will investigate the attitudes of the white 95 per cent majority of the plant. It will focus on the attitudes of the white ethnic old-timers.

Complaints about preferential treatment in the plant can be one indication of backlash. The index which seems to show the most backlash was the judgment by 27 per cent of the whites in the sample (compared with seven per cent of the blacks) that the employment office is giving black preference in hiring (see Table 10). But only seven per cent of the whites said that the poor do not want to work, and even fewer were opposed to the plant recruiting more poor people.

Very few, only 10 per cent, thought that blacks were getting preference for promotions. But some of this minority cited a supposed letter from management instructing

TABLE 10.--Hourly Workers' Perceptions: Blacks get Preference in the Hiring Process.

	Blacks N=23	Whites N=26
Favorable	7%	27%
Neutral	10%	27%
Unfavorable	83%	46%

foremen to give their Negro employees special treatment. No such letter could be found. The vast majority of the work force at Port City do not feel that blacks are being given any favoritism by the plant management.

The few in the plant who were negative on blacks and showed some backlash tended to be men, but they were young and old, skilled and unskilled, high school graduates and dropouts, etc. Some of these men were quite articulate and forceful. In Port City, as in the other plants, the researchers found that a handful of outspoken, prejudiced whites can have a great influence crystalizing anxieties and subconscious prejudices. They give a certain legitimacy to attitudes that the ordinary worker would tend to repress. Even if he held these biased views, the average worker would generally not speak out openly, and far less, act upon them. In short, the few intelligent and articulate people who feel that the blacks have been getting all the breaks, can have an influence beyond their numbers. This makes it imperative that light be shed upon these people, their background, their motivations and their influence.

Stephen Grumbacher a 22-year-old welder and a four year veteran of the Gaston plant, is tall, nice looking, talkative and smiling. His negative attitudes toward blacks are outspoken:

Grumbacher: I don't hate 'em. But I'll tell you somethin'. I've dealt with quite a few of them, 'n the majority of them in my estimation are bad. I mean they are bad. Like I says, I've had a few run-ins with some of them, and I'll tell you: the majority of 'em I have no use for 'em at all. There's a few good ones. With a few of 'em, I got along really good. But most of 'em no.

Purcell: Right here in the plant? What kind of trouble would they cause, Stephen?

Grumbacher: Well, it's like this. The foreman will give him the same chewing out that he gives me. This shine will yell discrimination, and hey! (whistles) Let's forget about it right now, right?

Purcell: The foreman drops it.

Grumbacher: Right. I've seen a letter that come from the general manager of the division to every supervisor. And they said in it that no matter what, if this man's qualified or not, you hire him for the job . . . I've seen them so dumb they can't read a yo-yo.

Purcell: I wonder how that works out?

Grumbacher: I don't know. But I still seen 'em disqualify white people. And actually the way that I look at it today--I don't mean just the way the plant's run, but the way the whole country is run (bangs fist),--they're discriminating against white people.

A few minutes later, Grumbacher admits that he very often went home on Friday half way through the shift, after getting his paycheck. But the boss got on him, and rarely jumped on the blacks who, says Grumbacher, took off whole days and did this more consistently. When he is asked where he thinks it will all end, he replies:

> It ain't gonna end. It ain't gonna end until they're in complete charge of everything. This is the way it is right now. And if everybody caters to 'em, I can't blame 'em. I look at all these riots; and when these people go beserk and they start burning these buildings up and the whole bit, I say, call in the Guard or get the police in there and start shooting them down. Hay! This is the only way to treat 'em. 'Cause this is the way that I'd expect to be treated, if I did this.

Older blacks are also upset by the new climate in the black community, and by the reaction of white men like Grumbacher. Perceptive, affable long service wireman, Grady Harris, 53, anguishes:

> Things are so messed up nowadays. I don't know. I just figure, I just think to stay here, work my time out, retire as soon as possible. . . . Well, in fact, I think that Martin Luther King brought out a lot of things, and hoping. But he made it more--I don't know--it's more tense now than it was before he started, you know. There's more jobs offered. It's better, but it's a tense feeling all the time.

Harris would opt for a gigantic program of education for the poor "teach people so they can read, write, and vote right and all that stuff . . . "

Gerald Drake, 28, is a stocky, young looking coil former. He is a pleasant fellow, but reacts quite negatively to any suggestion of special treatment for the poor or for blacks. He voted for George Wallace, and he says he is about to get himself a pistol. He feels that there are a number of people in the plant who are becoming increasingly prejudiced:

Drake: I think there's a lot of people that are more prejudiced than they were. There again because of the racial violence going on at the present time. And unfortunately, a lot of them condemn the whole race for a minority.

Cavanagh: How many guys would do that?

Drake: Oh, I'd say at least ten per cent, maybe 20 per cent of the people I associate with. A lot of them feel like me. They leave you alone, you leave them alone. Wanna be friends. You be friends. They don't want it, you're not gonna . . .

When asked if he thinks the company should try to provide jobs for the people from the inner city, Drake represents a majority view when he says:

> I don't know. I feel that they should be treated equal by all means. They're human beings. I don't care if they're black, white or yellow. But I don't want to see anybody treated special. . . . I think they should be treated equal, not better.

When white employees in the plant were asked about employing the hard core, 83 per cent were in favor of providing jobs, but they all opposed special work standards.

Although many whites can cite perceived instances of preference and greater latitude given to blacks, they still feel that the plant and their boss has generally been fair. A tempered, "I came up the hard way," and an insistance on fairness is illustrated in the attitudes of whites toward these new, young black employees:

William Prezioso, 44, 20 year veteran: They may lean backwards a little bit on hiring, I would say. I don't know for sure, but I think it would be a little easier right now for a colored person to get a job. They have a quota, I'm pretty sure. But I don't know, I think they're pretty just and fair around here.

John Leodas, 59 and 23 year Gaston veteran: The thing I can't see is why these people should think that they should come in, you might say, on the top. Golly, you learn to walk before you start to run. You don't start way up the ladder because you might

John Leodas (cont.): fall off; you have to learn how to climb that first. So why put a person on as inspector like that, instead of giving him some machine experience.

Willian Kalalas, 38-year-old machine operator: I don't think the company is doing any more than any other place. I think they're doing their share. No, I don't think they are discriminating against white people.

Penny Messer, 47, stator winder: We had one that just left the department. She was the cutest, laziest little kid I ever saw in my life. She got away with it. Boy, that kid hardly ever did any work. I don't think we could ever get away with it. You see, nobody ever tells them anything. I mean when you have to stand and work all the time, where somebody else is taking it easy all the time, that sort of bugs you a little bit.

Lawrence Hehemann, 45, electric tester and a Gaston veteran: What does bother me is the colored betting the preference because they're black. This I am against. I say, I don't care what his color is. If he has the ability to do the job, he should get the job--not because of his color. They shouldn't hire 20 per cent just because they're black. This is discrimination in reverse as far as I'm concerned. . . . If they want it, they can earn it like I did. I am not saying deprive them of something--not at all.

Dean Lohr, 42, beteran grinder: Well, like my boy for instance. I think he should have the same opportunity. I don't have anything against it. I mean, it's a good thing. But, I mean I don't think that maybe they should bring in somebody from the slum area that just doesn't have the capabilities, over some other person.

Preferential treatment frequently conflicts with more than a man's philosophy. A black high school dropout is given a job, while the son of a man who has been with the company 20 years is rejected. A white man is fired for insubordination; a Negro fired two weeks earlier is rehired. When one group is preferred, another group must be deprived. Many white people have come to fear as well as

resent the power of the black man. Listen to Edwin Holden, 46, a veteran wireman:

> There has been a lot of discrimination against the white people here by the colored folk. . . . You had a few people up here that would push the colored folks in, where on the same job they wouldn't take a white person. Well, it's just turned out that the white people in here is fired, you better believe he's fired. There's been an awful lot of colored fellows in here's been fired, is brought back in. Not once, but twice.

Preferential treatment is certainly a delicate issue. Whatever is done to help the disadvantaged obtain and begin his job, is done better if it does not alienate the whites. Foreman Thomas Burell, 43, describes his understanding of the slender line between legitimate preferential treatment and preferential treatment gone too far:

> I know it may be hard on some of the people that are working here, but I think you're going to have to try to give him the easier, simpler jobs originally work him into these other ones. I feel he should, after a period of time, come up to what the other people are doing. Or if he doesn't, I'd feel then that we have a serious problem. Because it's not fair to the other ones either then. . . . Cause they have feelings, the same as anybody else. And if they feel that this person is only doing one quarter, and he's getting away with it. . . . I think this may even take a little bit of salesmanship of the foreman to explain to the people, if these questions arise.

The theme that seems to run through the comments of almost all of the whites and old time blacks at Gaston is: be fair. Although they recognize that special effort and perhaps even training might be given the disadvantaged when they first come in, they ask that once they learn the job, they should be expected to produce just as any other employee.

In some cases employees feel that the disadvantaged have been given undue special preference. But the white backlash and resentment that does exist in the Port City plant is not directed solely at the disadvantaged. Many employees are not even aware of the NAB program at Gaston, and even fewer know who any of the 28 NABs are. Resentment is sometimes directed at blacks in general, at youth both black and white, and at welfare recipients.

Employees Resent Welfare Recipients

Almost half of the interviewees spontaneously brought up the subject of welfare. This occurred much more often than at any of the other two plants. Welfare issues were not directly part of this study, so were not on the interview guide and not coded. Nevertheless, it became clear that welfare was a source of some concern and irritation to Port City workers.

Both white and older blacks leveled their guns at welfare recipients. The workers at the plant deeply resent cheating by those on welfare, and they feel that many who are now on welfare are young, able-bodied, and should be working.

Among the blacks, it is especially the women and the older men who are critical of welfare recipients. Ira Patton, 35, a 14-year Gaston veteran stockholder, states the case graphically:

> A lot of our people, colored people out here, don't want to work. They're so used to sitting down and doing nothing. It burns me up. Like one woman told me one time, I'm gonna get a stove--she don't work--but I'm gonna get this on your money. Kinda got to me. I know she's healthy, and she no more than 25.

State welfare payments are higher than those of most other states. To some workers, it appears that the welfare recipients are making more than those who work.

Says clerical worker, Mildred Farland, 36 and one of the very first black women in the office:

> Those people on the welfare look like they are living better than me. I think they do! Some of them! Because John over there, he is on Welfare, and he will buy a car in his cousin's name. You follow me? While he is sitting home all day, I am coming to work. And I do not have a car as good as he has. You see? And they really need to probe into some of these situations. I mean really sit down and analyze those cases, because some of these people are really living good. This makes me as an individual rebellious, you see? I don't want to go to work, if I can sit around and get a car like him!

Mildred Farland says that these people spend their whole day standing on the street corners:

> If you have the opportunity, just go down there. This is right at Ferry and Jefferson. And I'll bet you, if you went there right now, these same people standing there on that corner will be there the same tonight. Because they do not have, they are not enthused. They get the welfare check.

Others also feel that it is wrong that they should be working and paying for those who can sit at home. In one case even a 20 year old agrees to this. Says draftsman Ray Jarvis:

> Most people just sit back and do nothing and get money. I was discussing this with my wife. Like her mother--I feel that anyone who can sit around the house and stuff like that, they can do housework, do anything they want to do, go get a job, you know. I didn't realize this when I was going to school, but

> now I see it, because that money they're getting is coming out of my paycheck, too. I was telling my wife, you know, your mother is getting part of my check.

Others criticize welfare because they feel it has hurt the very people it was designed to help. Many workers feel that welfare has broken down initiative and rewarded bad conduct. Leo Pinkston, 52, says:

> I think that welfare is detrimental to a lot of 'em. Like I been on welfare, but I didn't like it. And as soon as I could get off it, I got off it. If they're going to give 'em welfare, I think it should be where a man, if he's healthy, let him earn his keep some kind of way. Let him go out and do a day's work or so for this check that they get. They'll appreciate it more, because they have to work for it. A man supposed to live by the sweat of his brow. You're not supposed to be given nothing. And all I ask a man for is a job, if I can't make it after that, that is my business. No, it's no answer. A man has to have goals. He has to have ambitions. And when you take all his initiative away, what that leave, nothing.

Lillian Davis, 48, a stator winder, says that welfare tends to make people lazy and irresponsible:

> You know, I don't approve and I do approve of welfare. I think the welfare makes a lot of people lazy. Like these girls have babies. Well, you realize everybody makes a mistake in life. One mistake, you might overlook. But when you have four or five, that's not a mistake. Then the welfare takes care of them. But if I was the welfare, I'd buy a whole lot of land, and if you didn't farm, you didn't eat. This is the way I feel about it. Because I feel that a lot of these young people having babies, they don't know how to take care of 'em. And they're ripping around in the streets. They make you ashamed. And when the mother gets the welfare check, you find her sitting in a bar some place. Kids might not have nothing to eat or something. And this I don't approve of.

Another criticism is that welfare can make a woman self sufficient and so encourage her to break up her family.

A black man said: "My sister is on welfare and does OK, she doesn't have to take orders from anyone." She can make it on her own, and her young working brother feels this undermines the family.

Sensitive, James Winfield, 38, conveyer attendant, comments on the general racial situation:

> I think that I'm glad that I was the underdog. Because I hate to deal with myself if I misused somebody or taken advantage of somebody. Because with me, it would always come to my mind, late at night you know, I think maybe I should have told this guy I'm sorry, you know. But I think we should try to take advantage of the ways that is open for us now, and try to make a better living for our kids. Because you'll never be able to make up for the things that was did to my great great grandparents. It's just things that happened in history, and I think there's a lot of people sorry that it happened. But you can't make up for what your ancestors did. So we start from here, learn to know each other, get along better together, communication.

These same open non-militant attitudes show through when Winfield calls for more job opportunities and not hand-outs and welfare:

> I think a man has got to realize that he's got to stand on his own two feet. If somebody give him a loaf of bread, he should be man enough to accept a loaf of bread. And not expect that man to feed him that bread.

Since attitudes toward welfare was not an item that was coded, there is no statistical information available on these attitudes toward welfare. But generally white attitudes ran the same range as the above blacks. Bill Larson, 58, a 23 year Gaston veteran and shipper complains about his low pay "if I don't work six days, I'm ashamed to cash

my check," and compares his situation to those on welfare: He says that some with big families on welfare make more than he does working in a plant. "If they didn't support them like kings I think they'd go to work so that they could get something. I don't say to let them starve by any means. But this coddling them is doing no good." Larson says this is not the majority of those on welfare, but "there are quite a few of them." He cites an example:

> Well, now the other day here a fellow in our section said one of them cashed a welfare check for $99.00. That's for one week for food. Right ahead of him in the market. He said, my gosh, I don't earn that. And I come to work every day. Here she gets that out of my tax money. He was really sort of bitter about it. But I think you'll find that true all over. That the people that are working and making an effort, they are a little bit--how would you say it--down on these people.

A very few whites are not even as understanding as Larson. They feel that race relations are getting worse, and see no solution. Lawrence Hehemann, 45, an electric tester talks about the demand for reparations and more welfare:

> This is sick thinking, as far as I'm concerned. If a lot of them have the same thinking and this leadership goes along with it, then we're in a lot of trouble. It could lead to more than just riots. Could have a Civil War.

Although Hehemann is not typical, there is nevertheless a feeling of resentment at those able-bodied men and women who are on welfare. They see need for supporting a deserted mother, a man who cannot work. But the workers resent those who they feel are chiseling and getting a piece of their paycheck.

It did seem that there was more outspoken white (and older black) backlash here than in other locations. There are several possible reasons for this:

1. The ethnic neighborhoods are still intact in Port City.
2. Whites are still clearly dominant in the plant. Their values and cultures are still the norm.
3. The people in Port City seem to be more outspoken, "I'd tell the same thing to the General Manager, and I have in the past." General plant atmosphere and perhaps management style tend to encourage this outspokenness.
4. Port City is medium sized, and perhaps more conservative that some other northern metropolitan areas.

Blacks and Whites Support the Union

Almost 90 per cent of the sample of both races want a union in the plant. But there was considerable criticism of the union leadership. Only about one-third of both races clearly approved the present union leadership. The union officers were criticized for being cliquish. One ex-steward said that if you should decide to run against an incumbent union officer, you are his enemy for life. Another complaint heard several times is that the worker could not get a copy of the union contract from his steward. The steward said he himself did not have a copy. Union officers were also

criticized for signing out on union business when they were campaigning for their own re-election.

The ethnic backgrounds of the workers still plays a strong part in union elections and affairs. Veteran union steward, James Turesky describes how a man with a Polish background capitalized on this to win the election:

> One of the reasons why is this John Czajkowski. Now I know him as John, he's always John. But he knows the sentiment of the people in the shop. He changed his name to Jan, the Polish version of John. That's right. As humorous as it is, that's a fact. It went over big with the old-timers that were Polish, you know. He knew that, you know. You take a look at the employment records here. I would say maybe 3/4 of people in this place are Polish. Oh, maybe I'm exaggerating, maybe its 50 per cent. There's an awful lot and you can see by the members of the union administration. The president is Polish, then you have an Italian vice-president. The Chief steward now is Polish, and every once in a while you find an English or Czechoslovakian name. But 80 per cent of the slate is Polish.

The ethnic bias is evident in the plant. When blacks ran in the recent union election, both black winners and losers received fewer votes than others on their slates. Bright and personable Quintin Goode, 25, won a union office but he was urged to concentrate his campaign on his black brothers. Union members put great emphasis on ethnic origins, he was told:

> When I was elected, I was told don't bother with any white fellows. Get to the, your Negro brothers, and try to persuade them to vote for our slate. I thought about, I didn't like the idea. Because that's not going to help relations at all. One reason was because--you know the people in this plant vote--if your name isn't --ski you have a hard time making it here . . . and you ask people why: ignorance, that

> is the way they were brought up. This is the way they were taught: that black people are lazy and shiftless, and that Italians are no good because they're sneaky, and Polish people are no good because they're dumb and things like this, and it isn't true.

Goode says that in the plant and among the union officers, "a lot of things are hush hush" on the race issue; and although the officers say they are doing everything they can for the black community within the shop, nevertheless, "to me I don't think that much is being done." Although they process regular grievances for the blacks, Goode does not feel that the union is helping the black man to advance in the plant.

Draftsman Ray Jarvis comments on the black man's suspicion of the salaried union. It applies as readily to the hourly union:

> Most people, when they first join the union, if they're black, they get the feeling, you know: well, I'm not going to a white man to tell him my problems. He'll just walk over me and stuff like that. Give a big smile, you know, and a kick in the behind at the same time. If you find someone like your own race, you can sit down and explain it to them better, feel more at ease.

Both black and white workers agree in their attitudes toward the union. The vast majority want a union in the plant, but many are critical of the present union leadership.

Backlash or resentment at suspected preferential treatment, was not a serious problem at Port City Gaston. Although it is true that the Poles, the Italians and the other ethnics get along much better together in the plant than they do in their local neighborhoods or in politics.

CHAPTER XII

PROMOTIONS, SOCIAL RELATIONS AND SUMMARY

This chapter will examine promotion policies and practices, and will focus on the attitudes of blacks toward their own opportunities. It will look at social relations between blacks and whites both on and off the job. And, as the last chapter in the unit, it will summarize the five chapters on Port City Gaston.

Almost half of the workers at Gaston, both black and white, are old timers with 20 or more years of service with the company. They have worked long and hard. They also have the security and the opportunity for promotion due to their seniority.

The opportunity for promotion has been an important element with the blacks at each plant that was studied. Blacks, especially younger men do want a promotion. In Port City Gaston 80 per cent of the whites but only 54 per cent of the blacks felt that blacks have a fair chance for promotion.

Many of the new young workers are ambitious and impatient, and often feel they lack the opportunity for advancement. Although less than 15 per cent of the total

sample of both blacks and whites feel that seniority is an obstacle to advancement, it looms as a much larger problem for younger workers. Bright and strong minded Wilbert Troy, 24 says:

> First of all in the shop, there's no question, there are no chances for promotion. I am at the limit for the seniority that I have. The experience on any other jobs, I don't have any. And I know that I'd have to be here a good 20 years to get the next labor grade, which is just an increase of four or five dollars a week. So along those lines, there is nothin'.

Jerry Meggett, 27, a wireman with some college and varied job experience in the plant complains that there was discrimination at Gaston until a few years ago. He tells about how four years ago he bid on a job as a production clerk, and in spite of better qualifications, did not get the job:

> Well, it atarted quite a ruckus, because I claimed that they were discriminating. Because I found out that a white fellow had gotten the job who hadn't even graduated from high school. . . . And then at one point I found out that they wanted to make some Negro foremen. I asked to take the test, the examination to become a foreman. Matter of fact, I asked several times. They went around and they asked practically everyone in the section, and they had fellows that hadn't even graduated from high school. They asked them. They offered them the opportunity to take the exam. And to today I have not had the opportunity to take the exam. I didn't ask to be made a foreman, I just asked for the opportunity to take the examination.

As a result of these experiences, Meggett is discouraged. Meggett represents a problem that every plant like Gaston will face, if they have not already:

> It's fine when you open up jobs, and they hire many Negroes from the core area. It looks good on the surface, but what about those who qualify for higher jobs higher positions? Those doors are the ones that aren't open yet. This is my opinion.

Seniority is an important element in promotions at Gaston. Since there are a number of black old timers at the plant, attitudes toward seniority do not break down as readily along racial lines. It is an irritation more to the younger workers, both black and white. Arthur Sanford, a manager of industrial relations at the Port City plant explains the policy on promotions:

> I think basically what we say in our agreement is that the most senior applicant, who can satisfactorily discharge the responsibilities of the position, gets it. And even in our salaried area of clerical and technical people, we don't say the most qualified. We might have the third most senior applicant clearly superior to the most senior, but if the most senior can acceptably perform the duties of the job, we take the most senior.

Views on seniority break down more along generation lines than racial.

Especially for those who lack seniority, the system seems unjust and inefficient. Says out going wire cutter Agnes Getek, 43, who has been with the company just six years:

> You don't get promoted in here. You bid on a job, and if you have the seniority, yet get it, whether you can do the job or not. Consequently it's a little difficult, not only is it difficult, but there are people doing jobs that really don't know how. . . . I don't think it's fair to be promoted on seniority alone.

Gaston is no place for the young and ambitious, especially in white collar work, says draftsman Ray Jarvis:

> The white collar worker, you know, he is supposed to use his brain more than he does his hands. You figure he would make more money, but they don't. It's a shame that you have to sit up there, go to school and stuff like that, and you make less money. See, maybe in the long run you might make it. But for a young person these days, you know, they want to advance quick.

But the vast majority of the blacks in the plant are now convinced that being black is no longer a hindrance to promotion. College grad Hosea James, 24 a business systems analyist says:

> Still maybe not quite as many Negroes get hired as should, but I think eventually they will. Because most of the college group now actually go to companies that have a Negro hiring policy. And eventually they'll be in the top positions, too; and you can see it probably will get a lot better. And I mean, as I've said, if there is discrimination, I can't sense it so.

Electrical tester Freddy Dixon, 60 and a 24 year Gaston veteran, feels that, even thought there was little chance for a black getting a promotion just a few years ago, this is no longer true. If he is qualified Dixon thinks that the man can advance to the limit of his abilities today.

Speaking of blacks in salaried and more responsible positions, Earline Moblev, 46, and a veteran stator winder at the plant, says:

> There was a time that you would not see a Negro that smart or anything like that; and if you did, everybody would stare at him as though he had come from Mars. It was unfortunate. 'We know you are qualified, but it is unfortunate.' But now I notice that there are a few around here. Definitely there are now opportunities with Gaston.

Easy going Ora Mullen, 37, who has plenty of reason to be angry and frustrated because of his previous experiences at the plant, puts his finger on a motive for eliminating racial discrimination: enlightened self interest:

> I mean like if I had a company and a white fellow and colored fellow came in, I would be more interested in the best man for the job. Now if it is my brother-in-law , I might get him a break. But I might have to put the squeeze on him, if I see that he's diggin' into my pocket book, see. I think as these companies get more competitive, this is going to break down the discrimination. See, they're going to have to, more or less, pick the best man for the job, if they're going to be competitive.

Black Foreman

The promise and the reality of a black foreman was accepted more readily at Port City than at any of the other plants; it is the only plant where not one white said that they personally would have difficulty accepting a black boss. And less than 15 per cent of both blacks and whites felt that their work group would be uncomfortable with a black supervisor. More than 90 per cent of the work force felt that the black foreman would eventually work out and could do his job effectively.

In 1965 Stuart Orkin then 44, became the first Negro foreman at the Gaston Port City plant. One additional black foreman was appointed just a few weeks before the researchers arrived. Orkin's reception was better than either the company or Orkin had expected. But he did encounter some resentment from unexpected sources:

> The last words that I had when I came out of the manager's office, 'well, there's going to be some things that we can help you with, and other things you're going to have to weather the storm yourself.' In other words, this was people's feelings and attitudes; this the company couldn't help me with. I had to work this out myself. As far as academic things like your contract and insubordination, okay, that was cut and dried. I got as much support from the company as any other foreman.
>
> But I found I got opposition from foremen, that had been on the job for so many years. . . . I even got opposition from some of my own people. I call this jealously, because this is one of our bad traits. We don't band together as much as we should. Oh, what do you call it, clannish, like the Polish do. If you got a name I mean, you got the support. But the Negro is a little different--not all of them the minority type--they don't like to see their brothers get ahead, and they do their best to knock them, you know.
>
> And I got opposition from some of the union fellows, 'cause they figure I sold them down the river, you know, company man, not realizing that, after all, I had my own life to live. But overall the reception to the first Negro foreman in Gaston wasn't bad at all. As a matter of fact, the remark was made that I wouldn't last three months by one of the foremen. And now it's going on four years, and I'm still here.

Acceptance by his own people has been a difficult problem for Orkin. Quentin Goode, talented and insightful black owrker and recently elected an officer in the union, sympathetically relates the black reaction to Orkin:

> I think he's doing pretty good. Like I say, the man has a job to do, and a lot of black people gave him a hard time. Why, I don't know. Maybe they resent that he was in charge of them, and he was black, and he was stepping on them. I don't know. . . . More than whites. Because white people recognize that this man is here for a purpose, even though they were sort of sorry that he had to be black. But management choose him, and they're going to keep him there. But the black people in that department, at one time they ran circles around him: I'm not taking orders from you, and that sort of thing.

Goode feels that blacks are often a bundle of anxieties and ambivalencies. They are frequently prejudiced against themselves, and don't want another black to get ahead:

> We both have to be educated. You know what I found out, that Negroes are prejudiced to a great extent to their own. They despise white people and the reason they despise is because, like I say, they are gullible. We were cheated out of this, or we were snaked out of that, because we didn't know any better. We thought we were getting a good deal there, and actually we weren't. And it looked like a real jewel on the outside, but on the inside it was rotten.
>
> And we're prejudiced against ourselves because we can't stand to see one another of us get ahead. We're all in the same sort of boat, and we should all stay there. Well, I don't believe in that. I feel if I can help pull somebody out of that rut to come along with me, beautiful. I'd be more than satisfied.

Harrel Dinkins, 22, a machine operator with four years experience at Gaston is one of the most militant young blacks interviewed at the plant. He is one of the blacks who is highly critical of black foreman; Orkin he writes him off as an "Uncle Tom":

> He's tough and he's ridiculous. Because like I lost all feeling for Stuart, before I ever knew who he was. Because like they told me, well, we got a colored cat out here as foreman. And I saw him, you know; he had his white shirt and his tie on. Then this white woman came by and patted him on the head, and he grinned from ear to ear, you know. And I mean, that just blew my whole thing, right there. . . .
>
> When you get a colored foreman, they figure well, he'll give me a break, you know. But he has to look good to the man, see. And this is where Stuart was going overboard. Now, he'll jump all over your back, and all this. And he's a lousy foreman; he's

> a lousy foreman. I didn't have to work for him, but I just heard enough about him and watched him. . . .

Dinkins goes on to criticize what he considers to be Orkin's lack of patience and sympathy in handling black disadvantaged workers:

> Stuart just wasn't together at all. I mean, he fired a few colored cats, you know, things like that. Well, there's just so much that a cat just fresh off the street's going to do when he gets in here, you know.

For fear of showing favoritism to his own people, Orkin has perhaps leaned over backwards for the whites. James Winfield, 38, a black worker in Orkin's work group, understands his delicate position:

> This first foreman that I had was a black man; he's the only one in the plant. He has to be awful careful, because all the eyes are on him. He'll get it from both sides. I believe that he's afraid that maybe he'd be showing favoritism or something.

But Winfield a good worker and a balanced person, feels that Orkin has been harder on him than on the whites:

> . . . But I noticed there's some incidents that he will be a little more lenient with the white fellows that he could with me. In fact I was the only colored working, you know, in the department. And that could be because he didn't want to show any favoritism, you know, for fear that they'd take his job.

Winfield thinks that Orkin was poorly prepared for his job, that he should have had some foreman training to enable him to deal fairly and objectively with all the men in his work force.

Foreman Rodger Putnam, 59, has recently been working closely with Orkin. He feels that Orkin's biggest problem

is his own self-consciousness at being the first black foreman:

> I think his biggest trouble is, he's trying to live down the fact that he's a colored boy. And I think he thinks that people resent the fact that he is. . . . I have heard some fellows say they wouldn't work for a colored man, but I just smile and say, well, if he's qualified, why not? I think it's something he has to overcome.

The delicate position that Orkin is in as a black supervisor is futher underscored by Jerry Meggett, who himself has foreman aspirations:

> Well, no matter how we look at it, you've got to look out for your own, I believe, if you as a race, a people are going to get ahead. And I think that this is the only way it can be done, that you're going to have to look out for your own.

Maggett certainly presents a point of view that is very common among the young black work force. And it is probably true that various ethnic groups have done this over the years. To help a brother get ahead has always been considered to be a good thing. But Meggett feels that this sort of man will never be chosen to be a foreman. He says that they can only choose "Uncle Toms":

> Well, you know how management is. Your foreman has to cater to whoever is above you, and so forth. And I think it's harder for a Negro when he's coming up. See, to me if you're an outspoken Negro, and you stand up for your rights, then they don't like you too much. I can say it to you: an Uncle Tom type character, and you're all right with them.

Meggett's objection is a serious and not uncommon one among young blacks. And it again underscores the great pressure

that a black supervisor is under from both sides: for showing favoritism or for selling out.

