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Industrial Relations and "Race":-
A case study of the catering workers'
struggle for parity at Heathrow.

By Martin Carey

VOL I

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of City University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

July 1990

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Formal interviews were conducted with the following:-

Four catering shop stewards

Two catering workers (one branch official)

Seven shop stewards from other trade groups

Four trade union officials

Five British Airways personnel officers (From previous research)

SUMMARY

This case study provides a historical account of the industrial struggles of British Airways (South Side) catering workers initially against their own trade union and finally against their employer. The account focuses upon a period from the early 1950s to the early 1990s. The three main sources of data are; oral history, industrial relations documentation and media coverage of events.

The majority of the catering workers were Black workers therefore central to this study is a consideration of the dynamics of racism in an industrial context. It has been necessary then to examine racism in relation to class, trade union theory and practice and issues of discrimination. The study clearly demonstrates the dynamic nature of racism and the danger of reducing all forms of analysis to intentional forces.

This thesis argues that racism and cultures are complex and multi dimensional forces. Both are used as mechanisms for oppression, but also at times both operate as mechanisms for combating oppression. It is also argued that a real understanding of discrimination needs to make a distinction between intentional and unintentional forms of practice and action; that reductionist models of class or "race" fail to acknowledge the potential for different groups to make intervention to historical process; and finally that struggles take place in different arenas. Such struggles often have an unintentional and important consequence for other workers.

INTRODUCTION

- (1) Methodology
- (2) General National Trends
- (3) Labour Market
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- (5) Definitions of Discrimination
- (6) Formal and Informal Trade Union Practices -
Job Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

I first became aware of the struggles waged by the catering workers at Heathrow in the summer of 1980, while as an undergraduate I was researching a final year's dissertation. Previous to studying at University I had been a shop steward with British Airways at Liverpool and during this time I had made contact with many shop stewards at Heathrow.

My dissertation dealt with a comparative study of Cabin Crew and Middle-Management trade unionism. It was by chance, in a general discussion about trade unionism, that one of the Heathrow shop stewards mentioned the successful struggles of the catering workers to abolish corrupt practices in the catering unit and achieve parity in pay and conditions.

I was struck by a number of things at the time; the degree of acceptance and acquiescence by the shop stewards of what had transpired; and also the intensity and affectiveness of the actions of the catering workers in response to these malpractices.

It became apparent to me that what had happened at Catering Centre, Heathrow, was of major significance for the understanding of both the struggles of black workers and the mechanics of racial discrimination within the collective bargaining process.

Discrimination within employment has implications far beyond the work place as work constitutes the essential means by which individuals reproduce their existence. It serves as the main source of material reward and social status. The catering workers in the early 1960s had both poor pay and bad conditions and were locked into a rigid occupational structure in which the trend was for individuals, not groups, to achieve upward social mobility.

Recent research rightly suggest that differentials serve to create occupational ghettos where a disproportionately high level of black people and women find themselves. Once located in the lower regions of the labour market it is very difficult for any significant number of either group to achieve upward mobility.¹

To a great extent the catering workers at Heathrow were able to break through the occupational traps to achieve higher rewards and status. It is for this reason that the experience of catering workers offers a unique case study.

The implications of their struggle have ramifications far beyond the issue of low paid workers. Almost 95% of workers in the catering unit are Asian and over 57% are women. Moreover, their struggle was not waged solely against a company and the malpractices of some of that company's managers, but also against their own official union. The main focus of this research is trade union activity.

Thus any analysis of events requires particular attention to the four following areas: 1) the labour market (gender/racial factors); 2) trade unions; 3) racial discrimination; and 4) official/unofficial trade union action.

Obviously ethnicity and gender factors are essential components but both are areas I feel less qualified to analyse. While attempting to be sensitive to both these issues, I have accepted the need for additional analyses to be made of these factors in the events described and have concentrated my research on the areas mentioned above.

Methodology

The main method of enquiry used in this research is oral history. History is never one dimensional or non-political. All history is written within some kind of political framework. The social sciences are beset with all kinds of subjective bias which makes total objectivity unattainable, and history is no exception.

To a great extent the use of oral history accepts the principle that while personal accounts are likely to be distorted by the individual's own allegiance, they still remain a valid statement of history in themselves. Richard Hyman makes the point in the preface (1971 edition) to "Strikes" that the best one can do in such cases is acknowledge those biases and be as honest and methodical as possible.

Throughout the research I have used three main sources of data. Each has its own bias. Two are oral accounts and the third is based on documentation. The two oral accounts are: 1) the statements of various catering workers, mainly Asian shop stewards; 2) the statements of trade union officials and shop stewards in other trade-group areas. The documentation is mainly that of British Airways and the official trade union. I was given access to all the bargaining documentation that exists on the catering workers since 1962. I have also used some newspaper coverage.

In many ways these three sources offer very different perspectives on the past events in the catering unit. By using juxtaposed accounts I have attempted to give a far more rounded view of events than if I had simply laid down a chronological order of events.

Additional data are provided from my undergraduate dissertation (undertaken in 1979/80) in which I interviewed five British Airways Industrial Relations Officers concerning issues related to trade union practice in the airline. Also, my own knowledge and experience gained from being a shop steward for six years with British Airways have been used. If nothing else it has provided access to important areas of trade union activity at Heathrow that might otherwise have been difficult.

Obviously where a direct quote is given I will make reference to its source and thereby define its bias. Where I use information in the general text which has a distinct origin in one of the three sources, I will indicate that such a source is being used. Very often all three accounts agree (no distinct reference of sources will be

mentioned in such cases) and this I believe reflects the attempted honesty of all individuals involved in this research.

General National Trends

On existing empirical evidence (Brown 1984, The Radical Statistical Race Group 1988) it is possible to make very generalised statements of the national trends that address the employment struggles of black workers.

The majority of black immigrant workers in the labour market arrived in Britain in the late 1950s - early 1960s. Britain's economy was expanding and the requirement for labour, especially in the lower regions of the labour market, had created a need for certain employers to encourage and actively recruit workers beyond the national boundaries.

Certainly within airline catering at Heathrow before 1960 the tendency was to use European migrant labour, mainly women. The expansion of airline traffic in the early 1960s correspondingly brought about an expansion in airline catering and produced new jobs that could not be filled solely by the previous method, or by the indigenous work force. Opportunities were therefore created for black immigrant workers.

The major area of employment for black workers was in manual work and in the manufacturing industry, the two most vulnerable areas of the labour market in terms of poor wages, conditions, and unemployment in periods of recession. It is also these areas of the labour market that conform most closely to the stereotype of "sweatshop" employment.

Asians are mainly located in the clothing and textile industries which are situated in London, Lancashire and West Yorkshire. In London, Southall is the area of highest concentration of New Commonwealth and Pakistan people (1976 sample census estimated 46% of the Southall population)² and a large proportion of this

population worked in the service industries at Heathrow, in catering, cleaning, hotels.

Textile and service industry jobs have traditionally been poorly paid with bad conditions. From reports (Cashmore/Troyna 1983) in the early 1960s there did seem an overt acceptance by the new work force of the conditions and pay. This could be attributed to their recent arrival in this country. By the end of the 1960s though, a significant number of industrial disputes, throughout the country, was erupting in response to the nature of these jobs. A common theme was developing in disputes, that of a general dissatisfaction by black workers with their official union representation.

British Airways catering struggles seemed to typify this trend. Their early history was one of dual opposition to management exploitation and union acquiescence.

It was not only disputes such as those at British Airways Catering, Imperial Typewriters, Mansfield Hosiery Mills Ltd. and Grunwick Laboratories which applied pressure to individual unions and the T.U.C. to take a more overt opposition to racist practices, but also the general mood of criticism from black workers and pressure groups in the 1960s and 1970s of official union representation.

To a great extent the T.U.C. and official trade unions have done very little to improve the lot of black workers. To quote the "Home Office Research Bulletin No. 11" on increased unemployment between 1979-80:-

The number of unemployed Indian women in the south-east almost doubled during the year, and the number of employed Bangladeshies (male and female) in the region more than doubled. Other areas, where more than 60% increases in unemployment were experienced by particular minority groups during the

period were, in respect of Asians, Yorkshire, Humberside and the north-west (p.4)

It is apparent then that the union's principle of opposition to racist intentions was ineffective in practice. It would seem that discrimination operates often at a structural level within the labour market and is reinforced by a whole range of practices within the collective bargaining process where sections of the labour force are often actively involved, as in the defence of rigid differentials.

What is shown by the case study of British Airways catering is that it is not enough to focus solely on racist attitude in order to redress the imbalance in pay and conditions that low-waged black workers endure. Their experiences show that it is necessary to confront a whole range of work practices which serve to perpetuate poor wages, bad conditions and a multitude of mal-practices.

The organisation of the data in this thesis is divided into two broad areas; the first half deals with mainly theoretical issues which need to be considered in relation to the research: namely the labour market, concepts of "race" and class, and trade unions; the second half of the thesis deals with the case study itself and looks at job evaluation - theory and practice, informal struggles, formal struggles and events in the 1980s.

The Labour Market

Any attempt to understand the location of high levels of black labour in the lower regions of the occupational structure needs some theoretical attention to the labour market.

There is a tendency to locate a universal logic, a capitalist rationale which operates in a uniform fashion at all times, based on the assumption that all capitalist enterprises operate under the same conditions and all choose to implement the same strategies.

Labour market and labour process theories are particularly susceptible to this kind of analysis. Certainly part of the sociologist's task is to locate generalisations. The danger, particularly in relation to the two areas mentioned above, is that an attempt to develop more abstract theoretical understanding of certain phenomena produces in some cases over generalisation, with the result that insufficient attention is given to the specifics of the processes under consideration.

What I have attempted to argue is that, on the whole, conceptualisations of the labour market tend to view it in a very limited fashion, both in its formation and its existence. Many of the models used are based on a dichotomy of interest and fail to identify the segmented nature of labour and its lack of immediate common interest.

While the labour market's existence might well constitute an interrelated system structure, its formation is continual and open to negotiation. It is, though, its interrelated or systematic nature which instigates an effect on one group of workers by another. In practice this means that low-paid workers, whether they be black or women, can be locked into occupational traps by the defensive struggles of other high grade workers who instigate this discrimination with no intention in mind. It simply operates as a mechanism of the collective bargaining process.

In order to substantiate this argument I have examined the existing theories on the labour market, with particular reference to explanations of dual labour market theories, Doeringer (1967), Piore (1979), and radical theories, Edwards (1979), Gordon (1972). All examine the way in which women and blacks are located within confined areas.

Finally, the arguments in this chapter are, I hope, supported by the events that took place in the catering unit. These are outlined in the later part of the thesis. I believe that this case study provides a significant example of how workers can

radically challenge, and change, the forces and mechanisms that operate within the collective bargaining process, in order to reduce and possibly eliminate forms of racial discrimination.

Trade Unions

In arguing against a dichotomy model and promoting one which accepts a plurality of immediate workers' interest (c.f. labour market chapter), I am hypothesising a model in which trade unions play a far more instigating role in discriminatory practices than is usually suggested. It is therefore necessary to analyse the role trade unions play within the labour market and the effect that this role has on forms of discrimination.

Trade unions, since their origin, have been the main organisational form of protection of the interests of workers. In much of labour history and politics their position has been seen with a degree of reverence in terms of their part in the "class struggle" (c.f. Cole & Postgate 1938). They are viewed, and rightly so, as the focal point for workers' struggles and resistance to managerial exploitation.

It would be difficult to imagine an industrial front that did not involve a substantial representation of trade unions, even given the recent government pressure to erode the base of trade unionism. The role that trade unions play within the workplace culture cannot be overstated, and while I believe that an argument that gives credence to "union bashing" should be avoided, there is a real need to evaluate critically the instigating role that trade unions play within the collective bargaining process.

No two areas of union representation have come under so much "grass roots" criticism in the last 15 years the "rights" of black people and women. In terms of the sociological analysis of trade unions the work on women has far exceeded that on black workers. The extensive black literature that does exist deals mainly with the origin and manifestations of racism in a white society and the black experience.

There is surprisingly little work on the actual mechanisms of racial discrimination in trade unions.

In analysing trade unions I am hoping to identify those mechanisms within the organisations which operate either to inhibit black workers' struggles or to reinforce racial discriminatory practices. In order to do this it is necessary to provide a much wider theoretical explanation of trade unions, and I have therefore examined various classical trade union theories, as well as some more recent ones.

In the majority of these theories, trade union organisation and practice is viewed as a unified model with an endemic ideology linked to working class ideals. Those theories that do identify divisions of interest, such as "sectionalism", seem to conceptualise these divisions in terms of an abnormality or deficiency operating against the realisation of an inherent common interest between workers.

Implicit within this kind of argument is the assumption that trade unions are organisations that respond in a one dimensional fashion to the logic of capitalist exploitation. While workers may well share an ultimate common interest, control over their own labour power, there is no justification for assuming that trade unions are the rightful or qualified vehicle for such realisations. They might well be - but that is a matter for political intervention and not an intrinsic law of trade union motion.

Trade unions can, and do, operate in an arbitrary fashion and the very real immediate divided interest of workers ensures, to some degree, that what might be beneficial to one set of workers is not essentially beneficial to another. That capitalism instigates those divisions as part of its logic of regeneration is debatable (c.f. Hirst 1981, Hindess 1981) and is fairly irrelevant to the issue under consideration, racial discrimination in employment. Much of this argument is circular and what seems more important to the issue in question, is that these

divisions exist, and often have an immediate detrimental effect on the existence of black workers in the job market.

Trade unions are not a unified body of institutions representing a unified class interest. Those theories which assume an inherent law of motion for trade unions and which are linked to capitalist formation are highly problematic (Edwards 1979, Anderson 1967). Such arguments are deterministic in nature and ignore the important political impact and organisational changes that can be made, both within unions and the work place.

What I have attempted to argue in the trade union chapter is firstly, that unions represent a range of social and economic interests which often demarcate workers on both racial and gender lines, and secondly, that there exists a vague notion of what trade unionism constitutes, "collective representation". Such ideas are, to a great extent, problematic, taken-for-granted assumptions based on a unified class interest.

If racial and gender discrimination are not in totality the product of capitalist exploitation, (and that would seem to be the case,) then, the collective representation or collective consciousness should not be taken as given. Trade unions, while ultimately subordinate to capital, do have the capacity to change and affect the nature of the labour market. It is this ability to intervene which provides them with so much potential.

This type of analysis obviously presents a very optimistic view of trade unions, particularly given the degree to which trade unions, in the 1980s and 1990s, are under an increasing political and economic pressure which threatens to erode their power base. This optimism is based on the belief that there are no inherent laws within trade unionism and that their character is not in total a product of capitalist formation.

Past trade union commitment to achieving the elimination of racial or gender discrimination in employment appears, in the main, to be no more than ineffective rhetoric. Such commitment can only be achieved through a closer analysis of work place and trade union practices; and to a great extent this is what British Airways catering staff have done. Their analysis involved a multiplicity of struggles between management, other workers and the official union, and their success serves to demonstrate that divisional interests are by no means inevitable.

Definitions of Discrimination

The assertion that ideological commitment alone is sufficient to eliminate racial discrimination raises the whole question of racist intention. This thesis's use of the definition of racial discrimination is concerned to make a clear distinction between "intentional" and "non-intentional" discrimination. Too often the term "racism" is assumed to relate to actions based wholly on ideology and intention, and often both trade union policy and the Law on racism reflects this.

It would be difficult to argue that racist ideology does not affect human behaviour in some way, particularly in the area of employment selection. But to reduce nearly all discrimination against persons to intention is highly problematic for two reasons: 1) that individual or group behaviour is not located in a vacuum, and is part of a process of interaction with other groups operating under different conditions and constraints; 2) that actions are not one dimensional and have a range of unintentional consequences, particularly in an area such as collective bargaining.

Racial discrimination is a collective experience, and to locate intention as the prime mover reduces analysis, as the operation of the Race Relations Act shows, to the identification of individual motive and action. It is apparent by the degree to which racial discrimination persists, regardless of ideological commitment by Trade Unions, or the Law, that its force is greater than individual intention.

Even in employment, at the level of selection, where intentional discrimination is probably at its height, the existence of low-paid and low-status jobs acts as a pre-condition for discrimination to take place. The selectors regardless of their own ideological beliefs, for example they could themselves be black, will choose staff according to their market position or potentiality. Certainly, ideology has played some part in the creation of market positions, but it is only one of many forces, and to reduce analysis to the one is to ignore all other forces that are operating.

The catering staff at Heathrow were in no doubt as to how other white airline staff and union officials viewed their status. Their constant reference to the need to establish their dignity and to achieve equal treatment demonstrates this. In the end the real success was not based on changing workers' minds, but on eliminating a whole range of practices which served to subordinate their position.

The degree of support or hindrance, given by other trade groups to the catering struggles, was not based primarily on their own individual ideological stances, but rather on a range of bargaining considerations.

Formal and Informal Trade Union Practices - Job Evaluation

In addition the case study also raised some important questions about workers' struggles in general. The chapters on "formal/informal practices", and "job evaluation" deal directly and indirectly with the issues that the Braverman debate raises. The degree to which formalisation constitutes a form of managerial control and the subordination of labour to capital is debatable; both can be related to the experience of the catering workers.

The catering section engaged in a range of formal and informal tactics in order to achieve its ends. Its struggles also involved an attempt to aspire to a high level of involvement in the formal negotiation procedures, which indeed it achieved. In recent years the issue of control through formalisation has become a major area

of debate within industrial relations, and its origin can also perhaps be located in the work of Braveman (1974).

The issue of "job evaluation" is an essential aspect of my analysis, and it was, I believe, of major importance to the struggles in catering. I have therefore dealt with this issue at some length. My thesis attempts to locate and identify those mechanisms and practices that operate within the union machinery to support or hinder black workers in their struggles against racial discrimination in employment. I hope that this case study provides some basis for an understanding of those processes.

This case study also provides a human story, which, for reasons I am still not sure of, is difficult to tell in academic terms. Because of this I have attempted as far as possible to present the human story in the words of the speakers themselves. Still so much of the human struggle and intensity of feeling is lost in the transcription in these chapters, but hopefully, some idea is given to the reader of the degree of commitment and endurance, that the catering workers experienced in order to achieve parity with their co-workers. They have always kept their eyes focused on the practices which instigate discrimination, and their minds have constantly addressed the political and economic objective of racial justice. I believe their struggles provide important lessons for all those involved in anti-racist practice.

1. S. Feuchtwang., **Occupational Ghettos**, In Economy and Society **Volm.11 Number 3 August 1982**.
2. Southall Rights (1981), **Southall : The Birth of a Black Community**, Institute of Race Relations & Southall Rights, London.

CHAPTER I

The Labour Market

- (1) Previous Theories of the Labour Market
- (2) Dual Labour Market Theories
- (3) Barron and Norris Dual Labour Market Model
- (4) Radical Dualist Theories
- (5) The Labour Market

THE LABOUR MARKET

The whole conceptualisation of the labour market is riddled with danger; like many other obstructions it is easier to talk about than define. The traditional definition is that of:-an area within which a given set of supply and demand schedules operates to determine wages and other terms of employment.

Mills as early as 1909, and Cairnes in 1874, were both suggesting that a model based on competition and equal access to jobs, was far too simplistic, and that there were many areas in the labour market in which workers, particularly specific occupational groups, were "noncompeting". Cairnes further hypothesized that it was necessary therefore to examine the labour market in terms of submarkets and not as a totality.

It has even been suggested by Reynolds (1931) that most employed workers are not "in the market" in the sense of being aware of or interested in alternative jobs and therefore labour markets only exist in relation to each specific firm. Obviously Reynolds' notion of the labour market is a very limited and extreme one, as he places an emphasis on the individual worker's consciousness, with the result that the actual structure of the market and the interrelation of occupational categories and locations are seen as being of secondary importance.

The difficulty in defining the labour market partly reflects the complexity of the labour market itself. The changes in the organisational base of industry since the turn of the twentieth century have been immense. The development of monopoly capitalism, the increasing role of multinational employers and the emergence of international political and monetary organisations have all helped to transcend the construction of national labour markets beyond the national boundaries.

This chapter will concentrate on the role of employers (whether they be nationalised, multinational or private) and the trade unions (as they are the major

organisation for labour representation). It is these two groups who confront each other in negotiations and the influence of state, financial and international organisations are, in many instances, played out in their respective formal and non formal roles.

This chapter is mainly concerned to argue that; 1) trade unions in previous labour market theories have been given either a secondary or defensive role, and that 2) their role in many instances on the contrary instigates changes in the labour market structure. These arguments are given practical application in the case study, particularly in relation to discussion concerning trade union action in formal channels of negotiation, for example, job evaluation. Many forces are operating to assert pressure and influence the collective bargaining process and any theory of the labour market which ignores these important external factors gives a limited understanding of the how the labour market operates.

Previous Theories of the Labour Market

The increasing incidence of women and black labour in the poorer paid and lower status jobs, has been accompanied, since the early 1960s, by a wave of new theories to account for such a phenomenon. Many of these theories are based on a re-examination of the labour market. In nearly all cases these new theories have rejected the classical competitive labour market model.

These new theories are examined in an attempt to assess their relevance to the analysis of black labour and its location in the labour market. Firstly, it is necessary to outline briefly the classical model which most of the new theories oppose.

The classical model assumes that buyers and sellers of labour meet to transact their business with the minimum of limitations and that every job in the economy is continually open to all workers on the same terms and conditions. It is competition itself which forces the market to find its own equilibrium. The major

forces of competition within the market are: 1) each worker is subject to being under bid; 2) an employer faces the exodus of his employees if he fails to pay the correct market determined wage.

These two factors combine to form a self-adjusting mechanism within the labour market whereby wages and conditions are determined in the main by the supply and demand factors in the labour market itself. Thus the model is based on two major principles: 1) reliance upon wage rates to produce adjustments to changing market conditions; 2) assumption of a frictionless mobility and open job structure.

The economic philosophy of the "new right" has attempted to resurrect the central features of the classical model.¹ The political adherence of the present Conservative government to a populist view of these theories of economics has been a major issue of debate, particularly from those social scientists that advocate interventionist politics (Hall and Jacques 1983, Jessop et.al. 1988, Levitas (Ed.) 1986). The last chapter on "The 1980s and a New Era" looks at some of the adverse consequences of these political and economic philosophies of the present government on black workers. Perhaps this thesis will provide some evidence in support of political intervention in the case of issues of racial justice.

One of the major problems of the classical model, and the vast majority of those theories labelled "new right", is to provide explanations for the actualities of distorting factors in the labour market operation.

Further, the classical model also assumes a degree of equity between conflicting parties in relation to power and control, and it is this aspect of the model which has been incorporated into the theoretical framework of pluralist thinkers in the field of industrial relations (Flanders 1970). The critics of the classical model can be housed in two main camps, 1) dual labour market theories (Doeringer 1967, Piore 1979), 2) radical theories (Edwards 1979, Gordon 1972).

Dual Labour Market Theories

According to Rubery (1980) the theories of the dual labour market probably find their origin in the work of Slichter (1950), Lester (1952) and Kerr (1954). Clark Kerr probably typifies the early dual labour market model best, and it is Kerr's (1954) model which is used here.

Doeringer (1967) described Kerr's Model as follows:-

..... the labour market is not viewed as operating like an open and competitive bourse, but rather a series of distinct markets, reminiscent of the "non-competing groups" of Cairnes and Mill, each with boundaries determined by geographical, occupational and most importantly institutional factors. While the boundaries of these markets touch or overlap in places, for the purpose of labour mobility they remain largely separate. The existence of these market boundaries creates a distinction in terms of employment preferences between workers included within the boundary of a distinct market and those without. (p.207)²

Kerr's model of the labour market is constructed of two types. First, the structureless market, which has three main features; i) the "cash nexus", no attachment except the wage between the worker and the employer, ii) worker has no claim over any given job; iii) no employer has a hold over any employee. In many respects the structureless market conforms very much to the features of the classical model.

The second broad type is that of the structured market, and it is this aspect of Kerr's model that the later dual labour market theorists, such as Doeringer and Piore have concentrated on. The earlier models tended to be firm, specific and based on the belief that individual employers increasingly needed a two structured labour force, which has a nucleus of stable labour and a flexible labour force at the

periphery of production. Such a facility provided both a continuity of production and at the same time an ability to be flexible and receptive to the changing forces of the product market. In addition the poorer pay and the lower status of an external market reinforced the incentive of stability in an internal market. It was the work of the new dual labour market theorists, like Doeringer (1967) and Piore (1979), who realised that the "structured market" could have an impact on the labour market as a whole. Kerr outlines the central features of such a "structured market", as follows:-

In the structured market there always exists (1) the internal market and (2) the external labour market. The internal market may be the plant or the craft group and Preference within it may be based on prejudice, merit, equality of opportunity or seniority or some combination of these. The external market consists of clusters of workers actively or passively available for new jobs lying within some meaningful geographical and occupational boundaries, and of the "port" or "ports of entry" which are open to them or are potentially open to them. (p213)³

The "ports of entry" are the mechanisms by which mobility from the external market to that of the internal labour market are controlled. The external market, is presented as a kind of reserve army of labour. The internal market is governed by a set of institutional rules which delineate the boundaries of the internal market and determine its structure, e.g. "ports of entry", relationship between jobs, workers' privileges, mobility etc.

Doeringer defines the mechanisms of "entry ports" as follows:-

The "entry ports" into the internal labour market usually consist of a cluster of jobs within the plant, which constitute an area in which

workers may be upgraded, downgraded, transferred or laid off.
(p.209)⁴

In this way an employer can, on the one hand, maintain a stable internal market which services the needs of the core of production, and on the other, have greater control over the external market which is concerned with the periphery of production, and therefore more vulnerable to the changes in demand.

The major factors which serve to instigate movement within the boundaries of the internal market are of an economic nature and are closely related to the technology of the productive process itself. In addition the quantitative and the qualitative changes in production demand, and the availability of various types and qualities of labour on the external market all play a contributory role. The dual labour market theorists, Doeringer in particular, do place some importance on non-economic factors in terms of internal labour dynamics. Although the emphasis is on technological constituents, institutional objectives, such as customs, bargaining aims, employment and earning security all contribute in some way to the overall character of mobility patterns in the internal labour market. Doeringer's demarcation of economic and non-economic, is ill-founded. In essence his distinction is between technological and institutional factors. Institutional customs, bargaining aims, employment and earning security can all be practices of an economic as well as of a social nature, and one does not necessarily have to negate the other. It would seem that Doeringer's demarcation of technology into an economic category is an attempt to imbue it with primacy over institutional factors, as enterprises are seen to operate in the final instance under an economic rationality.

Dual labour market theorists argue also that the capacity of labour recruitment and its degree of mobility through the "entry ports" will vary between different kinds of manufacturing plants. A crucial factor in this dualistic model is the criteria by which priority is given to labour mobility between the external and internal labour market.

Doeringer in "Determinants of the Structure of Industrial Type Labour Markets", states:

...in a static internal labour market the most important variables shaping its structure, excluding the influence of non economic market forces such as custom, are the technology of production and work methods within the plant. (p.221)⁵

Further in the same article, Doeringer goes on to suggest it is the specific job skill requirements of certain jobs which make it financially advantageous to employers to block them off. The inducement of reward differentials in favour of the internal market in relation to the external market ensures to some degree a higher stability and therefore less requirement for employers to increase their expenditure on retaining. Even the mobility patterns within the internal market are seen largely as determined by the internal job content relationship. Therefore, in almost all instances it is technology of production (necessary skills) within any given enterprise which is organised in order to allow the maximum stability, and therefore continuity; while the periphery of production (less skilled functions) is organised flexibly, in order to be able to respond to the cyclical fluctuations of the market.

The majority of dual labour market theories are based on an historical analysis of the period of transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism (1890-1930). It is within this period that plant production expanded and the requirement to formalise job content occurred.

Piore in, "Birds of Passage", also suggested that "primary" and "secondary" sectors differed in the kinds of capital invested. The primary sector tends to be capital intensive, highly profitable and technologically advanced; those industries tend to be owned by monopolies. The secondary sector tends to be low investment; small backward firms located in highly competitive markets. Therefore

Piore hypothesized that the primary sector was bound to have, to some degree, more secure employment and better conditions and pay than the secondary sector.

The dual labour market model described (Doeringer 1967 and Piore 1979) in no way covers all the variations in the dual labour market models that exist; it is probably the most characteristic of all the models. Before I make a criticism of this model, and address myself to the radical theories, is briefly to outline perhaps the most radical of the dual labour market models, the model of Barron and Norris (1974).

Barron and Norris Dual Labour Market Model

Barron and Norris (1974) are critical of previous dual labour market theories because methodologically they fail to identify (beyond average differences in wages of men and women, blacks and whites) an actual segregation in the labour market. The two main criteria of labour market stratification are segregation in wage levels and segregation of actual jobs.

Barron and Norris (1974), unlike previous dual labour market theorists, identify a substantial difference between the hourly earnings of men and women. Using wage figures in Britain in 1962, they found that the area of overlap between the hourly earnings of men and women is less than a third of the combined distribution. This disparity of earnings obviously constitutes a distinct demarcation of location within the labour market wage structure. Whether such a demarcation is a result of the structural aspects of the labour market itself is debateable, and it is an issue that is challenged later in this chapter.

Having identified a segregation in wages, Barron and Norris then attempt to locate occupational segregation based on gender. The authors stress that national census categories are too general in their construction and therefore limited in terms of reliable sociological analysis, and yet, even given these limitations, using

this data it is still possible, they argue, to locate distinctive occupational segregation based on gender categories.

Having established a significant demarcation in the labour market, Barron and Norris attempt to demonstrate that such a phenomenon is a product of the labour market structure itself, assigning causation to very much the same factors put forward by Doeringer and Piore.

They argue that the market is divided into two sectors, the "primary" and "secondary" sectors, and between the two very little mobility takes place. Mobility within the sectors themselves takes place vertically in the 'primary', and horizontally in the 'secondary'. Occupational changes in the 'secondary' market tend to be between firms, while the 'primary' market is orientated towards firm-specific job moves.

The actual division between the markets and their respective characteristics, the authors argue, is a product of two distinctive employer production demands. The 'primary' market employer is faced with the problem of maintaining a stable and skilled workforce. It is therefore in his interest to minimize turnover, and this means to some degree buying off groups of key workers. This is best achieved by having two distinct labour markets. The 'primary' sector's occupational structure is based on a vertical pyramid structure, thus ensuring to some degree, an element of incentive for 'primary' sector workers to maintain employment in the same enterprise.

Because the labour market is divided and not based on a unified progressive structure the implication for the 'secondary' market is an instability in employment and earnings. In addition this unstable status of the 'secondary' market only serves to reinforce the stability of the 'primary' sector.

The strategy adopted by employers to deal with labour market and consumer market fluctuation is made easier, the authors suggest, by an available supply of labour, in this case women (a reserved army of labour), who are willing to accept lower paid jobs with inferior conditions. It is also argued that women's acceptability of 'secondary' market jobs is based on their subordination in the wider society. Further they identify five major attributes which they put forward as being characteristic of both 'secondary' workers and women themselves.

They are as follows:-

- 1) *workers are easily dispensable, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.*
- 2) *they can be sharply differentiated from workers in the primary labour market by some conventional social difference.*
- 3) *they have a relatively low inclination to acquire valuable training and experience.*
- 4) *they are low on economism - that is, they do not rate economic rewards highly.*
- 5) *they are relatively unlikely to develop solidaristic relations with fellow workers. (p.176) ⁶*

As Veronica Beechey (1978) in, "Women and Production", a Critical Analysis of Some Sociological Theories of Women's Work" ('Feminism and Materialism' ed. Kuhn/Wolpe), states:-

this part of the analysis is problematic, partly because little evidence is offered that these attributes actually are significant in concrete situations: the suggestion

that women possess them relies heavily upon inference from stereotypical assumptions, and such a suggestion also casts doubts on their general claim that women's position can be explained in terms which are internal to the labour market. (p.176)⁷

The final point (that which is underlined) is a far more relevant criticism than the first and is one which can be levelled against all the dual labour market theorists. It identifies a problem in the construction of abstract structures to explain social phenomena. It can result in the underplaying of factors deemed to be external to the given structure constructed, and would suggest that models of the labour market are especially prone to this owing, in the main, to the formalized way in which negotiation between distinct institutionalized interest groups within the labour market takes place.

For example it is only the last attribute in Barron and Norris's list which can be given total causation inside the labour market structure itself. The list also highlights crucial factors without attempting to provide any causation or rationale i.e. 3) *"they have a relatively low inclination to acquire valuable training and experience."* Why is this?

Further, that a stereotype of women and black workers exists represents some significance in itself, and it is exploited by almost all parties involved in the formalised negotiation of the labour market whether it be in a positive or negative way.

Probably the most general criticism against Barron and Norris, and all dual labour market theorists for that matter, is that the analysis tends to be descriptive rather than analytical. In a sense it is also tautological in that it identifies segregation in the labour market and then gives causation to the dichotomous nature of the labour market itself.

It also assumes that employers formulate and implement strategies in a vacuum; that in addition employers are divided into two clear camps in relation to the pursuit of a rational labour market strategy. Even similar enterprises, producing similar products with the same kinds of technology, but in different market constraints, may well affect different labour force requirements, such as the kinds of available labour.

Dual labour market theories are ahistorical in that they give causation almost totally to the strategy of employers; other social agents are presented in a relatively passive fashion, with the result that the model constructed is fundamentally a static one. No means of change is given other than the changes necessary to meet new technology. The historical development of the labour market in British Airways is clearly an arena in which different groups of workers influence and place constraint on its character and its development.

Jill Rubery has suggested that one possible reason for such a one sided theory is the period in which many of the dual labour market theorists based their assumptions; she states:-

further inadequacies appear in the theory because the consideration of major change in the economic structure is limited to one historical epoch, the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, which saw the development of widespread factory and machine production and the emergence of monopoly capitalism. Change in the economic structure at this time may indeed have been more intensive and extensive than in other areas, but the almost total concentration on this period results in a rather static analysis of present day labour market structure. (p.244)⁸

This criticism is supported and perhaps needs to go even further in that dualism, as such, probably did not apply in this period or any other. Even given that the defensive organisations of the labour force were divided to a degree into skilled and unskilled labour groups, and that those organisations were still in an embryonic state, the degree of conflict and the struggles that occurred in this period could not have failed to have some impact on the labour market. Dualism, to some degree, is based on the assumption of relative passivity of labour. To analyse any social arena in which only the motives and actions of one group are considered (employers) would seem to be sociologically unsound. Any further criticisms will be implicit in my own analysis of the labour market in the final section. We now briefly need to examine some of the more recent radical theories.

Radical Dualist Theories

In many respects the radical theorists do not differ that greatly from the dual labour market theorists. They too see the labour market divided into structural formations. Their main point of departure from the dual labour market thesis is their association with the marxist tradition.

For radicals, such as Gordon (1972) and Edwards (1979), it was not technology that was the determinant, but rather the employers' need to control the labour force. Gordon states the case quite clearly:-

employers will seek to develop in the labour force a kind of 'hierarchy fetishism' a continual craving for more and better job titles and status. (p.77)⁹

This 'hierarchy fetish' serves to divide workers and thereby makes it easier to control the labour process. Radical theory extends the analysis of stratification to emphasise differentiation between workers within the internal labour market as well as between the 'secondary' and 'primary' sectors.

The concentration of black people and women in the lower ranks of the occupational structure serves two purposes: 1) higher status and status aspiration are achieved in the 'primary' sector by the existence of a distinct lower labour market; 2) that blacks and women are concentrated in these areas minimises the possible identification of a workers' common interest.

For Gordon and Edwards control becomes increasingly the major determinant. Gordon argues that employers have two main considerations in terms of increasing production efficiency: 1) technology ("quantitative issues"); 2) control ("qualitative issues").

Of course employers are concerned with the issue of control, and paramount in all their decisions is the question of how the outcome of any action will affect their ability to manage and control the productive process. However, control is only one of a number of considerations that will affect their judgement, namely legal requirements, customer practices, production demands, available labour force and so forth. The radical theory also dismisses two other important factors: 1) that control is not achieved in one unified fashion; 2) that employers have limited power and that their actions are sanctioned, restricted and in many instances coerced by other social agents, such as trade unions, state agencies and financial institutions.

Jill Rubery (1987) criticises the radical theorists for not taking into consideration the power of labour to resist the strategy of employers regarding labour market construction. Rubery's criticism, though correct, misses one crucial point, that while labour does often respond and resist management strategies its active involvement in the collective bargaining process (such as the defining of jobs) also ensures that its actions have an instigating effect throughout the job structure. For instance, the insistence by various trade unions that part-time workers should be made redundant before full-time workers has the effect, on the one hand of defending the interest of the full-time workers, while on the other discriminating against part-timers purely on the basis that they are defined as such. As an action

it ignores a whole range of factors and implications. Part-time workers are often women, many of whom are single parents or the main breadwinner for a family in which the other partner has been made redundant.

This action is not necessarily intentionally discriminatory against women, but it has the same consequence. As an action it also serves to instigate conditions which change the redundant nature of the labour market itself. Both the dual labour market theories and the radical theories have the tendency to present the labour market formation as a result of management strategy alone. Its construction has been in many cases attributed to structure, (dual labour markets "hierarchical fetish") with the result that certain factors, how women and black people come to be defined categories of labour, have been excluded and groups of actors presented in a passive role.

It seems reasonable to assume that at a macro level the various parts of the labour market do have some influence on one another. In fact this would seem to be a crucial element in its mechanisms. It is important though that any presentation of its formation does not provide a model based on a static structure, for this case study shows that the labour market's consequence is the result of interaction by various social agents, such as managers, different groups of workers and the official union. Thus its construction is part of an ongoing formation.

The Labour Market

The major criticism of previous labour market definitions is that they are far too limited. The dual labour market theories and radical theories have tended to include factors which are only deemed relevant to the conventional labour market. In many instances social agents involved in the negotiation of job conditions and pay, incorporate and exploit the social categories, such as "immigrants", "women workers", "women physically inferior", which are constructed and formulated in the social network beyond the work place.

The classical marxist model on the other hand (see discussion of Braverman, Chapter 5, Section 7) presents the relationship in the labour market as based on total domination by the employer over the worker, with the worker at times actively resisting this domination. While it is difficult to dispute that employers as owners of the "means of production" have a dominant position in the relationship, they are themselves often drawn into negotiation with labour over job definition in order that any function can take place in the labour process. Once a party has some control over the defining of jobs in the labour process they also have an active part in the formation of the labour market.

The labour market is segregated into a complex system of job definitions which constitutes varying degrees of conditions and pay. Given that job definition does directly affect a pay and conditions status in the labour market, it would then follow that labour in its various segmentation is involved in the formation of the labour market. This point is made much clearer when we examine the catering workers' involvement in the British Airways job evaluation system.

Those job definitions have been part of an historical process of struggle; certain jobs have retained the skilled work status, while others have been designated various other categories. There have been numerous factors operating to influence the change in job definition, such as changing technology. Ultimately though the overriding factor is the ability of either the employer, or the specific section of workers in question to maximise their bargaining position. The ability to establish a definition of "skilled" status to a job category ensures to some degree a differential reward in terms of conditions and pay.

The category "skilled", is more a socially constructed phenomenon than one intrinsic to production requirements. A typist or secretary is probably more trained and has had to pass more examinations than many computer operators, and yet they never achieve the same job status category, probably due to the fact that the

typist/secretary function is mainly associated with women's work and this in turn has a socially constructed category of being inferior work.

To achieve the status of skilled, in many cases, is at the expense of other workers who are excluded from that category, particularly workers employed in the same industry. In many instances job definition and categorisation serve to create boundaries in which groups of workers are locked out. It is for this reason that legislation on race and sex discrimination in employment has had little impact. Historically both black people and women have been located in those jobs defined as low status, with the poorest pay and conditions. Even if women and black people achieved equal representation across the occupational structure those low status jobs would still exist and would likely be filled by those groups in society in the most vulnerable position.

Job definition is a crucial element in economic sectionalism, the maintenance of differentials and the perpetuation of segmentation in the labour force. Trade unions are active partners, as they should be, in the defining of job functions and as such are actively involved in the formation of the labour market.

As Cooke and Campbell (1982) state in "Sweet Freedom":

Skilled workers tried to defend their control over production to stop earning power being undermined by unskilled workers male and female. As part of their defense they sought to preserve the patriarchal relations that had prevailed in pre-capitalist society, in which men had authority and control over women and children based in the family home. (p.53-54)

This statement supports well the point made above concerning categories and power relations in the wider society being used in an exploitive manner by both groups (employers/trade unions) in the negotiation of the labour market.

To summarise the view of the labour market being argued in this chapter:

- 1) Most views of the labour market either:
 - i) take too limited a definition of its formation and existence, in that the majority of theories examined here fail to provide sufficient explanation for the distortions of the open adjustment of wage rates to supply and demand; or
 - ii) use a dichotomous model which does not come to terms with the segmented nature of labour and the lack of a common interest.
- 2) Though its existence may constitute a structure, its formation is continual and open to negotiation.
- 3) The interrelated nature of the labour market ensures, to some degree, that actions taken by one group of workers in one area will effect other groups in different locations of the labour market framework.
- 4) Unions are actively involved in the defining and categorisation of job functions.
- 5) Job definition and categorisation are important aspects of labour segmentation.
- 6) Segmentation causes both intentional and unintentional discrimination against black people and women in the labour market.

Unions then, along with employers and other social agents are actively involved in the formation of the labour market. What is worth remembering though is that because unions do not operate in a unified fashion, and that they represent different groups of workers with different interests, they can at the same time be

instigators of discrimination as well as defenders against it. This point is made more incisively in the latter half of the thesis.

1. The use of the term "new right" is problematic given that writers with a wide variety of economic views have been so labelled.. Here, it is used in relation to those economic theories advocated by the present Conservative government.
2. P.B. Doeringer., Determinants of the Structure of Industrial Type Labour Markets, from Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Vol. 20 No.2. January 1967.
3. From P.B. Doeringer., Detrminants of the Structure of Industrial Type Labor Markets, in A.H. Amsden.,The Economics of Women and Work, Penguin 1980 Middlesex.
4. P.B. Doeringer., ibid.
5. P.B. Doeringer., Determinants of the Structure of Industrial Type Labour Markets, in A. Amsden (ed.), The Economics of Women and Work, Penguin Books 1980 Middlesex.
6. From V. Beechey., Women and Production: a critical analysis of some sociological theories of women's work, in A Khun/A Wolpe., Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978 London.
7. V. Beechey., ibid.
8. J. Rubery., Structured Labour Markets, Worker Organization and Low Pay, in A.H. Amsden ibid.
9. D.M. Gordon., Theories Of Poverty and Underdevelopment, D.C. Heath 1972.