New Opportunity or Tokenism

Black workers at Gaston see that blacks have made significant breakthroughs into previously all white areas and jobs over the past few years. Avery Hobbs, 45, remarks on the change he has seen at the plant since he began work in 1947:

> Well, the biggest change I've seen here is--of course, it's only happened in the last five, six years--I worked here for years and I never seen a Negro working in the office here. And now, everywhere you look, you got 'em. They hiring 'em every day. That is probably the biggest change that I've seen out here. I worked here for years, and never seen a colored person work a white collar job.

Hobbs perspective over 22 years is an important one, and one that it is easy to forget, because there still remain some jobs in which blacks are not represented, and very many in which they are not proportionately represented. Gains have surely been made, but there is much more to be done.

The advance of some blacks into salaried and supervisory positions has provided good examples for the black work force. But some blacks feel that many advances appear to have remained examples, rather than breakthroughs which have opened up new areas to black workers generally. Bryant Williams, 45, a checker and a 22 year Gaston veteran also, sees the change but wonders if it is fast enough:

> I know for a while, for years, we had only one Negro on salary. Eventually we began getting more and more, and now I see that there are quite a few. But on supervision, we had two and then one left. I wouldn't go so far as to say that this shows gross discrimination. Because the company could very well show me that out of this whole list we don't have anyone who is qualified. Including myself. But ratio-wise, it doesn't seem feasible that there would be that many people that we have working in this plant, and not one would be even the slightest bit qualified to be a supervisor.

Williams states the problem clearly: recent progress is clear, but the gap to be made up is still large. And until blacks are well represented at all levels of the corporation, their lack will be a source of disappointment and even frustration and anger--especially for younger black men.

Young blacks are often very critical of older blacks who have been promoted to supervisor. It seems they are even more critical than the Poles and Italians were of their peers who first made it into supervision. This problem will be discussed more fully in the next section on Metropol Builtrite where there are a larger number of black foremen.

Blacks and Whites on Their Own Time

At Gaston, and also at each of the other four plants studied, more than three-fourths of both blacks and whites felt that the races got along well on the job. What difficulties do exist are not suprisingly felt first by the blacks. Both groups agreed that the mixing on the job most

often does not extend to lunch and breaks, and far less to activities outside the plant.

For many of the blacks and whites, working side by side is the first long term contact that they have had with a person of another race. Bright and capable Everlee Singleton, 21, says that he felt more discrimination in New York City than in Alabama. But he also says that he and his boss have learned much about each other:

> We're both learning. Bob, the guy I work with here; we're both learning a lot about each other, just by talking. I learn things about the way he acts, and he's learned things about the way I act. And he has little expressions. He's got a habit of saying, 'How you doing there?' Just like that. And I picked that up. And I got a habit of saying, 'Hey, man,' you know. And he's taking that up little bit by little bit, you know.
>
> And we were sitting there talking about skin pigment the other day, and I have a little scar there, and he's wondering, he says, 'Hey, underneath there you're really white!' And we're teasing each other back and forth. So one day we were sitting there actually talking about how people heal up. You know, colored people and white people, how when they get cuts and stuff, how they heal. And I was telling him the skin pigment kind of form little freckles at first, and then they fill in. And then they get completely brown again, and then you know what color you are. So I figure if we can sit down and talk like that, I don't really think I'm having a problem here.

Singleton's relaxed relationship with his boss is not restricted to their working hours. They have lunch together, too. That is quite exceptional at the Port City plant.

Bryant Williams, 44, feels that when they are on their own time the Negro in the plant segregates himself. He describes the cafeteria:

> You'll find table after table just loaded with one particular race of people, and I don't understand it. I joked with them one day, and said I'm going to sneak down to the cafeteria and I'm going to put a sign on the table: Colored Only. And then you'd have picket signs and everything else. So they tell you, we want to do what we want to do, and not be forced to do it.

Williams finds little overt prejudice in the plant, but he does notice small subtle reactions of whites:

> Oh, little things, like tickets being sold, let's say. It's always amusing to the colored people. These people will go and sell the ticket to this one and that one, and they go right around this colored one and sell it over there, you know. The colored people will nudge each other, you know, and wink. It's funny . . . but the overall picture as far as employees toward employee, I don't think you find any real discrimination.

A black and a white blame the racial separation in the cafeteria and on breaks on their own races. Avery Hobbs, 45, says:

> Well, they tend to eat a little apart. But I think that most of that, if you're speaking of races, it's mostly on the colored side. Because they will go where another colored is.

Gerald Drake Jr., 27, blames the separation as much on the whites:

> Down in the cafeteria, they, the coloreds sit at one table and the whites separate. And I really don't know why. Some of us are afraid to associate with someone, because of what his friends would think.

A few blacks choose to sit alone because they are somewhat radical and anti-white. One of these militants, Harrel Dinkins, 22, has been reading a lot of black literature during the last year, and it has profoundly affected and crystalized his attitudes:

> The more they come out about what happened to us over all these four hundred years and all that jazz, the less we like you people. And that's all there is to it.

He later explains why he does not trust whitey, and why he is impatient with the white liberal:

> Well, most of the kids in the colleges are now greater than what they used to be. But then you still have a few that are crusading for us. You know, they get carried away with their causes. So they say, what's your problem, white cat says, what's your problem? You're my problem, I says, and they look at me. . . . The black man cannot trust the white man, because he's been stabbed in the back, you know, smiling face, stabbed in the back.

Dinkins, and the few other blacks who share his views, would prefer not to eat with or associate with whites. But his militancy is not now typical. It may grow, since Dinkins has developed these ideas only in the last year or so, even though he has worked at Gaston for four years.

Earline Mobley, 46, a 23-year veteran at the plant, suggests a more subtle reason for this separation at meals and off the job. Mrs. Mobley is outgoing, self-possessed and quite perceptive in observing and analyzing human relations. Speaking of relations on the job, she says:

> This warmth that develops, this congeniality that develops between individuals seems to be lost whenever the Caucasian moves out of his area. He is friendly; and if he likes you, he really likes you.
>
> But when he moves out of that area, he is not sure whether or not he can afford to be the same toward you. 'I do not know what people would think. Maybe they see me talking with a colored, and they are wondering, 'How can you talk with them? What can you be talking about with people like that? What are you getting to be now? Are you changing?' It is a fear; it is a fear that they will not be accepted by their friends.

> It is too big of a struggle to try to convince these people as to the reality of the situation. It is easier to have my own private feelings and just go along, because it is more convenient that way. And then if I ignore a person, and if I look at them quick and turn away, I will make it up to them later.

When asked if this same fear of their own group's attitudes might not also be true of some blacks, Mrs. Mobley said that it depends on where the person grew up and his background,

> . . . but it is never to the same degree as it is with the Caucasian. Because the Caucasian represents the mass, and with the masses there is power.

As a good arm-chair psychologist, Earline Mobley feels that there are strong subconscious reasons that hold whites back from freer relations with blacks:

> As to people mixing generally, I feel that it is a wholesome thing. But the big bugaboo behind that, of course, as you must be aware, is the feeling that they are afraid of inter-marriage.
>
> When people work together, they not only work together. You do not remain separate from these individuals as far as liking them or disliking them is concerned. They are a person, and you are a person. Certain things do grow. These feelings do grow, and there is a very strong possibility of inter-marriage, especially among the younger people.

This fear is more freely spoken of among the whites in the south.[1] For many whites in the north it is a conscious fear, and for many more it is subconscious.

George Herman, 39, an inspector feels that both whites and blacks have prejudices, and that it is only contact and working together that can dispel them. In speaking of some few misunderstandings, Herman says:

> And I think this comes from people not knowing the man. I think that we're all guilty of that (chuckles). I mean you'll find the white who dislikes the black.

> By my being a black inspector, criticizing his work and saying, 'This is not right. Get it fixed.' But like I say, after you're there awhile, you learn the people.
>
> Once we sort of learn the man and accept the man, it's the only way it's going to be solved. And this whole thing fades away.

Although Herman admits that these prejudices are not going to disappear overnight, he is optimistic that inter-racial relations will continue to improve over the next few years.

Summary

Port City Gaston is a major employer in the city. The plant opened after World War II when labor was tight, and a larger number of blacks were then hired. Few were brought in or promoted in the 50's or early 60's. In the last few years, many more blacks are again being hired, and more are advancing to skilled and office jobs. But total blacks are still few in number: only five per cent of the total work force.

The Poles and Italians in Port City are a focus of backlash in the political arena, but backlash in the plant is not now a significant force. This is perhaps true because of the notion, more common among the old-timers, that they must learn to get along with those employees management has brought in and placed in certain positions. These older workers feel that management has certain unchallengable prerogatives, and the employee must accommodate himself to their decisions.

The resentment of white old timers is not directed only at blacks. They often express their dislike for welfare recipients, and for many of the activities of youth. On these latter items, the older blacks join the older whites. In many of their work and non-racial social attitudes, older blacks are much closer to the older whites than to younger blacks. Specifically, in attitudes toward promotion, their boss, and their work, older blacks and older whites tend to agree. In racial attitudes the older blacks not surprisingly tend to agree with the younger blacks.

All Port City employees, white and black, feel strongly that hiring and promotion should be fair. When any real or imagined evidence to the contrary is uncovered, it is communicated quickly and can even become a battle cry. Port City employees very much resent welfare recipients who cheat, or who without sufficient need take a slice of the workingman's paycheck.

It is this same regard for fairness that undoubtedly motivates the work force to favor giving the poor a chance at a job, and at the same time reject special work standards and preferential treatment of disadvantaged by their foremen. Plant management have used the same rationale for rejecting any special training or support for the disadvantaged; they feel that employees would oppose it as unfair. Nevertheless there does seem to be a need for some special programs to help the disadvantaged adapt to and stay on the job.

Blacks are still very few in the plant. Perhaps it is largely this fact that prevents strong backlash. Black breakthroughs into salaried and skilled jobs, and even into supervision, have also met with a minimum of white backlash.

As is true in each of the three plants studied, inter-personal relations on the job have been very good. But racial mixing largely ends when the employee is on his own time: at lunch or breaks. The lack of mixing at breaks is likely motivated by a fear of rejection by his own peer group: "What would my buddies say, if they saw me talking to a black person?"

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XII

[1]For a perceptive description of these underlying fears, see Calvin C. Hernton, Sex and Racism in America (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1965).

PART IV

ONE THOUSAND YOUNG BLACK ASSEMBLY WORKERS

INTRODUCTION

Many of the questions that were raised in the previous chapters on relations between black and white workers and their work performance will also be addressed in this setting: an assembly plant near the black neighborhoods in a large northern city that employs very large numbers of young blacks. Those questions are:

1. Is there a difference in the way that black and white workers view their jobs, their fellow workers, their boss and their opportunities within the plant?
2. Is there any difference in the way black and white workers perform their jobs? Do blacks have any special problems?
3. How do blacks and whites get along together in the plant? Is there much association outside the plant?
4. How do the disadvantaged perform on the job? How does one prepare, motivate and keep on the job young, disadvantaged workers?
5. Is there much backlash now in the Metropol plant? What can be done about it?

6. How well did plant management handle the influx of large numbers of disadvantaged black workers in the past? What programs did they devise? To what extent were they successful? What problems remain?

The two previous chapters have examined plants where blacks are a small minority of the work force, 11 per cent and four per cent respectively. In a very few years the percentage of blacks in the Builtrite Appliances plant in Metropol has risen to 32 per cent of the hourly factory work force. Very many of these blacks are disadvantaged; 466 were formally classified as such under the official criteria. Builtrite is an inner city plant bordering the black ghetto and readily accessible by public transportation. The previous two chapters reported on plants which were some distance from the black neighborhoods. Metropol Builtrite is an important position because of its wide experience in providing jobs for blacks and for the disadvantaged.

Some of the additional questions raised here are: How do large numbers of blacks affect the work force and work performance? What are the causes of the increasing problems of turnover and absenteeism? What solutions have been tried? Have any of these worked? To what extent and why? And to what extent are these problems unique to blacks or to disadvantaged workers? Or are they more a problem of

youth? How does the foreman react in the face of these new demands of blacks and disadvantaged? Builtrite has a larger number of new black supervisors than any other location studied. How have the black supervisors worked out?

The Builtrite plant has a separatist black labor organization that sponsored a plant wildcat walk out. What led to this sort of action? Was it justified? Will this sort of militancy result in every plant that has a large number of black workers?

CHAPTER XIII

THE SETTING: CITY AND PLANT

This first chapter of the section gives an overview of the white and the black communities. It chronicles the influx of the young unskilled workers and the problems of absenteeism and turnover that they bring with them. It then presents some early attempts of Builtrite to cope with these new young employees and to help them with their problems.

Driving a short distance from the center of Metropol along the expressway, one passes through an all black section of Metropol, Woodvale, then passes close to the white town of Athens. The 4500-employee Builtrite plants lie on the border of Woodvale and Athens. For the black and white employees at Builtrite, the industrial district surrounding the plant separates two worlds--in fact, two ghettos. The employees work in one of three plants: laundry (washer and dryer), electric range, and refrigerator.

Builtrite began in the appliance business more than 60 years ago and has always drawn heavily on its ethnic neighbors for employees and managers. The workers are represented by the Sheet Metal Workers' International Union. Referred to by one employee as "a little United Nations,"

the plant still employees a rich variety of nationalities and ethnic groups: 56 per cent of the total work force are white (southern white, the old Bohemian and Polish, with some Italians, Germans and Irish), 26 per cent black, and 18 per cent Spanish speaking (Puerto Rican and Mexican).

Of the sample of hourly workers interviewed at Builtrite, close to half of the blacks live in Woodvale and surrounding black neighborhoods, while about half of the white employees make their homes in Athens. These neighborhoods lie within a few miles of the plants. While transportation is often a difficulty for disadvantaged workers, it is not a serious problem for Builtrite employees. At least half of the disadvantaged work force live within a few miles, and there is excellent subway and bus service to the plants.

Because the atmosphere of the plants owes much to the ethnics, and to the two communities of Athens and Woodvale, these two neighborhoods deserve more attention.

Woodvale

There were few Negroes in Metropol until World War I. By 1920 blacks were still less than five per cent of Metropol's population. Even in these early years, the ghetto was forced into being. As these transplanted rural southern black Americans arrived in "the melting pot," the city that "was open to all peoples," they met a harsh reaction. In 1917 a committee of the Real Estate Board laid down a new basic policy on housing for Negroes:

> The old districts were overflowing and new territory must be furnished. It is desired in the interests of all, that each block shall be filled solidly and that further expansion shall be confined to contiguous blocks, and that the present method of obtaining a single building in scattered blocks be discontinued. Promiscuous sales and leases here and there mean an unwarranted and unjustifiable destruction of values.

This policy was effective, as any visitor to Metropol can immediately see. Metropol's black population continued to grow. By 1964, it was estimated that a quarter of Metropol's citizens were black.

The ghetto spread westward to the edge of the city: to Woodvale. Woodvale has more than 100,000 people packed into a smaller residential area than that which holds Athens' 70,000. Add to this the disruption of such a quick turnover of people, and we begin to catch the flavor of Woodvale. Woodvale was about 15 per cent Negro in 1950, over 90 per cent in 1960. In 1960, three quarters of the population had lived in another house just five years previously.

St. Joseph's parish, where Fr. Theodore Purcell and the author stayed during this study, is one of the few institutions left in Woodvale that has not changed hands or fled in the last decade. Former Jewish Temples with Hebrew inscriptions over their doors and white Protestant churches line the wide, tree-shaded boulevards. They are now owned by black Baptist congregations.

At the 1960 census only 18 per cent of the 50,000 housing units in Woodvale were owner occupied, and 14 per cent were in officially "substandard condition." There has

been virtually no new housing in Woodvale since 1930, and most of the housing is more than 50 years old.

The median family income in Woodvale in 1960 was $4,980 (Athens: $7,300). Unemployment among males in Woodvale was 10.0 per cent (Athens: 2.9 per cent). A special Labor Department study in 1966 showed underemployment among blacks in Metropol to be more than 33 per cent. And unemployment is actually higher than the official figures, because a large number of black men "disappear" from the census roles in their 20s and 30s. As for education, the median school year completed is 8.7 (Athens: 9.7).

A generation gap often exists between the older blacks and their sons and daughters. The peer group often has a greater influence on teenagers than their families. A recent sociological survey in Woodvale showed that 68 per cent of the adults there, in spite of the country's black revolution, are still insecure with their blackness and show a hesitance toward a positive identification with their race.[1]

Athens

Color is not the whole story of the differences between the people of Athens and Woodvale, but it is surely symbolic. And it is, perhaps, the major factor in the tensions present on Metropol's west side. In Athens an embattled all-white municipality resists Negro residence, but imports southern whites to take the place of the Poles and

Czechs as neighbors, and 15,000 to 25,000 black workers to man the lines and keep the factories producing.

Athenians are proud of their city. It is a clean community, with neat little brick and frame houses and well-kept lawns and trees. The people are proud of: their homes, their churches and their schools. A community organizer who visited many Athens homes in the summer of 1968 describes the typical living room:

> Cellophane on the lampshades, plastic covers on the chairs and couch, spotless rug--an unlived-in look. The family would spend their lives in the basement, so as not to dirty the living room and its furniture.[2]

Athens residents do not want this beauty, cleanliness and decency spoiled by blacks.

Athenians insist that there are not now nor will there ever be any Negroes living in the community. Residents are cold toward anyone who suggests integrated housing. "Letters to the Editor" in the local newspaper are firm and consistent in their protests against a local minister, for example, who "doesn't have this community at heart. He has been working toward integrating Athens for many years."

Athens is expected to remain virtually all white through 1975. Paul Shephard, a manager of Employee Relations at Builtrite explains, "There is no such thing for Athens as integration. It's inundation. And all they do is point to what used to be mostly white: the Woodvale territory." A Builtrite employee, Jasper Parker, 48, reflects on the attitudes of his community toward Negroes:

Parker: Our town is dead-set against 'em. They were allowed to live in there twice and both times wound up rapin' the white woman. The women were afraid to go out at night.

Purcell: Where did they live in Athens?

Parker: The first time they were livin' all over Athens. That was in the early 1900's. Yes. My grandfather was president of town when they run 'em out. Then they came back in about 1932 and were livin' on the IC railroad. Every night there was fightin' among themselves. They're drunk, and chasin' women, tryin' to rape 'em. And one they did rape. When that happened, they told the railroad either to get rid of 'em or build an area for them and keep 'em in.

Purcell: There's none in there now?

Parker: No. But they're pretty close. Woodvale's got infested with 'em.

Several racial incidents have marred the Athens community in the years past. One Negro family was bombed out many years ago. In 1966, reports a white employee at Builtrite, a young Negro boy was walking through Athens hunting for a job, when three white youths killed him. It is in this community of tensions that the Builtrite story takes place.

A nominal number (10) of Spanish-speaking Builtrite employees were interviewed, along with the blacks and whites. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the attitudes of the Spanish speakers toward their co-workers, and to compare their views with those of other workers on the wide variety of subjects.

Nevertheless, because it was not our intention to study the attitudes, performance, problems, etc. of the

Spanish speakers, there is no special section devoted to these workers. But they did present their views of the job, the blacks, and so on, and these are recorded.

Break-Up of the Family Plant

Most of the old-timers at Builtrite fondly recall the "good ole days" before outside management took over in the early fifties. Entire families worked at Builtrite: mothers, sons, cousins. The employees talked of "close-knit feelings between management and worker," company picnics and parties, days when "you could stand around and shoot the bull for awhile," and, perhaps most importantly, when "it was almost a pleasure to come to work." Now, these same employees wonder what has caused the less relaxed, less personal atmosphere at the plant over the past 20 years. For many of these whites, it is not just a coincidence that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of blacks at Builtrite. Blacks in the work force have gone from 37 to 1,200, from less than 1 per cent to 26 per cent in the last seven years (see Table 11). The number of blacks for 1962 and 1963 are from records in personnel, and include, largely or only, hourly workers. The rest of the figures are from EEO-1 reports, and are for the entire work force, hourly and salaried.

Because of an expanding demand for household appliances and the need for greater production, Builtrite had to increase its work force some 25-30 per cent beginning in

TABLE 11.--Number of Blacks and Spanish Speaking at Metropol Builtrite, 1962-1968.

Year	Blacks	Spanish Speaking	Total Employees	Per Cent Black
1962	37			
1963	97			
1964	261	515	3502	7.4
1965	1059	541	4629	23.4
1966	1611	775	5278	30.5
1967	988	697	4413	22.4
1968	1172	826	4549	25.8

1963. The workers hired by the plant for three generations had come from the all-white, ethnic towns of Athens and Berwyn. But for a number of reasons, including a tight labor market, the upgrading of white skills and aspirations, and the exodus of young whites to the western suburbs, this traditional source of new workers had almost disappeared.

Builtrite found itself on the western edge of the now black Metropol community of Woodvale with its huge supply of manpower: many unemployed and considered "unemployable." The company built up an entire second shift in the Refrigerator plant in 1966. In order to do this in addition to providing for normal turnover and growth, it was necessary to screen over 40,000 applicants to approve 5,511 for physical examinations. Of these, 632 (14.5 per cent) were physically or emotionally not qualified.[3] Approximately 3,000 reported for work, but seven out of ten eventually quit or were discharged. Approximately 1,800

who were approved by the employment office did not report for work. Company policy is not to re-hire a man who has quit. A significant number of these men returned to the Builtrite Employment Office several months later, denying they had ever been there before. They wanted to try for a job again.

At this time height and weight minimums were eliminated, as was any pre-employment testing. The tests were found to be of no value in predicting successful job performance and tenure. Minimum educational requirements had been lowered to 10 years, but were dropped altogether in 1966. Also, earlier, from 1935 to 1958, there had been no high school degree requirement.

Some of the older white ethnics viewed this great influx of blacks and Spanish speakers with alarm. And plant guards occasionally reported that a white would come to the employment office, see a waiting room filled with blacks, then turn around and go home.

Andrew Rouse, who was then Director of Personnel, said that the company gave up the effort to hire whites during this period: "Those whites that we did hire, they just didn't work out well at all."

Builtrite has lost whites from its work force every year since 1965. There were 157 fewer whites at the end of 1967 than at the beginning, and 180 fewer at the end of 1968. Some feel that the advent of large numbers of blacks has

discouraged the whites, but Don Keith, an Employment Officer, feels otherwise. He says that the number of whites coming to Builtrite dropped off quite some time ago, well before the blacks began coming in in large numbers.

A black employee, James Ricker, presents this transition:

> Around April of '66, they began an expansion and all the people they hired was black--all black. I mean they was hiring them by the dozens. New people was comin' in every day. Down to final assembly. And that's where they're at now.

For various reasons --e.g. a decline in demand for refrigerators, an inexperienced work crew, poor management--the second shift failed. It lasted from late March 1966 to early December 1966, when approximately 600 blacks were laid off. But the effect of this mass hiring left its mark on the work force--whites became apprehensive and fearful that they would soon be in a minority. Leonard Boler, a white, 47-year-old electrical checker from North Carolina, reports that 50 per cent of the workers in his department are now Negro:

Boler: It seems to me that's all the companies do hire now!

Purcell: A lot more comin' in, huh?

Boler: That's all they hire, and if the trend continues, I think the whites'll be in a minority, which I don't think is a good policy either.

Purcell: I saw one white girl in the employment office the other day, all the rest were blacks.

Boler: Yeah, yeah. That's the way it is all the time. Maybe the white people that have friends working here

Boler (cont.): wouldn't recommend the place to their friends anymore. . . . An older man retires, well, any new help is all colored. It seems that way to me. (laughs softly) . . . I think they should hire white people.

The white reaction to the Negro at Builtrite has undergone a change, at least in the eyes of Charles Eliot who recalls his acceptance as the first black production worker:

> Wherever there's one black, he gets along the best of all where there's all white. No matter what happens, everyone takes him in as a sort of a personal thing. But when it becomes a mass, then he becomes a problem. Where there's only one or two, the guy may resent it right away but he takes to you a lot faster. I don't know what he think--you're an orphan and he wants to be a big brother to you.

Today, however, the total Builtrite labor force is 26 per cent black and 18 per cent Spanish speaking; the hourly work force is 32 per cent black and increasing steadily. So whites can no longer take the good intentioned but paternalistic posture Eliot speaks of.

Blacks as Workers: A White Man's View

Many whites suggest that conditions at Builtrite were never so bad as they are now, and lay much of the blame on the young black man. Only 54 per cent of the white hourly employees feel that blacks do their jobs as well as the average worker.

Even though whites who are quite critical of the blacks' work performance are in a minority (30 per cent), they nevertheless represent a point of view that must be

reckoned with. Cesar DaCorta, a Spanish speaking salvage man, fires a whole list of indictments against the black workers:

> They drink coke, eat all lunch and no pay. Go out through the line. They don't want to pay for nothing. . . . Some, he no give a damn. He drop his garbage any place. . . . They drink, too, on the job. Marijuana, they smoke. . . . Drunk driver drive a truck, too. . . . The bosses are scared of them. . . . These people break everything, too.

Cesar berates the Negroes more than most of his co-workers, but there are other critical whites:

Stanley Alszak: Oh, shit. They're forever tardy, and absent. Their housekeeping--it's terrible.

Marjorie Smith: They're more wasteful. They don't care whether they do a good job or not. They figure, well, 'If you don't like it--you do it.' Dey don't have da energy like a white person has . . . maybe some of 'em will, but not all of 'em.

James Sifras: You have white guys that're just as lazy as the black guy. But there's more black that are lazy than whites.

Raphael Mendez: Sometime worka hard, sometime, a lot of colored guy is lazy. Get a scratch, go to the nurse. All the time. I can't.

Suzanne Strauss: John's the exception, he works good. The other ones are, well, there're two stockmen who are slow as molasses: We're always goin' down because we're out of parts. . . . One girl refuses to do work. And she gets away with it. They take the work away from her and give it to a white girl.

To what extent are these attitudes prejudice, and myth, and to what extent are they based on fact? Perhaps this can be determined best by looking to the foremen's appraisal of the work performance of their black employees. Although more foremen were interviewed, nine fell into our

random sample: six whites, two American blacks and one native African black. They were from all three plants, and three were from the second shift.

All nine foremen agreed that blacks did as well as the rest of the work force in their ability to learn their present job and in promotability, the ability to learn a higher job (see Table 12). More than three quarters of the foremen rated blacks as at least as good on quantity and quality of output.

TABLE 12.--Job Performance of Hourly Blacks: Percentage of Foremen who Judge that Blacks do at Least as Good a Job as Average Worker.

	N = 9
Quantity of Work	89%
Quality of Work	78
Absenteeism	44
Tardiness	44
Accept Responsibility	67
Personality at Work	100
Discipline at Work	78
Ability to Learn Job	100
Promotability	100

Three of the six white foremen thought that blacks did not accept responsibility readily, whereas all the black foremen thought they did at least as well. A white foreman, Ed Kolinski, tells us that the problem really narrows down to the hard core:

Kolinski: A majority of 'em will do as they're shown. Teach 'em to do what you're told and they'll do that.

Cavanagh: Do they have initiative?

Kolinski: Some have, but the hard core, you've gotta everyday come up and prod 'em. . . . It's not the fault of the people they're gettin' in. It's the type of environment these people had. About five or six per cent think everythin's gonna be given to 'em.

According to foreman Jack Grossman, responsibility and motivation are closely linked. He sees a lack of these in the new work force:

> I think the caliber of these people we've gotten in the last few years has deteriorated a little. I think it's motivation more than anything. A little laxity on their jobs, a little carelessness. I think the old timers were expected to do certain things, and I think they took it on their own to even do something over and beyond what their job would normally call for. I think the old timers never drew the line as close as some of your newer people.

Grossman feels that the potential is there, but that the blacks have to be motivated. Too many of them look for the easy jobs, and are not willing to work to build up their own qualifications for higher paying jobs with more responsibility.

Two of the six white foreman rated the blacks poorer on discipline at work. These men felt that blacks were more difficult to supervise. When asked how he found it to supervise blacks, Fred Dawson, who has a large number of blacks on his second shift, said:

> MMMM. Very hard. Like I said, they <u>defy</u> you. As a white man, I've put up a battle. And every time you do tell 'em something--and if you use a voice

> that's a little rough--they're very resentful. Very.

Other foremen share Dawson's problems, and they feel the strain. Some do not like their job of supervising any more.

Growing Turnover, Absenteeism and Tardiness

As noted earlier (see p. 13) in each of the three plants the researchers presented the goals of their study to supervisors and management before beginning the interviews. And in addition at Metropol there were presentations to all the foremen.

At the nine separate meetings that were called to accommodate supervisors at various Builtrite plants and shifts, questions such as these arose:

> Why do we have so much absenteeism and tardiness? Why have things changed so much in the last few years?
>
> Why is there so much turnover? These men get good wages.
>
> Why do men quit? If you ask them, they tell you nothing is wrong. A guy will have good attendance for two-three weeks, then he just doesn't show up.
>
> I find I can't communicate with these new employees, especially the blacks. What are they looking for?
>
> Does the paycheck motivate them to get to work? If it does, then why do these guys refuse to work overtime, especially on Friday night and Saturday?
>
> We've had some fights and even an office that was broken into. Is this because there isn't enough discipline in the plant, or because we are too strict?

The Problem in Figures

Turnover has gone from 18 per cent in 1963 to 42 per cent in 1969, with a high of 57 per cent occurring in 1966 at the time of the short-lived second shift in Refrigerator (see Table 13). A special in-plant study that was done for 1968 showed that of the 1,599 hires that year, 830 were no longer with Builtrite by the end of the year. Ninety-two per cent of these left before the end of the three-month probationary period. Of this group, 78 per cent left voluntarily; they were not discharged for non-performance or violation of established rules and practices.[4] Fifty-one per cent of the blacks, 63 per cent of the whites, and 46 per cent of the Spanish speaking hired during 1968 were terminated before the end of the year. Although the focus of this study is the black man, it is noteworthy that a higher percentage of the whites hired in 1968 were not at Builtrite at the end of that year.

Absenteeism has followed the same pattern as turnover. From 2 per cent in 1963, it has risen in 1968 to about 4.8 per cent with a peak in 1966 of 9 per cent.