CHAPTER 2

"Race" and Class

- (1) "Race" and Class
- (2) The Sub-proletariat/Under-class Thesis
- (3) Migrant Labour Thesis
- (4) A Non-Marxist notion of Under-class
- (5) "Race", Gender and Class:- Arenas of Struggle

"RACE" AND CLASS

Any research that involves the discussion of black workers, trade unions and the labour market will almost inevitably be drawn into discussion concerning the structural location of black workers within class analysis. The majority of work in this area has taken place from within a neo-marxist/marxist epistemology and has required a considerable amount of theoretical juggling, in order to sustain the difficult task of maintaining the dual importance of "class" (economic) and "race" (social construct) as major determinants in social formation. One of the strengths of the marxist tradition has been its ability to carry out a structural analysis of "race" and racism within a historical context.

This, together with its extensive analysis of exploitative processes, has been highly seductive in terms of attracting theorists to adopt such models of analysis. One of its major problems has been related to the degree of primacy given to either "class" or "race". The problematic nature of the marriage of these two concepts is not restricted purely to the level of abstract theoretical debate and the nuances involved in the various theoretical assertions all have very different and often distinct political implications.

In addition, the marxist tradition, probably rightly so, has never played "lip service" to the sociological belief of the necessity of detachment in order to make valid statements about the world. It has tended to embody the general ethos in Marx's own work of praxis. Of course, the danger is the temptation to tailor the theory to fit the political objective, and some of the literature in this area suffers from the stretching of theoretical models in order to justify a priori political positions. In many respects, the link between sociological research and the theoretical justification for politically held positions is more easily identified in marxism than in many other areas of academic concern. Whether this invalidates research is very much an issue of debate.

Of course this is not a problem just restricted to marxists, but because marxism tends to be more overt concerning its political alliances than those of the liberal and conservative research traditions, its "sins" in this area are far more evident. Nevertheless the "race"/class debate in marxism has generated considerable disagreement and the arguments have produced new theories to defend old political positions.

This chapter will consider many of these arguments and examine the work of Rex, the main non-marxist in the area of structural analysis of the position of black workers in Britain. It will be argued that all such theories tend to be problematic when applied to the British Airways catering workers, and very often provide a rather elitist or pessimistic picture for future political struggles. First, though, it is necessary to make some brief reference to some of the debates generated in marxism that relate more closely to the issue of class and the analysis of capitalism.

In classical marxism class is clearly defined in economic structural terms, and while in Marx's own work, class is never explicitly defined as a concept, it is an implicit element in almost all his work. Class tended to be an axiom in early marxism from which all other concepts are developed. Notions of "consciousness", "exploitation", "surplus value", "objective interests" are all key issues which are clearly explored through the context of class relations. The transition from classical marxism to modern marxism is one in which all these areas of concern have become central issues of debate.¹ Research into the issues of "race" and gender has further raised major questions concerning the validity and coherence of such concepts when applied to groups other than class.

The works of both Gramsci and Lukacs act as a major crossroads in the development of marxist thought in that they elevated the significance of ideology in marxist analysis. Such an elevation provided a platform upon which a number of issues could now be explored from within a marxist epistemology which previously

had been inhibited by the restriction of an economic reductionist model of class. These are: a) the failure of the proletariat to develop a revolutionary consciousness; b) the persistence of capitalist domination, even in times of crisis; c) the increased complexity of class structures in modern capitalism; d) the growth of revolutionary movements in the developing world; e) the role of religion as a source of social conflict (e.g. Northern Ireland or liberation theology); f) the significance of "race" and gender as social dynamics.

The Frankfurt School, or what is often called "critical theory" (Jay 1973), also provided an important challenge to orthodox marxism. Much of their writing is strongly motivated by a rejection of Stalinism and Soviet Socialism, which adhered very strongly to the notion of the iron laws of historical materialism. This rejection involved a very clear acknowledgement of the repressive nature of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and an assertion that liberation involved more than the adoption of marxist economics. For them (Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, in particular) liberation involved a high degree of voluntarism, self-emancipation and self creation. Much of their writing was to prove highly popular with the New Left radical movements in the 1960s and 1970s, and has implications for the analysis of political action in relation to black and women's struggles.

Marcuse (1964) in particular had questioned the notion of distinct class interest and class consciousness, and suggested that socialist objectives were not necessarily the property of the traditional working class. He argued that student and black political struggles were more likely to achieve a realization of revolutionary aspirations. Such assertions seriously challenged traditional marxist beliefs concerning the inherent role of the proletarian class to liberate humanity from forms of exploitation and raised important questions concerning the nature of political will.

Finally, the recent debates within marxism have concerned themselves with the more fundamental issues concerning the very nature of Marx's own work. The

debates have tended to generate two main camps of thought, humanistic marxism and scientific/structural marxism.² While not all writers can be neatly fitted into one or the other camps, the tendency has been when discussing related issues, for writers to declare explicitly or implicitly some form of alliance to one or the other school of thought, e.g. Lane's analysis of trade union history.³

Humanistic marxists emphasize voluntarism and the libertarian elements in Marx's writing. Both Gramsci and Lukacs have been defined as humanistic marxists (Lee & Newby 1987), but in recent years E.P. Thompson (1978) has probably been the most vocal advocate of this perspective.

Thompson, in "The Poverty of Theory" (1979), launched an intense frontal attack on structural marxism and Althusser in particular. The central themes of his attack on structuralism were as follows: 1) the construction of theory without reference to practice; 2) a rigid adherence to the "base/superstructure" metaphor, 3) the reconstruction of the "base/superstructure" model into a structural mechanism which denied history and human intervention, 4) guilty of structural determinism, 5) misrepresentation of Marx and Gramsci's work, 6) it denied the importance of historical analysis in the development of marxist thought, and finally, 7) the false claim of scientific status for this model. Central to humanistic marxism were issues related to alienation and capitalist oppression, which necessarily involved the discussion of the role of ideological domination and human struggle.

Scientific/structural marxism, on the other hand, has attempted to establish marxism as a science and has tended to emphasize Marx's later work which deals with the more mechanistic analysis of capitalist and class formation. Its attempt to reconstruct, develop, or rethink the "base/superstructure" metaphor has raised major questions in relation to the analysis of class, state and political action. While much of this work has now fallen from favour, it did provide, in the 1970s and early 1980s, a period of regeneration in marxist debate, and was highly influential in discussions concerning "race" and class. Its main theorists were Althusser (1969)

and Poulantzas (1978), who were both concerned to identify reasons for the persistence of capitalism in a number of very different social and political formations (e.g. Fascist Spain/"liberal democratic" Sweden). Such considerations involved the exploration of the concepts of state, surplus value, base/superstructure and the general structural mechanisms necessary for the "reproduction of the relations of production".

Both humanistic marxists and scientific/structural marxists were inevitably drawn into re-examining classical assumptions concerning the analysis of class. Both schools of thought, directly and indirectly influenced debates concerning the analysis of "race". The growth of consciousness amongst many black and feminist groups in the late twentieth century further challenged many of the class-based assumptions concerning radical, political action. Yet at a theoretical level many writers have attempted to retain an allegiance to the marxist tradition. It is now necessary to examine some of these writers' works in order to expose the seductive forces of marxism in the structural analysis of the situation of black people.

"Race" and Class

The sociology of race relations in Britain has been highly receptive to Marxist ideas. A principal reason for this must be that the subject matter lends itself to Marxist interpretation like practically no other. How else to account for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, black slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas-- not to mention the global panorama of European imperialism over past centuries-- but by reference to the primary role of systems of labour exploitation.
(Oxaal, p.144)⁴

Oxaal, is probably correct to suggest that the above features of marxist analysis provide extremely useful theoretical tools in the analysis of racism and black labour. He is careful here to make no mention of the analysis of "race" and class.

The unresolved dilemma, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, is the degree of primacy given to either "race" or class. For if you over emphasize "race" as a social dynamic then the ability to apply the economic exploitative analysis elements embodied within marxism is open to challenge, as in the case of the work of Gabriel and Ben-Tovim (1978). If, on the other hand, too much emphasis is placed on class, then the criticism of economic reductionism, as in the case of Sivanandan (1982), is made.

While the continuum between two such opposing arguments does not appear that great, between them lies a whole range of conflicting, and often contradictory arguments, which claim to have resolved the link between "race" and class. Before identifying some modern debates regarding this link it is necessary to provide a brief outline of early radical/marxist analysis of "race".

Both Ramdin (1987) and Robinson (1983) identify well the long history of black radicals, and rightly expose the ethnocentric/Eurocentric bias of much of the existing labour history, and history in general. The emergence though of a significant body of black marxist writers does not occur till well into the 20th century. The two earliest and most famous were DuBois (1915) and C.L.R. James (1933), both from black, middle-class origins, both historians and both to become deeply committed to marxism as a form of political analysis and expression. Both had utilised marxism in the analysis of capitalist formation and its links to the origins of the black slave trade, imperialism and colonial domination. It was DuBois, in particular, who explored the contradictory elements involved in the material forces of racism, and also challenged the assumptions related to the revolutionary potential of the industrial proletariat. Both of these themes of the contradictory nature of racism, and the elevation of black struggle as a revolutionary force greater than that of the white working class, are ones that find expression in the modern literature (c.f. Gilroy 1987, Sivanandan 1982).

It is probably the work of Cox and Genovese which forms the focal point for the development of modern debates. For Cox (1964, 1970) the concept of "race" is inherently linked to the concept of racism, the first is a product of the later. For Cox, to identify the causes of racism is to establish a theory of "race relations". He states:

One should not mistake the social relationship among the various social estates of the Greek and Roman world for race relations.
(p.323)⁵

For him "race relations" is linked very closely to specific material forces, those of capitalism, and the types of religious ideological forms that capitalist economic forces foster or inhibit. For Cox, Roman Catholicism had been restrictive to the development of racism due to its fundamental belief in "brotherhood", while the development of capitalism was more conducive to religious beliefs that stressed a competitive ethos. Thus Cox developed a theoretical model that provides a direct and rigid correspondence between the economic base of society and its ideological and political structures.

Harris (1964) and Williams (1964) also adopt a similar economic reductionist thesis. Their main critic is Genovese (1972). Genovese points to the work of Gramsci, and his strong belief in the dialectic nature of ideas and material forces. For Genovese ideological formations are interwoven into the totality of social formations and, therefore are not solely determined by economic forces.

It is Gabriel and Ben-Tovim (1978) who outline this debate as a means of establishing their own particular neo marxist/marxist analysis of "race relations". For them the debate clearly provides a means of establishing the divide between deterministic and non-deterministic forms of racial analysis. Their early work, written in the mid to late 1970s, took place at a time in which structural marxism was exercising a considerable degree of influence, and their article, "**Marxism and**

the Concept of Racism" (1978), and Ben-Tovim's article, "**The Struggle Against Racism: Theoretical and Strategic Perspectives**" (1978), clearly reflect this.

The first article above takes the Cox versus Genovese debate as a means of challenging a number of the then current arguments adopting a very economic reductionist approach to anti-racism rooted in a Cox tradition (c.f. Sivanandan, Gutzmore, Cambridge, Race Today Collective). Their main concern is to relate theory to political practice. They identify two main theories which need to be questioned in relation to the work of marxist reductionist approaches: 1) the economic necessity for capitalism to produce "stratification on racist lines"; 2) the need for capitalism to generate racism at a political level for political practice "that may not correspond to economic requirements" (p.132).

They rightly suggest that such assertions attach a mechanistic and conspiratorial nature to capitalism, which in practice is highly unlikely on a grand scale. In particular, they reject the rigid "economic needs" argument which underpins both the sub-proletariat, underclass, surplus population type arguments, and those theories which explore the notion of black labour as a response to the declining rate of profit. For them these arguments fail to acknowledge the complexity of the black class structure and may well result in replacing "class reductionism" for "race reductionism". Certainly, the case study of catering workers indicates that workers' struggles can result in making significant changes in the structural location of black workers in the labour market. For them the political implication involved in those types of analysis which adopt conspiratorial and economic reductionist models is the likelihood of abstentionism from political intervention from all areas other than that of a) consciousness raising of the black proletariat, b) conflicts at the point of production, and c) areas of direct confrontation with the state.

Ben-Tovim and Gabriel both assert the belief in two major political principles: the forming of alliances with non-marxist/non-socialist groups who oppose racism, and intervention in the state as a strategy of anti-racist struggle.

Their theoretical justification for this, as neo-marxist/marxists, is the structural concept of relative autonomy developed, in the main, by Althusser and Poulantzas. They state:-

It is high time, then, that the general advances taking place in Marxism towards a non-economistic, non-class-reductionist, non-essentialist theory of ideology and political practice be reflected in the urgent task of producing a complex Marxist theory of the relative autonomy of racism to inform a serious Marxist politics of anti-racism.

(Gabriel/Ben-Tovim, p.147)

Ben-Tovim develops this argument further in the Marxism Today article (July 1978) in which the concept of "relative autonomy" is offered as an essential theoretical base for developing forms of anti-racist practice. Such a model seems to offer a theoretical solution for the anti-racist marxist who wishes to acknowledge the complexity of "Race"/racism and yet still not totally reject the essential features of marxism or class analysis. For both writers are too aware that the nature of racism and racial discrimination is highly complex, and while they reject the "total autonomy" model of racism they are deeply opposed to the capitalist "needs" thesis, which they link to writers, such as Sivanandan, Gutsmore, Cambridge and the Race Today Collective.

What does become apparent in these early debates concerning "race" and class, is that there is more at stake than just academic theoretical differences. With hindsight it is now possible to see how quickly seemingly appropriate theoretical concepts were "snatched" in order to justify particular pre-held political positions.

This seems particularly apparent with those writers whose involvement in the area is not limited to an academic interest, and who are actively involved in various forms of anti-racist struggle.

Althusser and Poulantzas have been greatly criticized for the structurally deterministic nature of their work and particularly for the concept of "relative autonomy".(Thompson 1978). Althusser and Poulantzas employ the concept of "relative" autonomy" for two main reasons:

- a) As a means of explaining the persistence of capitalism in a number of different political and ideological environments. For them capitalism needs to ensure the "reproduction of the relations of production", and this is mainly achieved through the "Ideological State Apparatus", which has a degree of autonomy from the economic base.
- b) As a means of explaining the lack of development of class polarisation. The expansion of traditional middle class occupations in nearly all modern capitalist nations refutes one of Marx's own predictions concerning the internal logic of capitalism to lead to pauperization and thus the polarisation of class positions.

It is Poulantzas, in the main, who relates "relative autonomy" to class formation. Class is determined at three levels; the economic, the political and the ideological. For Poulantzas though, classes cannot be defined outside class struggles and their location within the class structure is an objective one. The middle-class, or more appropriately, what Poulantzas calls, "the new petty-bourgeoisie" occupy an independent intermediary class position with specific tasks and politics within the class structure.

The close scrutiny of Althusser's and Poulantzas's work in the early 1980s exposed extreme forms of determinism and also a number of features common to that of functionalism (Irbson, Gleeson). The political implications of structural marxism were hardly compatible with the model being asserted by Gabriel and Ben-Tovim. The forming of political alliances and the non-deterministic analysis of

racism or non-essentialist theory of ideology were all approaches to "race" that needed theoretical justification in quarters other than structural marxism, in order to have any sense of sociological coherence. The complex and abstract level, at which both Althusser and Poulantzas developed the concept of "relative autonomy", made it very difficult in the early stages to draw any distinct notion of what political action might be in their terms. Yet much of the early work of Gabriel and Ben-Tovim deals with the "race" and class debate in terms of discussions focussed on racism and political action. The theoretical models developed by Althusser and Poulantzas rejected human agents as significant causal factors in social formation. They stand in direct opposition to those marxists who stress the role of human consciousness (c.f. Lukacs, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School). Again structural marxism hardly seems appropriate to discussions concerned with anti-racist struggles within the state.

The result is that Gabriel and Ben-Tovim acknowledge that class is important. Their pre-occupation with anti-racist struggles and the state tend to result in very little discussion about black workers and their struggles. In the 1970s their analysis mentions very little concerning racist practice and deals mainly with the development of a complex theory of racist ideology. To some extent, the tendency of analysis related to racism at this period to overemphasize ideology and consciousness is apparent in these writers' work. Much of Ben-Tovim's later work abandons any attempt to marry bits of marxist theory to anti-racist struggles and concentrates on issues of practical political action to combat forms of racial discrimination by the local state. It is only as part of the Black Caucus Collective that Ben-Tovim (1986) returns to the issues of class, when they rightly confront Militant's reduction of "race" to class issues. In this later work Ben-Tovim et al. (1986) argue very much for an autonomous model of racism from class forces. They apparently acknowledge the deterministic nature of the "relatively autonomous" thesis and wish to site their own model within a theoretical framework which allows political intervention and involvement in the local state.

They view racial discrimination as being legitimised by a number of different ideologies, of which "universalism" and "labourism" are two.

"Universalism" refers to a kind of liberal democratic belief, that many professional state politicians and practitioners might hold, concerning the need to treat all equally, regardless of any prior disadvantage that groups like blacks may have suffered. The notion that any form of favourable discrimination towards black people is injustice to other communities is deeply entrenched in oppositional views to positive discrimination and positive action.

It would be difficult to analyse the situation of British Airways catering workers within the confines of Gabriel and Ben-Tovim's analysis. While they make reference to class it is never clearly defined beyond a reference to the dangers of the use of reductionist models. The main target for Gabriel and Ben-Tovim's criticisms of "race"/class reductionist models are those writers who promote the sub-proletariat, black under-class thesis (Sivinandan, Gutmore, Cambridge, Gilroy etc.). Many of these writers deal with the issues of political action at the level of generality. On the surface their analysis of class would seem more relevant to the case study, but on closer examination here also there are a number of theoretical difficulties. In addition, much of the work fails to examine the specifics of industrial struggles, and when they are mentioned in the literature it tends to be as a means of justifying "grand theory".

The Sub-proletariat/Under-class thesis.

A number of writers have attempted to use a marxist epistemology in the analysis of black communities as a means of exploring issues of exploitation, confrontation of the state and revolutionary politics. Such writers have adopted some of the more orthodox areas of marxism and adapted its predominantly class analysis to include a racial dimension. Here, also, some writers have used elements of the "relative autonomy" arguments in order to maintain the difficult task of linking black struggles to class analysis. In general, all these arguments, have required

substantial "juggling" of theory, and very often writers have simply constructed new terms to define old categories (c.f. Gilroy 1987). In the last ten to fifteen years much of this work has gone over the same ground. Central to these writers is the attempt to elevate black struggle over all other group conflicts. The riots of 1981 and 1985, the marginalisation of black youth in Britain, the tensions between black communities and the police, and the rejection by many black people of the majority of the political parties in Britain have all been used as indicators of the potentially revolutionary political nature of black communities. For them, in the main, it is the structural economic position of these black communities which results in this revolutionary potential. Their structural economic position at the bottom of the labour market is a direct correspondent to economic needs of capitalism to create a "super exploited" group. There is nothing new in this argument and Marx himself formulated the notion of a "reserve army of labour" to explain a structurally economic group below that of the proletariat.

The black sub-proletariat thesis suggests that the shortage of labour in many western industrial nations, which cannot be met by the indigenous workforce, results in capitalist enterprises and national states actively seeking labour beyond their national boundaries. The existence of an ideology of racism, and for many nations, old colonial and imperialistic links, makes the recruitment of black labour from underdeveloped nations a highly attractive prospect, particularly in terms of ensuring high levels of exploitation. Certainly this part of the thesis seems to hold true, and even non-marxists, such as Bohning (1981), identify such processes as dominant in the recruitment of migrant labour by industrial nations.

It is the suggested totality of political expression and shared collective interest which is more problematic. Of course here also similar themes were explored before by Marx, and more recently by Marcuse (1964), in relation to black people in industrial nations, and by Fanon (1967), in relation to the poor in underdeveloped nations. It seems reasonable to assume that the structural position of workers in the labour market will affect the kinds of political decisions and action

that they can take in pursuit of their own interests. There are, however, a number of other assertions related to this general thesis which are again more problematic: the unifying nature of such a phenomenon, the assumed inherent collective interest, the tendency towards conspiracy theory, the mechanistic relationship between ideology and practice, the negative political implications which reduce political involvement to rhetoric and the rather dubious way, at times, in which class analysis is applied to the analysis of black workers.

Sivanandan has been one of the central writers in this sub proletarian thesis movement. The clarity and power of his language has made him influential. A typical example of these characteristics is the following:

But racism is not its own justification. (Ftn. Psychologically it might be-but this is of no interest to capital unless there is profit in it. Socially, it is counter-productive.) It is necessary only for the purpose of exploitation: you discriminate in order to exploit or, which is the same thing, you exploit by discriminating. (p.358).⁶

His work has been highly persuasive in the anti-racist/black struggle debate, and has been a source for generating a radical black consciousness.

Sivanandan has been concerned to argue that the State operates with the direct interest of capitalism, and has therefore employed every opportunity to exploit racism for the benefit of capitalist accumulation. In, **Race, Class and the State: the Black Experience in Britain** 1976, he focuses his attention on black immigration and the state's responses to it. He first establishes that black migrant labour constitutes a sub- proletarian within the British class system, and then he suggests that a whole number of processes are instigated by capitalism to ensure the highest levels of exploitation and minimise levels of conflict.

Put in his own words:-

Capitalism had atomized the working class and created hierarchies within it based on race and nationality to make conflicting sectional interests assume greater significance than the interests of the class as a whole. It had combined with the trade union aristocracy to reduce the political struggle of the labour movement to its bare economic essentials degraded the struggle to overthrow the system to the struggle to be well off within it- and in the process had weaned the trade unions from the concerns of the labour movement to the concerns of government. And when the black proletariat threatened to bring a political dimension, from out of their own historical struggle against capital, to the struggle of the working class, state policy had helped trade unions to institutionalize divisive racist practices within the labour movement itself. (p.358)⁷

He further suggests, that state legislation in relation to race issues are carefully orchestrated to ensure this dual process of exploitation and racial harmony, that immigration laws are passed to maintain the appropriate size of a sub-proletariat class and Race Relations Acts are introduced to defuse potential racial conflicts. Thus the majority of those involved in the "race relation industry" are merely collaborators with capitalism in black sub-proletariat oppression.

The political implications involved in such analysis are extremely limited, elevating only certain struggles as significant; those waged directly against capitalism and the state. Much of this argument hinges on the direct correspondence between racism and black oppression and the economic interests of capitalism. Throughout his writing what is assumed is a coherence and unity of action by capitalism in pursuit of its economic interest. This makes any struggles which are not waged

at the heart of capitalism seem marginal. In addition his general analysis assumes also a direct relationship between racism, which is rooted in economic determinants, and action. No mention is given to unintentional discrimination. As discussed throughout this thesis, it cannot be taken for granted that discrimination takes place purely by intention. Finally, his general thesis suggests a primacy of revolutionary potential, which is lodged with the black sub-proletariat. This group is imbued with the ability to achieve socialism, justice, and human liberation. Such a belief is an extension of the cornerstone of traditional marxist thought, which attributes the ultimate process of liberation to the oppressed class. Again, this fails to acknowledge the importance of a whole range of struggles that might take place at a number of different levels in the labour market. By implication it implies that any group which succeeds in some degree of upward mobility in the labour market is diminished in terms of its potential political significance to "race"/class liberation. It is by the very distinction of sub-proletariat/proletariat that such an assertion is made possible. This issue of the inherent for achieving potential liberation in the sub-proletariat is returned to at the end of this chapter, when the catering workers at British Airways are discussed in more depth.

Research which is probably just as influential, but less accessible due to the abstract styles of writing, is the work of Stuart Hall and the Centre of Contemporary and Cultural Studies(CCCS) (1982). Here the work of Althusser and the concept of "relative autonomy" is utilised as a means of conceptualising the complex articulation between "race" and class. This body of work covers a wide range of issues, and as Solomos(1986) points out, while they share some areas of agreement, there are important differences in their work. This makes a group label on their research problematic and misleading.⁸ In addition their use of "relative autonomy" is different, in many aspects, from that of Gabriel and Ben-Tovim. Once again it highlights the different ways in which the same concept can be used to justify different sociological/political positions.⁹

Hall et al. in, Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State and Law and Order (1982), attempt to explore within a marxist framework a number of issues related to black experience in Britain. The central focus of the book is the policing of black communities throughout the 1970s, a period, which they view as a time of major crisis for British Capitalism. The central argument of the book, from which all other arguments are developed, explores the ways in which British capitalism is able to transfer the explanations for the crisis from its causes to its effects.

For them Britain's structurally backward economic position, as the first industrial nation, places it in a particularly vulnerable position regarding the world trade crisis in the 1970s following the rise of oil prices. This economic crisis placed considerable pressure on the British economy which, they suggest, was probably felt more critically at the lower end of the socio-economic structure of society. Such pressure then manifested itself in increased social and economic tensions - urban unrest, tensions between black communities and the police, the disenchantment of black youths with British society and the increase in economic demands by low paid workers. Such tensions were then used, by sections of the British ruling class, as a means of diverting attention away from the real causes of the crisis and of focussing it on the tensions, as if they were the causes, "too many blacks", "not enough law and order", and such like. Such issues then become part of a new ruling class hegemonic block known as "Thatcherism".¹⁰

This thesis deals with the issues of "race" in two ways; firstly, in terms of an ideological construct which is articulated through racism and is used by the ruling class as part of an ideological mechanism for constructing a new hegemony; and secondly, in terms of an ideological construct which articulates with class to form a specific experience and consciousness, what Hall et al. call a "modality".

Once again such writers are forced to acknowledge that the experience of "race", which they accept as an ideological construct, has major social significance in

terms of social dynamics. Here it is called a "modality". For them class is constructed at any one of three levels, economic, political or social; and once again also the marriage of class and "race" is made possible. In its favour the notion of "modality" does allow consideration for the way that gender and "race" add a very distinct character to class formation. The problem is that throughout it is dealt with in a very generalised way and very little specifics of class, "race" or gender experience and struggle are mentioned. It is here that one can see very clearly the influence of Althusser and Poulantzas and the concept of "relative autonomy". Throughout also is a strong influence of Gramscian marxism which stresses the dialectical nature of ideological and economic forces in society. Both of the influences seem to be partners of theoretical convenience, in this marriage of "race" and class, and, for much the same reason mentioned in criticisms of Gabriel and Ben-Tovim, seem not totally appropriate as theoretical justifications for the arguments being pursued.

One of the main concerns in the book is the issue of mugging and its link to black youth. Hall et.al. having adopted a marxist epistemology decide to examine the concept of the "lumpenproletariat", to consider how appropriate it is as a theoretical tool for locating the structural position of black youth in society. The authors are also concerned to attribute political importance to black youth, and therefore reject the traditional marxist notion of "lumpenproletariat" in favour of the concept of sub-proletariat. It is by the use of the category sub-proletariat that a whole number of other assertions are made theoretically consistent, that is the elevation of the importance of "race" and racism within a class analysis, the elevation of black struggle, the ability to analyse exploitation beyond the point of production, e.g. inner city black communities. In addition the concept of modality provides a means of giving sociological significance to black culture and experience.

Throughout the research a multitude of issues are covered, but are dealt with mainly at a macro level. This is its main problem, in the sense that it is very

difficult to establish any clear political plan of action. Very rarely are specific issues considered and the arguments operate very much at the level of abstract debate. Its justification or fault remain a matter of debate. It is possible to read this work from either Sivanandan's or Gabriel and Ben-Tovim's perspective and still assume an ally.

Its impact and theoretical directive for the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), of which Hall was director for some time, was considerable. Their (CCCS) most notable work was, The Empire Strikes Back, with a range of themes dealt with by different authors. For the purpose of this case study and debate the work of Gilroy will be examined, both his chapter in the above mentioned book and his later work, "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack". To some extent Gilroy argues for an autonomous model of "race" and class, as Solomos states;

Paul Gilroy mounts a sustained critique of both Marxist and sociological analysis of "race" for failing to deal adequately with the autonomy of "race" from "class". In so doing he questions the view of the working class as a continuous historical subject, particularly since such a view cannot deal adequately with the ways in which blacks constitute themselves as an autonomous social force in politics or with the existence of "racially demarcated class factions" (Gilroy 1982 p.284) The theoretical basis of this critique can be traced back to the work of Hall, (p.93)¹¹

What is meant by "racially demarcated class factions" is much the same as Sivanandan and Hall's notion of a sub-proletariat with probably, in this case, greater primacy given to "race" and black struggle, and so the "juggling" goes on.

Central to Gilroy's work is the attempt to give sociological and, seemingly more important for him, political significance to black youth struggle. One of the main mechanisms by which this is achieved is the exploration and promotion of the concept of culture. Gilroy is, rightly, concerned to ensure that his work does not give any credence to deterministic notions of culture, which now more than ever reinforce and underpin the ideology of racism.¹² Gilroy's use of culture is rooted in a Gramscian tradition and therefore stresses that culture is: a) related to material forces, b) an essential feature of hegemonic blocks, c) dialectical, in that it can form both a medium for oppression and a source of cultural resistance to oppression, and d) a powerful and meaningful form of political expression. Culture, for him, becomes a major aspect of "community" experience, and thus it becomes necessary to define "community" also within a framework which allows consistency for the assertion of "racially demarcated class factions". This is achieved mainly by stipulating that class formation is not restricted solely to relations of commodity production. He states;

The Marxist concept of class refers primarily but not exclusively to the location of groups in production relations. Capitalism's tendency to generate surplus population structurally excluded from productive employment by revolution in the labour process and changes in accumulation should emphasize this point. The composition of this population and the ways it becomes organized politically are determined by class struggles which are not reducible to the objective conditions which delineate the range of possible outcomes. The political organization of surplus population is particularly salient to class segmentation, and therefore to racial politics in the era of structural unemployment. (pp.302-303)¹³

Gilroy is rightly, arguing here, as do many feminists, that exploitation, oppression, and liberation are not forces which are the sole property of groups linked directly to the point of production. What becomes problematic is the elevated importance he gives to black youth struggles above many others. In order to substantiate this assertion he employs the concepts of culture, as mentioned above, and community, for what he later defines as urban social movements.

Community in particular is a highly problematic term (Bell, Newby 1971) and here it is used in a relatively unproblematic way. The concept of "community" is often employed in black politics as a means of establishing political credibility. It often assumes a much higher degree of homogeneity in such communities than is likely to be the case and this certainly seems to be apparent in Gilroy's (1987) work. This is not to argue that communities do not develop dominant cultural characteristics, or that these cultural characteristics do not act as source of political resistance. What is highly questionable is the degree of primacy and homogeneity attributed to the types of black community that Gilroy wishes to promote.

It is reasonable to assume that groups who feel threatened will draw on their culture for political expression. But the development of communities, community boundaries, community identity, and community cultures are all subject to diverse forms of influence. They are all highly dynamic formations which are constantly changing, and this makes it very difficult for any individual or group to be able to claim a comprehensive knowledge of their characteristics. In practice, it seems, that the term, "Black community" very often is a significant and important term of political discourse. The term becomes an instrument of political struggle in various arenas of struggle. This is illustrated in more detail when we discuss "cultural barriers" in the chapter on Informal Practices..

What becomes apparent, especially in the case of Gilroy's use of the term "urban social movements", is that community is being used as a mechanism for

transferring the primacy of class struggle on to that of black struggle, and in the process it becomes a form of racial determinism.¹⁴

There is no contention here with Gilroy's premise that the totality of shared experiences within a locality generate a shared local culture that is dialectical and interactive in its formation with other/dominant cultural formations. Nor is there any disagreement that such cultural experiences are part product of historical and material forces, or for that matter that black youth struggles do have cultural political importance. What seems highly contentious is the primacy given to such struggles. For at times, particularly in "There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack", he goes to great length to establish what forms of cultural expression are significant and potentially politically potent. The exploration of different forms of anti-racist tactics amongst youth culture is, at times, elitist and esoteric. It assumes that only certain forms of anti-racist, or class struggle, have the potential for liberation. In many respects he replaces the classical marxist notion of the inherent political importance of the proletariat with that of "urban social movements". As Williams (1989) states,

Gilroy (1987a) has elaborated the significance that the anti-capitalist, anti-state and anti-work imperatives of black expressive culture have for class struggle. He sees them as class struggles experienced and expressed in Black terms. In this way he challenges the Marxist notion that anti-capitalism consciousness develops amongst the working class by virtue of their relations to the means of production (the working class as the historic agent of socialism). This clearly has implications for other social movements like the women's movement, but there remains a tension between the way Gilroy almost imputes these social movements an element of vanguardism, yet holds

tenaciously on to the importance of class struggle.

(p.102)¹⁵

While Gilroy's work deals mainly in generalities, he singles out certain forms of cultural expression as significant, e.g. *Rock Against Racism*, with the result that whole forms of other struggles waged in different arenas of struggle are, by implication, given less importance. Finally the CCCS general totality approach to "race" and class fails to challenge critically the contradictions inherent within the Althusserian model of "relative autonomy". Their use of such a model is similar to that of their use of the works of a number of other writers, whom they simply employ at a given moment to justify the particular argument they are presenting. From nearly all this work it is very difficult to establish any clear guide to political action. Thus CCCS and Gilroy in particular are simply juggling many of the traditional marxist, Gramscian and Althusserian type arguments to fit the sub-proletariat/urban social movements thesis. Their use of class and "race" is then often problematic, a point Miles (1984, p.228-30) raises in the migrant labour debate.

Migrant Labour Thesis

The vast majority of British Airways catering workers came in the late 1950s and early 1960s from India and Pakistan and like the vast majority of other black immigrants in this period, found themselves employed in jobs which were located at the very bottom of the labour market. This process of migrant labour is one that a number of writers, mainly in the neo-marxist/marxist tradition, have explored. Here some of these theories are examined in order to see how applicable they are to notions of class and "race" and to the case study itself.

As mentioned previously Sivanandan (1982) and others (e.g. Castles & Kosack 1973) have used marxist models of capitalist world domination, imperialism/colonialism (c.f. Lenin 1966, Luxembourg 1951, Frank 1967.), to

explain the recruitment of migrant labour from the "underdeveloped" nations to advanced economies in times of labour shortage.¹⁶ The main features of this argument concerns how through imperial and colonial domination capitalism has created conditions of poverty and dependency in these "underdeveloped" nations which result in the creation of surplus labour. Developed capitalist nations can then draw on these surplus labour supplies in times of labour shortage at an extremely low cost to their own economies. In Sivanandan's own words,

To put it more graphically, colonialism perverts the economy of the colonies to its own ends, drains their wealth into coffers of the metropolitan country and leaves them at independence with a large labour force and no capital with which to make that labour productive. And it is to these vast and cheap resources of labour that Britain turned in th 1950s. (p.102) ¹⁷

The use of these groups constitutes a reserve army of labour which is legitimised by the ideology of racism. This new labour source is made distinctive then not just by its specific structural position at the very bottom of the labour market, but also by the fact they are viewed by the majority of the indigenous population through a set of beliefs based on racism. Such economic and ideological conditions create the environment in which the vast majority of black labour comes to occupy a structural position that Sivanandan and others (Hall et.al. 1978) call the sub-proletariat.

Finally, the actual experience of life for the majority of black communities as part of the sub-proletariat generates a black consciousness, which is often heavily influenced by prior cultures and experiences of colonial countries of origin. Thus black migrant labour does offer a an economically cheap source of labour, but there is also a political price to pay, in that such labour very often generates very

volatile forms of political expression and resistance to extreme forms of exploitation.

Sivanandan has been criticised from a number of quarters for adopting a functionalist type argument (Gabriel/Ben-Tovim 1978, Gilroy 1987, Miles 1982,) which attributes labour migration and its effects to a rigid correspondence to the economic needs of capitalism. As Miles states in relation to all economic functionalist explanations,

Moreover, to define racism as functional to capitalism is to presuppose the nature and outcome of its articulation with economic and political relations, and with other ideologies. Such a definition mistakenly assumes that a homogeneous ruling class inevitably and necessarily derives economic and/or political advantage from its expression. The use of racism to limit the size of the labour market is not necessarily in the interest of those experiencing a labour shortage, while racism and exclusionary practices that result in civil disturbance will not necessarily be welcomed by capitalists whose business activity has been disrupted as a result, or by the state that has to increase expenditure to maintain social order. (p.100)¹⁸

Of course the latter point concerning the disruptive potential inherent in the use of migrant labour is a point that Sivanandan wishes stress. It is the other element of his argument that Miles takes exception to. Two less economic reductionist accounts of the migrant labour thesis come from the work of Miles (1989) and Miles/Phizacklea (1982), and Bohning (1981).

Miles and Phizacklea's starting point is the concept of "race", which they view as a highly problematic term. For them much of the sociology of "race" and many of the neo marxist/ marxist writers, including CCCS, use the term "race" in a relatively unproblematic way. Williams (1989) points out their objection to the term,

Its use as an analytical starting-point is misguided and idealist because "race" as such does not exist, it is merely a construction, and a reactionary construction at that, used by politicians, policy-makers and others as an indication that the problem is "race" (i.e. Black people) when in fact the problem is racism. (p109)

What needs attention is the construction of the notion of "race" which these writers argue is a process by which racism acts as an ideological justification for collective exploitation of groups who are viewed as sharing supposedly inherent biological features. This process they call "racialisation".¹⁹ Miles has defined it in this way,

a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics. It is therefore an ideological process (1982 p.157)

This process of "racialisation" is rooted in historical and material conditions, of which the use of migrant labour is a major feature. While both writers are highly critical of the unitary and collectively homogeneous concept of a black underclass/sub-proletariat (Rex and Tomlinson 1979 p.1-35, Sivanandan 1982 p.123) they do argue that the use of migrant labour within the context of the racialisation process has resulted in black people forming a "racialized fraction" of the working class or any other class in which they are located. By viewing "racialisation" as a process which is rooted in historical material forces they are

able to argue that racism is not solely determined by economic forces and can find expression at a number of different levels, which include class, status and power.

Miles (1989) more recently has argued very strongly against assumptions based on economic determinants and corresponding political expression. To support his argument he cites the very different political responses by specific European nation states to the presence of migrant labour. In addition he also makes reference to the differing right wing reactions in these states to the presence of migrant labour and how they do not conform to any single form of expression or follow any similar historical time pattern.²⁰ In the case of Britain he views the active role of the indigenous working class as far more pronounced in the "racialisation" process than in many other European nations.(Miles 1989, p.119)

Finally in the same text Miles identifies the main three factors which operate to ensure that the majority of migrant labour (and those of recent migrant labour origin) form a "racialized fraction of the working class".²¹ These are racialisation, racism and exclusionary practice. He outlines their interrelationship as follows:

This interrelationship between racialisation, racism and exclusionary practice has continued to constitute a structural constraint for people of Asian and Caribbean origin seeking wage labour, thereby maintaining a hierarchy of concordance and setting ideological limits to the operation of the labour market. (Miles 1989, p.127)

It is within the area of this particular migrant labour thesis that their/his argument is weak. All three factors seem to be mainly rooted in ideological forces, and therefore give very little consideration to unintentional processes of discrimination, such as how collective bargaining processes might interact to prohibit the access

of certain groups into certain areas of the labour market and also affect racial exclusionary practices which may have several causes. We have already seen how racialisation has been defined as clearly an ideological construction, as is racism. It therefore remains to be seen how Miles defines "exclusionary practice".

Miles identifies two main processes involved in "exclusionary practice". They are the lack of appropriate skills by many of the migrant labour force in relation to the demands of the British industrial capitalist economy, and racism which mediates and distorts many of the decisional judgments that employers make in recruitment of labour (1989 p.126).

The latter is clearly linked to ideological forces; and the issue of appropriate skills is one which is dealt with in a relatively unproblematic way. The issue of skill itself is part product of ideological forces and is very often the end product of collective bargaining processes, as the case study shows.

It must be stressed though that no contention is being made here that the points Miles makes are irrelevant to labour market formation, only that there is a failure to address unintentional forces in any great depth, and a lack of any real analysis of the complexity or specifics of labour market formation. In short almost all explanations are based on ideological theories, which they suggest are in turn formulated within various historical material circumstances. Little, or no consideration is given to unintentional practice, or the ways in which agents, other than the ruling class are involved in the formation of the labour market. In this respect the works of Miles and Phizacklea (1979,1982,1984, and Miles 1980,1989) come very close to treating migrant labour also in a functional manner, e.g. black labour migration as a product of economic trends.

Much of the work in the area of migrant labour thesis provides a theoretical base for research, such as the case study. It is mainly the assertion of a distinct unitary/homogeneous class who have a primacy of political consciousness and

action which this thesis challenges (Sivanandan 1982, Castle/Kosack 1973). It also notes the lack of analysis of the complexity and specifics of labour market formation which result in both intentional and unintentional forces operating (Miles/Phizacklea 1979,1982,1984, Miles 1980, 1989). To some extent Bohning (1972) avoids these problems by concentrating attention on the process involved without drawing any spurious links to the deterministic elements which characterise neo-marxist /marxist theory.

Bohning is concerned to establish the processes that operate to generate a self-feeding mechanism of economic migration from low-wage to post-industrial countries with a liberal capitalist economy. A major feature of this process is the transformation of a substantial proportion of polyannual migrants into permanent residents. Two main features of the self-feeding process are identified, that of structural formation in the post-industrial economies, and the migratory process itself.

Bohning argues that the majority of European liberal capitalist nations undergo some form of labour shortage, particularly in the period of transition from an industrial to post industrial state. Such shortages result in an upward shift of the indigenous workforce who very often adopt increased aspirations in such circumstances. Often such periods of labour shortage start with a labour demand in specific areas of the labour market, but very soon result in a structural demand which creates a need for jobs across lower levels of the labour market. Such economies have only a limited number of options: either they allow those jobs to increase their wages, or restructure the job content, or leave unfilled vacancies until there is a growth of unemployment as a means of attracting employment to such jobs. This of course would halt or reverse economic growth. Alternatively they seek out additional labour through migration. Once you instigate a process of migration then a number of other economic and social mechanisms come into play. The actual process of migration intensifies the upward drift of the indigenous workforce which results in the kinds of identity and cultural shifts in class formation

that many of the above writers have wrongly associated with the development of distinct class formations.