Since absenteeism has been a problem for some time at Builtrite, a study of the problem was done during January of 1967. It was found that "absenteeism is concentrated in a small segment of the work population. About 40 per cent of employees have perfect attendance records; the other 60 per cent have absenteeism. Of these, the top quarter causes

TABLE 13.--Annual Turnover Less Layoffs at Builtrite, 1960-1969.

	1960		1961		1962		1963		1964	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Voluntary	472	15.1	177	6.5	232	8.8	366	13.4	308	11.07
Discharged	83	2.6	23	0.8	28	1.1	74	2.7	114	4.1
Other	76	2.4	68	2.5	72	2.7	60	2.2	54	1.9
Total	631	20.2	268	9.9	332	12.1	500	18.3	476	17.11

	1965		1966		1967		1968		1969	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Voluntary	423	14.53	1089	28.21	663	15.6	798	17.9	1164	25.3
Discharged	307	10.54	900	23.36	442	10.4	588	13.2	612	13.3
Military	64	2.19	122	3.16	51	1.2	44	1.0	49	1.1
Retired	58	1.99	49	1.27	62	1.5	89	2.0	60	1.3
Decreased	16	0.54	16	0.41	17	0.4	21	0.5	19	0.4
Other	6	0.20	11	0.25	68	1.6	77	1.7	13	0.3
Total	774	30.02	2187	56.68	1303	30.7	1617	36.2	1917	41.6

three-quarters of all absenteeism."[5] So, a mere 15 per cent of the work force is the cause of 75 per cent of the absenteeism. Who are these men? Where do they work? What is the cause of their high absenteeism?

In attempting to answer these questions, the report comes up with several variables: "69 per cent of the absenteeism was manifest in the assembly job classification;" and while only 27 per cent of the work force was under 30 years of age, they accounted for 42 per cent of the absenteeism. Negroes accounted for 27 per cent of the total number of employees, yet they were responsible for 55 per cent of the absenteeism.

Ralph Morgan, an Employee Relations manager, explains that absenteeism costs Builtrite a lot for a number of reasons:

1. It forces them to hire more men than they would strictly need, to account for the absenteeism;
2. Some units must work overtime to make up for lost production;
3. Inexperienced and less efficient people are put on the job;
4. When a man is moved to fill in, he is ordinarily unhappy; and
5. The gaps and inexperience slow the production rate.

Two personnel officers who have been close to these problems at Builtrite over a number of years, Don Keith and Andrew Rouse, both claim that turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness are as much a problem with young whites as with young blacks, and the facts bear them out.

Even though dropping out (turnover) is greater with the young white, and absenteeism is more common for the young black, the differences between young blacks and young whites is slight compared with the record of young, short-service people versus the older employee. The conclusion is that turnover, absenteeism and tardiness are largely a problem of the young.

Builtrite Copes with the 1966 Turnover and Absenteeism Crisis

Builtrite management has drawn up a number of proposals and experimented with some of them to meet the challenge of turnover and absenteeism. They have looked critically at their orientation program. And in early 1967 they also began a counseling program for absentees in the refrigerator plant.

In 1957, after the sobering experience of the 57 per cent turnover of 1966, the then Director of Personnel at Builtrite argued for one full week of "Job Education Training." There was a great deal of discussion of his thoughtful and detailed proposal, but it was finally dropped, largely because of its expense. The files at Builtrite bulge with a wide variety of other "One Day Induction" programs that have been proposed but never adopted.

The Home Laundry plant tried to avoid the high turnover faced two years previously. When they added their own second shift in 1968, they did provide a fuller orientation.

This, plus attempts to help the new employee find a job suitable for himself, did slightly lower turnover.

But the official orientation program at Builtrite now remains the two hour slide lecture, hardly sufficient to absorb the myriad of new and unfamiliar facts, policies and expectations. Twenty to 30 people at a time hear a maze of detailed information on: wage systems, incentives, safety, upgrading systems, department organization, pensions, benefits, personal conduct, penalties for absenteeism and tardiness, suggestion system, quality, and much more. Since the orientation is on the new employee's own time, it is not surprising that he is anxious to get on with it and get back home. So much new information is thrown at the novice employee, that Builtrite's own studies show that only a small fraction is remembered.

No regular plant tours are now given, nor are there follow-ups. The employee is then given a handbook that covers the rules, and is shown his job. It is then up to the foremen. Most of the foremen are so pressed (some in assembly have up to 120 people in their work group!) that they have no additional time to give to the often shy and frightened young new employee. Later in this chapter, the employees themselves will underscore the need for better orientation.

A subject of continuing debate at Builtrite and elsewhere is: Who has the primary responsibility for

orienting a new employee and helping him to understand the importance of his job and himself to the company? Is it the foreman or the Personnel Department?

With such rapid turnover, Builtrite is reluctant to invest much time and money in a new employee. He may be gone tomorrow.

Toward the end of their ill-fated second shift, in March 1967, Builtrite's refrigerator plant began a special counseling program directed at the absent and tardy-prone employee. The program lasted less than a year.

The black counselor was Ed Taylor who began his Builtrite career in the plant, and was later promoted into the Personnel office. He is soft-spoken, competent, and well liked by employees and supervisors alike. Taylor had the absentee and tardee records available to him, so he made it a point to talk to those who had already received warning notices and also those who in his judgment had potential problems.

Most of Taylor's time was taken up with his primary responsibilities of interviewing and screening all Builtrite hourly job applicants (sometimes as many as 40 per day), giving the two hour orientation, and other personnel duties. He was thus able to see only three to five men a week for brief counseling sessions of 10 or 15 minutes each.

In order to check on the effectiveness of his counseling, Taylor recorded the absentee figures for the work

groups he focused on before and after counseling. And he also included a control group.[6] Although the experiment lasted only four months, the report indicates that:

1. Absenteeism dropped significantly after counseling began; and
2. While absenteeism dropped for both the experimental and control groups, the drop for the experimental group was slightly greater.[7]

One additional factor should be recognized: layoffs began shortly before the experiment began, and continued into the early months of 1967. The second shift and its 800 employees in Refrigerator was dropped.

These layoffs undoubtedly did much to bring down turnover, absenteeism and tardiness from their 1966 highs (see Table 13). The layoffs acted both: (1) to get rid of the chief offenders--the younger men and the most recent hires; and (2) to scare the rest of the work force into line, for fear of losing their jobs.

Nonetheless Taylor, along with most Builtrite personnel men and many supervisors, feels that the counseling program should be continued, but much more extensively. Few employees even in that one plant were touched by the short effort.

Builtrite has tried other techniques to increase attendance. The laundry plant found that there were never more workers present than on the day of the free box chicken

lunch. Laundry also sponsored an open house during which each employee brought his wife and family through the plant, showed them where he worked and what he did during the day. On that day employees spoke and joked with each other as they had never done before. Pride in their job seemed to increase in the following weeks.

The refrigerator plant sponsored a contest: CARE ("Check Absenteeism and Regard Excellence" or unofficially "Change Alibis to Real Excuses"). Prizes were offered to employees with perfect attendance records for the month. Attendance showed slight improvement, but the contest was acknowledged to be no permanent solution.

Builtrite's attempted solutions to their problems of turnover and absenteeism have been sporadic and not very successful. Paradoxically these programs have been dropped because they seemed to be too expensive. The rest of this section and the following section will focus on an attempt to state and examine the causes of turnover and absenteeism.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XIII

[1]Thomas Honore, "Indications of Racial Identity," (unpublished paper dated May 1, 1969).

[2]From a conversation of the author's with community organizer, Pat Farrell.

[3]Figures from an article in a medical journal by the plant physician.

[4]"An Analysis of 1968 Hourly Hiring and Removal Experience," (unpublished in-plant Builtrite report), p. 8.

[5]"Absentee Survey," (unpublished in-plant Builtrite report, January, 1967).

[6]"Absentee Control Program: Report for 1-1-67 to 4-16-67," (unpublished in-plant Builtrite report).

[7]*Ibid*., pp. 5-8.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOREMAN AND THE YOUNG BLACKS

Why They Don't Stay

An investigation of personnel records coupled with interviewee responses at Builtrite yields the following six factors as causes of their turnover, especially among the new young workers.[1]

1. Inadequate relations with the foreman; little personal contact and support;
2. Inadequate orientation to the life and work of the factory: poor job training and narrow view of their job;
3. Undesirable working conditions, especially for the young and the blacks, and a feeling that there is no chance for promotion;
4. Frustration with assembly-type work as monotonous, uncreative and insignificant;
5. Restlessness of youth, decline of the "work ethic," and physical and mental health problems;
6. Easy availability of other jobs in the Metropol area, and the attraction of easier money through welfare or unemployment benefits.

The reasons are arranged roughly in the order in which it would seem that Builtrite could exercise some

control over the situation. The author also suggests that these same factors also help to explain absenteeism and tardiness.

Each of these factors will be taken up in detail. The men involved--the workers, foremen, disadvantaged--will present their views. The first cause listed above, the foreman's role, will be the subject of the rest of this section. The other five factors will be treated in the following section.

Foreman: Man Caught in the Middle

The young blacks make major additional demands on the foreman above and beyond the general pressures and responsibilities that the foreman shoulders.

The foreman is responsible for getting the product out. He is also responsible for the men in his section, sometimes as many as 100. He is the member of the management team who is closest to production and to the worker. The demands of his superiors and of production do not always coincide with the demands, tastes and needs of the people working under him. He is criticized both by the employees for being hard-headed, arrogant, demanding, and by his own superior, the general foreman, for not meeting production schedules, for having too many grievances, and for poor quality.

Viola Gladden, a 29-year-old conveyer worker, says that her foreman has little patience:

> I was really angry with him. He hollered me out one day, . . . Even if the foreman would try to understand. Because, after all, we're workers and sometimes we're tired and don't feel like gettin' up. But just because you don't feel like gettin' up, you can't stay in bed. Because if you miss too many days, you're going to have to be fired or something. That's why everybody's got to give a little. Some mornings we go there, and we don't feel well. And some mornings he doesn't feel well, and we go along with him.
>
> I find that once you get an understanding, and the same with the employees with the foreman, well you wouldn't have no problems.

A young foreman, John Clay, admits the pressures on him: "I take my lumps when they come--every day--so this is part of management . . . I don't blame my boss. He's my boss. I try to do my job. And when I'm wrong, he calls me on the carpet. But right or wrong, he's still the boss."

A hard-line production-oriented general foreman, Louis Tobias describes himself: "I generally reek with self-confidence, and I'm not backing up for anybody. I'm on firm ground, and I'm going to stay there." He admits that the foreman's job is a tough one:

> It's like being on the front line in Vietnam. They are underpaid for what they have to go through and what they have to do. . . . Get on that final assembly line, you're in the big leagues then. You've got 40 or 50 people looking at you, watching every move and every decision that you make, and how you handle people and what a guy can get away with and what he can't get away with. You're damn right it's a tough job. . . . It's getting to the point now where you get men that won't want to be a foreman. Management's gonna be suffering.

Several other foremen in addition to Clay admitted the pressure. One old-timer, Ed Kolinski, 22 years a foreman, said: "You get to be a victim. You get mashed between." He no longer likes his job of being foreman.

Old-timer Stanley Olszak, now a section leader but once a foreman, is not sorry that he no longer has this greater responsibility:

Olszak: The foreman is just a punchin' bag for everybody, that's all. A foreman today isn't like it used to be. I'm talking as far as authority goes. You had your own way many years ago.

Cavanagh: Was it that way then? Was the foreman a punching bag when you were foreman?

Olszak: Well, you got all the boys crying on you. Then, from management, you're always pressured. You're responsible, don't forget. You get a hell of a lot more responsibility.

Some of the more perceptive workers understand this pressure. An assembler, Edith Pierce, highlighted the problem when she said: "If the foremans and the big guys in the plant were more interested in the employees, it would be a much better place to work." Then, after being questioned as to whether it was the foreman's fault, or someone above him, she said: "Well, it's like this, the foreman have to get his orders from somebody else. . . ."

The high turnover is also a strain on the foreman. He constantly has new men to train and to get to know. Some of the old-timers find this wearing because so many of the young blacks come in "with a chip on their shoulder." Ed Kolinski said:

> When they first come in and you put 'em on jobs, they show a slight belligerance. After they're on for a while, they get to know you and they talk to the other people, they start to get relieved of that chip on their shoulder. And all of a sudden it gets to a point where they already know you, and they know how you're gonna act, and it sort of vanishes away.

It takes time to establish a personal relationship. Every man who quits takes with him months of effort on the part of his foreman. And the foreman is forced to begin all over with his replacement.

Young blacks sometimes make starry-eyed, unrealistic demands. A popular and effective young black foremen, Harry Ellcock, describes some of these:

> They really thought that instead of--and this is what they told me, no kiddin'--instead of telling them what to do, that I should ask them. I should go to each individual, 'Will you please do this.' But that wasn't my job to ask. I give you your job, tell you what to do and you're supposed to do it.

This overview of the foreman's role and responsibilities provides a backdrop for a more detailed examination of three of the most important problems facing the foreman: turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness. These problems stem largely from the new younger work force. The way the foreman handles the new work force and their turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness is a test of that foreman's ability. The attitude of the new work force, according to most, will grow and become much more significant in industry. The vast majority of this new work force are young blacks.

So, it is important that we now turn to the foreman's ability to cope with these young blacks and their problems.

Foremen, Young Blacks and Absenteeism

The foreman is the crucial man in the production process. He is also the most influential man when it comes to relations with the work force. He is the one who immediately faces the problems of turnover and absenteeism; it hurts his production record. Yet paradoxically, it is a finding of this study that the individual worker's relationship with his foreman is the variable that most influences the employee's attitude toward his job and his work; and hence most influences turnover and absenteeism.[2] A strong, supporting relationship with a new younger employee will make that new employee much less apt to be late, absent, or leave the firm.

The foreman's general view of young blacks as workers was presented earlier. Here the focus will be on foremen and worker attitudes and insights toward absenteeism and turnover. Of the sample of nine foremen that the researchers spoke to at Builtrite, five felt that the black employee tended to be poorer on absenteeism and tardiness. The group who thought that blacks were poorer included four of the six white foremen but none of the American black foremen who had fallen into the sample.[3] This same differing perception was also evident when it came to assessing the ability of blacks to accept responsibility. Three of the six white foremen

thought that blacks did poorer, whereas the black foremen thought they did at least as well in accepting responsibility.

Let us look to some of the comments of these foremen. White George Yanchuk, a 26-year veteran and a foreman for ten years said that it was the large number of new people who gave him absenteeism headaches. He complained that they were interested only in their paycheck and had little regard for quality.

Ed Kolinski, a foreman for 22 years, when asked if the blacks were poorer than average on absenteeism and tardiness, said:

> I would say, I would say so. They all seem to have the same problem. Either they gotta be in court, or they have a home problem, or they have a car problem. So, I think the majority of the people that I have out there have the same problem.

The four out of nine of the foreman sample who would not rate blacks as being poorer than average in absenteeism and tardiness admitted that there were some individual young blacks who were very bad. But they refused to generalize to all blacks. A sizable majority of the white foremen did generalize.

At the same time, it will be possible to investigate the main question of this section: that personal contact and support from the foreman is essential, especially for the new work force, in increasing work satisfaction and lowering turnover. In this connection recall that only 55

per cent of the blacks, but all of the whites, felt they got along well with their foreman. Again, only 51 per cent of the blacks, compared with 86 per cent of the whites, felt they could take a personal problem to their foreman.

If the new employee is shy, frightened, and aloof, he may appear to have a chip on his shoulder, to be uncommunicative, and not to be trusted. A foreman then feels he cannot relax, have confidence in, and trust the new worker. This lack of an ability to communicate and trust easily leads to the employee dreading to get up in the morning to come to work. Hence absenteeism, and eventually another dropout.

The researchers were not able to obtain data sufficient to determine a correlation between management style and turnover and absenteeism. However, one final assembly area that now experiences a high rate of absenteeism was selected for some special focused interviews.

This is a case study of the style and effectiveness of foreman Walter Jezak and his successor Virgil Havlin. After Jezak left as foreman, the absentee rate almost doubled.

Cyril Ford, 43, is a highly regarded black in this final assembly unit. He worked for Jezak and now for Havlin, and he here describes the foreman's influence on the work group:

Ford: Sometimes I didn't feel good, I says, 'I'd better stay off the job' because I couldn't afford to lose my job. I didn't wanna get fired, so I don't go in. Cause I know this foreman's goin' to be harassing me all day, and me I might get hot and crack him, and that was gonna make it wrong and bad for all the guys. So, when you get a guy like that, you don't care if you get to work on time. I mean you don't push yourself to get there.

Cavanagh: Is that the biggest single problem do you think on guys not coming to work is the type of foreman?

Ford: I believe that is the real trouble here at Builtrite, as far as the guy being absent and this lackadaisy way of doing. This is the way the guys show they resent a guy, is halfway doing their job. Don't care if they do the job or don't get here on time. That's a lot of resentment. This is the way they can show that, 'I resent you.' You can't come out and tell a guy like you want to tell him. This is a form of expression that you can tell a guy that 'I don't think your so big,' and 'You don't know your job so good either.'

I've talked to several of the fellows. I say, 'Hey man, why don't you get here on time?' 'Aw, ford you know I gotta work for this so-and-so. I don't give a damn if I get here or not.'

Now when we had our other foreman, we didn't have all these grievances, these little petty differences all the time. And like this new guy is a pain in the neck. Every minute he had confusion. They got nine million foremen in this plant. They don't have this same confusion and resentment all day long.

Cavanagh: Is there anything else you can think of?

Ford: Well, I think there's another thing that really hurts this section here. The employees and the 'ministration, they don't seem to have a way they can communicate. So you can understand that this is proper and this is the right way to be doing this. And I think that would cut down a lot of resentment and this agitation.

Cavanagh: Communication--just talking to each other?

Ford: Yeah. Talking to each other, be able to understand why this is this, and that and what not.

Ford's previous foreman, Walter Jezak, had been transferred to another smaller unit because his production level was allegedly not up to par. However, Louis Govitz, a foreman in charge of production control, told us that the reason given was "a lot of hogwash." Jezak was doing as good as anybody. There were a lot of petty jealousies involved." Jezak was charged with fraternizing too much with his employees. The present foreman was sent in to "straighten the area out." This assembly unit has a high percentage of young blacks. It is generally considered to be a rough line, but absentee figures during the period Jezak was foreman are seen to be low: they fluctuated between 1.5 and 3.2 per cent. Now, under Havlin, the absentee rate is almost double: 5.4 per cent in February, 1969.

In further attempts to find the reasons for the growing absenteeism in this final assembly work unit, the researchers talked to Harvey Norton. Norton has an attendance problem himself. Yet he expresses himself freely, is happily married, and seems to be well adjusted. He admits that he has heard other guys say that Havlin is a "prejudiced son-of-a-gun," but he did not accept this. Now he admits that:

> He is not an understanding man, you know. To get more out of the guys--he is like a baby, you have to pacify him. You have to bend way over to try to find out what he wants . . .
>
> He is not competent in handling people. Now, everyone will agree 100 per cent with that. They

had five or six grievances filed against him, and everyone in our department signed them.

A bit later Norton describes his former foreman, Walter Jezak:

> Our foreman that was there got another job. He had been giving the guys a lot of breaks. But the guys had been doing extremely good for him. He palled around. He worked harder than the employees did. Getting around, gathered jobs that were supposed to have been done; and he would do it. We had little arguments, but it was never nothing.

Another reason for removing Jezak, according to his superiors, was that he got too close to the men working for him, that he did not demand enough respect from them. Richard Sims, a 31-year-old conveyor man, is in Jezak's new unit, and he gives one more view of the man:

Sims: We have a nice foreman. What I like about him, he's the type of man if he wants you to know somethin', he calls you into the office. He don't come out screamin' and hollerin' and all that. He calls you in the office, and he sit down and talk to you, and explain it to you. So far, he's had no problem and he's only been in our department a short time. But so far everybody likes him. He's the type of guy, he goes strictly by the book. I can honestly say this. He goes by the book, and he don't show no favoritism. And this I like. He treat one man just like he do the other. Now, I can't say that for all of them, but he do.

Cavanagh: Is he the sort of fellow that you could take a personal problem to?

Sims: I believe that you could. Because he seems to be the type of person that is concerned. And he seems to be the type of person that would try to understand your problem; and he would give you his best on it.

Another black from the same work group joined Sims in saying that he could get along well with his foremen.

The fact that these two, plus two others previously quoted, rate Jezak high is maybe significant when we recall that only 55 per cent of the blacks in the total sample felt favorably toward their foreman.

Walter Jezak, 40, worked his way up through the plant to his present job as foreman. He is one of the best-liked supervisors in the plant. As demonstrated, four of his men said that they got along very well with him and rate him as being very approachable, even for a personal problem. Jezak says about these young workers:

> I say this honestly. When they are properly instructed and advised as to what is expected of them, and shown the importance of this small part--that they may feel that they are contributing to a completed product--I find very little difference in whether the man is black, white, Spanish or whatever.

When Jezak moved to his new unit, he was faced with a problem of absenteeism and tardiness. He comments on how he handled it:

> Frankly, I spoke to every member of the department after I worked there a few weeks. I talked, with the attendance records of the previous year, and pointed out to the employee whether in my opinion he had a good record, a fair, or a down right lousy one. If it were just fair or lousy, I asked them why it was that way. In some cases it was just a matter of not being able to get up in the morning or things of this sort

Because he started out at the bottom of the ladder, Jezak realizes the importance of communicating with <u>all</u> employees, not just those with special problems. He recalls that he himself "always resented it if other people were interviewed or talked to and I was overlooked." The excuse,

"we don't have to talk to you--you're O.K.," really didn't satisfy his couriosity and concern.

From this one focused case study, it would seem that other things being equal, an open, concerned, and supportive attitude on the part of the foreman can lead to lower absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover. In any case, it is a very important contributing cause in the minds of the employees themselves.

There seems to be a clear link between a lack of understanding between a foreman and his work group and high absenteeism, turnover, and tardiness. If therefore a successful foreman must be open, concerned and supportive, is this achieved at the expense of plant discipline--not only for the sake of productivity, but ultimately for the sake of the worker?

Those aspects of management style that the researcher found to be necessary with the new work force to keep absenteeism, turnover, and tardiness within reasonable bounds are: (1) A personal interest in the worker; (2) effective communication with the individual worker; (3) honest and fair discipline.

Foreman's Interest, Communication and Discipline

Young blacks demand that a foreman be supportive. A supportive foreman is open to his men, and is interested in them both as workers and as persons.

In order to get some information on the importance and the frequency of these qualities in the foremen, the researchers asked questions such as: Do you think you could take a personal problem to your foreman? Do you think it helps to have the sort of foreman that you could bring a personal problem to?

The positive responses the employees gave to these questions provide a graphic and sympathetic picture of the type of foreman they would like to have:

James Ricker, 23, black assembler from Alabama: If a man has a personal problem, he may not be able to perform his job right. If the foreman can help him in any way on his personal problem, you have a better employee. A foreman should show interest in an employee, not only because he's on a certain job, but even in his personal matters. As a matter of fact, I think that this is one of the things that makes a good foreman.

Thomas Ramsey, 33, white Mississippi-born assembler: I surely would take a personal problem to my foreman. And I have, lots of times. I would take him a problem more so than anyone else that works here. He also talks a few things over with me when he has a problem. He's all right. Very good.

Gary Rogers, 19, white apprentice, when asked about his foreman: Gray is tremendous. If there was any foreman I would want to work under for the rest of my life, it would be Matt Gray. . . . If you have a problem at home, you can go to Matt Gray and talk to him. He's very reasonable, very soft-spoken man. He's the type of foreman who's busy but he'll find time; and he'll go out of his way for you.

DeWitt Draper, 33, Negro finisher; describing his foreman, Charles Eliot: He never jump on you. That's one good thing. The way he goes about things it's easy to understand. You know you got a foreman but you feel like he works right along with you, so you're not scared. He's never sayin' 'You're doin' this wrong!' This is where the foreman comes in. Show him, help him. This makes the job bigger and better . . .

Eliot, the very well-liked black foreman, agrees:

Eliot: All reprimands should be done in private. It should be done alone, so that he can go back and tell the guys that he give me hell instead of me given' him hell. Then he feels a lot better, see? . . . I personally take time out to walk around, because it pays a lot of dividends.

Purcell: Yeah, it does pay off, does it?

Eliot: Yeah, it pays off because the kids, they got to know that you care. If they feel that you're not interested in 'em, they don't take interest in the job.

A younger but quite successful black foreman, Harry Ellcock makes much the same point:

> I think that this is the type of relation that you should have with your employees. Not being mean and harsh to them, you know, 'I'm the boss.' You have to get to know the people because the people makes you. The foreman is nothin' without the people.

The dimensions and direction of the problem can be suggested by the responses: 86 per cent of the whites, but only 51 per cent of the younger blacks (and only 30 per cent of the still younger black assemblers!) feel that they <u>could</u> take a personal problem to their foreman.

Almost all of the Builtrite foremen have come up through the ranks. They are not college men. They have worked in the plant, and they know the plant. One of the foremen, John Clay, points out:

> You're dealing with people. And you've got to know how to live and handle people, if you're dealing with people. All the education in the world can't help you on that. That's not an easy job.

Being promoted from within the plant without any special training or preparation, can make Builtrite foremen more hard-nosed, more production-oriented. They may have less time, interest, and sensitivity for personal problems.

Communication is also important for the new employee. Misunderstandings then often result from a lack of information. For example, quite frequently the younger worker does not understand the cost and great inconvenience that results to his fellow employees and to his supervisor when he is absent or late. A new young supervisor, John Clay, explains:

> I'm not bothered too much with absenteeism, because I make a point of stressing on the people how important it is that they are here, and that they are here on time. Because it has to be a group function. Otherwise, you are hurting yourself, and you're hurting the people around you. You owe it to yourself and you owe it to the group, you owe it to your fellow workers, your fellow employees to be here. And you owe it to them to be here on time.

As a more systematic approach to the communications, Builtrite has periodically experimented with a program of "Round Table Meetings" in some units. The foreman gathers his work group together for a discussion on some common problem such as quality or safety. But the communication is mostly one-way. Employees claim that there is little chance for them to really say what is on their minds.

Even hard-line top manager Louis Tobias thinks that better communications through the use of meetings is very important. He discribes his plans:

> I'm also starting a program, and I've asked Employee Relations to help me: on these foremen and general foremen holding meetings with five or six different people every day. When you're finished that 200 people, start over again. But I need help to do that, I need fresh ideas into their heads. Because the foreman is busy. He's busy trying to run that damn line. And his mind is crowded with his quality, his scrap, his attendance, getting cost reductions, getting suggestions. There's a thousand things this guy has to do, so we've got to be able to feed him material to talk to people about.

Tobias' proposal gets support from an intelligent young black assembler in his plant, Jermiah Collins feels that this sort of small meeting would be successful, providing that they are informal enough to encourage free and open discussion between the workers and their foreman:

> They should split up all the units. You should get these people together and talk to them. Because the union only have maybe a half of the people out here. And they don't go to the union meetings. But split the units up, and have your own little meetings, in your own group. And have <u>open</u> discussion like--you want to talk to your foreman. And let him be the head of the thing, and <u>then</u> maybe you can get up and talk to him the way you wanted--openly.

Collins felt that the other employees <u>would</u> bring up their problems at these meetings, if they had the opportunity. Collins himself had many problems and suggestions. He was critical, and in many instances constructively critical, of his foreman, his job, and the company. He quit his job in September 1969. Perhaps if Tobias had acted more quickly on his proposal, Collins would still be at Builtrite.

The foreman is the central figure here, and he is aware of the need. With some planning, the foreman could be given time, help, and be encouraged to communicate better

with his own workers. And this communication could help to lower turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness.

Fair and honest plant discipline is also very important for the new work force. The rising need for personal concern for the individual worker and better communication with him does not lessen the need for plant discipline. Perhaps a new style of discipline is called for, but all agree that discipline is essential.

The best liked foremen who have argued persuasively for closer personal relationships and better communication argue just as vehemently for discipline. Charles Eliot, in speaking of the new work force:

> The foreman must not establish two different sets of standards. He has to set the guideline, and it is going to be that way continuously. He can't do it temporarily. I think this is a mistake we make in getting new peoples in, we give them help too long.

Although Eliot holds that all reprimands should be done in private and not on the plant floor, he also feels that the verbal reprimand is not used enough:

> I think where we make one of our mistakes is that we don't give them this little reprimand soon enough. It's not anything that affects their record, because after 12 months it is automatically thrown out. But it does have an effect. It shows that it's possible that something could happen, if it continues. It sorta shakes them up a little bit. But if you let it go too long, if he got in a rut, it don't make no difference.

In handling absenteeism and tardiness, another well-liked foreman, Walter Jezak, admits that he is reluctant to reprimand anyone. But he goes on to say that, for some,

"It works wonders." He quotes himself as telling his problem employees:

> Get in on time. I need you here. We have a line going. We need to fill this hole when you're not here. I can't have you coming in an hour later. This business spreads like a cancer.

However, if they don't respond, he feels it is necessary to discipline them. And he does. He told about one man who had been spoken to, then even given a written reprimand, and he continued his absenteeism. So:

> It was policy. I would have to give him three days off without pay. I think that that man, when he came back, worked somewhere near one year without being tardy or absent after that.

For many in the plant, discipline is too lax. Some whites accuse management of being much more lenient on the young blacks, "They let 'em get away with murder." Perhaps one reason foremen are more tolerant of the tardiness and absenteeism of young blacks is the fear that they might quit. They would then face the prospect of training a new man, breaking him in. And he may well be harder to get along with than his predecessor.

When asked about discipline, Paul Shephard, a manager of Employee Relations at Metropol Builtrite, admits:

> It's clear from the record, that in certain areas, we are too lax. Because if you look at a given area that has minimal discipline, and this has been done in two of the plants now, you'll see a correlation between that and high absenteeism. Then you look at other areas that have pretty tight discipline, and his absenteeism is much better.

In explaining the correlation, Shephard goes on:

> If an individual or group of them get the feeling that the foreman doesn't care that they don't come in, or that they're tardy three days a week, they'll be tardy.

Two different foreman stances on absenteeism and discipline are illustrated by the experiences of two young blacks, Hilton Jordan and Todd Atkins. Jordan, 25, is a punch press operator. When asked if some men come in late or absent often, Jordan replies:

Jordan: Yeah, I mean, I come late sometimes. Sometimes I be late. Don't seem to be just no problem, though, you know.