Bohning's second feature in this self-feeding process is migration itself. This migration process is a social as well as an economic phenomenon and is influenced by the kinds of expectations that many of the migrants have in terms of the economic lure of post-industrial economies. Bohning argues that for the majority of these migrants, who came on the assumption of returning to their home land, the expectations are never realised, and very soon they discover that they exchanged one form of deprivation for another. Yet the economic demands (the desire to make it in the "land of plenty") and social pressures are such that many remain with the result that,

if he wants to improve his lot, and if he is not to return home and admit failure, he will have to send for his wife and older children and will have to send them out to work where he is. (Bohning p.36)>

Bohning identifies four stages in this general trend from polyannual migration to permanent residence. Each stage involves interaction with economic and social forces which finally result in the establishment of significant migrant communities. Bohning stresses that his model is based on an ideal type which is formulated from data generated from Germany. Nevertheless he suggests that German trends seem to have replicated themselves throughout similar European economies. While Bohning provides very little in the way of political or theoretical direction from his work, it does provide some important descriptive information related to the phenomena of migrant labour.

It seems that, with the exception of Bohning, much of the work in the area of the migrant labour thesis fails to deal convincingly with the complexity of the labour market and the struggles that are waged within. Very often the theories are

prostituted in order to assert the political primacy of , what is assumed to be, a specific class formation. While nearly all identify important features of the actuality of migration, very often the theoretical and political implications drawn from such features lead to highly vanguardist assumptions concerning struggles against exploitation. Before attempting to outline a possible alternative analysis which does allow for meaningful struggles to take place at a number of different levels and areas of the labour market, the work of Rex et.al. (Rex & Moore 1967, Rex 1973, Rex & Tomlinson 1979, Rex 1983) will be examined in relation to "race" and class and notions of an underclass.

A Non-Marxist Notion of an Underclass.

Rex's work comes from a very different epistemological background from nearly all the writers above, that of a neo-Weberian. Yet while there are major differences in the arguments he presents there are also a number of similarities. Unlike the neo-marxist/marxist writers Rex's work considers issues of status, market capacity, and life chances, all issues deeply entrenched in the Weberian tradition. Rex's conceptualisation of class is not limited to productive forces or related to historical materialism. One of the major features of the distinction between the black underclass and the traditional, white working class is access to welfare and housing provision, which is significantly based on issues of status.

Rex makes a comparison of British and U.S.A. black communities and their struggles. One of the main reasons for the relative success of black struggles in America is the nature of political representation in that country, which is less demarcated along traditional class lines. The British white working class, similar to that of the majority of other European working classes, has a long tradition of political representation which has been able to achieve major welfare and social benefits from the "ruling class". To a great extent, however, black communities in Britain have been prohibited and excluded from these forms of political representation, mainly the labour party and trade unions. (There seem to be very

little disagreement about this, particularly if you take into consideration much of the information provided in this case study).

The net result of this exclusion for black communities is twofold, firstly, that they have shared very little in the welfare and social benefits that have been won by the working class, and secondly, that black communities have had to resort to other forms of political expression, which have in the main been community based. Both of these features have reinforced the structural formation of an underclass which is based partly on status and partly on economic forces.

There are some advantages in Rex et al.'s model in that it avoids the kinds of problems associated with economic reductionism. However, there are also more disadvantages particularly related to the issue of status. For while Rex et al. acknowledge the existence of structural forms of racism and discrimination as party to the construction of the underclass, their main explanation for its formation is status. Given that status is a product of subjective forces, then the main explanation being offered here is ideological, and, mainly that of prejudice. This in its turn raises the question of where do such ideologies come from? The answer to such a question is likely to lead you back into the historical materialist camp.

In addition, one of the arguments pursued in this case study is the problematic nature of being over-dependent on ideological explanations of discrimination, which results in not giving sufficient consideration to unintentional practices.

Two important criticisms are also made by Williams (1989):

Rex's account makes no concession to the concept of gender, and gives the impression that the entire underclass is male. Above all, Rex's analysis lacks coherence, because it is not altogether clear what the

relations between class and "race" are, or what the links between class struggle and underclass struggle are, how they can be forged, or where they are going.
(p.100)²²

Both of these criticisms seem major omissions and reflect the general problem that writers have in trying to balance the varying importance and relevance of "race," class, and gender.

Again Rex, like the majority of other writers here, talks very much in generalities, in which the underclass forms a kind of homogeneous block. In addition, Hall (1980) has rightly criticised Rex for using too simplistic a model of marxism. Rex's critique of marxism addresses itself to a mainly crude version of historical materialism and economic reductionism. One direct result of this in Rex's work is a minimal analysis of workplace struggles and exploitative mechanisms related to the labour process. This deficiency has major problematic implications in terms of the kinds of anti-racist struggles which Rex is advocating. For the assumption that underclass status is a product of exclusions from working class political institutions automatically suggests that anti-racist struggles should be waged towards greater access to those institutions. Such an assumption never truly asks the question, "access to what"? These institutions are not monolithic or unified organisations and are made up at a number of different levels at which groups are located in areas of exploitation and arenas of struggle. Neither can it be assumed that such institutions as trade unions and political parties are class-aligned or represent specific class interests (Hindess 1987). It is not being suggested here that it is a worthless or a meaningless activity to make inroads into trade unions or political groups/parties, only that such access may well act merely as access into a different arena of struggle. It seems that one of the political problems of the underclass/sub-proletariat thesis is this assumption of political primacy, that the black struggle overrides all others. This seems a highly negative and limited political analysis and one which is not dissimilar to the assertion of class primacy.

But it seems more appropriate to analyse exploitative struggles as taking place at a number of different levels and in a number of different arenas.

British Airways catering workers' experience and structural location in the labour market, in the 1950s and 1960s, would seem to fit well with many of the arguments presented in this chapter. The extreme forms of corrupt practices, the poor pay and conditions all ensured high levels of exploitation and are the kinds of characteristics which would be attributed by many of the above writers to the status or economic position of underclass/sub proletariat. However, the kinds of struggles undertaken by British Airways Catering workers, and their relative successes, do raise major question marks over many of the assumptions made above. There are aspects of the works above which are applicable, and an attempt will be made to identify them, but much of it seems inappropriate and generates political agendas which are either vanguardist or pessimistic. We need therefore to examine alternative forms of analysis.

"Race", Gender and Class:- Arenas of Struggle.

One of the striking features about reading the literature in this area is how little is actually mentioned about gender. Writers quoted above, CCCS in particular, do mention it in passing, but not in any substantial way. This issue of course has been raised by black feminists, not just in relation to class/"race" issues, but also in relation to ways in which white feminists discuss gender issues (Parmar, Carby 1982). "Race, gender and class, it seems, are often conceptualised in terms of unified and coherent economic and social formations. When attempts are made to find some mechanism for integrating "race", gender and class into a single model of analysis, then the tendency is either, 1) to generate very generalised theories which continually juggle the three separate issues around in order to ensure that no one of them is given greater importance (Hall et al. is a good example here), or 2) to demote the importance of two of the issues in order to promote the third, as in the case of Gilroy (see Westergaard and Resler (1975) for the promotion of class over "race" and gender). One of the main problems with

nearly all these approaches is the assumption of inherent interests and forms of political expression attributed, by writers, to specific groups. The tendency is to over-emphasize both consciousness, or the lack of it, and a notion of objective interests as explanations for political action. Very little attention is paid to practice, and the combination of factors that contribute to political practice itself, such as unintentional forces, conflicting interests, how interests are defined, and institutional mechanisms²³.

By means of discussing an alternative model of analysis for "race", class and gender issues, a brief mention of the later work of Hindess will be made. Some of Hindess's early work, along with Hirst, was greatly influenced by structural marxism. Since then Hindess has become highly critical of structural marxism and marxism in general. Much of his later work has concerned itself with issues related to socialist politics. In Parliamentary Democracy and Socialist Politics, he suggested that the marxist notion of the inherent ownership of the potential for socialist liberation by the proletariat was highly problematic. There was no inherent reason or mechanism by which the proletariat could/should realise this potential, and also there existed plenty of historical evidence to show that proletarian politics was very often highly divorced from marxist politics. This he insisted could not be explained by the extremely dubious concept of false consciousness. He therefore challenged the marxist assertion of the primacy of class in political struggle and the assumption that classes were a product of structural forces.

The two main features of Hindess's argument concerning this challenge to the marxist notion of class formation are as follows: 1) the inability of marxism to sustain a theory of correspondence between the economic base of society and the other levels of social formation, what marxists call the superstructure (ideological and political levels). He suggests that various attempts to resolve this problem have simply resulted in the construction of a number of inconsistent theories which very often patch over the contradictions in order to maintain some semblance of

the base/superstructure metaphor (c.f. Althusser, Gough). This problem lies at the heart of the inconsistencies of many of the models considered in this chapter; 2) the false assertion by marxism that capitalism has a number of inherent laws of motion, which find expression in class formation, class struggle and objective class interests.

Hindess argues that "class interests" are socially and politically constructed, mainly as means for legitimising particular forms of political action. Here are two statements by Hindess which clarify this point:

The political importance of movements organised, at least in part, around ideas of socialism and claiming to represent the interests of the working class can hardly be denied. What that shows is that there are important cases in which class analysis is employed in the formation and organisation of agencies of political struggle and in the mobilization of support around them. It does not establish the theoretical role accorded to the concept of class in Marxist analysis. (p.118 1987),

and also,

Interests are effective, that is, they must be formulated or reflected in reasons that are formulated if they are to be acted upon. If they provide no actor with reasons for action they have no social consequences. This point may seem trivial, but we shall see that it has important consequences for the ways in which interests may be said to have political repercussions. (p.114 1987).

The implications of these statements are by no means "trivial", and Hindess provides a very clear example to support his argument:

In the 1984-5 miners' strike in Britain, for example, distinct and conflicting conceptions of the interests had been at issue in the decisions of miners who supported the strike and in the decisions of miners who opposed it. Which position was correct was itself a matter of dispute, and the conduct of that dispute had consequences in the changing pattern of support for the opposed positions- but it was not the "validity" or "objectivity" of one set of interests rather than another that determined what support it had. (p.115 1987).

Hindess is not suggesting that notions of class action and struggle or social collective action such as gender or black struggle are not important. It is the belief that such social collectives are an objective formation of either social or economic forces that he takes issue with. He argues that in reality a whole number of other institutions are involved in the expression of political action, such as political parties, trade unions, newspapers, civil servants etc., none of which, regardless of claims, constitutes a discrete class.

Also hindess is not suggesting that exploitation does not take place, or that structural locations do not bring groups into conflict with one another and influence the decisions they make. It is the notion of distinct social agents (class, gender or "race") with inherent/objective interests which is dubious. He argues that notions of "interest" are in fact social constructs which provide actor/actors with forms of justification for political action, such as racism and anti-racism.

All these struggles of political legitimacy take place in situations which are also subject to unintentional forces and structural restraints, such as the specific location of a group of workers within the labour market. In essence Hindess is advocating that political struggle, whether it is within a political party or part of trade union struggle, is partly based on political discourse. The realization of that political discourse is then likely to generate forms of struggle which will be subject to forces other than intentional action, such as the unintentional consequences of others' actions, institutional practices and other external forces. This then means that notions of racial justice, equality, socialism, anti-racism, and anti-sexism are products of political discourse. The methods by which such political aims are achieved involves not just forms of political action, but an assessment of political practice. The consistent analysis of how things happen means not just analysing political intention, but the whole range of other forces which result in different political and economic situations. At British Airways, the success of many of the shop stewards was their ability to understand well the mechanisms and forces which operated within the collective bargaining process.

Using aspects of this part of Hindess's work what is being argued here is that there exists a number of arenas of struggle, in which actors can draw on a number of social constructs, such as notions of interest, racism etc, to justify their actions. Class, "race" and gender are social constructs which of themselves do not equal objective interests. They are notions by which some groups will justify their political objectives, to increase profits, and others will justify their political objectives, of eliminating forms of oppression. What is important is that in themselves such social constructs can amount to the formation, the formulation and the justification for action.

The kinds of struggle undertaken by British Airways catering workers were ones that involved eliminating a number of practices and mechanism which served to exploit their labour. Capitalist enterprises do not all merely operate forms of exploitation through class action or the action of agents, just as all the workers of

British Airways do not share exactly the same interests, even though they may well share many.²⁴ While pay and conditions can be measured against other workers, the justification for parity and the appeal of fair play and justice are matters of political discourse. This is not to suggest that such appeals are not justified, only that they are not forces which are an inherent expression of the structural location that such workers occupy. Of course the forms of expression that workers give to their political aspirations are subject to conditions of their location, but that is a very different use of structural analysis than much of that offered in class, "race" and gender theory. Class, "race" and gender do exist as highly significant tools of analysis for political action, but they are not social forces that are embodied with inherent interest or inherent forms of political expression.

The claim of British Airways catering workers to be involved in forms of struggle against oppression is as open to justification as that of young black persons on the street. To analyse industrial and political struggle in terms of arenas of struggle leaves the political agenda open. Such an analysis combines a structural and rational model of political interpretation. Groups of workers enter into struggle based on either conditions of their location or rational choices generated out of political discourse, which might well involve notions of "race" gender or class. They are all key terms of political discourse, used differently in different arenas of struggle and used differently by the same people, as discussion on culture and racism will show later.

1. Here the origins of modern marxism are located in the works of Gramsci and Luka'cs who both, in their works, challenge a number of previously held, orthodox ideas within marxism.

2. A number of other terms have been applied to these two schools of thought, but humanistic and scientific/structural marxism probably have the greatest currency and are more appropriate terms in relation to further discussion concerning "race" and class.
3. T. Lane., The Union Makes Us Strong, Pluto Press.
4. I. Oxaal., Marxism and the Sociology of Racism, in M. Shaw (ed.), Marxist Sociology Revisited, Macmillan Press Ltd 1985 London.
5. O.C. Cox., Caste, Class and Race: A study in Social Dynamics, Monthly Review Press 1970 New York.
6. A.V. Sivanandan., Race, Class and the State: the Black Experience in Britain, in Race and Class, No.4 Spring 1976 Volm. XV11.
7. ibid.
8. Owing to the confines of this thesis only those issues which deal mainly with "race" and class will be referred to.
9. The difference in usage is so marked at times that Solomos, almost certainly wrongly, suggests that Gabriel/Ben-Tovim's model is in fact of complete autonomous.
10. Hall has examined the subject of Thatcherism in a number of different articles, but here it applies more directly to the issue of "race".
11. J. Solomos., Varieties of Marxist Conceptions of "Race", Class and the State: a Critical Analysis, in J. Rex/ D. Mason (Ed.) Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations, Cambridge University Press 1986 Cambridge.
12. See Martin Barker's book New Racism.
13. P. Gilroy., Steppin' out of Babylon-race, class and autonomy, in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies., The Empire Strikes Back, Hutchinson Ltd. 1982 London.

14. Much more research needs to be done on the diversity of different class/group cultures and the ways in which these cultures act as a form of political expression. Gilroy's work has provided an important contribution to this debate.
15. F. Williams., Social Policy: A Critical Introduction, Polity Press 1989 Oxford.
16. The term "underdeveloped" is used in relation to dependency theory which suggests that the economic and social condition of the majority of third world nations is mainly a product of capitalist world domination. Capitalism underdevelops third world nations by exploiting their human and material resources in order to develop their own economies. (Wallerstein 1974, Frank 1967).
17. A. Sivanandan., A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance, Pluto Press 1982, London.
18. R. Miles., Racism, Routledge 1989 London.
19. The concept of "racialisation" was first substantially used by Fanon(1967 pp.170-1) but since then a number of writers have employed it (cf. Banton 1977 p18, Troyna/Williams 1985, pp. 39 & 241).
20. One example Miles provides is the different periods in time over which neo-fascist organisations, such as the National Front, achieve any major political significance in different European states, such as Britain in the 1970's and France in the 1980's.
21. It is worth quoting Miles at some length here,

"First, the majority of Asian and Caribbean men and women occupy a proletarian economic position: more than 65 per cent of Asian and Caribbean people of working age are economically active and in paid employment (Barber 1985; pp.469-70, Anon 1987: pp.19-20). There are, however, significant differences according to sex and national origin. For example, 49 per cent of women are economically active compared with 83 per cent of men. Of those who are economically active, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women have the lowest proportion in paid employment (66 per cent and 60.4 per cent respectively) while East African men have the highest proportion (91.2 per cent). And, amongst the Caribbean population, 83.2 per cent women are in paid employment, compared with 69 per cent of men. Of those who are economically active, 83 per cent of Caribbean men and 73 per cent of Asian men are in manual jobs, while the comparative figures for Caribbean and Asian women are 47 per cent and 52 per cent (Brown 1984: 305).

Second, Asian and Caribbean people are also a significant part of the relative surplus population: in 1984, amongst Asian and Caribbean people aged 16 years and over, 21.3 per cent of men and 19.1 per cent of women were unemployed (Barber 1985: 473-4)." (Miles 1989: p.122).

22. F. Williams., ibid.
23. An understanding of unintentional forces is central to the various arguments pursued in this thesis. Unintentional is defined as actions and practices which are constituted by forces not based upon intention.
24. British Airways while publicly owned still operates under much the same considerations and constraints of most capitalist enterprises.

CHAPTER 3

Trade Unions and Trade Unionism

Section (1)

- (1) Trade Unions and Working Class Politics
- (2) Unified Class Interest
- (3) Some Traditional Theories of Trade Unions
- (4) Trade Union Historical Development
- (5) Pluralism & trade unions
- (6) The work of Clegg, Fox and Flanders
- (7) Trade Union Historical Development
- (8) Union Organisational Structures

Section (2) - General Trends in Post-war Trade Unionism

- (1) The 1960s: "Optimism of will"
- (2) The 1970s: The rise and fall of union power

Section (3) - Problems with the History of Trade Unions and Black Workers

- (1) "Untold Stories", the 1960s
- (2) Black workers and trade unions in the 1960s
- (3) "Voices Heard", the 1970s
- (4) Summary

TRADE UNIONS AND TRADE UNIONISM

The last chapter looked at the issues of "race" and class, and centred its examination of such theories on the marxist/neo-marxist tradition. This chapter, in its theoretical section will do the same, but also look at the pluralist tradition. The chapter is divided into three main sections; the first, as stated above, examines a number of theories that have considered the role of trade unions in relation to working class and socialist politics; the second section looks historically from the 1950s at general trends in trade union development and makes reference to pluralist analysis of trade unions; the final section looks specifically at trade union post war history in relation to black workers.

Trade Unions and Working Class Politics

All mature socialist theory since Lenin has started by stressing the insurmountable limitations of trade union action in a capitalist society. (p.333)¹

Perry Anderson's statement is almost certainly accurate in terms of assessing the general perspectives of Marxist (and many liberal) social scientists in relation to trade unions. Many, such as Lenin, Trotsky and Anderson himself, have suggested that trade unions are a major contributory factor in the failure of the proletariat to achieve a socialist reality, and as institutions only serve either to integrate, incorporate or absorb class conflict within the acceptable social, political and economic boundaries of capitalism.

The assumption implicit in nearly all these theories is the interrelationship between trade unions and an objective unified class interest. In most cases, these theories also suggest that trade unions are an expression of working class interest, which in their institutional form are limited either by the structure of capitalism or by capitalist hegemony. Certainly Lenin, Trotsky and Anderson have all identified

divisions within the proletariat but such divisions are usually conceptualised in terms of theories of "trade union consciousness" or "sectionalist interests."

This section will argue that trade unions are not a unified body either in their ideological construction or in their institutional mechanisms; that many of their constraints are unintentional and are a product of factors either within their own framework or those operating from the wider society. Further, it will be argued that trade unions in nature are often subject to arbitrary forces and therefore are a mechanism for various class interests rather than an expression of them. Thus it would follow that trade unions have no definite limitations and are themselves open to negotiation and are an arena of struggle. Such an hypothesis of course does not argue that trade unions are devoid of class interest, since almost all sociological analysis would account for some class position for every individual. The core of my argument is that trade unionism in totality is constituted out of more than human intention, an issue in fact most marxist writers accept.

Trade Unions in terms of actions are often determined by a set of established practices. These practices have been established by an historical process of viable options, which are not necessarily based on a socialist ideology or any other given ideology for that matter. They are often, as Lenin, Trotsky and Anderson point out, the product of direct defensive action by a section of labour to the exploitive actions by capital.²

What most of these trade union theories do not examine is the unintentional consequences of such action on other workers. When studies have examined the effects of bargaining by one group of workers on another, it is a rule conceptualised either in terms of; 1) the ability of capital to divide and rule, or 2) the limitations of economic sectional interests. Both approaches stress the economic factors involved and assume a unified class interest. While collective bargaining is concerned in the main with defensive economic interests it is also involved in constructing a social and political reality in the work place. How jobs

are defined, allocated and controlled are all critical issues for which which trade unions have struggled since their inception. Even given the complexity of the labour market, it does in totality have some interconnection and thus the construction of a social, political and economic reality in one area of the market by labour and capital will have some effect on the rest, however unintentional those actions might be.