Cavanagh: What happens when you come late?

Jordan: Well, most of the times, you call in. And tell them you'll be late. You can get stuck in traffic . . .

Contrast Jordan's relaxed attitude toward his own tardiness with that of Todd Atkins, a young black assembler, who had been identified as having an absentee and tardiness problem:

> They give you a hard time about not being late. You be two minutes late and then they come buggin' you (said disgustedly). You know, buggin' you. They give you a hard time about that. And then, you know, as you sick, they'd bug you. You'd had to be <u>awful</u> sick 'fore them to let you go home. But any white person, Puerto Rican or somethin', they want to go home. It's Okay.

Within a few weeks after we talked to Atkins, he was fired for "failure to keep supervisor notified monthly of illness status."

A young but rather successful black foreman in assembly, Harry Ellcock, realizes the difficult position

he and his fellow foremen are in. He is well aware of the atmosphere that can be created when discipline is not administered fairly and consistently. Ellcock describes a man who had been coming in late regularly:

> So I said: 'The next time that you come in at 12, without calling me or anything, I'll send you back home.' And I sent him back home. The last two weeks I've been watching, and he hasn't been tardy. And he's been here the full week.

He can see what happens when the foreman has two standards. He tells about another tardiness problem:

> I said, 'Just takes a second to put a dime in and say, 'Well, look, I'd like to come in a little late; I have this problem.' But they don't call! So, OK, you let him go. So two or three days later, another man does the same thing. Then what do you do? Can't send them all home. So pretty soon, everybody starts doing the same tning, and this is getting out of control. If you don't stop it then, you're in trouble.

Foremen are unanimous in their insistance that uniform plant discipline is essential. A young black supervisor, John Clay, rejects a double work standard for the disadvantaged, after they have learned their job. He feels that perhaps too many of the foremen are afraid of the young blacks, "Don't let the black employee do it, because he is black and you expect it of him." Clay is convinced that uniform and fair discipline will result in "less termination of these kids, hard kids, poor kids, kids that we have here."

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XIV

[1]Of the total of 78 hourly Builtrite interviews, 50 blacks and whites and 10 Spanish speakers fell into the sample. Naturally the plant-wide attitudes and percentages are computed using only the sample. But in addition a number of other employees were specially interviewed because of the insights they might provide. Some of these were absentee or tardy problems themselves or worked in units with a high absentee record.

On turnover: at least three of the men interviewed have since quit or been fired. Ideally, a researcher might interview a sample of men who are no longer with the company. The Institute of Social Research of the University of Michigan tried this approach several years ago at the request of Builtrite, but gave up in despair. They found it almost impossible to locate the men who had quit or had been fired. They had moved. Neighbors would not give them information, in spite of the fact that those who went into the black neighborhoods were themselves black. And it was very time consuming to get just one interview. After beginning the study, they gave it up as impractical.

[2]This was also suggested by Charles R. Walker, et al., in their The Foreman on the Assembly Line (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 17, 123, 143.

[3]The researchers spoke to all five of the American Negro Foremen at the plant, but only two of them fell into the random sample.

CHAPTER XV

THE JOB AND FRUSTRATIONS OF YOUTH BRING TURNOVER

The high turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness rates at the Builtrite plants were indicated earlier (for example, see Table 13). The last section focused on what may be the most important single factor that influences job tenure: relations with the foreman.

This section will take up the remainder of the reasons "why they don't stay:" inadequate orientation, poor working conditions and unfriendly relations with co-workers, monotonous jobs, restless youth, and easy availability of other jobs.

Inadequate Orientation to the Factory

A variety of present Builtrite experimental efforts toward a better orientation, plus the contents and the impact of these orientation sessions, were presented above (pp. 232-233). Here the testimony of the foremen and workers themselves will underscore the need for a more thorough, effective orientation.

There is an abrupt gap between the spontaneous life of the street corner and the patterned, planned life of the factory. For many of these young men, the closest thing

that they have experienced to this patterned life is the school. And school has rarely been a successful experience for them. But now it is more serious. Their paycheck and perhaps their staying on at Builtrite depends on their getting to work each day and on time. They are not prepared for this sudden transition. It is psychologically wrenching, and the two and one-half hour orientation does little to bridge the gap.

Often foremen complained that a new employee would call in with a plausible excuse that he would not be able to come in to work that day. For example, he might say he had to take his wife to the hospital. An hour later the wife calls, asking for her husband. But the foreman quickly adds, "When I got 'em here, they work hard."

In most cases, the ultimate reason for this sort of staying away that the worker's initial expectations are too high. He thought he would be making more money, or that he would get a quick promotion, or that the work would be easier or more interesting. To show his disappointment and frustration with the company and the job, the young man often simply does not come to work.

A 26-year old black transferman, Elliott Thompkins, who has been with Builtrite for less than a year, tells about his false impressions:

> Well, I guess, for the work you do, they're not payin' you the money you're supposed to be getting. They tell you one thing over there, when you go for employment. Then you get here, it's another thing.

> They say you'll be makin' this and that. But when you get here, you won't be makin' that. I don't know what they been sayin'. Plus you have to do a whole lot of work, and they're not holding to their promises.

Incentive pay is generally difficult to explain. It is even more difficult to explain to the young man with high, unrealistic aspirations and expectations. And yet wages are an extremely important element in the attitudes of the new work force toward their job: if pay is not what they had expected, chances are they will become dissatisfied with their job.[1]

A 28-year-old, well-educated black foreman, John Afese, agrees that expectations are too high:

> I think that there is a need for personnel or some training program for these people to be clear on expectations. Because their expectations are way too high for what the company or any organization can offer. . . . Because if a guy has a high expectation, and feels that he is cheated by the organization, then that organization, as far as he is concerned, is useless.

In addition to false expectations, the new young worker also often lacks both basic information and a sense of being a part of a team, according to a young articulate black union officer, Jeff Streisfeld. When asked what he thought the basic causes of tardiness and absenteeism were, he replied:

Streisfeld: It could be due to two or three reasons. One is intimidation. A guy can only take so much. And before you hit a guy, he rather start laying off a couple of days to cool off.

Cavanagh: You think that's a problem? Some of the guys just don't come in because they . . .

Streisfeld: Right. They don't feel a part of this operation. They don't get enough responsibility. In other words, they're just like robots, just like a machine. You come in, and you put a screw in. You do this constantly, day after day. I think there should be more informative meetings between the company and the people. I mean assembly hours. I mean you got to invent how important this product is to a individual, make him feel a part of it.

Two middle-aged blacks who have come up the hard way Lawton Pierce and Benjamin Howard have some insights into the attitudes of the new work force. Pierce had been thrown out of a number of schools, but he finally got his high school degree from a school for problem teenagers. He now has a well-paying and responsible craftsman's job. Pierce pictures the young man, much like himself, coming into the plant for the first time:

> I think a company has an obligation, not only to give a person a job. I think they have an obligation to orientate the person to the job and the particular people they are working around. . . . What I'm saying is if my people had some history of a past. But for them there is no past. So, it's unfair to bring a person in here. Possibly the guy's just out of high school or didn't finish high school. He walks in here. He might be here a month before he actually found out what we're making in this place, because he's stuck in one part of the plant. Well, I think he should be orientated to how his job, how the whole structure is put together. But, now to ask the company to go out on a limb and to give the hard-core employee a job, and then teach them all the other things, in my opinion it's a little too much to ask of a company. But, if the company is going to make this investment, then it's only a small investment to go a little further.

Benjamin Howard is a 20-year Builtrite veteran black. He now drives an electric truck, but began at the bottom, unloading trucks at the receiving dock. He says that he

would like to talk to some of these young men coming into the plant:

> When a young fella come in, he should have one of the older fellas like myself that come up the hard way, talk to these guys. I'd tell them, 'You're makin' over a hundred dollars a week. When I started I was makin' nine dollars a week. You can afford to buy a car. When I come up, I couldn't buy the hubcaps.' We had two or three families livin' in one flat to pay the rent. We had it rough. Now, they got all these opportunities. Now let's knuckle down an take advantage of it, fellas. An' if you don't want to work, don't tell the man you wanna work. Leave the job open for some guy who does wanna work.

It would seem that some of the straight talk that both Pierce and Howard recommend would help. Both "come up the hard way." Both are direct, honest, and mature. They are not uncle Toms, yet they have the wisdom that goes with experience, both in living and in working.

In Pierce's words, if Builtrite is going to bring in new young workers, then "it's only a small investment to go a little further." And perhaps this small early investment would save much later on. Assuming a quite conservative hiring and training cost of $200 per employee (not counting psychic effort and wear on personnel and the foreman), the almost 900 new employees who left in 1968 after only a short stay with the company represent a loss to Builtrite of $170,000. A fraction of this is enough to pay for a thorough orientation and the salaries of several counselors.

Heavy, Dirty Work and Unfriendly Fellow Workers

It has already been pointed out that absentee and turnover rates are high among both young whites and young blacks. But, since blacks are being hired at a rate of two and a half times that of whites, it is not surprising that a majority of the absentee problems are young blacks. According to the absentee survey conducted for Builtrite, three-quarters of all absenteeism was concentrated in 15 per cent of the work force.[2] The report paints a profile of the "absent prone" employee: Negro, male, under 30, working on an assembly job, in a unit of more than 35 employees, with less than two years of seniority.[3] Six units in refrigerator, mainly assembly areas, contributed 49 per cent of the total absenteeism. In these units Negroes represent less than one-third of the work groups, but account for two-thirds of total absenteeism.

Typical of all three plants, there are two main sections of the assembly work: the beginning of the line, where we find most of the heavy work, such as dropping refrigerator cabinets into place on the line; and further up the line is the less strenuous hand work and testing. These latter more-skilled and higher-paid jobs are filled largely with white workers. The Negroes, mostly because they are new hires with less seniority, often find themselves on the heavier jobs at the beginning of the line.

This unintentional segregation is apparent to anyone walking through the plant; and it accounts for a great deal of black resentment.

Some few blacks feel that racial discrimination exists: eight per cent of the blacks interviewed felt that their boss discriminated. But it is true that until the last few years, a black man had little chance to advance at Builtrite. And there remain shadows of the image of the Negro chained to a menial job, no matter how hard he works or how motivated he is.

Promotions and attitudes toward promotion will be treated in detail in a later section. But it may be noted here that whereas 23 per cent of the white workers felt that they personally did not have a fair chance for promotion, 41 per cent of the blacks felt this way. Even more to the point here, when black workers are divided into non-assemblers and assemblers, only 20 per cent of the non-assemblers but a huge 70 per cent of the assemblers feel that they do not have a fair chance for promotion.[4]

Assemblers tend to be either recently hired employees, or those with few skills. For the recently hired, their perception of not having a fair chance is not always accurate. As they build up seniority, they can move up or transfer out of assembly work. For the unskilled, perhaps their perceptions are more correct. And the attitudes of these older, unskilled people may influence the new employees.

About half of the jobs at Builtrite are assembly. So the attitude of the majority of the ordinary assemblers--that they are working on dead-end jobs with no chance for upgrading or promotion--is a significant factor leading to job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover.

Delvin Pace, a black conveyor man and union steward, said that once assigned to assembly it is hard to get off: "They've got it so fouled up, it's a cryin' shame." If a man transfers to another job, he often has to take a lower grade job. And if it doesn't work out, it is almost impossible to get the old job back, "it's like a blind date."

A black who sees no chance for moving up in the company would be less apt to consider a good attendance record as an asset for promotion, an investment in the future.

Negroes on the assembly line often complain that their jobs are heavy, low-paid, and even hazardous in some cases. Delvin Pace feels that the young black gets the heavier and harder jobs:

Cavanagh: Is there much of a problem in the guys coming to work on time?

Pace: Yes. That is a problem, because the job is hard. Let's don't lie about it; it's a hard job. You've got a hard work day. You go to work from 10-11 hours a day, which is bad. . . . They don't put much pressure on guys to come in on time, though, because they <u>can't</u>. They're workin' 'em like mules. They work <u>pretty</u> hard.

Many blacks feel that their physical strength should not be used against them. They see the Spanish speaking,

who are generally smaller in stature, being placed on easier jobs. They feel that if the company needs workers to lift heavy appliance cabinets, they should be willing to pay accordingly. Other blacks complain about the hazard of working with acid, or the annoyance and small cuts received from installing fiberglass insulation.

The lower paying, unskilled jobs have the highest absentee and turnover rates: janitors, sanitary service, and lower-paid assembly workers. The older white maintenance and set-up men, who are highly skilled and the best paid of the hourly workers, have the best attendance records.

A friendly and helpful atmosphere is created in a work group, not only by the foreman as we have seen, but also by the workers themselves. The men working in the immediate surrounding area are in a position to help the new man learn his job and to get acquainted with the company and the other workers.

Rodger Lendau, of Tri-Faith Employment Project in Chicago, says that one of the most important elements contributing to length of job tenure is having "buddies on the job." If the new employee gets up in the morning somewhat looking forward to coming in to see his friends again, chances are he will stick with his job longer. If the work group is unfriendly or even hostile, he will dread coming to work, and will probably not stay with the job very long. One indication of the friendliness of the work

group is their readiness to help a new fellow worker. Only 16 per cent of the whites but 42 per cent of the blacks said that their fellow employees did not help them to learn their job when they first came on it.

Builtrite has made some attempt at exit interviews. They found them generally unsatisfactory, both because it was difficult to find most of the men who had been terminated and also because they could develop no universally applicable coding system to analyze the data in the interviews.

The author was given the opportunity to interview a man who had come in for his final check after being fired the week before. He had simply walked off the job three days in a row. Hank Clifford is 17 years old, white, and worked on final assembly. Since it was clear that he was not happy with his work, the researcher asked him why:

Clifford: I just didn't like it. It's not that I didn't like the people around me, it seems like just that I didn't get along with them, or they didn't get along with me.

Cavanagh: What sort of thing was that? You mean they wouldn't talk?

Clifford: They wouldn't talk. And when they did, they'd say something I wouldn't like, and I didn't want to start any trouble or nothing.

Cavanagh: What would they say, for example?

Clifford: OK. They'd say 'Why don't you get your ass in here you fucking white boy?' and stuff like that. I didn't like it, but I didn't want no trouble. . . . I just didn't enjoy working. It was good hours, good pay, but I can't work in a place where I don't feel comfortable.

A while later Clifford elaborates on what made him feel uncomfortable:

Clifford: I like to associate with people, get to know 'em, talk, you know, have a little fun while you're working, too. That comes in handy as long as you're being careful about what you're doing. Because you can't work, you know, isolated from everybody. On my lunch hour, I just used to sit there all by myself and eat my lunch, disgusted and fed up. . . .

Normally I can make friends faster than anybody I've ever known. But I felt it was taking too long, and it wasn't going to work. I was unhappy with the job, I mean as far as the boring work, and I couldn't get any communication with anybody. I just didn't like it that way.

Cavanagh: How was the first day?

Clifford: The first day was so confused and mixed up, I didn't know what I was doing. I was so slow. I hardly did anything, because I couldn't do it right. The second day was different. It seemed like I had been there for a couple days, and I knew what I was doing. And the people around me were--well, they weren't friendly, but they didn't say nothing.

Clifford's reaction to his first day of work helps to explain the finding of a 1966 Builtrite report[5] that 7.6 per cent of new employees don't make it through the first day.

The first day of work in a new, foreign, hostile environment can be a threat to a young and insecure person. His peer group and their cavalier "put down" can be devastating. For the young and the black worker, personal relations are very important. If he fails in this, it can challenge his self-image.

Builtrite now no longer sponsors picnics, dances, and parties as they did in the ethnic days. There are now

even fewer opportunities for employees to get to know each other in a relaxed atmosphere. This seems ironic, since personal relationships are perhaps even more important to the new work force than they were 30 years ago.

The Assembly Line and Little Responsibility

As noted earlier, most of the turnover and absenteeism occurs in the assembly work units. These jobs are most often mechanically paced, repetitive, and monotonous.[6] And it is precisely these qualities that the workers most object to.

The large number of repetitive, unskilled jobs that Builtrite has is an advantage in that they are able to employ men with relatively few skills and only the briefest job training program is required. But the lack of interest and even tension that is often produced by these repetitive jobs sometimes results in job dissatisfaction and eventually in absenteeism and turnover.

A 23-year-old, conscientious black assembler who has been with Builtrite for more than three years describes the feeling of working on the line:

Simpson: I don't know if I want to do that all my life--the assembly lines.

Purcell: It must get boring.

Simpson: Yes, it does. Same thing. You don't seem to be gettin' anywhere. No matter how many times you do it, you do it again. (uncomfortable laugh) I like to do a job that you can get assigned to and maybe give you a couple o' days to finish it. When

Simpson (cont.): you accomplish somethin', you wanna see it. (Chuckles) Look at somethin' and say: 'Well, I did this.' Especially you don't even get to see the range. You just makin' the cook top. Some thing. All the wires handing out. You put in maybe six or seven screws and then here come another one look, just like it. . . . On a job like that, you don't feel like you really needed.

Alfred Porter, another assembler of the same age and experience as Simpson, agrees:

> I do this job every day. It's all right, but you get bored sometimes on one job. You feel you want to be switched around sometime. But I never gets the chance to get the opportunity to do another job, or a job that's maybe a little easier. I'm forever on the same job, every day.

But merely switching a man from job to job is not the answer. Paradoxically, it is necessary to put a man on a new job when absenteeism is high. For example, on Monday after Friday payday, the foreman often must ask a man to fill in for an absent fellow worker on a temporary job. But for some of the new young work force, the job is the first element of stability in their lives. If they are moved, they must learn a new job--perhaps resulting in new insecurities. They get the feeling that they are not really needed to do their job, they are merely fill-in men, a part of the production process, an interchangeable part, like a conveyor or an automatic screwdriver.

Foreman Harry Ellcock says that sometimes his men just walk off the job, when he tries to put them on a different job. Once a young disadvantaged person learns his job, he has some confidence in his ability to do it. To

move him is painful, yet it presents a new challenge when he must prove himself again with another risk of failure. Simpson again explains:

> My hands are kind of fat and some of those jobs I couldn't do. You might be here for maybe two or three years and you want everybody to think you can do everything, although you really can't do it. You be doing this job, and then they put you on this new job and you fall down on the line. They got to stop the line and wait on you. And they don't want to take the chance of bein' put on something they can't do.

Simpson's hard won status can be destroyed in one catastrophic moment of humiliation. Neal Mitchell and James Ricker both black assemblers, feel the same way. Says Mitchell:

> Some of them's being switched to a higher skill level job without getting higher pay. I don't think this is fair. And sometimes this happens several times a week. I don't want to be switched around. When I come in every day to work, I want to know what I'm doin', you know?

When an employee is used frequently as a fill-in, he begins to feel that his contributions are not important: "Anybody can do my job. They don't need me." So he will be less apt to think twice before taking a day off.

The worker has no control over the speed of the line; in fact, the pace of the line determines how fast he must work. Harvey Norton, another black on assembly, explains how the pacing effects him:

> You get 25 minutes to eat your lunch. As soon as you get through, or before you're through eating, you walk right back to work. The line is rolling, you know. And your dinner is going down. Well, they say that you cannot get cramps in the heat if you eat your lunch and then go right to work. I told

> them: 'Oh, yes you can. Oh, yes you can.' Not all the people. Some of the people. All people's stomachs don't work according to others. You will get cramps. I know that for a fact.

Most assembly workers said that their job required very little skill. Many were apologetic perhaps embarrassed. Listen to several young black assemblers:

> James Ricker: The job really doesn't take much training. You can learn it in--Oh, gee whiz--a matter of seconds. You're not doin' anything complicated that would take maybe a day or two to train you in. Maybe you might have to put on a nut here and tighten it up, which I do. Maybe run a wire through a hole and tighten it up, and put a fitting on it.

> William Flech: It's just a job, because there's really nothing to it. Make doors. Put the fiberglass in, the cover on. A 12-year-old could do it. It's very easy. . . . I'm gonna look for a job somewhere else.

> Harvey Norton: It ain't nothin' to learn. You just grab a cabinet and drop it. (He laughs).

> Russell Simpson: I don't particular like workin' on the assembly line. . . . On a job like that you don't feel like you're really <u>needed</u>. You can be doin' the job and you want a relief or somethin'. Then you call somebody over and show him what you're doin'. And you show him what you're doin'. (He chuckles) . . . If you come in late somebody else might be doin' the job, and they might (chuckles) put you anywhere.

The chuckles and self-devaluation exhibited in these comments on the skill required for their job seems to exhibit a sense of inferiority.[7]

Even though the assemblers agree that little skill is required for their job, many nevertheless feel that they get too little training for their job. While 80 per cent of both assembly and non-assembly whites and non-assembly blacks felt that they received adequate training for their

jobs, only 50 per cent of the black assemblers felt that they were adequately trained for their jobs. The latter are almost all young, black, unskilled and on the job for only a short time.

The mechanical pacing, the repetitiveness of the line brings to the worker feelings of domination by the job, futility, isolation and powerlessness.[8] It is not surprising, then, that the highest turnover and absenteeism is found in assembly work groups. Job redesign would be expensive, but should not be dismissed too readily. Nevertheless, the researcher would agree with foreman Charles Eliot that every job should be fully explained to the new worker--and in terms of its contribution to the final electrical appliance: "Give him a little responsibility that he can take a part in it, and feel pride in it."

Most of the work and the pay incentives are on a group basis. There is little chance for the individual worker to take pride in "his" accomplishment, his product. Listen to Russell Simpson once more:

Simpson: I don't know anybody out there. It's all right sometimes, but I hate the thought of comin' here all the time. You know, same thing. Like when I was workin' at Sears. If dey had paid me more money, I probably would still be workin' there, because I liked it. I had more responsibility there on the job. I had a much better attendance workin' there. I was there every day. If I didn't come in, then they couldn't do it. Dey couldn't go bring over somebody and say: 'Go do Russell's job.'

Purcell: This had to be done by you.

Simpson: Ahuh. A good example is this one guy who's a friend of mine. He had a bad record, you know. Every week he was at least late twice. Off all the time. He put in for upgrade, and then they made him an inspector over there. And now, every day he's here, every day.

Several other supervisors reported the same sort of reaction to a promotion and greater responsibility. One case was quite similar to that described by Simpson: A man was promoted to inspector, and his attendance record vastly improved. Another was the case of a young black secretary who was part of a pool. She was not responsible to one single person, and her attendance record was very poor. Once she was made a personal secretary she was in on time every day.

The man who had an attendance and tardiness problem was often not the taciturn, and uninterested person who was unwilling to work that the author had as a stereotype. He demonstrated a surprising desire for a pride in himself and his work.

For example, one of these men showed his sense of pride by being quite embarrassed to admit that his second moonlighting job was dishwashing. He also indicated that the biggest single reason he dropped out of school was because he didn't have good clothes to wear to school. He pointed to his work pants: "You can't wear this kind of clothes. You gotta look good when you're at school."

Given this at least latent desire to be proud of themselves and their job, work with no challenge or responsibility is soon disliked.

View of Work

Up to this point the focus has been on factors outside the worker as contributing to turnover and absenteeism: relations with the foreman, orientation, working conditions, and the job.

The focus now will be on the employee himself. What sort of person is he? What is his background, his concerns? What is it that makes him so restless, so difficult to satisfy? Is his job-hopping a reflection of home and neighborhood instabilities that might be rectified, or does it mark the end of the "puritan work ethic?"

Job-hopping is not uncommon. The author found it often in the other two plants that were studied. But it is clearly much more a problem in Metropol, where the 1969 turnover was 42 per cent (see Table 13) and was largely concentrated among the young people. The problem is not restricted to blacks, but because blacks make up a larger portion of the young new work force, they account for much of Builtrite's problems.

World and local conditions, the Vietnam war, and the draft have also been unsettling. And the young worker is touched much more by these conditions. Benjamin Howard, a 50-year-old black trucker sees them as an important factor in absenteeism:

> These fellows figure they got nothing to look forward to but to be drafted. So he better squeeze as much life in a short space of time. They whoopin' it up, havin' a good time, because they don't know

> when they going to be called to Vietnam. They don't think like an older guy is thinking about security and his home and family, about taking care of his money. But these young guys figure that every day is a day to live.

This restlessness is almost a way of life with many of the young. Personal fulfillment through a diversity of experiences, job and otherwise, is of great importance. Many are not yet ready to take on the responsibility that comes with a family.

Who are these restless youth we are talking about? Are they youth in general, or are they primarily blacks? A hint of the answer is given in the comment of a 30-year veteran general foreman, Louis Govitz. He said that absentee problems at Builtrite began in the 1950s when the appolocians and the Spanish speaking young people first came into the work force. Govitz says that they knew which models were harder to work on, and how the work was scheduled, so they would take off on the day of a tough model.

The whites in the plant are generally longer service people. A personnel man said that 90 per cent of the whites have been with Builtrite for 10 to 15 years or more.[9] They have considerable seniority, and are not so free to leave as the young people are. For a more detailed breakdown of age and service of the sample, see Table 14.

Since the youngest and the shortest service group in the plant is the blacks, it is not surprising that turnover and absenteeism are higher among them.

TABLE 14.--Biographical Data on Metropol Hourly Employees.

	Whites N=25	Negroes N=25	Spanish Speaking N=10
Age	44.2	29.7	32.0
Years of Service	16.4	3.6	5.7
Average Education in Years	10.5	11.5	9.3
Single Marital States	16%	32%	40%
Birthplace			
North Central	60%	20%	0%
Deep South	24%	76%	0%
Other U.S.	12%	4%	0%
Outside U.S.	4%	0%	100%
Shift Worked at Plant			
First	80%	56%	70%
Second	20%	44%	30%
Rate Per Hour at Plant	$3.21	$2.70	$2.72

Average figures are means.

Todd Atkins, who has a poor attendance record himself, explains how hard it would be to just move on, if he were married:

Atkins: Most people still ne'er worked no more than 'bout three days befoe they quit. Some of 'em don't even stay there a day.

Cavanagh: Is that right? Some guys that come on the line?

Atkins: That come on the line. . . . And you know 'bout a man. He's desperate for work, cause you catch most these dudes comin' out of school. They not lookin' for no jobs, 'cause they probably work awhile, work two to three weeks, and they quit. They've gotta walk the streets, and do that kind of work.

Cavanagh: If you have some money. You need some money, though.

Atkins: Yeah. You know, most kids raised in the North. They just carry on 'til they get somethin' to eat--probably lookin' for book work.

Cavanagh: How about if a guy had a family, though. That'd be kinda hard, if he didn't have a job, wouldn't it?

Atkins: If he had a family, it'd be kinda hard? It'd be hard! They probably find you a job you don't want, but you have to stick with it. If you got a family, you got to feed 'em, and so he have to stick with the job.

Atkins has since left Builtrite. Of the three men who have left the plant since we talked to them, only one was married. And he was 23 years old with no children.

The young men who quit or allow themselves to be fired know that they will have no trouble finding another job. Harry Ellcock, a black foreman, says he's "seen fellas walk right out of here and walk right over to Taylor's across Second Street and get another job." Ellcock, goes on describing the absent and tardy prone employee:

> They are the young people. I'd say between 23 and 26. And they're the ones who really don't want to work no overtime. And they take these days off. They're used to working only three or four days a week, so it's in them. So how long does it take to change them? You try to change them by talking to them, and by giving them a verbal reprimand and maybe a warning notice. But then they slack from under you again with that same absentee problem or tardiness.

For Richard Masterson, another black assembler, Atkins is right: his family ties him to his job:

Masterson: Right now I'm not satisfied, but I know I gotta do it, because I gotta family. I'm not gonna make dem suffer for something that I don't like. So I do the job. And tha's why I do it.

Cavanagh: Is there much of a problem of guys coming in late or missing work in your unit?

Masterson: No. They don't have any problem too much because mostly everybody in there is married. . . . Just about everybody I talk to--they married and they gotta family. They tell me, 'Yeah, man, that's the reason why I stick with it. Cause I gotta family and dey got to eat.' Mostly everybody on that end of the line, they really loves their families.

But there are more Todd Atkins' than Richard Mastersons'. Fifty per cent of those hired in 1968 left before the end of that year. Many of these young people have little understanding of the need for being at work on time every day: the problems of running an assembly line, the inconvenience to others, etc. A day lost from work means only the loss of a day's pay for them. And they may not <u>need</u> that day's pay. They may be making more money in a day at Builtrite than in a week in Mississippi.

The will to get to work every day and on time does not come naturally: it is learned. The experience of industry in trying to build up a work force in South America, Asia, and Africa attests to this. Our family training and school systems have tended to support the habits necessary for an industrial society.

From the evidence above, the author concludes that one of the factors contributing to turnover and absenteeism is that the new employee's value system, goals, and world view, whether articulated or not do not mesh with that which is demanded of a person working in an industrial plant.

Broken homes, frequent moves and few permanent friends can undermine a person's self-image and his security. Three-fourths of the blacks in the plant were born in the rural Deep South. The life style that they develop in the South is not best suited to an industrial environment. In the South work hours on the farm were more flexible. A certain amount of work was to be done, but scheduling the work was in the hands of the individual.

Lawton Pierce, a black skilled tradesman in the plant, reflects on the importance of an employee's background:

> As far as I can trace the history of the black man in city of Metropol the migrates from the South have always settled on the west side. They bring their traditions, they ways, they modes with them. Because it's closer, most of the black employees are from the west side. They were southern in performance. They had a certain amount of work to do, and they got it done in a day's time. But they didn't have to start at eight o'clock. Not only the blacks, but what we call the hillbillys are the same way.

Many of these black men were born into families of sharecroppers in a heavily paternalistic society where rewards were not tied to effort and output, but more to the image that the black man projects to the white man (what whites <u>think</u> of him: keeps his place, says "Yessah," etc.). The young black rebels at this obsequiousness. He often resolves that he will "be his own man;" he will not take orders from another, especially a white man.

Until very recently a black man had little chance to advance in spite of often superior ability and even

education. The black man and his family still bear scars from the period when he could go no higher in the firm, no matter how hard he worked.

A common complaint now of both foremen and personnel man is that those who get wage garnishments (the plant is ordered by the courts to set aside a portion of a man's wages to pay a debt), are also those who are the most absent prone--even though they most need the money. Foremen report that these young men do not want overtime, especially if it is on Friday or Saturday (even though overtime pays one and a half times as much). It therefore seems that money is not the primary motivator for these men. They value their leisure more than more money. One foreman quoted a black explaining that he needed his Saturday rest and exercise, "Can't you see how pale I is?" This attitude is in sharp contrast to the old ethnics who would and will work <u>any</u> overtime that is offered to them.