Unified Class Interest

Workers who sell their labour power are part of an exploited class within capitalism and as such can be defined as proletarian. The classification proletariat gives us little understanding of the important differences within such a category which serve to divide and differentiate workers' interests, a point accepted by certain Marxists (Althusser 1969³, Lane, 1974⁴). These divisions, though a product of given social formations (Capitalism, Post Capitalism), are not static. As Marx pointed out individuals are involved in the creation of their own existence and as such can reinforce, eliminate and in certain instances be involved in establishing these divisions. These divisions, such as "race", are socially constructed and as such have determining attributes in themselves. They certainly have real consequences for the actors they affect and the rhetoric that describes divisions as a divisive element of capitalism ignores the real ramifications of such divisions.⁵ To talk of a unified class interest in a society in which socially constructed divisions exist is nonsensical. It is therefore possible for trade unions to operate systems of practice which by intention or non-intention serve to operate in favour of one group of workers and simultaneously have a detrimental effect on others.

Of course, workers do ultimately share an economic interest, that of control over their own labour power, but there are important ideological political and social factors which serve to construct divisions within the different class relationships and thereby also differentiate the level of economic exploitation. In addition, as in the case of arguments explored in the chapter on "Race" and Class, there are no

inherent laws of motion within capitalism which ensure specific forms of political action or expression are embodied in trade union organisations.

Thus a trade union can operate in both a positive and negative way by any single action. For example, given that unions are involved in the bargaining for job definitions, and that the labour market in totality has some inter-connection, then it will follow that the establishing of a job definition by one group of workers which enhances their bargaining strengths may well affect adversely other groups who are excluded. This argument is expanded in much greater detail in the case study. Of course some Marxists (c.f. Nichols 1980⁶) would argue that it is capital's invention to divide power of labour and thereby reduce conflict. But this is not true in all cases and newspaper compositors serve as a good example. The bargaining strength of newspaper chapels has resulted in a tight control by the workers themselves over the access to their trade. This power has been a major element of conflict in the newspaper world and many newspaper owners, following Murdoch's success, would be pleased to eliminate it. The level of control that compositors have been able to exercise over their labour power has resulted in the ability to dictate areas of recruitment, with the consequence that entrance by women and blacks has been restricted, as they are seen as a dilution of the skilled workers' trade.⁷ Such actions are a product, to some degree, of ideological prejudices which originate from the ideological structure of the wider society. But such discrimination is not always the product of ideological intention and may well be the product of bargaining practices in the labour market, as stated earlier.

Having very briefly stated my hypothesis, I would like now to explain why trade unions cannot be examined as a unified body. It will therefore be necessary first to examine more closely existing theories of trade unions, secondly to trace trade union development, and finally to evaluate the existing trade union structure.

Some Traditional Theories of Trade Unions

Probably the most prominent traditional writers on trade unions are Lenin, Michels and Trotsky and all share the common assumption that trade unions are fundamentally limited in terms of realising the full potentiality of the proletariat.

Lenin in particular views unions as obstructive to revolutionary change. For Lenin, trade unions generated a "trade union consciousness", which in essence accepted the rationale of capitalism, in as much as they legitimised the sale of labour power as a commodity. Trade unions could therefore be integrated into capitalism as long as capitalism had the available margin necessary to allow the minimum concessions acceptable to organised workers. In Lenin's view if revolution were to take place in a relatively affluent capitalism, it would be necessary to develop a "social democratic consciousness", and this in some ways would require the commitment of part of the middle class intelligentsia to revolutionary politics. The basis of Lenin's argument is that it is necessary to preconstruct a theory before actions can take place, and therefore the main inadequacy of trade unions is their ideological make up which accepts the sale of labour power, a major component of capitalist relations.

Michels, on the other hand, viewed the actual organisation of unions as the formation of an oligarchical institution, which, in his opinion, constituted a contradiction with the rationale for union existence, collective representation. The development of national union organisation led to the establishing of full time union officials who had a monopoly over information and expertise. These union officials' oligarchic control was reinforced by a mass apathy, based in the main on the acceptance of the principle that those paid for the job knew best.

For Michels, oligarchy was directly related to conservatism, and this then meant that the major political and ideological input to the unions was of a reactive nature. Both Lenin and Michels examine indirectly the unintentional aspects of trade union

behaviour, but both assume that such behaviour has had a unilateral effect upon its members.

Trotsky was more concerned to establish a theoretical analysis which highlighted the deliberate incorporation of unions into capitalism. A major element of his theory was based on the belief that union leaders, having acquired authority over their members, used this authority to control workers in the long term interest of capitalism. Incorporation, in Trotsky's thesis, was a conscious strategy employed by monopoly capitalism in a situation where competition was reduced to a level in which the progressive needs of trade unionism could not be met. In such a situation, Trotsky suggested, the trade union leadership turned to the state for support, "a natural response given the ideological and social position typical of union leaders."

The state, of course, within Trotsky's analysis, operated as a direct correspondent to the needs of the employing class. Trotsky later went further to say that incorporation took place also at shop floor level where collective bargaining became more formalised in an attempt, by employers, to reduce anarchic tendencies of workers and recruit shop stewards as agents of social control.

Trotsky's analysis is based on four major assumptions; 1) the role of the leadership; 2) the role of the state; 3) the role of shop floor representatives; 4) membership response. Given that Trotsky wrote in the historical context of the 1920s, his analysis would seem to have some empirical credibility. Yet, since the late 1920s, examples such as Pilkington's unofficial strike in 1970 and the rank and file movements in the 1960s, demonstrate the power of shop floor representation. It would appear therefore that Trotsky's analysis was by no means universal, or for all times.

The role of trade union leadership in the inter-war period does appear to have been a mediation between the state and union collective issues. Certainly the list

of trade union leaders knighted - Lord Carton (AEU), Sir Sidney Green (NUR) and Lord Cooper (G.M.W.U.), supports the belief that their ideological and political perspectives were based on an acceptance of capitalist survival. Yet these people may well be representative of an era now past, when mass unions were a new phenomenon and the rank and file still unpractised in democratic forms of representation. The initiative in the 1960s of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon to shift power back to shop floor activity in their respective unions, T.G.W.U. and A.U.E.W., demonstrates that the role of leadership is not determined, in all instances, by a state operating solely in the interests of the "ruling class". Further, given that the role of trade union leaders is defined, it cannot be assumed that they operate in a political vacuum, somehow able to dupe all their members all of the time; they have to supply some of the goods some of the time.

The whole question of the role of the state is one which divides marxist thinkers and involves a complexity of issues. E.P. Thompson's position in "Poverty of Theory" would seem to produce one of the more tenable arguments. He suggests that various pressure groups, such as trade unions, have by struggle made significant inroads into state machinery and have, as a consequence, won important civil liberties. These liberties are not simply ploys of a unified ruling class and are important concessions which should be actively defended.⁸ Also as Culter et al. in "Marx's Capital and Capitalism Today" suggest it is no longer relevant to talk of a unified ruling class.⁹ Major enterprises are no longer owned by a minority of individuals, and even trade unions, like the G.M.W.U., hold considerable share holdings (G.M.W.U. 1971 - 71% total investment in joint stock companies).

Thus capitalism has transcended the level of individual intention and is divided by more than two polarised classes. The issue of shop floor representation and membership response can be dealt with as one. They assume that both groups are incorporated into the formal framework of collective bargaining which is endorsed by both the official union and the employers. The protracted strikes at

at Ford Halewood in the 1960s and Pilkington St. Helens in 1970 and the British Airways catering workers' own strike in 1976, all unofficial disputes, would refute such assumptions and while not constituting a major threat to capitalism as a whole, demonstrate that workers will, in certain instances, make assessments and actions based on their own evaluation of the situation, regardless of the ideological pressure imposed upon them by both official union or the agents of the employing class.

Finally I would like to turn to evaluate the work of Lenin and Michels. I have left these writers till last as both their work, to some degree, examines the unintentional consequences of trade unions, and it is this area which needs to be pursued further.

As stated earlier Lenin viewed "trade union consciousness" as the major unintentional obstruction to the achievement of a socialist society. For Lenin it was the acceptance, by trade unions, of the sale of labour power as a commodity which imbued them with a bourgeois ideology. There are two main objections to this view: 1) it concentrates on the economic functions of unions, while ignoring the importance of issues of control and power. Unions are involved at all levels in an attempt to take part in the social and political formations of the work process, and this does of course fundamentally challenge the right of employers to manage. 2) It assumes that ideology is a direct correspondent of practice. Even given that it was, it would be difficult to locate a coherent trade union ideology. No established laws exist which can be described as a unified body of thought in relation to trade union practices.

The existing ideological laws are rather ambiguous and disjointed, probably due to the nature of their formation. As stated earlier, given that trade unions do not operate for a unified class interest, at any given time many of their actions will have unintentional consequences for other interest groups, due in the main to the complex nature and development of the labour market.

Thus certain actions will have consequences regardless of their ideological intention. This is not to argue that ideology is not important, only that it represents half the picture and that in addition practices and mechanisms have to be evaluated and understood in order that their real effects be monitored. This issue is discussed again in the case study in relation to racism and racist practice.

Michels, on the other hand, is concerned with the unintentional consequences of trade unions which result from its organisational structure. His stereotype union is based on a monolithic model, in which power is strongly entrenched in the official leadership. Such a model tends to be over deterministic and has been disproved historically by the growing shift towards shop floor power since 1930. Even given the technical competence and control of information which trade union leaders possess, there are still basic requirements which a trade union must provide, and in the main, those requirements are determined considerably by the membership's needs. Finally Michels equates collective will (democracy) with collective interest, a point surely not defended by Marxists, particularly given the number of reactionary democratic governments elected.

The major criticism of all these writers, Lenin to a lesser degree, lies in their approach to unions as a unified body, whose actions have affected workers in a holistic fashion. In order to justify this criticism we need to make some historical analysis of unions in terms of their own development. However before that it is necessary to first consider the theoretical influence of pluralism and its relevance to this thesis.

Introduction to Pluralism

Norman Lamont, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, declared in Parliament on the 16th July 1992 that "corporatism had died". The statement came as no surprise, given that this senior conservative Minister was part of a government that had consistently legislated for three terms of office, since 1979, to minimise the level of consultation with and power of British trade unions.

The vision of optimism for the role of trade unions that surrounded the publication of the Donovan Report of 1968 was one not merely espoused by pluralist thinkers. The 1970s had seemed to offer the possibility for power sharing in industry and the realisation of a tri-partite structure of consultation and co-operation in industrial decisions. There was sufficient statement of intention for corporatism by some industrialists, trade unions and government to suggest that such a dream had a chance of becoming a reality. However after a passing of two decades since the Donovan report that dream of optimism seems very distant. The generally acknowledged defeats of the miners in the 1980s, the exclusion of trade union representation from nearly all forms of government decision making, are all clear indicators that Norman Lamont's works were not just political rhetoric.

To what extent corporatism could ever be a reality is still an issue of debate and one that this thesis would want to challenge. The main advocates of corporatism have tended to be, and continue to be, pluralists. Certainly the industrial struggles of the catering workers, particularly in bureaucratic structures and issues related to job evaluation, could be sited as an example or justification for pluralist's analysis. Such analysis though often fails to emphasise the significance of specific arenas of struggle, the complexity of conflict that often precipitates against stability and the existence of covert forms of power. These criticisms should not be taken as a support for a traditional Marxist critique of pluralism. As such that perspective itself is heavily criticised throughout this chapter.

Pluralism still remains a major perspective of trade union analysis regardless of the demise of the language of corporatism in industrial discussion. However it has been far more problematic in its application to the analysis of "race". The dominant use of pluralism in the sociology of "race" has focused on the negative/conflict features of pluralistic social forces. The colonial pluralistic models of Smith and Van Berg are a good example of this. Equally the use of pluralism in the work of Rex et.al. also refers to pluralism in a negative way (see previous discussion related to "race" and class).

The use of pluralism in a positive way in the sociology of "race" is mainly limited to the concept of multi-cultural education. Multi-cultural education advocated the recognition of cultural diversity in the classroom as a positive's element in all children's educational development. The onslaught of criticisms levelled at multi-cultural education at the end of the 1980s focused upon its inability to analyse power and conflict in the school and the wider society clearly and to fail to fully recognise that diverse cultural formations often operate in situations of unequal power relations, such as in colonial and imperialistic states (Brant, Sarup). In essence such models tend to be static and one dimensional. Its views of culture are rather like an "inherited overcoat" that changes little as it is passed from one generation to the next. It will be argued in this section that these criticisms, and others, can equally be applied to the use of pluralism in its analysis of trade unions. In order to justify these criticisms it is first necessary to outline the pluralist perspective in some detail.

Pluralism and trade unions

It would be wrong to equate pluralism with corporatism. Its forms of analysis are far more wide ranging and complex than this one single issue. In fact pluralism itself is highly pluralistic. Its link to corporatism here is an attempt to provide a clear practical example of its application in mainstream industrial relations.

Pluralist analysis focuses around the issues of power and interest and its early development was often constructed as a direct critique of classical theories of power. Classical theories of power, in the main, were rooted in dichotomous models, with elite and Marxist theories being the most obvious. While both classical models are politically opposed they share some common views of the structure of power in capitalism. Both identify an unbalanced dualistic model of power with the disproportion element of power in the hands of the "elite" or "ruling class". For classical elitism this process is inevitable while for Marxism it is a product of class relations and therefore dependent on the specific nature of the

"mode of production". Pluralists clearly view the structure and organisation of power as far more fragmented and the product of many competing interest groups.

The early use of pluralism in the analysis of power is clearly associated with the work of Dahl. His work in America in the late 1950s to the early 1970s is a good example of this construction of a model in opposition to the classical perspectives. A major source of support for his writings was his research of city political power. In his book, "**Who Governs?**" (1961), he studied New Haven and concluded that the existence of competing interest groups operates to prohibit autocratic structures of power. Newton identified the key features of this model as follows:-

- (1) *Modern America is an inclusive pluralist system.*
- (2) *The major actors are the leaders of a wide variety of interest groups which have political resources available to them.*
- (3) *The resources are not equally distributed but nor are the inequalities cumulative in the structure of the system.*
- (4) *Most people exercise power through voting.*
- (5) *The system of leaders and decision makers is a relatively open process.*
- (6) *While each interest group may be oligarchical, the end result is pluralist, because they are competitive, even if internally oligarchic, interest groups.*

- (7) *A workable democracy is the outcome, in which compromises between competitive groups produce some general distribution of satisfaction.*¹⁰

Features of this model are apparent in the various pluralist models developed in Britain to analyse trade unions. To suggest that these developments are in totality a theoretical reflection of Dahl's work would be misleading and an injustice to British writers. Many such writers have done considerable research in order to attempt to identify the specific nature of trade union power and collective bargaining processes in Britain. However the majority of this work, similar to Dahl's, focuses on the intentional political actions of interest groups, whether they be formal or informal practices of power, and measures their success in terms of overt forms of political power.

Developments of pluralist analysis applied to trade unions in the United States and Britain have adopted very different perspectives of trade union action. Hyman identifies these differences as clearly rooted in the different expectations that many such inter-continental writers have for the role of trade unions. He suggests that the American model has tended to be more conservative and emphasised the significance of inter group competition between unions, while British writers have extended their analysis to union power to a framework that includes the state and employers. Implicit in many of these writings is an endorsement for the worth of strong trade unions within the tri-partite structure of industrial relations.¹¹ Such an endorsement is clearly a temptation for any writer who wishes to defend or promote trade union action. Nevertheless while such endorsements often recognise the complexity of interest and power that operate between unions employers and state; they do tend to ignore the internal complexity of interest and power within and between trade unions, which often result in different groups of workers benefiting at the expense of others, whether this be intentional or unintentional. Black and women workers are two obvious examples of this. Again

this is a criticism levelled at many traditional Marxists approaches mentioned in this chapter.

The work of Clegg, Fox and Flanders

Fundamental to all forms of British pluralism was an acceptance of the necessity to encourage and maintain strong tri-partite industrial relations between trade unions, employers and the state.¹²

The work of Clegg has been paramount in this assertion. Poole identifies six clear assumptions in his work, they are; firstly, the challenge to the political doctrine of sovereignty; secondly, that industrial relations involves a process of compromise and concession; thirdly, that essential to the free operation of interest groups and the check to authoritarian power was the existence of a clear and coherent body of rules, fourthly, the establishment of a "moral imperative" based upon compromise rather than rigid adherence to vested interest or aims of specific groups; fifthly, little reference to the issue of equality of power; and finally sixthly, the link between economic prosperity and the possible constraints and benefits to be gained by the various industrial partners. Implicit in all of this is a belief in conflict as a mechanism for ensuring order, stability and a check to self directed or exploitative creed. However even Clegg himself has in recent years conceded that pluralism may well need to think again about a range of assumptions, particular the need to address unequal power relations in industry.

Central to Clegg's work is the importance of the oppositional role of trade unions as a mechanism for ensuring industrial stability and order. A main feature of oppositional action was compromise. The establishment of clear and coherent rules thereby assisted such compromise and allow for a wide variance of interests and opinions to be given expression within a legitimate framework. Thus for Clegg formal collective bargaining was an essential feature of industrial democracy. Much of Clegg's best work relates to the comparative in-depth analysis of the structure and various levels of collective bargaining in different contexts.¹³

The emphasis by Clegg on the oppositional role of trade unions is problematic in that it tends to limit their action to either a unified and coherent whole, or fails to recognise their potential as instigators of discrimination, as in the case of the catering workers. Of course often groups of trade unionists or sections of unions are involved in oppositional practices but Clegg's model has a tendency to reduce power and conflict to a tri-partite model. In essence by focusing on rules and oppositional roles Clegg has understated the potential of trade unions, sections of trade unions and groups of workers to instigate forms of political and economic action. For while his work, in the main, acts as a prescription for pluralist expression, it does so very often based upon a prescription of the roles of partners involved. As Poole points out much of Clegg's argument has been to advocate a pluralist state of being in industrial relations.¹⁴ While we remain indebted to him for our understanding of collective bargaining, which has an obvious application in the understanding of the formal process of job evaluation undertaken by the catering workers, Clegg's general analysis provides little to assist us in an understanding of the struggles undertaken by the catering workers against their own union. Further issues of the dynamic nature of culture, intentional Vs unintentional action and the concept of arenas of struggle are ones clearly not given priority by Clegg and ones that are central to this thesis.

The work of Flanders elevates the role of collective bargaining over that of individual economic pursuits. His critique of the Webbs' was based mainly on maintaining this distinction of the social and political from the economic. For Flanders job regulation, and collective bargaining in general, had important political and social consequences that he viewed, of more significance than wider political forces. There is much to admire in this voluntaristic model. Not only is it possible to make sense of anti-racist struggles by workers, but it is also possible to relate such struggles to formal procedures, such as job evaluation. However Flanders' preoccupation with the formal and procedural issues once again makes pluralist analysis problematic in understanding significance of informal struggle and particularly its link/relationship to formal practices.

Further his commitment to collective bargaining as a central vehicle for democracy makes any argument of unions being involved in instigating discriminatory practices difficult. This elevation of the political "mission" of trade unions was one that led Flanders to be cautious of state intervention in industrial relations, a concern well founded in light of the past two decades of government intervention.¹⁵ However Flanders' optimism of the role of collective bargaining may not be totally consistent with a voluntaristic model of analysis. The utilisation of arenas' struggles does provide a more appropriate framework for making sense of the wide range of interests and struggles undertaken by specific groups of workers, the official trade union and management at British Airways from the late 1950s.

Trade Union Historical Development

From the very beginning of factory production there were varying forms of organised opposition to owners of production by those who actually produced, both of a militant and a sober nature. Even before that farm workers throughout history had resisted changes that brought hardship and further insecurity to their lives, (particularly in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe), what Hobsbawm (1964) has called "collective bargaining by riot".

Yet prior to the mid 1820s repeal of the "Combinations Act", there had been more sober labour defenders than those who wrecked machinery. The friendly societies, based on particular trades and crafts, were the most obvious forerunners to trade unions. Many of these friendly societies, particularly those of highly skilled workers, were not so concerned with direct confrontation of masters, but rather with maintaining their privileged position in the economic pecking order. Thus at the very formation of trade unions in their legitimate form, there existed a whole spectrum of labouring classes with different aims and aspirations.

As Tony Lane states in "The Union Makes Us Strong".

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period since unparalleled for the sheer variety of working class organisations and political and economic practices. Movements rose and fell with astonishing rapidity; but only trade unionism in certain of its forms endured. (p.37)

The endurance of trade unions throughout this period, and up until today, is due in the main, to the effectiveness of its defensive actions. The period of 1800 to 1850 was a half century of dynamic change, one in which historians such as Hobsbawn(1969) and Thompson(1968) viewed the revolutionising of one form of production into another, "post feudalism" into "capitalism". One need only read Cole and Postgate's "Common People", to begin to understand those forces operating on people, who had only their labour power to sell.

So in a period when people were searching for some defence against a changing order and for some means by which all these changes could be understood, trade unionism survived where numerous other organisations, such as Chartism, had failed. The reason was not its ideological construction, as many of the failed organisations probably had a more coherent analysis of the given situation, but simply because it worked. It was located at the very point at which exploitation took place, the work place, and for this reason appealed to a wide range of workers from varying ideological backgrounds. This is not to argue that trade union origin was void of ideology, since it was in fact subjected to a whole range of varying ideological inputs, only that ideology was not the factor which determined its survival. It was rather the effectiveness of its actions and its ability to impose sanctions over the productive processes. Its ideological formation historically has never been consistent or unified and while its formal rhetoric may espouse ideals of "solidarity" and "brotherhood", (the latter and obvious example of the male chauvinistic nature of trade unionism), it has never developed a

theoretical framework for either realising these ideals or understanding the complexity of obstruction which precipitates against them.