Other foremen complain that many of the new work force are absent on Monday, Friday being pay day. Another foreman criticized the lack of responsibility of these men. He says that one man put a coin in a coke machine. It didn't get his dime back, so he pounded on the machine until it broke.

Ed Taylor, a black personnel officer who worked his way up through the Builtrite plant, feels that a major cause of these difficulties is that these young people find it

difficult to adjust to what is for them a new planned world of alarm clocks, time cards, and scheduled factory work.

For a young worker today, a job no longer holds the same prestige, the same sense of pride, that it did for his father. A job is viewed more pragmatically. George Yanchuk, a foreman in Range, comments:

> Half of my force is new people, and these are the ones where I have trouble with absenteeism. It seems like the new people are tryin' to just get that penny. They're tryin' to rattle out the work. They don't care whether it's good or it isn't.

Today, money is a sign of manhood, a symbol of success. "Never mess with a man's money," one employee told us. But the attitude toward money brings paradoxical results. On the one hand, some men will refuse to work overtime and will frequently be absent. Yet we also ran into several other men at the Builtrite plant who found it necessary to "moonlight," to hold a second job, in order to put food on the family table. And it was precisely the fatigue caused by the second job that often made the man absent and late at Builtrite.

John Afesi, a black foreman who was born outside the United States, suggests a new point of view for the absent prone young man:

> And then there is the problem of absenteeism. When these guys get their paycheck on Friday, how do you motivate them to save money or invest in something? How do they know dat this money is not to be all spent on liquor, and women, and buying big fancy cars dat dey don't really need? How do you motivate them to think of the future? And think of something to help other--blacks--who don't have the benefit of working

> in the same position that they do? Isn't there a way that we could try to infuse this knack of investing in the future? Saving? If they meet this goal, they should consider themselves, you know, real tough men, a sign of toughness.

But Afesi is not sure how to marshall the resources of either Builtrite or of society as a whole to accomplish this change of viewpoint.

During the hiring year of 1966, when a second shift was added to Refrigerator, 40,000 applicants were screened by Personnel and 5,511 were approved for pre-placement physical examinations. Of these, 632 were physically or emotionally not qualified.[10]

Among the major health problems encountered among the blacks were: decaying teeth, hypertension (eight times that of a comparable south western rural group), vision problems, and lack of body hygiene. The fact that hypertension is such a great problem is a surprise. It may indicate that the chuckles, unconcerned attitude, and jokes are often a cover for unresolved tensions and frustrations.

The Medical Director of the Builtrite plant said that the dental status of the applicant would be almost totally decayed with "almost total dissolution and disintegration of the enamel and dentin." The question was whether to accept or reject a person with such very bad teeth. Two concerns seemed to be appropriate: (1) would the state of the teeth probably result in lost time in the near future;

and (2) would the state of decay and, e.g. resultant bad breath, be a source of annoyance and irritation to fellow employees? Practically, the medical staff decided to accept those with not over two teeth in this advanced state of decay.

Initial rejection for employment was often eventually greeted by much appreciation. One third of those initially disqualified returned following corrective therapy. The staff was able to direct many to free dental clinics, and several of those so referred returned that same day for completion of the examination. On several occasions, friends, relatives, and clergymen called to thank the medical staff for encouraging the individual to remedy his physical problems so that he could obtain a job.

The fact that one third of those examined and rejected returned after corrective medical treatment shows that the inability to obtain medical help was often more social than economic. It was not that they couldn't afford it, but rather that they did not know how or have the motivation to obtain needed medical help.

The low levels of physical and mental health indicated here also affect those men actually hired. That same tension and sickness also contributes to turnover and absenteeism.

Tight Labor Market

There remains but one additional factor that contributes to turnover and absenteeism, and it is something

totally outside the control of the plant: the labor market. In recent years, industry has been expanding, providing more jobs. Unemployment in the Metropol area had been running under 3 per cent, even though unemployment for blacks has been about twice that of the rest of the labor force.[11]

A man who leaves Builtrite can readily find another job. An indication of the general tightness of the job market is the fact that the other employers in the neighborhood of Builtrite have experienced as high or higher turnover.[12]

Foreman Walter Jezak says that he thinks that they are not always losing the poorer people:

> A lot of them quit, I think, because they think that they could do better elsewhere. I think that this must happen because in our turnover, it isn't the people who are being reprimanded who are being discharged. It's just people who come in and say, 'Well, this is all right until I can find something better.' I think that we all start a new job with that in mind. You talk to any old-timer and he'd say: 'Well, I'll work through this winter and then I'll get something better this spring.' Then you ask 'How many springs have you been here?' 'Twenty-four,' you know.

The fact that among the disadvantaged a large percentage of the dropouts worked for a higher wage at their previous job lends credence to Jezak's point that those who leave Builtrite may be some of the better people.

Harry Ellcock, a black foreman in assembly, describes how he had two men doing a job. He needed one in another spot, and pulled the second one. The first man objected vehemently, and Ellcock said to him:

Ellcock: I said, 'If you don't want it, walk upstairs and quit.' So that's what he did: quit.

Cavanagh: He did quit?

Ellcock: Sure. You can't talk to him. Just quit. And when they say that they quit, they quit. And most of them was Negro.

Cavanagh: Why is that do you think? I mean is it . . .

Ellcock: In some cases the men have second jobs. And he doesn't need this job.

A bit later, Ellcock expands on his point:

> And I'll tell you another thing, just because there's a lot of jobs opening up now--and they walk out of Builtrite and get another job. It's as simple as that, and everybody needs employees.

A man who has been selected from eight to ten applicants probably feels that if the going gets rough, if he meets with a problem, he can obtain as good or a better job elsewhere. If his previous job paid him more than Builtrite presently pays him,[13] this feeling is intensified. And even if his job-seeking efforts fail, they is always unemployment and welfare.

In 1970 unemployment just about doubled over 1968. There was not the same great demand for workers that there had been at the time of this study. Nevertheless, turnover for 1969 was still very high. And there is always the alternative of unemployment benefits. Turnover figures for 1970 are not yet available.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XV

[1]See the work of Fredrick Herzberg. For example, his early Job Attitudes: Review of Research and Opinion, by Herzberg and others (Pittsburg: Psychological Service of Pittsburg, 1957).

[2]"Absentee Survey," op. cit., p. 1.

[3]Ibid.

[4]The smaller number of white assemblers were not so negative, but one-third of this group were already utility assemblers--already a promotion.

[5]Quoted in "1968 Hourly Hires and Removal Experience," op. cit., p. 4.

[6]See earlier results of Charles R. Walker and Robert H. Guest, The Man on the Assembly Line (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 65.

[7]For much the same findings see Ibid., p. 152.

[8]See Robert Blauner, Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 15.

[9]Of those in the white hourly sample, 72 per cent had been at the plant for 10 years or more, 48 per cent for 20 years or more.

[10]This section is based entirely on an article by the plant physician, plus interviews at the plant with him. The author is indebted to him for this information.

[11]U.S. unemployment among whites in May, 1966 was 2.6 per cent, among blacks 5.3 per cent. See Employment and Earnings: Monthly Report on Labor Force (June, 1969), p. 15.

[12]"Long Range Employee Relations Considerations: Builtrite Division" (unpublished in-plant Builtrite report, May, 1965), pp. 6-7.

[13]Disadvantaged workers who dropped out received a beginning day rate salary at Builtrite lower than their final salary at their last job. This phenomenon will be treated later in Chapter XIX on disadvantaged workers.

CHAPTER XIVI

BLACKS SEEK RECOGNITION

The large number of young blacks at Builtrite brought problems in addition to turnover and absenteeism. After 1,500 blacks were hired on unskilled entry-level jobs, and especially after 500 of their number were laid off in one plant, they began to feel they were being used by Builtrite. They felt they were being discriminated against in the assignment of jobs and in promotion by management.

This chapter relates the walk out and bitterness that followed, which were very expensive in money, time and human resources. Will such a situation develop whenever blacks approach a majority of a work force? Is there anything management can do to avoid such a reaction? A look at the Builtrite experience may answer these questions.

The Generation Gap

Builtrite is becoming more and more a young people's plant as the work force expands and older people retire and are replaced by younger workers. Most of the new hires are in their twenties, and many are starting a family. About half are high school dropouts and half have finished high school.

According to employees, a clear generation gap lies between the young and the old, among both blacks and whites, on racial attitudes. Clarence Elam, 27, a Negro from Mississippi, is sensitive to the differences when he speaks of the younger generation of whites:

> They don't discriminate like their parents did. . . . They have a better viewpoint all the way around. And really they're nice to be around.

Andrew Marshall, a 39-year-old white up from Arkansas just a few years, finds it difficult to adjust to the North. He admits that he does not understand and does not like Metropol or the black:

> If you're not raised up in a big city, you really don't like it. I mean, it's the race of people that you come in contact with. If you're not raised up with them, you don't understand 'em too good. I'm really not happy up here, but I try to make a go of it the best I can.

Marshall is unhappy. He said he would refuse to work alongside a black. But he represents a minority. Stuart Sheldon, a 28-year-old black assembler from Mississippi, can sense Marshall's attitude in the older whites:

> The younger generation is not so bad. But the older guys that've been here 15 years, that're 50, 60 years old, they're the mostest, hardest ones to get along with because their people taught them against the black people, and they still live with that inside. Although they try and laugh and talk with you, deep inside, they don't mean it from their heart.

The generation gap exists not only among whites, but also among the blacks. The older blacks at Builtrite are opposed to the new militancy that they see in the youth

of their race. Benjamin Howard, a 50-year-old Negro trucker, is looking for a better understanding between the races:

> One thing about the colored people is that they cannot get up and start a war with the white people. That's crazy, stupid. It's stupid. And what's the use of me hating a man if I got to come to work for him the next day?

The Militant and Black Power

Black workers at Builtrite were naturally influenced by national black thinking in the late 1960's on the subject of black power. The employees revealed much of themselves when speaking of black power, "Black is beautiful," and black pride:

Harry Ellcock, 34, Negro: When I think of black power or black is beautiful, I think that the Negro man as a whole is growing up.

Norma Haynes, 28, white from Mississippi: It was so strange from when I first came up here to see that some of 'em are really proud to be black. I've never seen anything like this before. But I think that's the way it should be.

Otis Powers, 25, Metropol-born Negro: I dig it. Yeah, I dig it. I think it's bringin' us closer together within ourselves. . . . All the black over there are from down south, and they just don't talk about it. But you can just mention two or three words to them, you can look at their expression and tell they really believe it.

John Afesi, 28, Negro: When this idea of black power came out, I loved it in the economic sense. . . . But it got twisted out of shape . . . knocking down walls of boarding houses, you can never stand for because it is destructive. And a destructive man finds it very difficult to change and become a constructive thinker.

John Dahle, 47, white: These guys want the black power. Black power, black power--it seems to me when they get into the plant, they want the whole thing or nothin'. They wanta move up, right when they hire in. They want your job. They don't want the one they got. They want <u>yours</u>.

Richard Kingman, 40, Negro: It makes my flesh crawl when I hear someone shout: 'I'm black and I'm proud of it!' So what? That's you.

The diversity of views expressed here, as the Negro trys to find his own identity and gain pride, perhaps makes the events which follow more understandable.

The Afro-American Employees Committee at Builtrite

A caucus of black employees, led by bright and angry 27-year-old Leroy Preston, was formed in 1968 at the Builtrite plants. Preston had two years of college, and had come to Builtrite about five years previously, before the huge influx of black employees in 1966.

White and black employees describe Preston when he first came to Builtrite as being a relaxed, outgoing, and likable person. Many charge that it was only after he had been in the Refrigerator plant for several years, especially during the second shift build-up in 1966, that he became hard, frustrated, and angry. Some good black employees charge that it was his experience in the plant that changed him; he "was formed and fashioned by the Refrigerator Department." Recall that 3,000 new workers were hired during 1966. The majority of these new employees were from the black ghetto, and the Personnel Department had little experience and could afford little time to screen these people carefully. Peter Siris, a superintendent in Refrigerator tells us:

> We picked up some really rough characters. I mean this was not the bottom of the barrel; they looked under it, I swear they did.

According to Preston, these new employees, hired largely for the second shift in Refrigerator, were just young people who had never really held a steady job before:

> They hired a whole lot of kids that were still in school, and naturally they didn't work as well as maybe people with families. I think this move was more or less an experiment. When it didn't work out like they thought it should work out, after hiring all these school kids, they said, 'Well, this is the black race.' And from there they cut it off. And all the black kids got laid off.

Preston and other blacks who had been at Builtrite a few years before the 1966 build-up of the work force watched these men be hired, the second shift fail, and then 500 young men be thrown out of work again. The blacks who were left after the layoffs of early 1967 were the nucleus of the revolution that was to come in October 1968. They thought that "these black kids" had been used by Builtrite, and when it was finished with them, Builtrite discarded them. And they found that they themselves had less seniority and were now at the beginning of the final assembly line with some carrying heavy refrigerator cabinets from one line to another. Blacks were critical that in Refrigerator there was not one black control man or utility and repair man, the principal upgraded positions.

In early 1968 Preston was a leader in forming "The Afro-American Employees Committee," also known as "The

Concerned Builtrite Employees." The aims of the organization were to end discrimination and get blacks into better jobs by increasing promotions.

The Afro-American Committee received support from the larger Metropol Black Labor Federation, a successor of the now splintered Metropol Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). They presented their list of grievances to the union, the local of the Sheet Metal Workers' International, but found the union to be a rather weak organization unresponsive to their demands. This union was voted in as recently as 1962, and Builtrite does not have a closed shop: only 46 per cent of the hourly employees are members of the union. Preston's group then began a campaign to encourage blacks to sign up as union members. In the summer of 1968, the Afro-American Committee published a weekly handbill, calling for better black representation in the union. When union elections came up in June, Preston decided to run for President of the local against the incumbent Joseph Daniels, and the former chief steward, George Mathews. Alfred Porter, also black, ran for member of the Executive Board, on the same ticket with Preston.

A part of Preston's platform was to get the local out from under the racially conservative policies of the International, perhaps to even make the union independent: "I don't go along with somebody from Washington telling us what we should do out at Builtrite." Most of Builtrite

employees interpreted his plan as an attempt to run on a black separatist ticket. Preston's supporters publicized meetings which were held next door to the Black Labor Federation offices. Jose Rosario, a Spanish speaking Secretary-Treasurer of the union, and others said that these meetings were not well attended: 60 at most. On election day Preston lost. He received only 137 votes. George Mathews won the union presidency with 338 votes and Joseph Daniels received 207 votes. Only 682 out of 1,600 in the union cast their ballots. So, contrary to the assertions of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the related Progressive Labor Party, Preston did not even carry the black vote. There are close to 600 black union members.

Viola Gladden, a black in Range, tells why she believes Preston was defeated:

> I think we kind of brought it on ourselves. I think he could have won if he hadn't just campaigned for one side's support--like soul sisters and brothers. He needs everybody's support, but he only would issue handbills to the Negroes mostly. I guess this is why a lot of white didn't vote for him.

Ora Mullen a capable young expediter and a member of the Afro-American committee, defends Preston, his policies, and his strategy:

> During the summer Leroy said he wanted to try to get more black people in positions within the union itself. It was interpreted that he was trying to form an all-black bloc, which he wasn't. He was trying to form something for the good of all the people within the company, providing these people could get into office in the union. But blacks are

> so critical of each other, and they were worried about what the management would think if one of them supported Plunkett.

George Mathews, who defeated Preston and is now president of the local, also drew support from Negroes with his Negro Vice President Jeff Streisfeld. Some believe that Preston might have won had it not been for this and Preston's own strong tactics. Lewis Stickney, a black office worker and not a union member says:

> A lot of people don't think too much of Streisfeld. And Leroy Preston, although he didn't draw a whole lot of support, stirred up more than any other duck in the pond--he created a lot of fear and a lot of animosities, too. I think a lot of Negroes would have gone along with him if he just didn't sound so hard, so brass. And I really feel he'd probably do a hell of a job in the union if he'd gotten in there, because he's one of those type guys.

After his defeat for the union presidency, Preston turned directly to the company with his list of grievances.

The First Black Foreman

It was shortly thereafter, on July 22, 1968, that the company, according to Louis Tobias, a top manager of the Refrigerator plant, responded to pressure from the Afro-American Committee and appointed Alvin Jennings the first black foreman there. Tobias says he deliberated for about two months before choosing Jennings: "We gave Jennings his job because of pressure, and even at the time I picked him, he was no more qualified to be a foreman than the man in the moon." Preston and his group were not appeased:

> Jennings maneuvered himself into the job, at the expense of black people, which is what happens in most cases like this. They wanted to put Jennings up there as window dressing, and say, 'Look what we doing for you all now.' . . . This was a man that the company knew they could control. It was just a matter of the company taking a person that's not really with the black people and putting him up there. . . . But we tried to go along with Jennings as far as him being a foreman, naturally we had to feel some sense of pride.

Preston reports that when whites and Puerto Ricans balked at Jennings and even went to the superintendent's office to protest, the blacks upheld him in spite of their dislike for him. Preston continues:

> The company's response to that was to divide the line up. As I said, they have mostly black on one area, and mostly white on the other end of the line, where it's clean work. So, their response to this was to divide the line up and put Jennings over at the end where there were mostly blacks.

Tensions mounted over the summer. In the opinion of the Afro-American committee, little had been done to satisfy their grievances. Preston speaks of the atmosphere in the plant:

> I think the real problem was the atmosphere created by the white people out there: it was sorta like a plantation, and the black people naturally resent this. You go to work, look down the line and see everybody on the line is black, especially everybody on the harder jobs. If you've been to the assembly line, you'll notice that everybody at the beginning of the line are black. And everybody at the other end, where the work is clean and you do nothing but check the refrigerator--most of these people are white. And when you look down the line, all the cats are black. Everybody standing around looking at you working are whites. And this is the atmosphere that kinda antagonates black people especially.

In addition to the "plantation atmosphere" that blacks feel, and probably contributing to it, is the fact that management in refrigerator is production-oriented, hard-nosed, "let's get the work out," and they enforce a strict discipline. They told workers what to do, and expected them to perform. The Bohemians and the Poles, the old-timers in the plant, accepted this as the way it was done. The Spanish speaking who came in in the fifties tolerated it and did their work. The Appalachian whites found it more difficult, but went along. But the blacks revolted. It was a collision course between a strict, old-line management and a young, new, undisciplined work force who had barely, if at all, been in a plant before.

Even to a casual observer, it seemed clear that the blacks had the heavier, dirtier, and less interesting jobs, but much of the reason is seniority. As men build up years of service in the plant, they are upgraded or they transfer out to an easier, cleaner, and higher paying job. Most of the blacks have been hired in the last four years, so they have had little opportunity as yet to bid for better jobs.

The situation is worse in Refrigerator, which is the only one of the plants to have no blacks in upgraded positions of utility and repair men or control men. But there is a special explanation for the black absence. Management has been forced to promote those men, all white,

who had held these jobs on the short-lived second shift in 1966, and had been downgraded. No blacks, no matter what their abilities, could be appointed to those jobs because the union contract demands that the men who had been downgraded get the first opportunity at the job when it opened up again. So these upgraded positions are all held by whites. Every new appointment for the past two years has been white, and there remain in the backlog a score more men who will get those upgraded positions--all white.

In sum, then the black felt that there was discrimination, especially in job placement and promotion; whereas management was certain that there was no discrimination. In fact, management felt that the blacks were often not good production workers and they were harder to discipline. It was volatile situation going into the fall of 1968.

The Black Walkout

In early October, a Spanish speaking worker verbally prodded Alfred Bell, a black, for bumping him with the part Bell was inserting into the refrigerator on the assembly line. They got into an argument. Bell struck the other man and pushed him down on the floor. While Bell was a very likable person and had an unblemished discipline record up to this time, all but one observer agreed that he was the aggressor. Evidently the Spanish fellow did not return a blow, although he did begin the argument.

The company sent both men home under suspension. After two days, they called the Spanish speaker back on the job, on the grounds that he had not fought back, and later fired Bell. But company rules hold that any two people involved in a fight would both be fired immediately. The blacks seized on this as an occasion for their walkout. At noon on Thursday, October 10, after the Spanish worker had been brought back, the blacks sat down for fifty minutes at their positions on the assembly line in the Refrigerator plant. The line could not move. Preston was not at work that day, so he was clearly not alone: there was other leadership in the movement.

A larger confrontation came on the following Monday, October 14, when Preston was back at work. Management in Refrigerator got word that the black employees would stage a sit down and walkout at noon. They called Preston into their office at 10:30 that morning, and told him that he would be fired immediately if the work stoppage occurred. Preston said that he was told that he would have a good chance for a foreman's job, if the walkout was called off. According to one management participant in the conference, Preston just smiled and said, "you'll never understand."

Preston called a press conference outside the plant to announce his intentions. After lunch, at noon on Monday, he led the second sit down on the assembly line. The stoppage started at the beginning of the line where the

heavy cabinets are set on the line. Preston mounted a platform and shouted to the other blacks. He was the only one talking, and the other blacks were quite quiet. At this point, management in Refrigerator decided to send all of the people home. A shout went up from the men on the line. It was a victory for the black man: They had shut down the plant. The blacks left the plant, and a large number picketed outside the front door.

Tuesday morning about 30 blacks picketed outside the Refrigerator plant. Most of the 350 black employees of that plant did not make it to work on Tuesday or Wednesday. Some did not come because they supported Preston's move, although many did not fully understand the issues. Of 11 blacks in Refrigerator that were interviewed, five backed Preston and joined the walkout; two were neutral but joined the work stoppage; and four were opposed to the wildcat strike and much of the rhetoric. All of the favorable five were young black men between 22 and 28 years old.

Many blacks came to the plant that Tuesday morning, saw the pickets and, typical of any labor dispute, did not want to start any trouble, so went back home. DeWitt Draper, 40-year-old assembly man in Refrigerator, describes his reaction:

> You had these guys out in front of the plant with the cars and the police here, so I just turned around and went back home, because I want no part of the thing.

A few slipped into the plant through side doors and worked. The younger men criticized those blacks, typically women or older, who did not support the walkout. Jeremiah Collins also an assembler, says:

> They couldn't get together, because half the blacks worked, and half didn't. So they weren't together. They're pretty disgusted. They feel's though they didn't get anything. Which they didn't, actually.

On the other hand, a recurring criticism of Preston is that of Delvin Pace, a young black active in the union:

> He was gonna discriminate for the ghetto. He was talkin' about the soul brothers and that. Well, you can't have just the soul brothers, you've got other brothers out there, too.

Most of the blacks thought that Preston made much sense in what he said, but many did not agree with his tactic of the work stoppage .

On Wednesday, October 16, the National Labor Relations Board announced that it would investigate Builtrite's charges that the Black Labor Federation and the Afro-American Employees Committee led an unauthorized walkout. By this time 33 black employees had been suspended for leading the stoppage. Several of them, in addition to Preston, were later fired. The local of the Sheet Metal Workers Union had also issued a handbill pointing out that the strike was illegal and urging all employees to return to work. By Thursday morning, production was almost back to normal.

Black Militants in Retrospect

Eight hundred blacks, a large percentage of whom were disadvantaged, came into the Refrigerator plant at a time when management was least prepared to understand or absorb them. Because of the new second shift, management was overextended. They were completely taken up with inventory and production problems. Table 15 gives some idea of the scope of the build up.

When the second shift was dropped at the beginning of 1967 and more than 500 blacks were laid off, it left 300 blacks and a residue of suspicion and distrust. More importantly, it put large numbers of whites, who had held upgraded positions on that second shift, into a position where they would be put into all of the new openings for those jobs in the plant. A black could not be considered for those jobs, regardless of his qualifications.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the refrigerator management has tried to control their percentage of blacks, since their bitter experience in 1968. They have evidently asked the employment office to send them fewer blacks. Of the additional number of blacks at Builtrite from 1967 to 1968, only 8.7 per cent went to Refrigerator, while 61 per cent of the new Spanish speakers went to Refrigerator.

Many held that Preston's view of unions and bargaining agents was naive and unrealistic. It is difficult to say how much pressure the Afro-American Committee put on

TABLE 15.--Number of Black Employees in Builtrite Refrigerator, 1964-1968.

Year	Total	Black	Spanish	Per Cent Black	Per Cent Black in all Three Builtrite Plants
1964	1209	97	275	8.0	7.4
1965	1583	499	265	31.5	23.4
1966	2041	857	360	42.0	30.5
1967	1482	336	282	22.7	22.4
1968	1557	352	361	22.6	25.8

management to upgrade blacks. There are now nine black foremen at the plants, whereas before the formation of the committee there were none. But probably some of these men would have been promoted to the foreman's job in any case.

Black caucus activity since October 1968 has been low, and employees report that the Committee no longer exists.

CHAPTER XVII

BLACK SUPERVISORS

In the past, promotions into salaried jobs for blacks at Builtrite have been slow. Negroes who came to work in the plant before the 60's harbored little hope of advancing to positions of responsibility. They worked as matrons, laborers, janitors, chauffeurs--the low-skilled, low-paid, traditional Negro jobs.

Many employers felt that Negroes weren't qualified for greater responsibilities, as a consequence of poor education, poor work experiences, and poor childhood environments. Even now, some people still hold this conventional notion. And it is often difficult for qualified blacks to escape the stereotype. Sidney Pope, a 36-year-old black engineer, said that for a black to be promoted, he has to be twice as good as anyone else. When asked if he thinks this is still true, he says:

> Yes. He has to be so outstanding or so dynamic that his qualities, if you try to hide them, it would be noticed by others that you're trying' to hide 'em . . . especially when you're trying to move up in higher echelons of management. Inadvertently hidden prejudices will come out when you have people competing for a job, you know.

Blacks at Builtrite complain that management is not willing to take a chance with them, to see if they are

qualified to do the job. A young auditor, Lewis Stickney, emphasizes that the company must be willing to take chances:

> You have to take a few chances, I think. There's a mania about Negroes being in a position. Either they're gonna be extremely capable and you don't expect that they can fail, just like a lot of other people gonna fail. And so, the company has to take a few chances, go out on a limb, and if a guy falls on his face, don't throw up your hands. Look for somebody else to replace him.

Stickney suggests that a major restraint on appointing blacks to foreman positions was the anticipated rejection of the white work force. As the first Negro in the office in 1964, Stickney recalls how well accepted he was; and he presents a severe indictment of management for their lack of faith in the whites:

Stickney: There were not any [Negroes] upstairs when I moved over here; although, after I was there, somebody else showed up. They started hiring a few more--but I've had no problems.

Purcell: So that's great, you really broke the ice.

Stickney: Well, I don't feel like it's nothing to be proud of myself, because it just shows that the company wasn't nearly as ready as it thought it was. It has very little faith in the white people that worked on the jobs. I mean, that's really what they're saying, 'We don't know if our white people are ready to accept Negroes."

Stickney says that the whites were considerably more open than management had predicted. He suggests that the principal obstacle to appointing black supervisors, the anticipated rejection of the white work force, did not materialize.

The first black line supervisor, a foreman, was appointed on July 1, 1968. Although an unprecidented event,

it was followed in rapid succession by the promotion of five other blacks to the foreman's job in less than seven months. Although to most whites and blacks, the efforts of the Afro-American Employees Committee were largely a failure, some blacks and even some management men at Builtrite give them much of the credit for those promotions.

Charles Eliot, one of the best known and best liked men in the plant, and John Clay are the only two of these new foremen who had gone through the 24-week Foreman Development Course. They did so in early 1967. But it was not until more than a year after the formation of the black committee that they were given line responsibility. In the meantime, they had watched many whites, including one who had never gone through the course, be made foreman.

Eliot pointed out that the week before he was given his first line responsibility over men, it was announced that the Afro-American Committee was planning a big meeting on the coming weekend. He was given the job the following Monday, in spite of some apprehension on the part of one of his supervisors that they were "jumping the gun."

Many employees said that there were no black foremen before the walkout on October 14, 1968. This is not true; there were three black foremen appointed prior to the actual work stoppage. But it is correct that there were none before the formation of the Afro-American Employees Committee, and their meetings, handbills, and pressure.

To those who speak in terms of power, the sequence of events at Builtrite tends to lend credence to their hard-line thesis. Although two blacks had gone through a management training course, no black foremen was actually appointed until the Afro-American Committee began exerting pressure.

There were some objections from white workers to these men as supervisors, but generally management stood solidly behind them.

White and black work side-by-side rather well. But it is quite another thing for a white to take orders from a black man. Some have feared that whites would quit their jobs, or would refuse to work under a black foreman.

These are articulated by John Dahle, a 42-year-old white assembler who had a black supervisor for a short time:

Dahle: We got this colored, black foreman in the department where I used to be, and all the time the whites don't wanna work in there because they claim there's partiality if they're all black.

Purcell: The black foremen then favor the blacks against the whites?

Dahle: Yeah! That's what these people've been tellin' me that works back there. Most of the people that I've been workin' with for years here, a lot of 'em, are over there workin' now on the line I'm on. Because they no longer wanta work in that department. They claim it's just a hole.

More typical is Clare Eckerle, a white 40-year-old bench assembler, who calls herself a "happy Builtriter." When asked what her reaction would be to a black foreman, she says she would completely accept him:

> Wouldn't bother me in the least. I don't think it would bother any of us. Our expediter, Ora, is colored and you wouldn't want to meet a nicer person. He's very, very nice. If a colored man was made foreman I'd have just as much respect for him as I would for a white man. Yes I would.

Verna Comeau, a white 53-year-old assembler, is probably most typical of the white workers in her attitude toward a black foreman. While the researchers sensed some hesitancy in Verna, she said that it would be fine as long as "He's a decent person, knows how to handle people, how to talk to people. They'd have to have an education a training of being a foreman, because you have to respect somebody."

There are three kinds of white reaction to a black foreman: (1) negative, and least frequent; (2) positive and this is of intermediate frequency and (3) a qualified acceptance, and this is the reaction of the majority of the white work force.

Only 17 per cent of the whites and 14 per cent of the black workers thought that a significant number of men in their work group would be uncomfortable with a black foremen. Only one white and one black said that they personally would have difficulty working for a black foreman. And that one white backed off when estimating whether the black foreman would finally work out.