What has developed over the years is an accumulation of vague principles based loosely on a common class position. In many instances this vague rhetoric has served to cloud issues rather than to understand them more clearly: particularly given the growing complexity of the labour market, which since the early 1940s has had a large expansion in female labour, and since the late 1950s has had a large input of black workers.

Both these groups of workers have faced problems of a discriminatory nature, problems which trade unions have been slow to confront, due mainly to their lack of knowledge and inability to analyse the specific constituents of the respective discriminations. Where action has taken place, it has been as a rule through direct pressure by the workers themselves, and often, as in the case of Imperial Typewriters received obstruction, official and unofficial from sections of the unions involved.

It seems to be the general inability of trade unions to come to terms with the changing nature of the labour market, and the problems this causes, which has forced groups like black workers to form their own organisations within the framework of existing unions. One possible reason for this inability could be the fact that the trade union movement is not a single movement. It has not the organisation or structure to co-ordinate information and respond with the necessary action to eliminate the kinds of discrimination that women and black people suffer in the labour market.

Further, the lack of co-ordination may possibly, in certain instances, be the determinant of that discrimination and the indirect consequence of some other group of workers who have analysed their own actions in terms of their own interest. This is not to say that they are operating in a purely sectional fashion;

many workers have problems collecting information on their own work place bargaining, let alone analysing the effects upon others.

The inability to collect and distribute information must in some way lie in a deficiency in the organisational structure and to a lesser degree the way in which workers view the functions of unions. Considerable research has indicated that the majority of trade unionists do have an instrumental approach to trade unionism (c.f. Lane 1974, Goldthorpe et al. 1969). Also the number of individual trade unions operating in Britain precipitates against the gathering and analysing of information in relation to the labour market.¹⁶ Neither of these two latter factors in themselves amounts to an insuperable problem.

There is one other factor which has received little attention in terms of sociological analysis and this is the ideological input into trade unions by white collar and women workers. In terms of union membership women and white collar workers have been the fastest expanding groups in the ranks of trade unions in recent years. This trend has been attributed to, and has been seen by some (Giddens 1973) as a cause of, the proletarianisation of the middle class, more so in the case of white collar workers than women in general. Very little attention has been given to what effect these phenomena have had on the unions. It would need a considerable amount of empirical research even to start to understand such phenomena, but it seems safe enough to say that the social input has not been one way and while proletarianisation may well have taken place, it is certain that the ideological nature of trade unions themselves will have been affected by the input of two groups with very distinctive world views.

The actual historical development of trade unions has, in many respects, been greatly determined by the nature of the labour market and it is almost inevitable then that a response to changes in its nature will be retrospective, but what seems crucial is the delay between response and in-depth of analysis of these changes. Both these factors are not determined by the labour market and are forces which

trade unions have power and control over. Successful enterprises are actively aware of the changing nature of the commodity market and it is for this reason that most large companies have developed some form of market research. Trade unions on the other hand tend only react to the labour market in separate isolated units whose experiences are never transmitted and analysed beyond the very limited domain of their own work place, however some attempt has been made with low paid workers.

Thus it can be argued in this section that trade unions from their origin have been influenced by a complex variety of forces and ideologies covering a whole range of political beliefs from reformism to revolutionary aspirations. Further, the labour market itself constitutes a major factor in determining the nature of the work force (trade union membership). The labour market is also in a constant state of change, especially in capitalism where market forces have a greater impact, and it therefore follows both the nature of the labour force and the arena in which struggles are fought are themselves subjects of on-going formations.

Finally, it needs to be stated in relation to the historical development of trade unions, that from their origin until the 1950s they were very autocratic organisations. Tony Lane, in "Industrial Strategy and Trade Union Politics", suggests that one possible reason for this was the period in which trade unions were formed (1800-1850). Within this period a very limited concept of democracy existed where "parliamentary democracy based on a universal adult suffrage was an innovation" (page 58). The centralist nature of trade unions was to remain a consistent feature until the 1950s and attempts by grass roots organisations, like the Minority Movement in the 1920s, were relatively easily defeated by the centralised power structure of union organisation. After the 1950s the centralised bureaucratic nature of trade unions was to remain, but a considerable shift of power back to shop floor level was to take place. This was due partly to the political climate of the 1950s and 1960s when so called liberal democracy was meant to prevail, and the pressure from rank and file members for more power in

a period of relative affluence, linked also to the initiative of individual trade union leaders, such as Jack Jones, tilted the balance of power in favour of shop floor representation.

Union Organisational Structures

Obviously the organisational structure of any institution plays an important part in the way that institutions operate and it is for this reason that this topic has been left till last. It has been decided to concentrate on the organisational structure of one union, the Transport & General Workers Union. The reason for this is not that it is typical, because although it may hold many common features with other unions, all unions have distinct features which have important consequences. Rather, it is the union with probably the strongest lay representation. So as a model it probably constitutes the most positive of all unions in terms of grass roots involvement. It is also the catering workers' own union.

Its basic formal structure is four tier, that of branch level, district committee, regional committee and general executive council. At each level lay members constitute the majority membership and are involved in the majority of policy making. The official, full-time union organisation, in theory, is meant to operate as the mechanism for the co-ordination of these policies, in practice this is not always the case, because of to their control of information.

Even given the degree though to which lay representatives are involved in policy making, in terms of everyday organisational interaction, this union like most others, can be divided into two basic groups: 1) the work place bargaining units; 2) the centralised bureaucratic official organisation of the union. So what exists in many respects is two sets of machinery within the one organisation; 1) the national negotiating machinery which deals with labour power in the abstract; and 2) the localised trade union which concerns itself mainly with localised issues and never examines or questions the interrelation of specific plant bargaining or job specific issues in any more than a cosmetic or generalised way.

This polarisation between national level issues of generalisation and local level issues of particularisation leaves the middle ground empty. There does not appear to exist a unit within the organisation which can monitor the various consequences of union action at local or national level. Such a unit would have to collect and distribute information to the various bargaining units that do exist, to ensure that its presence did not constitute the development of an autonomous power group.

Existing research departments in unions could well serve this function. At present they are under resourced and are at the disposal of union officials only. Further, their area of concern is almost totally orientated towards enterprise analysis and very little self analysis is undertaken.

The consequence, of such an organisational deficiency is the existence of numerous organisational units operating in isolation within the framework of one. The existence of such a unit would not in itself produce a unified interest among workers, but what it would do is provide a clearer understanding of the problems involved and highlight areas in which political issues concerning trade unions, such as racial justice, could be pursued.

It has been argued then that trade unions and trade unionism are not a unified body representing a unified class interest. The major reasons are as follows; 1) its formation is not unified; 2) there does not exist a unified and coherent ideology of trade unionism; 3) organisational structure is not unified; 4) while there may exist an ultimate objective economic interest of workers, there are important socially constructed divisions which in some cases are determinants in themselves, such as "race" and gender.

The tendency on the left of socialist politics has been either to be critical of unions as a whole because of the ideological reasons given in the argument of Lenin and Trotsky, or to defend trade unions' actions whatever as long as they are performed under the banner of trade unionism, "all strikes are strikes against capital". Both

tendencies do trade unions an injustice; they ignore the full potentiality of a movement which has survived, primarily because it is effective. It has been involved in the social formation of the work place and for this reason has the capacity of operating against, as well as for, the interest of various workers. It is this very capacity to intervene in social formation which implies a greater potential than has yet been realised. The events of the case study support this and demonstrate that unions themselves are arenas of struggle for the realisation of political and economic objectives. It is necessary to examine the wider trends in post war trade union history and specifically that history in relation to black workers.

Section 2

General Trends in Post-war Trade Unionism

This section is concerned to relate the historical development of trade union organisation in British Airways catering to trends within the wider trade union movement in the same period as the case study. It is important to distinguish those trends that were specific to the internal collective forces related to trade unionism in British Airways, from those that were simply a product of general trends within the wider industrial relations environment.

It will become apparent that many of the events that occurred in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s in British Airways catering were in fact influenced by wider events, but there are also a number of features of this struggle which do not totally conform to general trends, and would seem to be a product of the specific form of actions taken at Heathrow. These will be discussed in more depth later in the thesis. Firstly, an examination of trade unions in general through this period will be made; then an outline of some of the major features and events relating to black workers and trade unions.

The 1960s: "Optimism of will".

It is difficult through the gloom and pessimism related to predictions of trade union future in the 1980s to remember periods of optimism. While trade union fortunes in the 1960s were extremely mixed the general sense of optimism expressed in much of the research of the day indicated, at an academic level at least, a belief in a significant future for trade unions in corporate politics. (Clegg 1970, Flanders 1970, Fox 1973).

The early 1960s saw the beginning of both a massive increase in trade union membership and a change in its general profile. The arrival of a substantial number of migrant labourers, the increased bureaucratization of clerical workers, the expansion of public ownership and the further development and expansion of

new technology in production all ensured that the character of trade union membership was changed.

This was clearly reflected in the world of aviation and the various state owned airlines which came to make up British Airways in 1972 (B.O.A.C., B.E.A., Cambrian Airways, Northeast), where all these trends, to varying degrees, had an impact. The public sector unions were particularly susceptible to these trends given the post-war political commitment to the expansion of the welfare state and public ownership.

From the 1950s, right into the early 1970s there was a relatively consistent consensus by governments to adopt Keynesian economics with its belief in demand management. The pursuit of policies based on a balanced mixed economy, the drive for full employment, and the expansion of the welfare state, simultaneously ensured the increase of the state workforce and an economic and political environment in which a greater role for trade union involvement was likely. By the mid 1970s a third of the national workforce was in the public sector, and the general shift of employment was away from manual occupations towards non-manual.¹⁷

The 1960s act as an important watershed in the development of trade union involvement in British industrial relations. This was to strengthen the hand of official union power, increase the importance of the role of the T.U.C., and bring about an expansion in the formal negotiating machinery at national level, particularly between unions and the state (c.f. Hyman 1983 pp. 54-55).¹⁸ Yet even within this period there was pressure for greater shop floor representation (Hyman p.42).

Throughout the 1960s a combination of factors influenced a shift towards shop floor representation in a number of unions. While the degree of trade union democracy in 1960/70 remains a matter for debate mainly between the optimists

(Clegg 1970, 1975, Flanders 1970) and pessimists (Anderson 1977, Clarke/Clements 1977),¹⁹ there is a general agreement among writers in this area that the trend was towards greater shop floor involvement in decision making. Certainly within state airlines in Britain one can see a number of forces operating, that were also being expressed in wider trends towards shop floor representation in industrial management, increased trade union membership, increased complexity of trade groups, the introduction of new technology, the changing work conditions and practices, and the drive for new markets. These changes all created the conditions for some form of political will in both managers and trade union bosses to establish better machinery for achieving agreement between the workforce and employers.

This process was by no means unilateral, and a number of factors operated within industry, and airlines in particular, to cause differential access to bargaining power. In the case of British Airways those groups which were the most successful, such as ramp workers, tended to be those trade groups who had gained the strongest bargaining position to begin with. Vulnerable groups, like catering workers, had a much longer and harder struggle to achieve effective trade union representation within the new consultative machinery that was developing from the end of the 1960s onwards. But this is dealt with in much more detail later.

The early 1960s also sees major changes in the structure and location of trade union organisation. As Hyman (1983) points out, prior to the 1960s union structure differed little from that of the 1900s. Unions were, he states,

dominated by a handful of general, ex-craft and single industry organisations composed overwhelmingly of male manual workers in staple sectors of nineteenth century British Capitalism (pp.35-6p)²⁰

From the 1950s onwards (within many unions) there was immense pressure from the shop floor to obtain immediate sectional interests, while the main thrust from the official trade union organisations was to establish and consolidate more formal agreements and machinery for consultation with employers and the state (Lane p.168). Thus throughout the late 1950s and 1960s a number of different trends were developing which were directly influenced by: a) the expansion of economy; b) the growth in trade union membership; c) political commitment to Keynesian economics; d) the extension of the welfare state and public ownership; e) the introduction of new technology and work practices; and f) the development of a more complex and diverse labour market.

National Airlines, in many ways, all expressed the kinds of structural complexities which were to become more common in the late 1960s and 1970s. One of the major features was a departure from the domination of the traditional white male manual character of trade unions. The 1960s were to be a period in which many black and women trade unionists were to find themselves in union structures dominated by white males. What seems evident in this period is the number of occasions that both women and black workers needed to consolidate their own position in order to confront union officials who had no understanding and very often, it appears, very little sympathy for their grievances. Almost all the trade union officers interviewed blamed the catering workers' lack of knowledge of, or expertise in the formal channels of negotiations for their underrepresentation. Cockburn's research (1983) is one of many that highlights the patriarchal nature of both the informal and formal frameworks of trade unions; today white male trade union officials (the majority) may well be a little more careful about their terminology but their overall tone, language and actions still very often ensure that women and black people feel uneasy in the world of trade unions.

It is very easy though to be drawn into the assumption that ideology or attitude were/are the only, or main forces operating to ensure the ghettoisation of women and blacks in trade unions and the labour market. This is not to diminish the

importance of political will, but as so often has been the case trade union political aspirations are more likely to be related to experience and realisation of bargaining strengths than a commitment to an abstract political ideology. The experience of British Airways catering workers in the 1960s was of isolation both in the labour market and within trade union frameworks and racism, both at an institutional and informal level, legitimised that isolation. To suggest that such exploitation would be abolished by diminishing racism alone would be naive and many of the black workers in the 1960s realised this through their own analysis of the situation. As one shop steward put it:

I am not bothered about them liking me just giving me equal pay and conditions.

Equally, to ignore the influence of racism on these processes would deny the importance of "race" and racism as a dynamic in the labour market.

What seems clearly demonstrated within the political formation of trade unions in the 1960s was the complexity of forces which influenced the development of racism within this period.

As Cohen points out:-

To argue that racism is an inherent aspect of European society, or an innate disposition of certain groups within it, is not only to ignore other cases (for example, the role of racism in the rise of Japanese fascism), but also fail to see that even in its most entrenched and institutionalised forms within, say, Britain, it is continually changing, being challenged, interrupted and reconstructed. To deny racism's history is to surrender to a kind of fatalism. (p.25)²¹

To assume that racism is simply a product of one class origin, that of the "ruling class", is to reduce all its aspects to the demands of capitalism. It is apparent in the 1960s that groups of workers did very often use racism for their own protective convenience, that their actions and involvement in labour market formation made them part architects in the construction of modern racism.

Also apparent is the lack of attention, within research of the day, paid to the impact of black workers on trade union activity. It is only within recent years, that commentators, such as Ramdin (1987) and Fryer (1984), are rediscovering black history within the labour movement in this period.

What occupies much of the literature on trade union organisation and action, are issues such as: a) the changing nature of trade union membership; b) the changing attitude of trade unionists to trade union action; c) the divisions between the national leadership of trade unions and the rank and file; d) the shift of political consensus of unions to the left (an issue which is highly problematic); e) a drive for greater democratic accountability; and f) the increase in unofficial disputes.

Nearly all research acknowledges the increased diversity and fragmentation of unions within this period. The increased complexity of the labour market was inevitably to lead to an intensification of the inherent tendencies of trade unions towards sectionalism. It is the significance of this process which divided authors. Writers like Beynon (1973) and Lane (1974) argued that such forces were influential in creating greater shop floor militancy, while writers like Clegg (1970) and Flanders (1970) used it as an indication for the justification of more formal channels of negotiation, which led up to the Donovan Commission.

The existence of the first interpretation, i.e. shop floor militancy, in state airlines in the 1960s, should not exclude the development of the second type of analysis, i.e. the extension of more formalised channels of collective bargaining. This was not purely an instrumental response by management to regain control (c.f.

Flanders).²² This process was not necessarily instigated purely to institutionalise conflict (Edwards 1979). The beginnings of greater industrial democracy within the airlines in the late 1960s, might well have been in the interests of management in order to achieve greater consensus and order for the introduction of new practices. But also the demand was beginning to come from the shop floor, not just for improved economic gains, but for a greater say in the management of their unions and places of work. In particular, the extreme forms of disadvantage and exploitation suffered by the catering workers were likely to lead to the type of confrontation related to issues of representation and control. For them expression of grievance meant finding access into trade union and management negotiation structures which previously had been predominantly hostile, or even impenetrable. The link between power and knowledge was one that many shop stewards had made and they were fully aware of the importance of information in order to maximise their bargaining position.

The 1950s and 1960s, in general, was a period of increased rank and file militancy, with a notable increase in unofficial strikes (Lane p.164),²³ and this must have played an important role in the struggles that took place throughout the 1960s, both within union organisation and in collective bargaining within the workplace. Those groups with the strongest bargaining power were very often the ones who pursued greater involvement in decision making.

Significant consultation at Heathrow with many trade groups took place almost ten years earlier than those in the trade groups in the provinces, and this was not just due to geographical location. Many of the struggles undertaken by catering workers themselves had as much to do with representation as with parity. For this group of workers the problem of political expression was acute in this period and one which was shared nationally by many black workers.

Shop floor militancy was often not only tainted with a good deal of machismo but also much racism. This was the age of trade union grass root support for Enoch

Powell. Shop stewards and union officials at Heathrow admitted that workers in key areas, such as transport, were openly resistant to the employment of black workers.²⁴

The problem of political expression for black catering workers had less to do with foreign tongues and more to do with the language and power of racism. In addition much of the institutionalised forms of language within the union made it very difficult for both women and black people to give expression to their grievances. Thus both their structural position within the labour market (mainly at the bottom), and the mechanisms of representation (mainly trade union representation), hindered any significant changes in their general patterns of disadvantage. For women and black workers, in general, their initial struggles were often with their own unions' inertia, insensitivity to their cause, or the unions' inability to understand their problems - before going on to challenge employers' exploitative practices.

For trade unions, the 1960s can also be viewed as an important period of transition in terms of members' attitudes to action. (Cronin (1979) in particular identifies a departure from a defensive approach to trade union action, based mainly on resistance to unemployment, to that of a more assertive approach, based mainly on demands to increase wages and control. He states:-

of the two post war strike waves, therefore, that of 1957-62 belongs ideologically and in terms of union strategy to the interwar experience, whilst that of 1968-72 reflects more contemporary conditions (p.138)²⁵

The 1960s certainly saw the development of shop floor assertiveness and an increase in organisational networks between shop stewards, which in turn applied additional pressure on many unions to shift their politics to the left. The appointment of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon was an indicator of this trend and

were a marked departure from the previous right wing leadership of both the Transport and General Workers Union and the Electrical Trades Union in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Cronin attributes this shift in attitudes to: a) the labour victory of 1945; b) increased prosperity; c) a reduction of unemployment; and finally, d) "a new set of attitudes towards society and towards social inequality which lay behind the new militancy of 1968-72" (p.142).²⁶

Cronin's last factor might well be idealised in the sense that this statement implies a degree of collective altruism in the militancy of 1968-72. Certainly black workers, women workers and low paid workers, in general, were not high on the list of collective altruistic action by other workers in this period. As Ramdin (1987) points out the ghettoisation of black workers was very often a direct result of:-

the entrenched positions adopted by employers, white workers and the trade unions towards black workers
(p.269)²⁷

One of the major consequences of this ghettoisation was the initial struggle that black workers needed to undertake within these unions before they confronted management. This resulted very often, in the 1960s in excluding black workers from the general trends taking place within trade union action. Certainly there is sufficient evidence of shop floor militancy, particularly in the state airlines and places such as the iron foundries in the Midlands (Duffield 1988), but the entrance into negotiation machinery by black workers was generally to lag behind most union trends for almost a decade.

The 1970s: The rise and fall of union power

The early, and mid 1970s academic discussion about trade unions centres on three main issues: a) the degree of industrial democracy and corporatism within

industry; b) the various implications for increased involvement of shop floor representation in formal bargaining; and c) the political and economic implications in the expansion of trade union power. All these issues are, in many ways, interrelated and focused on discussions related to industrial democracy. While a high degree of scepticism was expressed at the extent to which the Donovan Report 1968 was to find a realisation in British industrial relations, its significance in terms of discussion was major (Batstone 1988 p.3).²⁸ An indicator of this was a joint statement by the T.U.C. and the C.B.I. endorsing the majority of the recommendations.²⁹

At an academic level the debate, in the main, was between the pluralists, many of whom had served on the commission³⁰, and the radicals mainly marxists. Naturally the majority of pluralists defended the significance of the report and viewed the future as encouraging. While the radicals focused their criticism, mainly, on the report's and the pluralists' failure to acknowledge the unequal distribution of power. With hindsight, the radicals' criticisms seem highly relevant, particularly in terms of management ability to determine, very often, the nature and the content of the agenda (Lukes). However, too often, the radicals substituted for the pluralist model of power a crude model, which failed to give significant recognition to the limited access to power that many disadvantaged workers suffer within union organisations and the labour market in general.

The Donovan Report was mainly addressing itself to the growing trend of informal agreements between sectional trade union groups and employers. It was the Commission's view that such a trend undermined formal agreements and was likely to increase conflict and obstruct orderly agreements. They advocated greater democracy based on formal negotiation machinery at a factory level.