The black foremen that Builtrite has appointed, and also the prospect of more black foremen in the plants, are accepted by the majority of the work force at Builtrite.

The Spanish speaking at Builtrite, who have traditionally been hard workers and willing to accept company policies, all agreed that they would have no problems in working for a black foreman. Salvage man Cesar De Corta feels there is no discrimination in the plant, and believes he would get equal and fair treatment from a black foreman. When asked what would happen in his work group if a black foreman were appointed, he says:

De Corta: Have to be my foreman. Nothing nobody can do.

Cavanagh: Would it work out all right?

De Corta: Oh yeah! It would work all right. Because when you get to be a foreman, it's supposed to be you got more education than I do. Right?

Although they were not enthusiastic at the prospect, the majority of the Spanish speakers thought that a black foreman would be accepted by the rest of the work group. They also thought that the appointment would work out.

The researchers found that both the whites and the Spanish speaking would accept a black foreman readily, as long as he had the qualifications for the job. Other aspects of this issue will emerge in Chapter XVIII on promotions for blacks.

Whites reported that negative reaction to a black foreman was more common among the blacks themselves than among whites.

Mayer Grieshow, a white 37-year-old pipe fitter, says that the blacks give the new black foreman, Ellcock, more headaches than do the whites:

> I had one area in my department where they have a colored foreman, and the people that gave him the hardest time were the colored. Ellcock doesn't seem to be a bad person, a bad foreman. I think he's young and inexperienced. I think he's probably not sure how to handle people, because he was sort of plucked into being a foreman without really being groomed for it. He struggled both with the white and the colored. But where he figured he would have no trouble with the colored, and they would kind of help him and make his job easier, a lot of them resented it, I guess. He used to have his biggest headaches from them.

Common among blacks who witness a fellow black "make it" is the desire to maintain the same degree of personal relationship with him as before. Harry Ellcock tells why this creates difficulties on the job:

> I don't think the people were familiar with taking orders from a Negro. They don't have that fear. I'm not saying that they should be afraid of anyone. But they didn't have that fear, and they figure, 'I can talk to you.' And if I meet them on the street, they can come to talk to me that way and they figure, 'I know him; we came up together.' And they figure they can do anything because they know you. Whereas Carl Bergstrom or Alan Wynoski (white foreman), they have this certain fear.

Ellcock was one of the first black foremen appointed, and his most difficult period is behind him. Ambrose Cairns, 29, is a newer appointment, and he has experienced much of the same reaction from blacks. He says that men he formerly laughed and talked with over lunch are now sometimes hostile toward him, because he is unable to give them easy jobs or special breaks. Often he gets complaints such as, "Cairns, why don't you get offa so-an-so's back. You giving him all the hard jobs." Cairns credits these attitudes to the black movement in the country, and even to the walkout in the

plant, which he feels has given the blacks a sense of racial solidarity. Cairns comments:

> Mostly it is in the young people. I know the movement is on. For the Negro, the better jobs and everything for them. Well, he wants this. I have seen them snatch me off into the aisle and say, 'Cairns, I called you, and you didn't even turn around.' And I say, 'Well, it could be I was doin' somethin' else, but I'll get back to you.' And they say, 'You know something; Cairns? If it hadn't been for us, you wouldn't have that job. When we talk to you, you ought to turn around and see what we want.'

On the other hand, many blacks recognize that relations between themselves and Cairns cannot be the same now that Cairns is foreman. Richard Masterson tells of his friendship with Cairns:

Masterson: I get along with him. Matter of fact, we even get together from time to time after work. Been some time since we did this, though. Since he became foreman. We seldom went out with him, since he became foreman. But that's all right. When he became foreman, he changed all the way around to me.

Cavanagh: Is that right? How so?

Masterson: You can't blame him, because when he became foreman his attitude is got to change and everything. I realize this.

Sidney Pope, a black engineer, focuses on the dilemma the black office worker is in, with management pressures on one side and demands of his fellow blacks on the other:

> Management is expecting one thing out of you, because they're paying a salary. Okay. And then your fellow black man is expecting another thing out of you. You're walking really a thin line. The way I have been able to conquer the situation is that I tell all my soul brothers basically this, 'Now, we will laugh and joke and talk. We can talk about the weather and everything else. But we will not discuss

> company business.' And this has worked out tremendously well, because they respect me for this, because they know the position I occupy. But if I try and underline it in any kind of way, I have really lost their respect. Plus the fact that management knows, I'm supposed to represent them. But by the same token, they're just wondering whether or not I'm giving my fellow soul brothers secrets. So, as you can see, it's a pretty precarious position to be in . . .

The suspicion that a black foreman is not really qualified, but got his job through playing the bosses' game and having the right friends rankles many of the black workers. At Builtrite most of the whites were on the job for 10 or 15 years before being made foreman, whereas few blacks now in the plant have more than three or four years seniority. It might appear to both blacks and whites that a black who is made foreman received special preference from management.

Alvin Jennings (see p. 298) is the most controversial black foreman at Builtrite. While he is not typical, his precarious situation does illustrate the dangers of a quick selection on superficial criteria. Jennings was suspected of "selling out;" and this suspicion intensified his problems. It will be recalled that Louis Tobias, a manager in Refrigerator, admitted that Jennings' promotion was a result of pressure from the Afro-American Committee, that he has hand-picked by Tobias himself, and that he came not from the assembly line but from the material supply unit.

Four blacks and a Spanish speaker, who have worked with Jennings, evaluate him:

Ora Mullen: I think he got his job through sell outs. I've met guys over there with seniority that were more qualified for the job. . . . I don't think he's his own man. I think this Louis Tobias is pulling strings for him.

Sylvester Tate: I'm not too interested in black foremen . . . I want to see a qualified foreman.

Cyril Ford: They picked him out of the ship room. But if they goin' to use him as a foreman I think they should teach him. I mean, he's a fellow they picked at random, for political reasons or somethin', and set him up there to kind of shish things now. But if they gonna put him there, show him the job, so he knows the job. Don't let him keep strutting around here like he's on the top of the world, and he knows the job. He's just a figurine there. . . . The fellows resent it. The company might figure, 'Now, we'll make an image and we'll give them this guy.' But those kind of things create more wrong and distress and frustration than they do good.

Delmiro Correia: Yeah, he listens to me. He listens to everybody. He tells the people when they are doing something wrong not to do it. . . . He gets along okay with the white people. But sometimes the colored people like to pop off, you know?

Neal Mitchell: He was picked by the Tobias, and that's the way he got in to be foreman. . . . He's real nice in a way. I think the majority of black employees go along with him. He's got a nice personality, you know? He knows how to talk to some of them. Right now, I think he's doing a very good job. This was just the beginning when everybody was disturbed--last year when we had these confusions.

Considering that Jennings was selected by a supervisor who referred to the new disadvantaged blacks during the ill-fated second shift as "jungle bunnies," it is no suprise that Jennings was accused of being a puppet. He undoubtedly also felt great pressure, as one of the first black foremen, to favorably impress his superiors. As foreman, he was expected to relate positively to his black

employees and also to "keep them in line;" he was also naturally expected to maintain a high production level. A tough order for anyone.

Jennings said that he thought it was a big advantage for a foreman over a largely black work group to be black himself, and he had his own explanation for the criticism he knew he was receiving:

> Envious. See, envious. Most of them thought that it should have been them. And after they saw that the Spanish and whites all went crazy about me because they saw me to be fair and honest with them, but firm. . . . Well, they fell in love with me. The majority, not all, but the majority. So the Negro, after he noticed how when they would call and ask something special or do something, and I wouldn't yield to them, then after a period of time, they began to accept me.

Jeremiah Collins, a black assembler under Jennings, agrees that a black foreman can understand attitudes and nuances of black workers more readily then a white:

> Being as he's a black man, and I'm a black man. It's just like a different race. I mean, you just see people different, you know. It's like being white--I mean you can see finer points in your own race than you could in mine; there are some things you wouldn't understand.

But Collins is not satisfied with Jennings. He charges that he uses his understanding against the blacks, "He'll confront us before he'll confront anybody else about what they're doing wrong." He feels that the acceptance that Jennings spoke of will not be total until Jennings is willing to sit down and talk over their problems together:

> The blacks prob'ly expect more from a black foreman. They prob'ly look more for a black foreman to be closer to them than anybody else. The expectations

> are fo' him to understand our problems too. If we have a problem, he should be able to solve it. We are grown men, and if he would just say, 'I'm your foreman, and if you want to, on your lunch period, I want to talk to you all.' Then say, 'Well, I know what you think of me, but I can't he'p it; this is what I have to do. Now, if I'm doin' something wrong, you let me know. Don't talk behind my back.' That's all he'd have to do. He don't do that.

Jennings was selected because management wanted a black foreman immediately. His quick selection on superficial criteria, and his lack of training made his early months on the job quite difficult.

Most of the new black foremen were assigned to work groups that are largely made up of black workers. As James Ricker put it, "I don't think a black man could get to become a foreman in an area of the plant, unless it would be predominately black people working in that area." The Afro-American Committee demanded black supervisors; and management expects these new black foremen to quiet these demands and eventually increase production in these units.

The black foreman is on the spot. The conflicting demands placed on him cause anxiety. Ambrose Cairns, a new young foreman in Laundry, put the dilemma graphically when he was asked if he thought it was an advantage being a Negro supervisor:

> I know it's a big responsibility. Because they expect more out of you. In fact, they expect a lot of special attention. They want to converse with you, talk with you. 'I want this job. What's the meaning of he getting an upgrade? Do this for me and do that for me.' It's a lotta problems.

He recalls that his former buddies from the line say, "Now Cairns don't give me no hard job." When they don't like their job, they come to me crying and say, "Cairns, I can't do that job." But he goes on, "I know the excuses they use on those jobs, because I used them myself."

Cairns still occasionally sees some of his old friends from the Builtrite plant after work hours on the south side. He quotes them:

> Most of them say, 'Cairns, we got you this job. If it wasn't for us you wouldn't had a job. You should look out for us, you know.' I say, well this is where I'm bagged up against the wall. So I tell them, look here, you got your job, I got mine. We got our regulations, you got your regulations. I'll do the best I can. You do the best you can.

John Clay, another new black supervisor, went through the Foreman Development course, and gives his view of this dilemma:

> I have no fears of anyone saying I'm more lenient or more stringent on my black employees than my white employees. If a black supervisor has these fears, then the black supervisor has a tendency to be harder on the black people than he is on white people. . . . He's trying to prove to himself and the people around him that he's not showing favoritism. It's not fair to the black employee, because in order to show that you aren't showing any favoritism, you are showing favoritism against him.

Black workers in the plant who have a Negro foreman will try him out to see if they can obtain special favors from him. But they are relieved if he turns out to be fair to everyone, both blacks and whites. Although he too has received his share of criticism, Harry Ellcock is generally

considered to be fair and to be "the same with all of 'em." Edith Pierce, an assembler in a largely female section says:

> O ne of the girls and Mr. Ellcock was good friends before he become foreman. So I told her, 'Don't expect Mr. Ellcock to play witchya, like he always did before he made foreman.' But she still wants him to talk and kid around with 'er, but he don't, he doesn't. He is just like, if he wants her to do somethin', he'll tell her to do it, and he'll keep goin'. He do's all the girls like that.

Ed Kolinski a white foreman, who used to be Ellcock's supervisor and is still a close friend of his, observes that although Ellcock had problems at first, his people "seem to be a little loosened up." Kolinski felt Ellcock had licked the problem by gaining his workers' respect through treating all of them equally.

John Afesi, a 28-year-old African-born foreman from Biafra who is a college grad, reports that he was accused of being an "Uncle Tom" when he first came on the job:

Afesi: I get resentment in the sense that they suspected I would be a white man's lackey.

Purcell: An Uncle Tom?

Afesi: Yeah. They have called me that several times. That was towards 'de first month that I came. But when they saw that I was working at least three times as hard as they themselves are to get things done, and that I wasn't getting everything on a platter of gold, that I was sweating--they changed their minds. When they thought that 'dey could get off easily by committing certain unacceptable acts, and I would hit them just as I would hit anybody else, they become suprised.

Russell Simpson, a 22-year-old black assembler under Afesi agrees that he and his co-workers really did not expect such fairness from their new black foreman.

When asked if he and the other blacks in his work group were at all jealous of Afesi, Simpson responds:

> No, they wasn't jealous. They was glad to see him coming. They was kind of surprised because he wasn't kind of like what they expected him to be. He wasn't an Uncle Tom.

The whites and Spanish speaking are quite satisfied with their new black foremen. Most of the criticism that these new supervisors received appears to come from the black themselves. While this reaction initially took the researchers by surprise, it seems to follow an old pattern:

1. Some blacks had expected special favors from their former peer and resented it when they did not receive them. The first Irish, Polish, and Italian foreman also caught much criticism from his former compatriots. His buddies thought he had "sold out;" and perhaps he did lean a bit harder on his own ethnic group to demonstrate that he would not play favorites.

2. The blacks can be jealous and resent the success of their former peers, just as the Irish, Poles, and Italians.

3. Blacks do not share the old ethnics' cohesiveness. The black pride movement underscores this felt need. One black man said, "The white man has taught us to hate and distrust each other." We see evidence of this distrust and lack of willingness to follow a black leader in the various national and local factions of the civil rights movement. There is still considerable criticism of each other, and cooperation emerges only in the face of an outside crisis.

4. Some blacks may unconsciously resent another black as their boss. They may even feel this is degrading to themselves not having a white man as supervisor. There is less evidence of this among young blacks.

5. All new foremen are tried, tested, pushed to the limit, and criticized by their work group. And since the first black foremen were placed over largely black work groups, it is not surprising that most of the difficulties came from blacks.

The peculiar problems of the black supervisor are slowly fading at Builtrite.

CHAPTER XVIII

PROMOTION OF BLACKS: METHODS AND PROBLEMS

Promotions are always a delicate issue in any work-setting. A large part of a person's interest in his job is often centered in his hope for a better one. He will come in on time and do good work to establish a good record, so he can be promoted.

A minority of both blacks and whites are favorable to their own chances for promotion (see Table 16). Blacks are less optimistic about their personal opportunities.

TABLE 16.--Hourly Workers' Perceptions: I Have a Fair Chance for Promotion.

	Black N=25	White N=24
Favorable	40%	48%
Neutral	20%	29%
Unfavorable	41%	14%

In judging the promotion opportunities of blacks in general, both blacks and whites were more optimistic (see Table 17). This would seem to indicate that the promotion difficulties of blacks were not always thought even by themselves to be related to racial discrimination.

TABLE 17.--Hourly Workers' Perceptions: Black Promotion Chances Are Fair.

	Black N=24	White N=25
Favorable	66%	90%
Neutral	4%	5%
Unfavorable	30%	5%

Any promotion to salaried ranks, which would include that to foreman, is a management prerogative. It is not bound by the union contract, and so can bypass the question of seniority. Upgradings within the hourly ranks are covered by the union contract, and seniority typically is an important element. But the Builtrite contract technically gives more emphasis to ability:

> When considering an employee's qualifications for promotion or transfer to a higher rated job, ability will be the chief consideration in all cases. In the case of two employees with approximately equal qualifications seniority shall be taken into consideration as an important factor in promoting or transferring to a higher rated job.

Builtrite has fought to keep ability as the primary criterion for promotions. And Paul Shephard, a manager of employee relations for the plants, is quite right that this has permitted minorities with relatively no service to move up quite rapidly in our hourly work force to the mid-skill, and in some cases higher skilled positions. In 1969, 86 per cent of the upgrades in one plant were minorities, 74 per cent and 64 per cent in the other two were minorities.

The possibility for blacks to move up rapidly in the plant is there at Builtrite. The question now is: How do the blacks feel about this? Do they really feel they have a good opportunity? Do they feel that their skill is more important than their seniority?

A considerable minority of the blacks in the plant felt that they did not have a fair chance for a promotion. In addition, the researchers asked the blacks if they felt that seniority was still an obstacle to promotion. About half thought that it was. Here are some of their answers:

Russell Simpson, 23, assembler: They juggle seniority around to their advantage.

John Afesi, 29, supervisor: Sometimes they say: 'Well, when a more senior guy has the minimum qualifications, then he has to take a crack at it.'

Richard Sims, 31, conveyor man: I think the chances are good for promotion. There's only one thing about promotions: You just have to wait your turn.

Aaron Hurley, 25, assembler: I think seniority is still standing in the way.

Carmen Roland, 28, secretary: If they take advantage of the opportunity to put in a planned advancement form, there's nothing for 'em to happen but an upgrading.

The Planned Advancement Program that Carmen Roland speaks of is a somewhat unique and controversial method of trying to select the most qualified man, for an upgraded position. Each employee is asked to submit to personnel, through his foreman, a "Planned Advancement" request form noting the job that he is applying for and his qualifications for it. When a job opens up, these requests are

reviewed by the foreman and personnel and a selection is made from them. No further requests are accepted once the job has actually opened up. Theoretically, the system has great advantages. It would break down, however, if a foreman quietly told his favorites of jobs that were about to open up. Leroy Preston called the program the "buddy-buddy" plan for upgrading. While many employees have been successfully and fairly upgraded using this system, it is a cause of resentment among some blacks and whites in the work force.

Billy Heath, a 25-year-old black trucker and union steward, agrees that ability is a better criterion for upgrading. But he charges that foremen most often provide that ability to their "buddies." They temporarily assign them to a job that gives them additional experience, which can be noted on the upgrading request form. It is, in effect, training for upgrading, so "he automatically know more than the guy that didn't have the opportunity to be trained."

Aaron Hurley, a 25-year-old hard-working and conscientious black assembler, said that he didn't think his chances for promotion were good. He has been at Builtrite for four years, and we asked him if he ever put in for an upgrading:

Hurley: About 20 or 30 times. You know those upgrade slips you fill out? I put in mostly for one job, as repairman. But it's doin' the same thing I'm doin'.

Hurley (cont.): You know, if something go wrong with the box I go over there and fix it.

Cavanagh: What about the guys that got the job? Were they good men or . . . ?

Hurley: Well, I wouldn't say they're good men. And another thing. There's no colored guys got the job.

Cavanagh: Is that right? In your unit or all over?

Hurley: All over. And every unit has got four or five repairmen.

Hurley, is working in the refrigerator plant, where the short-lived second shift in 1966 left a file of downgraded men who now under the union contract, have first call on all the new openings. All those men recalled, and the ones remaining in the file, are white (see p. 301). No one told men like Hurley that, no matter what his abilities, he has not had a ghost of a chance at a repair man's job--for the past three years! It was futile for him to turn in a Planned Advancement Form during those three years, and it is not surprising that he is now somewhat negative and frustrated. It was in this same plant that the anger of the blacks erupted into the work stoppage of October, 1968.

Hurley is not the only one in the Refrigerator plant who is discouraged. Stuart Sheldon, a 28-year-old black assembler, says pointedly:

> Well, yes, I do think there's discrimination, when you come to promotions. Because it's pretty hard to get a promotion around here, you know.

Sheldon feels that the only reason a black man was appointed foreman was because of the pressure of the Afro-American Committee and the walkout. Sheldon says that:

> There are some white foremen around here, I don't think they even finished high school. . . . But, for one of the black brothers, it'd be pretty hard for him to make foreman, even with a high school diploma. Because they sayin' you're not qualified if you haven't got at least two years of college.

Whether Sheldon's appraisal of the situation is correct or not, his attitude is typical of a majority of the men in the Refrigerator plant. They feel that they themselves, and the black man in general, do not have a fair chance at a promotion.

Even the one black foreman in Refrigerator at the time, Alvin Jennings agrees that there is a problem:

> If promotions for blacks could be stepped up just a notch faster, it will make a difference. Yes, it would make a difference. Before another fool jumps up to persuade the wrong ones that they are right again. The good ones would have something to look at. But when you get up there and start talking to them, regardless of what you're talking about, they look at what has been done already.

Refrigerator is not typical. But it does demonstrate how the system, coupled with a lack of communication, can create discouragement, frustration, anger, and immense problems. The attitude toward the opportunities for promotion for blacks was not nearly so negative in the other two plants. There were at least a few blacks in these upgraded positions.

We have seen several examples of black men who were quite discouraged at their prospects for promotion. In that instance the system, through no one's fault, was working against them. For the past three years, they really had no chance at all for those upgraded positions.

But motivation of the black man can be a problem even in a situation where ability is primary, i.e. where a competent black man can get a better job even with less seniority than another man. Quite often the black man has an erroneous notion of what contributes to giving a man a promotion and is either discouraged or overoptimistic. He may feel that the world owes him a living.

Todd Atkins is a young black assembler and a three-year Builtrite veteran. His lethargy and premature discouragement, even though an extreme case with him, is not uncommon with the young black men coming into the Builtrite plant. Even though he has landed a job, he does not think of himself as one who could get a promotion. He has already given up:

Cavanagh: Why don't you put in for upgrading?

Atkins: Upgrading. It wouldn't make no difference. It'd just waste time. I know a dude out there that put in for upgrading, been three years. But he don't have the seniority. Don't have but four years seniority, some dudes been out there 15-16 years.

Cavanagh: Well, if you put in for upgrading, what sort of job would you look for?

Atkins: Oh, expediters, punch press operator, or somethin'.

Cavanagh: There's been no black guys in the last three years who've put in for an upgrading, and gotten it?

Atkins: Not on the line. Most the dudes they get upgrading job easy, most likely be a truck driver.

Cavanagh: You don't wanta be a truck driver particularly?

Atkins: No. They don't pay as much as on the line.

Cavanagh: Although sometimes they go from that to expediters, dispatchers sometimes. There are some black guys doin' that.

Atkins: Yeah. And they just started last year. I know about five dudes went to expediters.

Cavanagh: You gotta chance now, man! How about it?

Atkins: It's, it's kind of hard to even get off the line, though.

Cavanagh: Why?

Atkins: Because, you know, you probably put in for a truck driver. You stay on there 'bout three years. I think most of them, though, go around to different plants.

Cavanagh: Well, that'd be all right, wouldn't it?

Atkins: Yeah. If you get it. Cause somebody else already probably--got application in for it. They got a chance and it'd be probably about three more years 'fore I git there, and get a chance like that.

Atkins was absent a great deal, was unhappy with his job, and had never put in for an upgrading. He felt he had no chance. And considering his record, he was right. It was a vicious circle. He said that his job was too tough, and that he had thought of quitting as the only way out--rather than making the necessary effort for the upgrading. Shortly after the author talked to him, Atkins was fired for excessive absenteeism.

Elliot Thompkins is a 26-year-old Mississippi high school graduate and transferman who came into the Builtrite plant as one of their 200 job pledges under the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) JOBS Program. This program

will be discussed in the next chapter. Thompkins is not very articulate, but is eager to do well and to get ahead. When asked if he had a chance for a promotion, he replied:

> Well, I don't know. I just believe I does. Maybe if I get in contact with the right person, maybe they take a liking to me. Maybe I could do something for them. It all depends on if I catch the right guy.

Thompkins was born into a southern, paternalistic way of life. He does not see ability as the most important element in promotion. He can not believe that promotion criteria are impersonal; and as a result, he will probably not take the opportunities that are available for further experience, education and training. And this perpetuates the difficulties.

Some blacks react against the subservience, the discouragement of men like Thompkins and Atkins. The young black militants come into the plant well aware of the centuries of prejudice and discrimination their black brothers have been victims of over the years. They are also aware that white society, "the Establishment" is making some attempts to correct the injustices. This may lead them to expect rapid promotions and even special treatment.

Attempts to pull a man out of his initial resigned acquiescence can easily result in building aspirations that are entirely beyond the man's ability to quickly realize. When these aspirations are not fulfilled, the man often sinks back into an even deeper discouragement.

Foreman Jack Grossman sympathizes with the new workers and blames the job difficulties on the home environment. He says that the newer employees lack the motivation to take a real interest in their jobs. Grossman encourages his people to qualify themselves for better jobs; and he urges them to come to him to find out what to study, what programs to get into in order to become qualified. But he says that few blacks have come to him to ask how they can better qualify themselves. He feels that some blacks try to get easy jobs that they are not really qualified to perform. They are not willing to wait for training and education and to move up through the ranks. A younger foreman, Mario Ianelli, who has a large number of blacks in his work group, puts the problem more graphically:

> I've had better paying jobs, but these people just don't seem to wanta be interested. It requires a little more mechanical ability, if you will, a little more tedious type work. But didn't get much of a response. They're pretty satisfied with the job that they had, some place, type of individuals do not want to depart from a given method.

Ianelli's indictment of the worker is not new; it has been heard over many generations. Perhaps it no more true today than it was fifty years ago. Louis Tobias, a manager in Refrigerator, also claims, "the Negro objects to moving around to get the ability to advance."

Jack Grossman tells us more about the black man's motivation, and what his solution would be:

> I do think they have to be, I think a lot of 'em have potential. But, boy, I think they have to be motivated, and I think this is where society as a whole is failing. I think their own race is failing. I think if the same effort as they put into some of these here agitating incidents, were put into getting people that're lookin' for counseling . . .

Grossman says that much can be done to build up the black man's motivation. He would like to place the responsibility on society as a whole and on black society especially. How much of that responsibility does Builtrite share? The following section illustrates company attempts to find capable black men, to train them, and to provide some educational facilities for them. These programs will be examined and evaluated.

Builtrite, like other industrial plants, has not been able to attract many college-educated blacks. Paul Shephard, a manager of Employee Relations, presents the problem:

> Howard University, if I recall, will graduate somewhere around 75 Negro engineers. And they'll be deluged by over 1,500 companies. Well, Metropol is a perfect example of a very high scarcity of qualified minorities to come into professional positions. And this is our number one problem. We're trying as many different ways as we know how to attract them, and so far our batting average is not so good.

According to John Clay, a recently appointed black supervisor, one reason Builtrite has difficulty attracting black professionals is that "room at the top for advancement is very limited, very limited." It is not enough to offer a job to black graduates. Especially today, they must feel that there is an opportunity to move higher in the company.

Paul Shephard sees training and promotion from within as the only viable answer for Builtrite. When asked about five black foremen who were named within a year, Shephard says:

> But they all came up from the ranks. So this is one of your very, very necessary requirements: that you train from within. This may be what we have to do more and more as we go down the pike, because of this scarcity.

In 1967 Builtrite operated a 24-week Foreman Development Course in the Range plant. It consisted of two-hour class sessions once a week for 12 recently promoted foremen and 11 selected hourly workers who took part voluntarily. John Clay and Charles Eliot, both black, graduated from this course, and now hold supervisory positions. With both management and employees strongly recognizing the need for qualified foremen, Shephard believes more must be done in this area of training.

In Plant Training and Education

Since Builtrite has found it difficult to attract well educated and highly skilled workers, it becomes even more important to set up programs to bring their own more talented employees up through the ranks. They have done this with programs ranging from Apprentice Training Programs to a high school equivalency program conducted in the plant.

A survey taken at the beginning of 1968 yielded dramatic findings. For example, maintenance mechanics at the Metropol plants were on an average 52 years old, had

22 years service, and 60 per cent of the group would retire within 10 years.[1] These data underscored the need for an effective Apprentice Training Program.

The Builtrite Apprentice Training Program was begun in 1966 and has been expanded in recent years. Admission to the program is decided by the supervisors judgment of apptitude and testing. There are about 30 in the Program now, and almost half of these are members of minority groups. James Ricker, a competent black who applied for the Program last year but was unable to come to the entrance examinations, feels that there should be more black youth in it: "They are trying to make some progress in that area, but it's not fast enough." Considering that more than 80 per cent of the new hires are minority, perhaps Ricker is right.

Builtrite's Apprentice Program was designed to take four years, while many comparable programs last only three years. This is for the sake of the black and the Spanish speaker; according to Paul Shephard, "to take into account that the minority has not had as good an educational opportunity as the white . . . and it seems to be working out quite well." However, Garry Rogers, a young, white trainee, feels that there is still a residue of discrimination against the black youth in the program. He tells us:

Rogers: They take an apprentice for one month, and he's put in the stockroom. We learn how to order, price, file, index, whatever you want to call it.

Cavanagh: Is that right? And all of the apprentices go through that?

Rogers: Well, they select. As much as I hate to admit it, they are a little prejudiced in the color, you know.

Cavanagh: Is that so, how?

Rogers: Well, if a storekeeper doesn't want a colored boy in there, he doesn't take him. I hate to say it, but the storekeeper is very prejudiced.

In many cases, employees are not aware that the opportunity to apply for an apprenticeship program exists. Albert Jay, a black visual checker, said that he expressed his interest in the program on his application when he first came to the plant. But he has heard nothing about it since. Perhaps the answer to the problem of the small number of blacks in the program lies with a lack of effective communication rather than disinterest. The company newspaper, Builtrite News, does feature announcements of the program and stories on it. But there is some question as to how effective a tool of communication a company newspaper is with blacks and Spanish speakers. Management feels that they do not read it as regularly or carefully as do the older workers.

In 1966, as a joint venture with the Metropol Board of Education, Builtrite set up a program to enable school dropouts to obtain additional education, and eventually to obtain a high school equivalency degree. Workers can attend classes at the plant on their own time and in that way broaden their background and abilities. Two graduates of

the program have become foremen. The Board of Education provides the teachers and pays their salaries. The program is at the mercy of the Board in assigning instructors. The 1968-69 school year saw four separate instructors for one class. This was a source of discouragement to the men in the class. The company provides the rooms, books, and other educational materials. The employee pays nothing but his own time.

In the first three years of operation, Builtrite High has enrolled 153 employees. Out of the 116 enrolled in the first two years, only 22 obtained their General Education Development degree (high school equivalency diploma). Of these, there were only four blacks and two Spanish speakers. Enrollment for 1969 dropped considerably, probably because of the lack of consistency in the instructors. Although the program seems to have great potential, and has been widely publicized, it has never really achieved that potential--especially for minority group numbers. And it had been set up largely for them. Although the classes receive considerable publicity in the company newspaper, again perhaps this is not the most effective form of communication for minorities. Those in charge of the program report that blacks and Spanish speakers often are ashamed to admit they are undereducated. They do not want to appear in pictures or lists of those attending these programs, and do not want their fellow

workers to hear that they have been there. They often do not even want it publicized that they have obtained the GED degree; they don't want their fellow workers to know that they didn't previously have their high school diploma. Unfortunately, participation in Builtrite High is on too small a scale to have much impact on the work force.

A lack of skill and experience in the management of money and credit is always a large problem for disadvantaged people. In an attempt to help provide the necessary information. Builtrite provides a one-shot Credit Seminar to its employees at least once a year. It is widely publicized in the newspapers, and special notices go out to about 100 who are constantly getting into credit difficulties and have received wage assignments.

The Seminar in Spring, 1968 was run by a legal aid attorney, a man experienced in the law of credit matters. He did an excellent job, once for first shift employees, and again for second shift. A total of 41 attended both sessions, most of these being black or Spanish speakers and most of the 41 also being those who had received the special notices. Builtrite also has an active employees Credit Union, and they do much credit counseling with individuals--especially those who have received wage assignments. If an employee receives four wage assignments, he is discharged. But few receive more than two assignments, and very few get four and must be discharged.[2]

A final aspect of promotion depends on the initial training that an employee receives. This training not only enables the employee to perform his job more adequately and come up to standard rate more quickly, but it gives him confidence. Eighty per cent of both whites, but only 61 per cent of the blacks are satisfied with the training they received for their jobs (see p. 275). Eighty-four per cent of the whites, but only 58 per cent of the blacks say that their fellow employees helped them to learn their job (see Table 18). One-third of the blacks, but less than 10 per cent of the whites complained that other employees did not help them to learn their jobs. They were critical when they fell behind, and they were quite unfriendly. But this was not primarily a racial issue; the researchers found it white to black, black to white, and black to black.

TABLE 18.--Hourly Workers' Favorable Attitudes on Training They Received.

	Black N=25	White N=25
I was adequately trained for my job	61	80
My foreman helped me learn my job	62	87
My fellow employees helped me learn my job	58	76

Here are some comments of the employees on the training they received when they first came onto their job:

Baldamar Gomez, 38, Puerto Rican polisher: They give you a couple of instructions, and that's that. If anything happens to you then who's responsible? I am, huh?

Richard Sims, 31, black conveyor man: They gave us two weeks training, turn us loose. We still wasn't left alone, though. They always had somebody there to show us when we were right and when we were wrong. And this is very important to me.

Andrew Marshall, 32, white machine loader: They don't have patience with a new guy like they should. They don't sit down and really show a guy. I learned it the hard way.

Stuart Sheldon, 28, black assembler: In final assembly they don't give you enough time to train you enough. They just tell you, 'You do this job.' The guy'll stay with you 'bout five minutes, then he'll walk away. And he expect you to keep up just like the guy that'd been here all the time.

DeWitt Draper, 36, black finisher: Several guys I know, one Mexican and a colored guy came in and worked on the polishers for a couple of weeks until they caught on. Now they makin' five bucks an hour. . . . Now, this is good for black men that haven't had the experience before. I think polishers is something they require five years experience on, and ain't too many blacks in that field. That would be a difficult field for him to come through that door, so Builtrite could do this to advance the black man up.

Sims and Draper had a good trainer. The other men were not so fortunate. The lack of a careful and consistent training program comes through in these comments.

In sum, Builtrite realizes that what talent it needs, it will have to bring up from the ranks. It has done this over the years with regard to foremen. Since there are so few upgraded slots it is also important to provide the visible incentive of men getting ahead within the plant.

The programs that have been set up so far are noble efforts: Apprentice Training, Foreman Development, and Builtrite High. But they now affect less than 5 per cent of the work force. As retirements increase, the need for salaried and skilled workers will rise dramatically. The training and educational programs at Builtrite have been good, but they are as yet only token.

James Pesch, a likable and popular employee relations manager, says that today the black man has an excellent chance for promotion if he is interested and capable; it is "the black man's world now." A black with an education may have even a better chance today than his white counterpart. But therein lies a problem for Builtrite and the black: Builtrite employs large numbers of undereducated and unskilled blacks. Those blacks need the education and the training, and Builtrite needs the skilled workers.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XVIII

[1]From a speech by a former director of employee relations at Metropol.

[2]Builtrite has defended its employees. They have found that one-third of the wage assignments are invalid; improperly made out or illegal. Some of the dealers and insurance agents will get the person to sign a black contract. Builtrite has also found that most services that offer to consolidate debts are not reputable. They counsel employees to avoid them.

CHAPTER XIX

PROGRAMS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

National Alliance of Businessmen Job Pledge Program

In April, 1968, Builtrite pledged 200 jobs as its share of the Metropol chapter of the National Alliance of Businessmen Job Pledge Program (NAB). Builtrite's efforts are part of a larger national campaign that proposes to have 500,000 disadvantaged workers on payrolls by the summer of 1971. It's aim is to help the unemployed or under-employed find good jobs.

But for Builtrite, hiring the disadvantaged is no experiment. They have been doing so for several years, and now a large proportion of their work force could be classified as disadvantaged. Most of these men come to the plant gates on their own. Eighty-five per cent of the "NAB pledges" are classified as such only after they have been interviewed and hired. Builtrite needs workers, and these men would have been hired even if there were no NAB Program.

Often referred to as "hard core" (see p.175), a name which not surprisingly is not popular with the men themselves, job applicants must meet certain criteria that

have been jointly laid down by the National Alliance of Businessmen and the United States Department of Labor. The applicant must be a poor person. He is considered poor if his family is supported by welfare or, for example, if there are four in a city family and their annual net income does not exceed $3,300. In addition to being classified as poor and without suitable employment, he must also be either (1) a school dropout, (2) a minority member, (3) under 22 years of age, (4) over 45, or (5) handicapped. In other words, the person must be poor and without work and also fall into as least one of the five additional categories listed.

Builtrite and other Metropol employers quickly found it difficult or impossible to determine a job applicant's income. Credit checks proved to be too expensive, took too long, and were not always reliable. A person was then considered to be poor if he lived within certain predetermined geographical limits in the city--in the poorer, ghetto neighborhoods. The job applicant can be certified as a NAB pledge by the state employment service and by various other job recruiting agencies, and also by the employer himself if there are no federal subsidies for job training involved.[1]

By July 1, 1969, Builtrite provided 466 NAB pledges with jobs. They themselves certified 85 per cent of this group as being disadvantaged or "hard core;" most of the rest of the pledges were certified by the state employment

service. Builtrite considers itself to be well over its pledged goal of 200 NAB jobs.

Of the 466 who were hired from April 1, 1968 to July 1, 1969, only 165 were still working at Builtrite at the beginning of July, 1969. This is a 64 per cent loss.

Why did so many of these people leave their job? Since this question for the entire work force was treated in some detail previously, (pp. 238-287) only some additional data on the 466 workers who were formally designated as disadvantaged shall be presented here.

Company formulated reasons for leaving most often do not touch on basic motivation, but they can be instructive. Table 19 shows the reasons for leaving for those 301 NABs who are no longer at Builtrite.

Additional clues may be obtained by looking at the backgrounds of those who stay and those who leave. Are those who stay younger or older, married or single? How much education do they have? Where were they born? Table 20 provides some answers to these questions.

It is surprising how much alike the background of these two groups are. Of course, they are all already a subsample of the total plant population, being designated as NABs. And they are further selected in that only roughly one in ten who came into the Builtrite Employment Office were hired. One of the major criteria that the interviewers use for selection is job perseverance, so it is probably not

TABLE 19.--Metropol Disadvantaged Employee's Reasons for Leaving.

Fired	Per Cent	Voluntary Departures	Per Cent
1. Excessive absenteeism and tardiness	26.2	1. No report (after 5 days absence)	22.2
2. Couldn't adapt	6.3	2. Resigned	11.6
3. Falsification of application	3.3	3. Left for another job	7.6
4. Violation of shop rules (abusive language, drinking, etc.)	2.3	4. Walked off job	3.3
5. Refused job assigned or to follow instructions	1.7	5. Didn't like job or pay; personal problems related to job	3.3
6. Not qualified	.7	6. Personal problems, or home duties, not job related	2.3
TOTAL	40.5	7. Never started: or worked one day and didn't return	3.0
		TOTAL	53.3
Other: Moved away; return to school; military; laid off; deseased; unknown			6.3

TABLE 20.--Biographical Data on all Metropol Disadvantaged: Stays and Dropouts.

	NAB Dropouts N = 301	NABs Who Stayed N = 165
Sex[a]	95.7% male	89.7% male
Age (Median)[a]	23 years	25 years
Marital Status	65% single	70% single
Education: Highest grade completed	10.7	10.2
Rate of pay at previous job	$2.49 per hour	$1.97 per hour
Beginning rate at Builtrite (Not including incentives)	$2.34 per hour	$2.46 per hour
Arrest Record	15%	10%
Place of Birth		
North Central	45%	20%
Deep South	45%	50%
Outside U.S.	10%	20%
Middle South		
Shift Worked		
First	46%	70%
Second	42%	20%
Third	11%	10%
Number of months unemployed before Builtrite job	3.55	3.4
Number of jobs Held in last 2 years	1.8	1.8
Race[a]		
Negro	84.8%	75.2%
Spanish Speaking	14.9%	23.6%
White	1.2%	0.3%
Certified NAB by		
Builtrite	78.7%	91.5%
State Employment Service	20.3%	7.9%
Other[a]	1.0%	0.6%

[a]From the total population of 466 NABs. The other figures are from a random sample of 10 working and 20 separated employees. For averages, means are given where median is not specified.

surprising that, for example, the number of months unemployed or the number of jobs held previous to Builtrite are low and roughly the same. The obvious job-hoppers have already been eliminated.

Two differences do stand out. The first is the differential in the rate of pay from their previous job to their starting rate at Builtrite.[2] It is a pay boost, and this does not count group incentives, which for most jobs can bring the pay up another 25 per cent. For these who drop out, the pay differential was not significant. Six of the sample of 20 dropouts made more than $3.10 per hour on their previous job; and so clearly took a cut in pay at Builtrite. This job was "no big deal" to them; they probably figure they can do as well or better by going elsewhere.

The second difference is the fact that Builtrite loses a larger percentage of the men who are born in Metropol and other Northern cities. This may mean that these men have more opportunities and are more mobile; they know where they can go to get another job when they want to. The data could also mirror the frustration and militancy of the northern-born black. Those born in the south are often thankful for their job. They work hard, and hope to get ahead. The northern-born is less satisfied with monotonous, hard assembly work (roughly 50 per cent of the dropouts and 40 per cent of those who stayed worked on assembly or conveyors).

New Criteria in the Employment Office

Builtrite and other firms will be hiring the disadvantaged long into the future. The extremely high turnover is not only a great inconvenience to everyone, from the employment office to the foreman, but is also very expensive.

For every one of those 1,250 men who had to be replaced in 1968, about ten others had to be interviewed. The employment office waiting room is most often filled in the mornings, but it takes a lot of time and money to sort through the applicants, trying to separate those who are really serious about working from the chronic job hoppers. The challenge to the employment office is to determine which of these men really want to work and are likely to stay on their jobs. An obvious criterion is their previous job, their reason for leaving, and the number of jobs they have held in last five years. If the interviewer sees them as a job hopper, they are not hired. Tests have not been found to be of any value in predicting successful job performance or job tenure, so they have been dropped.

Many of the men the researchers talked to, both foremen and workers, felt that on the first day of work they could distinguish a man who would probably quit from a more steady worker. The poor worker who would probably quit would ask no questions, was not interested in his job

or things around him. This observation may be hindsight, but it is worth further investigation.

In their effort to develop better criteria for selecting employees, Builtrite experimented with a "values interview." They would attempt to determine the basic values of the newly hired individual and then later correlate them with whether the person stayed with Builtrite or not. For various reasons, the effort was not successful. The employment office now attempts to have an "exit interview" with employees who leave. They hope to both uncover problems and help themselves determine what sort of person is more likely to stay. This effort has had limited success, because the majority of workers quit without notice.

At present, almost the entire burden of selection at Builtrite is on the employment interviewer. Although these men are skilled and experienced, they have few tools now at their disposal to help them in making these difficult judgments.

The new work force are a large percentage of the workers at the Builtrite plants. Builtrite needs workers and these men are the best available. Even given this, Builtrite still has many options open to it. But supervisor Mario Iannelli feels that there is a better approach to a profitable and satisfying plant operation:

> If our plant is gonna stand more than 10 years, we can't just collapse; we have an opportunity to develop a guy who doesn't have a high school education, who doesn't ever seen a machine in his life.

> Never was under the roof for eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, throughout noise, unfamiliar surroundings. This individual has to adapt to industry; and this man has to develop if industry is gonna continue. And more and more the Negro, Puerto Rican: that's what's available on the market. And we have to develop 'em. We have to show them, motivate them to assume these other jobs and responsibilities.

For some time into the future the disadvantaged will be the best, and perhaps the only, source of labor for Builtrite and very many plants like it. These men are intelligent and capable. They often lack motivation and education. Builtrite now is beginning to realize that an investment in these men now is really an investment in the future of their Metropol operations.

Federally Funded Program to Train and Support the Disadvantaged

In 1969 the Manpower Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor awarded Builtrite an MA-4 contract to train, orient, and support 400 disadvantaged workers. Builtrite realizes that an investment in these men now may lower their operating expenses in the future. And fortunately, the federal government stands ready to help finance the training program.

The program is now just beginning. It involves nine weeks of classroom work off the plant premises. This portion is subcontracted to the Metropol Operations Industrialization Center, (OIC) a black-run group originating in Philadelphia under Rev. Leon Sullivan. The trainees will be on the Builtrite payroll from the first day of their

training. The entire program will cost about $3,000 per man. The only men who will not be accepted into the program will be alcoholics and drug addicts.

Counseling and support are an important part of the MA-4 program. The man's regular foreman is also expected to act as a counselor and to be somewhat more understanding of the background out of which the man comes. To ensure this, all of the first-line supervisors and other higher managers will go through a special minority relations training program, conducted by the black staff of OIC.

This program seems to be what Builtrite needs and was lacking. It might even have been a worthwhile investment if it had to be paid for out of their own pocket. Will these men really be better adapted to the plant and have longer job tenure than those who have been hired at the employment office and put right on the job? Only time will tell.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XVIV

[1]For a detailed discussion of various federal manpower programs, including the NAB pledge program, see "Private Involvement in Federal Manpower Programs" by Arnold L. Nemore and Garth L. Mangum, in Public-Private Manpower Policies, ed. by Arnold R. Weber, Frank H. Cassell and Woodrow L. Ginsburg (Madison: Industrial Relations Research Association, 1969), pp. 61-78.

[2]The same finding is reported in Herzberg, op. cit., p. 107.

CHAPTER XX

BLACK AND WHITE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS AND SUMMARY

For many of the workers in the plant, perhaps especially the 76 per cent of the blacks and 24 per cent of the whites who have come up from the Deep South, work at Builtrite is the first sustained contract they have ever had with other race. Coming from segregated neighborhoods, segregated schools, and segregated recreation areas, many of the old cliches and myths melt away when they get to know the person working next to them in the plant.

Thomas Ramsey, a 33-year-old white repair operator from Mississippi, has come to accept the black man, although to him basic differences still seem to exist.

Cavanagh: Have you gotten to know colored people better, would you say, since you've been here?

Ramsey: Oh, yes. Yes, yes. Very much so. In fact, when I was a kid in the South, colored people didn't live very close to the white people. I was raised in the country, and we were never around them much--just what I heard when I was a kid. In the South, even my mother would say, if I was being bad: 'Son, you'd better be good or the niggers are going to get you.' I guess the people didn't know any better or something. I guess my attitude has changed more about them. It's really hard to say. There seems to be a difference in the colored and the white to me, but it's not a bad difference. It's just the way of life.

Lawton Pierce a middle aged black skilled electrician who has been working at Builtrite for 16 years, has watched the atmosphere in the plant change in recent years:

Pierce: I know the people here. I've seen their attitudes change. I've seen their eyes opened up. And we have men that I've talked to 15 years ago; they think different today. They were prejudiced, but prejudiced out of ignorance. They don't have the shackles any more. What caused it? The being able to work around a different ethnic group, of being able to watch him function, to find out that, given the opportunity, they like the same things. They cultural minded, and they have the same aspects as anyone else, whites and blacks.

Cavanagh: In other words, just the opportunity to work in the same place, to be together, to talk to each other, was educating.

Pierce: Very much. Educating in itself. In this way, you don't judge another by the slide rule that you have lived under. It's impossible. Once you find his mode or his reasons for living or doing as he does, you know.

Nelson Kodey, a 57-year-old white set-up may and a veteran of 34 years at Builtrite, explains how working side by side has brought blacks and whites closer together:

> I'd say in the last six months, they've been gettin' along swell with the whites. They come along, and they'll talk to ya. Let's face it, we're boths leery. We don't wanna go an' question them. They don't wanna question us. But when you work with 'em, well you've got to get together some. You say, 'Goddam, you, get over there--move over or somethin'.' See? Right there he'll holler right back at you. Before you know it, first thing, you'll help him out. He'll help you out. It works nice. See?

Kodey's attitude is shared by a large majority of the workers at the plant. Ninety-six per cent of the blacks and 86 per cent of the whites feel that blacks and whites do get along well on the job at Builtrite.

Louis Gibson is a 31-year-old, fairly new black employee who was born in Alabama. His large work group is almost all black, and he feels that the company makes a mistake in allowing any work group to become largely black:

> I believe you should mix them all up, because it makes the working conditions much better. Usually, when you got a bunch of colored guys working together they not going to--well, they just, we got so many of them that's ignorant. I don't know what's wrong, but if you got some white guys working with them, you can get along with them. I don't know why.

Gibson is also critical of the way many of these blacks treat their fellow blacks. They don't try to help a new man learn his job:

> Every new guy comes, the guys act like they don't want to show him anything. The last new guy came there, I tried to show him everything I could. I know how I felt when I first started. But a lotta guys, they don't want to show a new guy.

Everyday relations can be difficult, too. He doesn't find many of his co-workers to be considerate of others:

Gibson: It's not a team. That's my opinion. I'd rather have it a team I like the guys to get along. I don't like no disagreements. I don't like no arguments. Like when you come in and work: even if you got a problem on the outside, make your work easier, make the eight hours go by better. Everyone treating each other like they ain't got a problem in the world. Have some guys come in: one day they got a chip on their shoulder, next day they want to laugh and talk . . .

Cavanagh: Do they joke a lot among themselves?

Gibson: Some of them do. And they do a lot of backtalking. I mean talking behind a guys--I mean one say this guy's this and that. Some guy will go back to another guy,

Gibson (cont.): and say this guys this and that. You know what I'm talking about. I seen a lot of that here. I don't like it.

Among blacks, a veteran in the plant, James Ricker has had a lot of experience working on the assembly line. He blames the line itself for the lack of personal relationships among those who work there:

> I'm working here and this guy's working there. I'm doin' my job and he's doin' his. The line is steadily going. I can't leave my work and go over and have a chitchat with him. . . . The white person goes and eats with his friends, and I do the same thing. It goes on day after day. . . . Where they're working close together, they've got time to stop and talk. But you won't ever get this workin' on the line. They'll never be any better relationship between the races. That line will not give you time.

Ricker is one of the few blacks in his present work group, and he finds that his white co-workers treat him well. But there seem to be limits to that friendship, and that puzzles him:

> They treat me nice. They talk to me; I can talk to them. Well, a smile and all, that doesn't really mean anything. I think that true friends are those who are not only your friends in the plant, but out of the plant as well. Now here's a difference. You can laugh and talk in the plant, and maybe say a few words in line before you part.
>
> But when you go outside, there's a difference. People just don't act as free as they do in the plant. I don't know why; they just don't. This is why I say they haven't been truly converted yet. Because when we go out in our parking lot, I go to my car and they go to their car, and we don't have a chat or anything like that. She goes to her car, and I go to mine. I don't know what she's got there. Maybe it's in my mind.

But, while an overwhelming majority of the workers feel that blacks and whites get along very well together at Builtrite, the same is not true when the employees are on their own time (see Table 21). Less than half of the blacks and only 10 per cent of the whites feel that blacks and white mix well during lunch and break periods.

TABLE 21.--Hourly Workers' Favorable Attitudes on How Blacks and Whites Socialize.

	Black N=25	White N=25
Blacks and Whites Get Along Well On the Job	96%	88%
Blacks and Whites Mix at Lunch and Breaks	48%	10%

The employees explain their attitudes toward one another:

Clare Eckerly, 40, white assembler: They don't want to mix with white people, and that's true.

Stanley Olszak, 62, white section leader: You know damn well they don't like white people. They don't. I don't hear too much of it, but I get wind of it every once 'a while. They don't like them. Well, I guess the whites don't like the colored, either.

Ambrose Cairn, 29, black foreman: They get along pretty well. But when they get pissed off out there, and I mean pissed off, then they choose sides along racial lines. You hear the conversation getting vulger, and loud--real loud. You can hear it all over the shop. You can just about tell when it's going to explode.

John Dahle, 47, white utility assembler: They work together as well as is to be expected. But the Negro people eat together. If there's somethin' bunched together like a bunch of geese, and have their little conference. They stick together like a leech.

A young perceptive, and outspoken black assembler, Jeremiah Collins, 23, has an explanation for this voluntary segregation:

> It's split up. The blacks eat their lunch over here; the Puerto Ricans go their way, and the whites go their way. Because actually you don't have anything in common, you know. Like, we couldn't get with the Mexicans and talk about how much we like Mexico, and how we wish we were there. And they couldn't get with us and say, 'I want to know how Harlem is.'
>
> Just like a movie star and a football player won't have anything in common. They'll put their nose up to one another. One of them going to say, 'He's stuck up. Don't want to speak to me because he got money.' People just don't have anything in common. Why should they speak to you? Why should they talk? Nothing you can talk about.

It is one thing to come to work, smile at each other, even exchange a few words. But it is quite another to take breaks together, or more so, to meet outside the plant. This is basically where the line is drawn at Builtrite. For black and white employees there is little contact with each other on their own time. There is almost no contact outside the plant.

Summary

Builtrite is a large employer of semi-skilled workers which is located on the edge of the black neighborhood. The proportion of black hourly employees rose from one per cent to 32 per cent in four years; this was an addition of about 1,600 blacks to the payrolls. In 1966 the proportion of blacks in one plant was 40 per cent. Most of these new employees are young, poor males from the ghetto.

Turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness have doubled, tripled or more in the last few years and are among the major problems facing Builtrite. This problem affects not only plant productivity and product quality, but also plant morale. It is discouraging and time consuming for the foreman, and a source of considerable inconvenience and even loss of pay to fellow workers. The large numbers of new young black workers are the principal sources of the increased turnover, absenteeism and tardiness. Although the methodology of this research did not allow for correlation between these problems and race and youth, some suggestions on the relative impact of race and youth will be presented in the Conclusion (Chapter XXI).

Builtrite is now immersed in the problems surrounding the employment of the disadvantaged, and these problems go well beyond the 165 men who are formally designated as NAB pledges and are still working at Builtrite. An analysis of the personnel records and the information and attitudes obtained from the interviewees at Builtrite yields the following as the factors that are most responsible for the increased turnover at Builtrite, especially among the new young workers:

1. Inadequate relations with the foreman; little personal contact and support;
2. Inadequate orientation to the life and work of the factory; poor job training and narrow view of their job;

3. Undesirable working conditions, especially for the young and the blacks, and a feeling that there is no chance for promotion;
4. Frustration with assembly-type work as monotonous, uncreative and insignificant;
5. Restlessness of youth, decline of the "work ethic," and physical and mental health problems;
6. Easy availability of other jobs in the Metropol area in 1968, and the attraction of easier money through welfare or unemployment benefits.

Of the above, at Builtrite a worker's relationship with his foreman is probably the most important single factor affecting his job satisfaction and thus absenteeism, tardiness and tenure on the job. A strong supportive relationship with a new young employee will make that new employee much less apt to be late, absent or to leave the company. Principal elements of the supportive relationship are:

1. A personal interest in the worker;
2. Effective two-way communication with the worker; and
3. Honest and fair discipline

Builtrite's attempts to attack the above six problems by means of better orientation and personal counseling have been creative, effective to a limited extent, but half-hearted and sporadic. These programs and their effect have also been documented, but that evidence is still not

persuasive enough to Builtrite top management that they would permanently continue these programs at their own expense.

The black caucus at the plant is now dormant, partially because the leadership is no longer at Builtrite, and partially because the blacks feel they have achieved their purpose of bringing their grievances to the attention of Builtrite top management. The blacks felt that it took this sort of confrontation to awaken the line managers of this ethnically-staffed and production-oriented plant. There is some evidence that the black caucus did accelerate the promotion of blacks especially into salaried and supervisory positions.

Builtrite had six black supervisors. These men have all risen from the ranks and are capable. They experienced little resentment and difficulties from the whites. But unexpectedly some of these men had some initial problems with their black employees. The new supervisor's previous black peers sometimes accused him of "selling out" to management. The blacks were often jealous, just as were the old ethnics at the success of one of their own. But, on the other hand, they did not demonstrate the old ethnics' cohesiveness as a group. Some blacks may even subconsciously resent the fact that a black man and not a white is his boss; he may feel that this lowers the status of his job.

Builtrite has hired 466 men who were formally designated as disadvantaged under the NAB Program, of which 165 were still on the job in Spring, 1968. A comparison of the background of those who are still on the job and those who quit yields the following two differences:

1. For those who are still at Builtrite, the pay they receive there was a considerable increase and this was not true for those who are no longer at Builtrite;
2. Builtrite loses a larger proportion of those men who are born in the north.

Plant management is still trying to determine the underlying causes of this high turnover, and they have made some attempts to rectify it. The new federally-financed contract to orient and support some 400 disadvantaged workers has just begun.

Blacks and whites get along rather well on the job. They are placed next to each other at their work stations and they cooperate and communicate. But this is not generally true when the workers are on their own time at lunch or breaks. They then tend to separate into their own social and racial groups; there is then little mixing.

PART V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the dissertation will summarize the findings, make comparisons, try to determine some root causes, and will look to the future. Chapter XXI will summarize and compare the findings from the three plant studies. Chapter XXII will suggest some factors underlying these observed phenomena, make recommendations and, finally, will outline areas where additional research is needed.

CHAPTER XXI

SUMMARY AND COMPARISON FROM THE THREE PLANT STUDIES

The questions posed in the first chapter of this dissertation will now be examined in the light of the information available. The principal data input is from the interviews with the random sample of black and white hourly workers at each of the three plants. Among other sources drawn on are: company records and reports, population data, published reports and interviews with foremen, managers, union officers and community leaders.

The Findings

The principal findings from these three case studies are:

1. Black workers are slightly less satisfied with their jobs, their boss, their opportunities for promotion, and the way they are treated by their fellow workers. But both blacks and whites are generally positive on these items. Between one-third and one-half of the blacks at the three plants were not certain that blacks had a fair chance for promotion. Almost all the whites thought that blacks did have an equal opportunity.

2. Blacks do as well as the average worker in quality and quantity of work, according to their foreman's estimate and plant records. But younger black males do tend to have a poorer than average record on absenteeism and tardiness.

3. Blacks and whites cooperate and communicate quite well during working hours on the job. However, on their own time, in the plant and outside, both blacks and whites tend to gather in racially separate groups.

4. A large number of the disadvantaged (NABs) have serious problems of absenteeism, tardiness and turnover, although when on the job they tend to be good workers. For the real disadvantaged, more than the ordinary orientation to the job and to industrial life is needed. And it is essential that these men have a sensitive, supportive, and fair foreman.

5. White backlash toward black workers and the disadvantaged was present in only a small minority, but that minority could often be quite vocal. There has been a great increase in the number of blacks hired and promoted, but there was only one instance out of about 20 where the black man was promoted due to black pressure and was probably not entirely qualified. Effective communication of equal employment opportunity policies tends to counteract backlash.

6. Until about 1965, a relatively small number of blacks were hired at each of these plants. The evidence seemed to indicate that blacks were discriminated against in hiring. Generally this discrimination was unintentional. The plants were ahead of most other institutions (e.g. schools, churches, clubs) in racial integration, but they catered to community customs until very recently on the type of work blacks were assigned to and especially on the rate of promotion. Plant management now tends to be considerably more active in community and interracial affairs than they were in 1967. The most significant problem that remains is the gross underrepresentation of blacks in skilled, salaried, and supervisory positions.

Additional findings of this research are:

7. Hiring practices at each of these plants are now fair, and are not racially discriminatory. Both black and white workers acknowledge this. The employment office now makes special efforts to find capable blacks.

8. The large majority of both black and white workers at each plant felt that they got along well with their foreman.

9. Especially in their early months as supervisors, black foremen often have their most serious difficulties with blacks in their work group.

10. Official criteria for designating the disadvantaged were easily applied, but were inadequate.

11. Of those who were formally designated as disadvantaged (NAB pledges):

a. Almost all were workers who might have been hired even without the NAB Program.

b. All received good work performance ratings from their foremen, especially quality and quantity of work.

12. A large number of the disadvantaged have serious problems of absenteeism, tardiness and turnover. The principle causes of turnover were:

a. Inadequate relations with the foreman; little personal contact and support;

b. Inadequate orientation to the life and work of the factory: poor job training and narrow view of their job.

c. Undesirable working conditions, especially for the young and the blacks, and a feeling that there is no chance for promotion;

d. Frustration with their work as monotonous, uncreative and insignificant;

e. Restlessness of youth, decline of the "work ethic," and physical and mental health problems;

f. Easy availability of other jobs at that time, and the attraction of easier money through welfare or unemployment benefits.

13. When blacks felt that they were not getting sufficient representation in their local union, they often formed a separate black labor group.

Hiring of Blacks

Since 1964 the number of blacks in two of the three plants, Middleburg and Metropol, increased by more than 300 per cent, while the total size of both work forces grew much more slowly. Metropol has many blacks coming daily to its employment office. Middleburg and Port City plants are located some distance from the black neighborhoods, and are somewhat aggressively seeking out blacks as employees. All the plants now have a percentage of black hires more than twice the percentage of blacks in their work force. And yet, after several years of this, the percentage of blacks in each plant is still far short of the percentage of blacks in the city where that plant is located.

Until about 1965, only a small number of blacks were hired at each of these plants. The evidence seemed to indicate that blacks were discriminated against in hiring. Some of this racial discrimination was overt, but most was unintentional. At two of the plants, Middleburg and Metropol, the blacks in the work force have more years of schooling than do the whites. Because the average level of education completed for blacks in the community was considerably below that of whites, it became clear that these plants had some of the better educated and thus probably

better motivated of the blacks in the city. The whites in each work force were more typical of the rest of the whites in the city.

Job Performance of Blacks

The foreman is the most qualified single person to judge the performance of a worker. Even when there existed a more objective norm by which to judge an individual worker (e.g., production quotas, rejects, etc.), the foreman had access to this information. And he was the person most concerned that the production of those workers under him was up to expectations.

Foremen generally judged that blacks were good workers (see Table 22), in spite of the fact that, especially at Middleburg and Metropol, they tended to be younger and have less industrial experience. Not one foreman found the blacks in their work group to be more difficult to deal with personally than the whites; they found most to be cooperative and communicative.

However, two consistently difficult problems for blacks were absenteeism and tardiness. This was especially true of the young black males working on the assembly line in Metropol. No one in Middleburg claimed that the blacks in the plant there were poorly equipped or disadvantaged. So the two Middleburg foremen who judged that some blacks have poorer discipline and were less promotable probably

TABLE 22.--Job Performance of Hourly Blacks: Percentage of Foremen who Judge that Blacks Do at Least as Good a Job as Average Worker.

	Middleburg N = 9	Port City N = 8	Metropol N = 9	Total N = 26
Quantity of Work	100%	87%	89%	92%
Quality of Work	100%	100%	78%	92%
Absenteeism	89%	75%	44%	69%
Tardiness	89%	87%	44%	73%
Accept Responsibility	89%	100%	76%	84%
Personality at Work	100%	100%	100%	100%
Discipline at Work	78%	100%	78%	84%
Ability to Learn Job	100%	75%	100%	92%
Promotability	78%	62%	100%	81%

reflected either less work experience on the part of blacks, or a biased view of these two foremen, or both.

Port City blacks tended to be older and they came to the job with fewer years of schooling than blacks at the other plants. As part of an older generation of blacks, they may have learned to fit some of the expectations of an earlier era: their supervisors thought that it was harder for them to learn and that they were less promotable. Even where very many of the blacks at Metropol were disadvantaged, not one of the foremen there judged these young men to be less promotable or to have difficulty in learning their admittedly easy job. Two Metropol foremen considered these same men careless, however, since they had poorer quality and were thought not to accept responsibility as readily.

Promotion

Promotion was probably the most difficult issue at each of the three plants, even though some blacks had been promoted in the last few years. Blacks were still very much underrepresented in the salaried and especially the supervisory ranks. While the perceptions of the black work force were becoming more optimistic, there were still between one-third and one-half who were not sure that blacks have a fair opportunity to obtain a promotion.

In the locations where there were more blacks in supervisory positions, blacks tended to feel that they had more of a chance for promotion. One-third of the blacks in

Metropol who still felt that they did not have a fair chance for promotion turned out to be largely from one section. Because of special layoff problems previously discussed (see p. 301), this section had not been able to promote many blacks.

Relations With the Foreman

To the credit of the supervisory force at each of the plants, the vast majority of both blacks and whites said that they got along with their foremen, worked well for him and respected him. But at each plant fewer of the blacks than whites felt they had these good relations. There were no black supervisors at Middleburg, only one at Port City, and 95 per cent were white at Metropol. At Metropol only a little more than half of the black hourly workers felt they got along well with their foreman. A large number of the blacks at Metropol were young and disadvantaged. Their special attitudes and problems will be summarized later.

The three cases, especially Metropol, seemed to demonstrate a link between a lack of understanding between a foreman and his work group and high absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover. The elements of management style that were found to be necessary with young black workers to keep absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover within reasonable bounds were:

1. A personal interest in the worker;

2. Effective two-way communication with the individual worker;
3. Honest and fair discipline

When a black supervisor was appointed at Metropol and Port City, the whites and Spanish speaking accepted him as their superior more readily than did many of the blacks. Former black peers gave the new foreman a disproportionate number of problems. This reaction can probably be explained, following an old pattern:

1. Some blacks had expected special favors from their former co-workers, and they resented it when they did not receive preference. And perhaps to prove his impartiality, a new black foreman may make even greater demands on blacks.
2. The former co-workers may be jealous, and resent the success of their former peer.
3. Blacks do not always share the old ethnics' cohesiveness. Black leaders point ot this as one of the needs for black pride and black consciousness.
4. There may be "black Jim Crowism" present. Some blacks may unconsciously resent having a black as their boss; they may feel that it is degrading to themselves not to have a white man as a supervisor.

5. All new foremen are tried, tested and pushed to the limit by their work group in their early months.

Black and White Social Relations

One of the greatest triumphs and also disappointments was the pattern of interpersonal relations on the job. Blacks and whites meet, talk, and get along very well on the job. They have been placed side by side by the company, which they generally accept as a right of management. While working thus, they do not resist the opportunity to get acquainted and even to make new friends. And there is evidence at every plant that the fact of blacks and whites working side by side has helped clarify biases and preconceptions that each has toward the other.

But the forum in which a worker shows his new friendship is most often sharply limited to his work area. For on their own time, most blacks and whites did not socialize. Where and how they spend their free time is not determined by the company, and they generally seek out friends of their own race.

It is not surprising that on racially-oriented subjects blacks tend to be more positive than are whites. To most blacks it is quite clear that there is no preferential treatment in hiring, from their boss or from promotion; some whites are not so sure of this. And, of course,

blacks feel that their own race does good work and that some blacks could do the foreman's job adequately.

Blacks in the three samples tend to be slightly less positive than whites in their attitudes toward their job, their boss, the training they received, and their attitudes toward promotion. This difference runs from being almost insignificant at Port City to being quite pronounced at Metropol. Another variable that is probably affecting these attitudes, perhaps more than race, is age. Port City has the oldest blacks, and their attitudes on job-related subjects tend to be quite close to whites of roughly the same age. While the blacks are younger than the whites at Middleburg, the difference in age between the two racial groups is quite pronounced at Metropol.

This difference in age has an influence on the variation in job attitudes. The methodology of this research does not enable a precise man-for-man correlation (i.e., age or race vs. individuals absentee record). Nevertheless, it was true at Metropol that the young blacks had a poorer absenteeism and tardiness record than did the young whites. The young whites quit at a greater rate. But there is some evidence that the presence in large numbers of so many blacks on the entry level jobs scared some of the whites away in the early weeks (see p.). Some further conclusions on the possible influence of age, class and culture, will be discussed in Chapter XXII.

The Disadvantaged on the Job

In spite of the fact that the National Alliance of Businessmen (NAB) JOBS Program proposes to provide jobs for men who would not otherwise qualify for work, the researchers found that only very rarely did any of the plants really lower their hiring standards in order to hire the disadvantaged. Almost all the NAB pledges were people who might have been hired in any case. In Metropol the disadvantaged were certified as such only after they had been hired; and in Port City almost half the foremen did not even know who their disadvantaged workers were.

Foremen found the job performance of disadvantaged workers to be good and in some cases even superior to the average workers. These new workers can be quite good performers. The one major problem that came up over and over again in each plant was absenteeism and tardiness; the record of the disadvantaged worker was often considerably poorer than that of the rest of the work force.

Absenteeism and turnover was a problem with both young whites and young blacks at Metropol, so it was not primarily a racial problem. Younger workers have different attitudes toward the job than did their fathers and grandfathers. These young people are not nearly so wedded to their jobs, nor as respectful of the authority of their foreman or other managers. They demand more satisfaction from their work. They want to understand what they are

doing and its importance.[1] If they do not feel that what they are doing is worthwhile, or if they do not have good relations with their supervisor, they simply do not show up for work or they come in late.

Neither the importance of his work nor his relations with his supervisor are issues that the young worker can attack head on. He will not ordinarily be able to articulate his problem, sometimes because he is not wholly conscious of these roots of his dissatisfaction. By missing work or quitting, he is relieved of his anxiety of being in an unpleasant situation, and at the same time he feels that he is getting back at a hated job and an unsympathetic boss. If he loses his job as a result, this is a small loss to him since he doesn't like the job anyway.[2]

Aspirations of the new young worker and the disadvantaged are often unrealistically high or low. When a young man comes into the plant with very high aspirations, he expects a good job and a quick promotion. When he does not find either to be true, he becomes disappointed and frustrated.

Another new disadvantaged worker might begin work with his aspirations too low, because of all his previous failures. Or he might arrive at such a state of mind after being on the job for a period, as perhaps through the process described above. With low aspirations he lacks interest in his work, the desire to do well, and initiative. And so it is not surprising that, although he has the ability to do the job

well, he does not do good work or, more frequently, he misses work. The extremes of both of these attitudes could be alleviated by better orientation to the job and by better communication with a sensitive supervisor.

White Backlash

Attempts to rectify the product of past patterns of racial discrimination sometimes results in white backlash. Both the attempts to rectify discrimination and the backlash itself may be seen as stemming from the quest for fairness. Backlash is the resentment of whites at what they perceive to be special consideration that is given to blacks.

Backlash, though it can be quite outspoken and aggressive, was present in only a small number of the white work force. At each plant three-quarters or more of the white work force were quite certain that no preference was being given to blacks for promotion. Where some positive steps have been taken to put blacks into supervisory positions, a small number of whites did resent what they considered to be preferential treatment.

Two other indices showed that white backlash was not widespread. Only a very small number of whites felt that their own boss gave blacks preferential treatment. This proportion was never greater than 13 per cent at any of the three plants. The largest portion of the white work force that felt that they could not work for a black foreman was only eleven per cent at Middleburg.

There was evidence, however, that first-line supervisors often tolerated behavior, especially absenteeism and tardiness, on the part of the disadvantaged and some blacks that they would not stand for in a white. This was a common complaint in the plants. While double standards may be temporarily applied for a new young employee while he is learning, all foremen agreed that eventually he should be required to work at the same standards as the rest of the work force.

The few in the northern plants, Port City and Metropol, who showed some signs of backlash tended to be men, but they were young and old, skilled and unskilled, high school graduates and dropouts. In Middleburg, where the work force was largely women, the most articulate spokesmen of backlash were women. Possibly because it is potential peers, who are coming in with what the older workers feel are less ability and poor attitudes, that antagonizes the white workers.

Some of these workers were quite articulate and forceful. In each of the plants a handful of outspoken, prejudiced whites had an influence in crystalizing anxieties and subconscious prejudices. They give a certain legitimacy to attitudes that the ordinary worker would tend to repress.

Plant Management

Since about 1967, at each of the three plants management has taken a stronger and more active role in equal

employment opportunity within the plant, and in interracial and community affairs outside the plant.

At about that time they began to actively seek new black employees. And more recently they have been upgrading blacks, bringing college-educated blacks into salaried and professional jobs, and looking for blacks as foremen and supervisors.

Management at each plant has also become more active in community affairs. At Middleburg and Metropol, men are newly assigned to "community relations" as a large part of their job responsibilities. Port City has a man without that title, who has been doing some interracial and community work for more than a decade.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XXI

[1]Elliot Liebow says that the jobs of streetcorner men are typically "hard, dirty, uninteresting and underpaid. The rest of society (whatever its ideal values regarding the dignity of labor) holds the job of the dishwasher or janitor or unskilled laborer in low esteem if not outright contempt. So does the streetcorner man. He cannot draw from a job those social values which other people do not put into it." Tally's Corner, op. cit., pp. 58-59. Although most jobs described here are more stable and better paid than those described by Liebow, the assembly line jobs at Builtrite are probably only slightly better in pay and esteem.

[2]"The streetcorner man wants to be a person in his own right, to be noticed, to be taken account of, but in this respect, as well as in meeting his money needs, his job fails him. The job and the man are even. The job fails the man and the man fails the job." Ibid., pp. 62-63. Liebow also points out that this sort of man does not like to sink roots in too deep. He values his ability to move, his freedom. Paul Goodman makes many of these same points from the standpoint of youth, "It's hard to grow up when there isn't enough man's work," Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER XXII

DIAGNOSIS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

This chapter will attempt to determine factors underlying some of the findings outlined in Chapter XXI. And it will also present some recommendations for those who are working with disadvantaged workers. Among the issues that will be treated from this perspective are: social relations in the plant, the attitudes of the younger work force, and white backlash. After a brief look to the future, the chapter will conclude with some suggestions for further research.

Social Relations

A very frequent comment in each plant was how well blacks and whites got along while on the job, and yet how these same people separated into racial groups when on their own time in the cafeteria and on breaks. This is not unlike the caste system in India, where Indian workers are "modern" while in the plant and return to their traditional ways when they are at home. Pointing to this same sort of attitude change, "'When I put on my shirt and go to the factory I take off my caste. When I come home and take off my shirt I put on my caste.' This dramatizes the

paradoxes in which the modern Indians live."[1] The white worker is much the same way. He is modern and secularized while on the job, but often traditional when at home or in the cafeteria (which is also home to him).

In each of the three plants, the black workers there were more positive than the whites on whether there was racial mixing at lunch and breaks. This may have been because:

1. As a minority in the plant, many blacks could mix well, and still leave a majority of white groups without a black, or
2. Possibly the black as a victim of discrimination unconsciously denied the unpleasant reality that he is not welcome in some white groups.

Attitudes of the Young Black Work Force

Absenteeism, turnover and tardiness are growing problems at each of the three plants, and especially so at Metropol. It has been pointed out in the body of the case studies and reaffirmed in Chapter XXI that these men make demands on the plant and on their supervisor that workers of a generation ago would never think of.

These young black men are largely uncertain, distrustful, impatient, and often aliented. They demand that they understand the importance of what they are doing, though their demands are not always verbal. If they dislike their work, the boss, or their fellow workers, they often skip days, come in late, or quit.

Personal relationships, even at work, seem to be more important for younger workers than they are for the old-timers. If the younger worker has a good, positive relationship with the foreman, it will influence the worker more positively than will loyalty to the company or some other more abstract sense of obligation. He also places a high value on the personal relations he has with his fellow workers. Many of these same personal characteristics were summarized some time ago by Knupfer, entirely aside from the race variable. In her "portrait of the Underdog"[2] she showed that with low status people, the more underprivileged, disadvantaged they were, the more inclined they were to require a foreman who is a father and co-workers who are brothers. They do not go out to seek friends, but find them where they live and where they work. So personal relationships at work are vitally important to them.

In addition to being an underdog (class variable), many of the differences between black workers and white workers can be accounted for by their difference in age. Especially at Metropol and Middleburg, the black workers were younger than the whites.

The restlessness and lack of stability of the young blacks may be more a function of their youth than their race.[3] And this situation is more healthy than if the divergence of values were wholly a function of race. Given

the generational differences, this means that some blacks and whites have a common adversary. In other words, the generational conflict works to close the gap that race seems to open up. It integrates a portion of what race dis-integrates.

One additional variable that should be investigated as a source of the divergence of values of the young black work force from the accepted values of the industrial plant is the difference between traditional and modern views.[4] In a more traditional society, the peer group has a very strong influence on the individual and physical proximity is important in making friends.[5] The individual from a lower-class, traditional culture tends to have a low self-image. He views as an ideal job:

> . . . one that pays the most money for the least physical discomfort, avoids strenuous or 'dirty' physical labor, demands no emotional involvement, such as 'taking the job home with you,' requires no submission to arbitrary authority and provides companions at work.[6]

Some of the seemingly erratic ways of the young black are common traits in a traditional society. Perceptive people at Builtrite noticed that the absenteeism and turnover of young blacks is not really new. They experienced the same difficulties with the Appalachians who had come into the plant 20 years previously. As a study of the mountaineers' attitudes puts it:

> He feels no responsibility to work. I know men who have actually quit their jobs in the city and returned to the mountains because the factories expected them

> to be there every single day . . . the mountaineer does not understand a way of life which elevates work above what he feels to be the real human values.[7]

Metropol Builtrite and the other two companies operate their plants with increasing numbers of these younger workers because of economic necessity. They need workers. Builtrite gained a great deal of experience in a short time. There was little time to evaluate or digest it. As a personnel man close to these younger workers put it, "All that I had learned earlier was obsolete." Perhaps he is putting it too strongly, especially in the light of his own previous acknowledged experience with the Appalachians, the Spanish speakers and other traditionally-oriented workers. But, in any case, that experience is a precious reference for Builtrite's future and that of the rest of U.S. industry. Managers from other companies are looking to the experience of plants like Metropol in order to learn from their experience.

This young work force will be around for a long time, if not permanently. Any large urban firm which expects to remain efficient and profitable in the coming years must learn how to cope with this group of workers.

Many suggestions to help in keeping the disadvantaged on the job and reducing their absenteeism are implied in the Metropol and the Port City chapters. Clearly called for are:

1. Much better orientation to the plant and the job;

2. Sensitive, knowledgeable and flexible foremen (foremen training programs are often called for); and
3. Special counselling and coaching on job-related and other personal problems.

In addition, each plant has its own individual problems that make its work less attractive (e.g. transportation for the ghetto to the plant, assembly line work, etc.)

From the above comments on traditional societies, and from U.S. industries' experience in trying to build up a work force is South America, Asia or Africa, it is clear that the will to work and to get to the job every day and on time does not come naturally. It is learned. This underscored and need for good orientation to the life and work of the factory. Broken homes,[8] frequent moves and few permanent friends can undermine a person's self-esteem and his security. He then finds it difficult to look to long-term goals, to plan and save. The orientation program that is needed is not the typical two hour slide lecture, but something that can help the individual adapt to this new planned environment.[9]

But the question arises: given the influence of youth, class and culture, how much of the divergence demonstrated in the study is due to race? It is very difficult to isolate the variables, because they are so intertwined. Surely an underscoring of the effect of each of these other

variables bridges much of the racial gap between the young black worker and the older white ethnic. It is not only, nor even necessarily largely, race that makes the biggest difference. Race is probably less influential on most of the work-oriented attitudes than is age, class and culture. But it is also true that most of the new black males in the work force are young, lower class and from a southern traditional culture.

Some Reflections and Projections

For a variety of reasons, there is now a determination in industry to employ more blacks and to provide them greater opportunities within the firm. In these three electrical plants, the number of blacks has increased dramatically in the last few years. And plant management has determined that they will continue to increase.

Two problems may be on the horizon. Where real disadvantaged have been taken into the work force (i.e., low skill, little industrial experience and often threatened by the job and the boss), they may not be able to be promoted above the lowest level jobs. Taking unskilled people into the work force does provide them with a job, and increases the percentage of blacks in the firm. But if they are not helped to become acclimated to the work environment and if their skills are not upgraded, they will either continue to job-hop or will clog the entry level positions. Large numbers of black workers kept on low-skilled jobs will

inevitably cause disappointment, frustration, and then anger. Some methods and programs must be found to enable these disadvantaged to develop their talents and to move to jobs that they are capable and desirous of doing. If this is not done, industry has merely postponed a problem, and created a situation that with added frustration will be even more difficult later.

A second problem is underscored at Metropol. Already blacks there are 32 per cent of the hourly work force and Spanish speakers are 22 per cent, leaving whites in a minority position of 46 per cent. More than half of the current hires are black. And there is already evidence that at least some whites do not want to work in a plant that has such a large porportion black. Although Metropol may now be eliminating largely those whites of deep prejudice, and may be better off because of it, can they expect that whites will continue to come to the plant? Or will it become a minority plant within a decade?

The older, capable black men now in their 30's and 40's often felt racial discrimination in the plant keenly. Some few, especially in more recent years, spoke out (see pp. 81 & 89). They rocked the boat and sometimes got the reputation for being "trouble-makers." As a result, they are often considered unsuited to managerial responsibilities when sometimes quite the opposite seems to be true. A few have been fired for alleged or real militancy. So, in spite

of their abilities and their efforts, they are not considered first for the very jobs that they themselves fought for. This characteristic is probably typical of any organization, and will probably continue to be so.

Younger black men now typically get promotions and get the opportunities that were denied their older fellow-blacks, even though it was often the older men who fought to get the chances. The younger black is standing on the shoulders of his older black brothers.

In spite of the difficulties, the three industrial plants studied here are considerably ahead of their surroundings in interracial attitudes. Blacks and whites do work together. The plants are more successful and more effective integrators than the other parallel social systems, the schools, politics, neighborhoods or churches.

The insights that have been gained from working with the disadvantaged have a much wider relevance than merely to black ghetto residents. Many of the young workers have problems with repetitive work and the demands they place on their supervisors have been discussed for some time. When in addition to their race and youth, these men also come from poor, lower-class families and a more traditional society, it is seen even more clearly that this is not a new problem.

It is true that the young work force's demands are not really all that new. But they have become pressing to

managers because of the fact that they now constitute a large portion of their work force, and they have caused turnover and absenteeism to rise drastically.

These insights can also be useful when trying to gather a work force in developing countries. These potential workers are poor and tend to come from a traditional culture. They are not unlike the young black worker in the U.S., just as he himself is not unlike the Appalachian or the Spanish speaker.

Future Research

This study has been broad-gauged, and has pointed directions and attempted to gain graphic grass roots insights. And, as a result it has raised as many questions as it has answered.

Additional research might best take more specific and narrower objectives. Many of the problems addressed here deserve furher study:

1. Some foremen were very critical of the performance of blacks. To what extent does a work force, especially the young black detect this generalization, this expectation of his boss? If so, to what extent does it alienate and close off communication between them? And does it thus become a self-fulfilling prophecy?
2. How much of this alienation, disorientation, and need for a sensitive foreman of the young black

worker is due to the southern traditional background of the individual?

3. How much of this is accounted for by his poverty, his low income status?
4. Does the young black man share these problems with the comparable young white work force? That is, is it largely an influence of age and not race?
5. How does one judge the success of programs to employ the disadvantaged? Turnover is ordinarily used, but a man may leave to get a better job somewhere else. Ought he not to be considered a success and not a failure?
6. Is it predictable that young black men will give a black supervisor a more difficult time than will a white? Why do they do this? Is it jealously, a lack of cohesiveness, or what?

There is a great deal of raw research material in the files at the Cambridge Center for Social Studies from this research project. Many of the most articulate and insightful men were not quoted at length in this dissertation in order to give a fuller representation of the rest of the work force. Some of these workers provide many valuable insights that were neglected here. Perhaps their attitudes could be coupled with some biographical information. This might give insights on their birthplace, family and other influences that have made them the way they are.

A large number of the better educated and more articulate blacks in both the south and the north had graduated from Catholic schools. Their proportion certainly seemed to be larger than the five per cent black Catholics that are in the population. Many were also very favorable toward their experiences with these schools, the priests, and nuns. Although the fact that the interviewers were priests undoubtedly encouraged them to bring up the subject, they spoke honestly, straightforwardly and without apology. Additional research of these people might examine their present education, their jobs, and their background in an attempt to find a possible correlation between a Catholic school education and the "success" of a black.

On the methodology of this research: to check the reliability of the information gathering process, black interviewers and also interviewers more conservative in their racial views could be used in a pilot study to see if the information return parallels what was reported here.

The focus of this dissertation has been the problems and the attitudes of the black man. But as many whites were interviewed. Those same white interviews could be examined in an attempt to better understand the roots of their resentment of preferential treatment and welfare, and also to better understand the "hard hat," working-class and interpersonal values more specifically.

Additional research could also be directed to determine the effectiveness of the various longer and more detailed orientation programs that were proposed and tried at Builtrite. Some internal reports are available on the amount of information that is retained in the typical slide-lecture orientation. This was tabulated for the first time by the author and could be presented. Orientation is a vital issue, and deserves a more thorough investigation.

The counselling efforts in the plant could also be investigated in more detail. Why was the program never expanded? Why was the 30 year old famous counselling program at Western Electric's Hawthorne Plant discountinued precisely at a time when it seems to be most needed?

The surprisingly negative relation of black workers to their black supervisor also deserves more attention. Are these difficulties largely temporary? As the black foreman gets settled and becomes more accustomed to the job, do they die out? What are the causes of these difficulties. Do the older blacks tend to give as many difficulties to the black supervisor as do the younger blacks? Why?

Information already on hand is sufficient to write up a suggested foreman training program for men who will be dealing with the disadvantaged. This would be especially valuable for whites who have come up through the ranks, and have little experience with the attitudes and culture of

the disadvantaged. An editor of the Harvard Business Review has indicated that he would like such an article.

What sort of a foreman training program is most desirable? Most agree that sensitizing of the foreman and manager is essential. What sort of sensitivity training ought this be? Many are skeptical of industrial use of sensitivity training on the Bethel model. How effective has the Bell and Howell effort been? Is sensitizing enough, or must the supervisor also get broader training in managerial skills, and must he be given more responsibility as a manager before he can make use of his new information and insights?

This research showed plant management were more involved in community and local affairs. Will management continue to move out beyond the plant and take a more active role in local schools and perhaps even in such issues as housing? Corporate taxes support the schools, so some say that managers have a right to see that these funds are spent responsibly. Is this so? What are the implications of greater management activities in the civic and political arena?

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER XXII

[1]These comments are by M. N. Srinivas in (ed. by Myron Weiner), Modernization: The dynamics of Growth (New York: Basic Books, 1966), p. 64.

[2]Public Opinion Quarterly, 11 (1947), p. 107.

[3]Eli Ginsburg points out how the urban child is remote from any work experiences. He does not see his father at work. And the father rarely talks about his work except to complain about difficulties. "The fact that his father brings home with him only a little of his total work experience means that the child gains only a very skewed and unbalanced view of work." The optimistic Tradition and American Youth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 55.

[4]For the classical statement of these two world views, see Ferdinand Tonnies, Community and Society (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 231-232.

[5]Herbert J. Gans, The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1962), p. 81f.

[6]Ibid., p. 123.

[7]Jack Weller, Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 106-107.

[8]"Nonwhite women are more than three times as likely to have their marriages disrupted as white women, and more often by separation than by divorce." Mollie Orshansky, "Children of the Poor," in Work, Youth and Unemployment, ed. by Melvin Herman, et al. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), p. 339.

[9]The great disparity of values between the disadvantaged, more traditional worker and the demands of the industrial plant, and the need for some kind of a bridge between

the two was demonstrated more than 20 years ago by Allison Davis, "The Motivation of the Underprivileged Worker," in Industry and Society, ed. by William F. Whyte (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1946), pp. 84-106.

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APPENDIX

SUPPLEMENTAL IN-PLANT ISSUE

Divisions News

Vol. 1, No. 1 JUNE 3, 1969

OUR PLANT INCLUDED IN HUMAN RELATIONS STUDY CURRENTLY BEING MADE IN ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY

Father Purcell *Father Cavanaugh*

Two interesting and interested men, Dr. Theodore V. Purcell and Dr. Gerald F. Cavanaugh, both of the Cambridge (Mass.) Center for Social Studies, will have office space at our plant for the next few weeks as they conduct a portion of their two-year, nation-wide study of human relations in the electrical industry.

To obtain meaningful information for their industry study, Fathers Purcell and Cavanaugh (they are Jesuits) will conduct interviews with both management and non-management employes selected at random from our employment files. To chat with these gentlemen will be an interesting and enjoyable experience for those of us who might be selected, and we will be giving significant help to an important study. (Of course, if your name is selected, your participation is still an entirely voluntary matter for you to decide.)

Fathers Purcell and Cavanaugh will begin their interviews here this week and will continue until this phase of their study is completed -- a period of, perhaps, three weeks in all. They may not be wearing clerical garb, but you will know them by their warmth and sincerity to be good men, sharing the concern we all have for our fellow men and the society in which we work and live.

It goes without saying that we will all want to show them every courtesy and the warm hospitality that typifies the welcome that employes accord all visitors.

UNION MEMBER

Of, by & for the Workers
. Plant
Local IUE-AFL-CIO Telephone:

y 29, 1969

NOTICE: Beginning next week --
The Cambridge Center for Social Studies, an independent social science research center, is conducting a nation-wide study of human relations in the electrical industry. This two-year study is supported by the Ford Foundation.

Rev. Theodore V. Purcell and Rev. Gerald F. Cavanagh of the Cambridge Center staff have secured the cooperation of the major companies in the electrical industry.

Father Purcell's activity in the labor relations field is quite well known. He has been a guest at several of our IUE Conference Board meetings and was in attendance at our IUE Convention last fall. Several of your Officers have had the opportunity to meet and talk with him and his associate during the past few months. We have been convinced that he has a genuine interest in the opinions of those to whom he talks. We would like to assure our membership that the selection of volunteers in this survey will be done by Father Purcell and Father Cavanagh. We would also like to assure you that anything you say will be kept in confidence. If you have the opportunity and decide to participate we urge you to state your opinions very frankly, regardless of the subject, since this is the only way such a survey can show the true feelings of the people.

NOTE: Next EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING -- FRIDAY, JUNE 6th
AT THE UNION OFFICE -- 1:00 P. M.

CAMBRIDGE CENTER FOR SOCIAL STUDIES
42 Kirkland Street Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138 (617) 868-1210

Dr. Theodore V. Purcell
Dr. Gerald F. Cavanagh

June , 1969

Attention: _____
(Supervisor)

Dear

We are making a national study of human relations in the electrical industry-- , and others--sponsored by the Ford Foundation. and the International Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers, Local , have agreed to cooperate with us.

We would like to get your ideas and suggestions on working conditions and human relations.

We picked your name at random--like out of a hat. I would like to meet you and converse with you for about an hour. Our conversation will be in strict confidence, of course.

Would you please come to_____
where I have a desk and will be waiting at _____.

Thank you.

PERSONAL DATA FORM-I

Payroll No. _____

Name _____

Fictitious Name _____

Address _____

Plant _____ CCBS No. ___

City and State _____
(zip code)

Outreach _____ HC _____

Sex: M ___ F ___

Shift _____

(check only one)
Single ___ Separated ___ Widowed ___
Married ___ Divorced ___ Remarried ___

Work Unit No. _____

Supervisor _____

Date of Birth _____

Rate per hour _____

Place of Birth _____

Skill Level _____

Citizenship: U.S. Citizen _____
Non-Citizen _____

Continuous Service Date _____
(began work at plant)

Number of Dependents _____

Job code and title _____

Education (circle appropriate answer):
Highest grade completed:
Grade: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
High School: 9 10 11 12
College: 1 2 3 4
High School grad: Yes No
College grad: Yes No

Race: Negro ___
Oriental ___
American Indian ___
Spanish American ___
White ___

Last place of employment _____

Disciplinary action within last 12 months _____

Absentee history: 1969:
1968:
1967:
1966:

Depts., Jobs, etc.	Occupation	Rate	Date Hired Rate Chg.	Date Dropped