Batstone (1988) has argued that:-

the Donovan Report was a political rather than an academic document. Key members of the Commission

were keen to prevent attempts to deal with industrial relations primarily through legal means (p.26)³¹

Certainly this reflects the general philosophy of pluralism which promotes order by consent rather than imposition, whether it be by use of law or autocratic management. A number of national industries, and particularly those in the public sector, paid at least lip service to the general philosophy of the Donovan Report. Thus formation of British Airways in 1971, as a single state airline, took place with a commitment by management to the general ideals of the Donovan Report. By 1973 they had started to set up the machinery for a form of industrial democracy. On the 3rd January 1973 they issued an Industrial Relations Charter which stated:-

Whilst recognising that it is Management's job to take decisions, the Board, being anxious to tap the advice and experience of its staff, will set up a joint Manpower Advisory Council. This council will be chaired by the Group Personnel Director with agreed representation from the unions and from management with the following terms of reference:-

- (i) to advise on future manpower policies (except matters which would normally be for negotiation within the orbit of the N.J.C.) and, to that end to consider manpower trends and all other relevant consideration.*

- (ii) to consider and advise on in-company training (including retraining) policies and deployment.*
(p.11).³²

While the proposal was hardly a radical initiative in power sharing it did at least indicate a shift in management styles away from those of consultation, mainly on contractual issues only, to a broader definition of staff involvement.

In the mid and late 1960s many in the trade union movement, and particularly shop stewards, were highly sceptical of industrial democracy, viewing it as mainly a management ploy to incorporate conflict into bureaucratic channels, and further compromise the union, particularly over issues of staffing.

By 1975 the majority of airline staff was committed to achieving some form of practice of industrial democracy even if not all were convinced of the sincerity of its philosophy. In a paper prepared by Ron Crew, staff side shop steward, there is a strong appeal to other shop stewards to support industrial democracy initiatives. He states in his conclusion:-

The interest being taken in the subject of industrial democracy, both in this country and abroad, together with the unique constitution upon which all agreements in the industry are based, present a great opportunity for its introduction into British Airways.

Its benefits, to the industry, its staff and to the country, I believe to be self-evident. The amendment necessary to existing legislation would be simple. It is to be hoped that, for reasons which can only be sectarian or dogmatic, this opportunity will not be lost.

(p.53-58)³³

By October 1976 sufficient support had been won for Crew's argument to endorse a declaration of intent by a trade union conference of airline staff for staff involvement in the democratic machinery of the industry.

Edwards (1979) has argued strongly that such trends in the late 1960s and early 1970s were simply a means by which employers implemented far more effective systems of control. Central to this thesis is the assumption that Taylorisms within capitalism had failed to provide fully sufficient rationalisation of the labour process and in fact very often had generated opposition and conflict amongst workers.

For Edwards the bureaucratization of collective bargaining leads to: a) more effective mechanisms of control; b) an increase in the incorporation of trade union power within the employers' own systems of operation and control; c) an illusion of conflict being a product of inefficiency within the bureaucratic machinery; and finally, d) increased sectional divisions between workers as a direct result of the overall structural complexity of bureaucratic systems of negotiation.

Similar themes had been explored previously, if in a much simpler form, by Wright Mills (1948) and Anderson (1967), both of whom had argued that trade unions institutionalise conflict and act as "managers of discontent".

Implicit within all of these assumptions is a one sided view of bureaucratic machinery. It ignores the positive contribution that workers make towards the formation of bureaucratic bargaining. The early 1970s within British Airways serve as a classic example of shop floor sectional interests struggling for greater representation within the negotiating machinery. Such a process must have contributed to the development of the bureaucratization of collective bargaining. Catering staff were represented on the consultative panel by ground service representative. In fact the gross under-representation of catering workers within this early consultative machinery was a contributing factor to their general marginalisation in the decision making machinery of the airline and the formal organisation of the union itself. This process of marginalisation within unions was to a great extent a national phenomenon (Wrench 1987). This situation forced black catering workers to resort to informal tactics and to community support in order to gain access to the main channels of decision-making. Such action broke

the vicious circle whereby a weak bargaining position led to under-representation in formal machinery, which in its turn led to marginalisation and a weak bargaining position. While the community support elements appear to be a common feature of black workers' struggles, the use of informal tactics seems to be a unique feature of action at Heathrow to gain access to appropriate representation. The background to all this is discussed in the historical case study chapter. What is important for discussion here is that once again the history of black workers differs from the general pattern of white trade unionism.

The wider political trends affecting trade union practice in the 1970s can be divided into three distinct periods, all of which had major influence on events at British Airways.

The 1970s had started with the election of a Conservative government committed to controlling trade union practice by law. The introduction of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act established: a) a court to have jurisdiction in most industrial disputes with the power to impose a "cooling off" period; b) the requirement to hold a strike ballot in major disputes; c) the imposition of fines on unions for "unfair industrial practices"; d) the abolition of a pre-entry closed shop; e) the right for workers not to join a union; f) registration of unions, and finally, g) the right of workers sacked unfairly to claim compensation.

Generally the major unions viewed such measures as a direct challenge to their traditional role and provided them with a major issue that politically they could unite around. By 1974 the Act had brought the government into conflict with various trade unions, and necessitated the introduction of the three day week. But it was mainly the miners strike which influenced Edward Heath to call a general election in order to gain public support for his policy of legal intervention in union affairs. Labour won by default: Heath failed to win an overall majority and the Liberals refused to form a coalition.

The second period began in 1974 when after two elections Labour secured its majority by three seats. Both the Labour government and the T.U.C. were committed to a notion of corporatism, in which wages were linked to price rises and thus the "social contract" was established. While the referendums on E.E.C. membership had gone against many of the left wing elements of the unions, thereby destroying some of the unity between unions and the Labour Party, the strong commitment by many within the unions (e.g. Jones and Scanlon) to the "social contract" provided sufficient accommodation to ensure a degree of co-operation between the two respective bodies. The third period began in 1978 when Jim Callaghan, now prime minister after Wilson had resigned, introduced a 5% limit to wage settlements. The government's inability fully to implement it in the private sector (e.g. the Ford Motor Company settled 15%) while it still attempted to maintain it rigidly in the public sector led to a number of strikes which were to affect essential services and lead to the now famous "winter of discontent".

In very general terms, the 1970s can be seen as, a period in which trade unions were first of all, in the main, united in opposition to government intervention in their affairs; then as a period of attempted partnership between unions and government over issues of wages and prices. (It needs to be stressed that whole sections of the union side were less than totally convinced of the relevance, or effectiveness, of such a partnership). Finally the 1970s ended with the demise of the marriage of government and unions. Many commentators have argued that this period intensified union economic sectionalism (e.g. Hobsbawm 1989) and further provided an ideological focal point for the New Right to mount a campaign against union power (e.g. Hall 1980). What seems certain was that the 1970s was a period in which the bargaining power of unions was to rise almost as quickly as it was to fall. As Tony Lane put it:-

In looking over the entire span of the 20th century thus far it is obvious, if we ignore the Second World War, that the trade unions reached their peak of influence

sometime in the mid 1970's; they had defeated the Tories' Industrial Relation Act and sold the social contract to an ungrateful and uncomprehending Labour government. Since then it has all been downhill (p.13)³⁴

The major issues of academic debate concerning trade unions in this period are: a) the extent of industrial democracy; b) the growth of bureaucratic control; c) the increase of economic sectionalism; d) the loss of trade union power; e) the link between trade union actions and the growth of a New Right ideology.

Each of these issues is highly contested and there is a danger in attempting to impose some of the arguments upon the case study of catering workers at Heathrow or black workers in general. However, many of the issues are highly relevant, and in some cases, the case study itself threw into doubt some of the assertions being made.

What becomes apparent once more though, even taking a very generalised examination of trade union history in this period and the 1960s, is how much out of sequence with events is the experience of black trade unionists. The increased involvement of shop floor representation in formal bargaining was not a trend shared by the majority of black and Asian representatives. In many cases they were still far from recognition within their own union, let alone finding representation inside board rooms. In fact very often at Heathrow rather than bureaucratic procedures being used as a mechanism for incorporation and control, the unions evoked them as a mechanism of excluding representation on the union machinery. Within British Airways the official election of some Asian shop stewards was invalid because of the requirement of a two year membership by official union procedure.

The general trend, for black workers in the 1970s was as in the 1960s to confront unions first and then to take on employers. Mansfield Hosier (1972), Imperial Typewriters (1974), and British Airways (much of the early 1970s) were all disputes in which the official unions gave little or no backing and in most cases were highly obstructive to the black workers' demands. Very often the publicity of these disputes, particularly media coverage of racist/fascist banners by "White Imperial Typewriters" trade unionists, did much to embarrass the T.U.C.'s rhetoric of opposition to racism and fascism.

Many commentators, such as Wrench (1987), Sivanandan (1982) and Ramdin (1987), identify this period as an important turning point in the official stance of the T.U.C., which was now beginning to declare a much greater commitment to getting its own house in order. Further, the Grunwick dispute, in 1976, finally provided a focal point, by which a wide body of official and grass roots trade unionists could be seen to support black workers in struggles.

Phizaklea and Miles (1981) though, provide a particularly strong argument by suggesting that the mass union support for Grunwick had less to do with racial discrimination and racism, and more to do with an economic issue directly related to the right of trade union membership. Nevertheless, both Grunwick and the changed official stance by the T.U.C. in 1974 towards black workers did influence, in a positive way the ideological environment in which black workers operated. How effective all this was in practice is highly debatable. It may simply have made some union officials, and white trade unionists more careful about expressing racist attitudes openly.

The main trends amongst black workers in the 1970s were a high level of unofficial action, and a tendency to seek support from community groups. For British Airways catering workers both of these trends were to have far more significance in their struggles than the changing ideological climate - their major gains were in the area of union and management structures and procedures.

Section 3

Problems with the History of Trade Unions and Black Workers

"Untold Stories", the 1960s

Up until the last twenty years much of black history, like that of many other oppressed groups, had been conveniently forgotten or ignored. Fryer 1984, Ramdin 1987, Robinson 1983 and Walvin 1984 are amongst many who rediscovered the importance and significance of black experience to British history. Nevertheless, the history of black workers and trade unions is still relatively uncharted.

Whilst most of the writers above make reference to the general trends related to black workers and trade unions, they are, in the main, based upon a limited number of recorded events, such as the disputes at Imperial Typewriters and Mansfield Hosiery, which have all now become landmarks in labour history.

The suppression of any group's history is very often an indicator of unequal power relations operating. One of the striking features of the British Airways case study is the extent to which discriminatory practices took place, and how easily such events were contained and/or viewed, by many, as insignificant. Thus any history of black workers and trade unions in the labour market as a whole is subject to distortion while research in this area remains limited. Therefore it will be argued that the existing recorded events are either notable exceptions, or an indicator of what is a more generalised phenomenon; the latter seems more likely.

Too often, also, accounts of black workers in trade union history are dealt with in a highly defensive and patronising manner. For example, H. Pelling (1987) states:

Since 1955 the T.U.C. had been firmly committed to a policy of opposition to all forms of racial discrimination.

But the immigrants undoubtedly sometimes encountered forms of discrimination in employment as a result of xenophobia among trade unionists - though this xenophobia was often the results of economic fears, rather than of racial feeling. London Transport workers for instance, felt that their employers were deliberately recruiting immigrants in order to avoid the necessity of raising wages in order to attract indigenous labour. On the whole, trade union officials performed a valuable role in preventing fears of this character from developing into an attempt to keep all qualified immigrants out of union membership. But the immigrants could not avoid having difficulties when they sought entry to unions which had always had strict apprenticeship requirements. Sometimes too, language difficulties and misunderstandings based on cultural differences interfered with good relations; and union officials who in any case had little time for going out to recruit new members failed to make special efforts to recruit the immigrants. As has fairly been said, these were sins of omission rather than sins of commission. (pp.259/260)³⁵

So here we have an eminent labour historian articulating a number of the standard arguments, which acknowledge a "problem" but shift the blame away from structural mechanisms and practices in unions towards misunderstandings, language and cultural difficulties and reasonable economic fears. This reluctance to analyse critically "the problem" is one which is indicative of sympathetic labour historians, or white trade unionists. The uneasiness seems to be related, very often, to an avoidance of an acceptance of some of the blame. After all trade

unionists are often most confident and assertive when attributing the blame to other parties.

The limited amount of research and the lack of a general critical analysis of the "problem" presents any attempt to outline a history with difficulties. As B. Hepple comments in 1968;

The negative attitude also reflects itself in the absence of trade union based research into these questions. Information about immigrant and coloured membership has to be based on impression.... (p.23)³⁶

Sadly the statement seems as relevant today. The absence of trade union based research, may well be a significant factor in the history itself. While it would be difficult to sustain that such a phenomenon is part of a "grand conspiracy", what seems more likely in such an avoidance of self questioning is a reflection of how deeply rooted racist practices have become in trade union attitudes, traditions, and practices. Two views were often encountered in the case study: discrimination was viewed either as a norm, and therefore insignificant in itself; or as some guilty secret; to reveal its existence was to expose a major defect in the practices and structure of the union. Both of these trends make research in this area very difficult.

Having identified some of the difficulties involved, what follows is a history of black workers and trade unions. This history is based mainly on the limited amount of research in this area, material concerned with racial disadvantage and the labour market and the case study itself.

Black workers and trade unions in the 1960s

Nationally the majority of black workers came in the 1950s and the early 1960s and, in the main, fulfilled two sorts of labour requirements. The first was created

by a demand for a mobile labour force to fill jobs defined at a low level of skills, status, and rewards. The second was a small demand for jobs defined as highly skilled, "professional jobs", such as doctors. Both of these areas of demand were not being met by the indigenous workforce which resulted in many employers becoming actively engaged in recruitment of black labour. For instance, London Transport by the end of 1958 had employed approximately 4000 black workers, of which 1000 had been directly recruited from Barbados (c.f. Ramdin 1987 p.197).

The vast majority of black immigrant labour was located in manual occupations and concentrated in three main areas, manufacturing industries, service industries (e.g. catering workers, hotels, airport cleaners) and the National Health Service. Remarkably, the employment profile of black workers in the 1980's has changed very little since the 1960s. Ohri and Faruqi (1988) state;

Black people on the whole have very different employment characteristics from white people. They are concentrated in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, and earn less than white people in the same job levels despite more shift-work and greater unionization. Colin Brown in the third PSI report, Black and White (1984) argues that '...the position of the black citizens of Britain largely remains geographically, that allocated to them as immigrant workers in the 1950s and 1960s'.³⁷

This is all the more depressing given the introduction of a number of Acts outlawing discriminatory practices.

Both Hepple (1968 p.84) and Daniel (1968 p.133) in their research on employment and discrimination in the late 1960s comment on the high percentage of black workers who joined trade unions. While this can be explained partly by the fact that black workers were located in jobs that had traditionally been unionised, nevertheless the workers' own predisposition to unionisation needs also

to be taken into consideration. Daniel's work in particular demonstrated that many black workers in the 1960s joined unions under the assumption that they were institutions committed to the pursuit of equality regardless of the racial origin of the worker. Unfortunately, as Daniel points out;

Despite this formal commitment to equality, however, our interviews with trade unionists, employers and coloured people elicited two uncomfortable facts; that coloured union members are more likely to have experienced discrimination than coloured people who are not union members; and secondly that, at least occasionally, union members have themselves been responsible for acts of discrimination. It appeared, thirdly; that union members shared many of the prejudices of employers with regard to coloured people and consequently had a lot in common with employers on the issue of employing coloured people. (p.132)³⁸

Early research, mainly that of Hepple (1968) and Daniel (1968), identifies two major factors as paramount in this process of black unionisation and union discrimination:

- 1) the type of job black workers were located in (i.e. bottom of the labour market); and
- 2) the existence of racist attitudes among both the employers and trade unionists.

Certainly the location of the majority of black workers at the bottom of the labour market, in jobs with, mainly, poor pay and conditions was likely to generate a high level of exploitation of black labour, and thereby create the conditions in which

black workers would be more likely to join trade unions in order to redress their grievances. In addition, the 1960s has now become renowned for its high level of overt racist expression by large sections of the working class. The support by Smithfield porters for Enoch Powell was not an isolated example. In addition, the growth of the National Front in the 1960s and the election of Peter Griffith in Smethwick on a racist platform, were both political indicators that racism was "alive and kicking" amongst working class communities. Both the popular press and formal political debates after 1964, concentrated mainly on the issue of immigration. Such discussions were forces in the construction of the notion of black people as a "problem" (Moore 1975).

It is a major mistake to assume that these are the only factors operating to ensure the ghettoisation of black workers in both the labour market and the union structure. The repugnant nature of overt racism, particularly some of that expressed in the 1960s, inevitably leads to distortion of the analysis of causal factors. It becomes apparent in the British Airways case study that if improvement of their pay and conditions had been dependent upon changing attitudes then they would have achieved very little in the last 25 years.

What is striking about the small amount of research in this area is the appearance of black workers suppressing or containing their grievances until the later part of the 1960s. Yet, the Race Today Collective, in The Struggle of Asian Workers in Britain (1983), does identify the seeds of growing discontent in the early 1960s, and links such phenomena with the highly significant practice of "secret meetings held at homes of Asian workers," (p.p.10/11, footnote). Such meetings resemble early trade unionists meeting when trade union activity was outlawed by the Combination Act 1799, an irony that such meetings now should be a product of distrust against unions themselves.

The British Airways catering workforce, like that of Imperial Typewriters and Mansfield Hosiery, met secretly to discuss a strategy, not just against employers

but against the union also. In addition, a general theme running through many of the disputes of the 1960s was the need for black workers to seek support in their own communities. This "turning-in" towards community support has been interpreted in a number of ways. One main theme, with very little empirical foundation, is the notion of first generation relative acceptance/second generation rebellion. Certainly the riots of 1981/1985 were inevitably to draw a good deal of attention to street culture resistance, which mainly involved British-born young black people, and, to some extent, to overshadow the considerable struggles that took place within the workplace. Statements such as the following can only reinforce the myths:

In the 1950s and 1960s we had barely visible groups of migrants posturing in such a way as to diminish their presence and quite prepared to accept the often harsh conditions amidst which they lived. In the early 1980s their sons and daughters were rioting in the streets.

(Troyna/Cashmore (1983), p.178)

The "turning-in" of British Airways catering workers towards their community was never a form of retreat. They, like many other black workers in this period, sought support in order to direct their effort towards workplace struggles and against union opposition to fair representation. Fryer (1984) supports this trend in a wider context. He states;

one area of self-defence in the 1960s was the factories, where black newcomers were invariably shunted into the most menial, dirty, dangerous and ill-paid jobs. Yet they struggled valiantly against two kinds of discrimination; that of employers determined, if they accepted black workers at all, to keep their pay and conditions inferior to those of white workers; that

of trade unions, and trade unionists, who failed to support their strike or actively opposed them. Black strikers in the 1960s were mainly Asians, whose only support came from their local communities. (pp. 385-386)³⁹

In addition Sivanandan (1982), Ramdin (1987) and Fryer (1984) list a number of disputes in the 1960s which received very little exposure in the media, or among labour historians, or by the wider trade union organisation. Their examples include Rockware Glass (Southall 1965), Courtuald (Preston 1965), Woolf Rubber Co. (Southall 1965), Coneygre Foundry (Typton 1967), Midland Motor Cylinder Co. (West Bromwich 1968), and Newby Foundry (West Bromwich 1968).

Dresser also in Black and White on the Buses(1986), provides a good oral history account of the 1963 "colour bar" dispute on Bristol buses. Black workers successfully organised a boycott of Bristol buses which involved "taking on" employers, city council, union and church leaders, who had all been either obstructive or apathetic over the issue. After the event all these groups, particularly those institutions advocating philosophies of high morals and justice, had strong vested interest in minimising these events. As Driver herself reports:

The Bristol Omnibus Company insists that all its records are automatically destroyed after five years. The Regional officials of the T.G.W.U., who kindly granted me interviews, could not find their written records for this period. The records of the Bishop of Bristol's Social and Industrial Mission were lost in a recent move. And the City Archives are curiously incomplete for 1963, the year of the dispute. (p.7)⁴⁰

On the other hand, resistance on the street is not likely to generate the same kinds of institutional defensiveness. For example either the suppression or the amplification of information by the police and media on street resistance will involve for them a whole range of positive and negative elements (cf. Hall et al.1978).

The nature and conditions of street culture resistance itself are likely to be more volatile than work place conflict, but to elevate one or the other as an expression of greater resistance is highly problematic, particularly given that the first is likely to have attracted exaggerated media coverage, and the second, to receive very little.

Nearly all the leading black shop stewards at British Airways were first generation immigrants. Even some of them admitted that the beliefs about racial discrimination which they had instilled into their children were unacceptable. Such beliefs often contradicted their own involvement in confronting discrimination and probably indicated more their conscious resolve to politicise their children in an awareness of racism. What seems certain is street culture resistance is not likely to be learnt only on the street, and in many cases family socialisation might well have played a more significant role than has previously been suggested.

From what little data we have, it seems that many of the trends within Airline catering in relation to black workers, trade unions and employment are reflected nationally in a number of areas. Black workers, it seems, were more willing to join trade unions than their white counterparts. However, they received very little support from such unions in resisting extreme forms of exploitation. They were often victims of corrupt practices, and very often found themselves having to accept formal agreements made nationally in which they had had little or no say. They were marginalised very often through the collective bargaining machinery and their first line of resistance then was confronting union representation and practice. This resulted in a trend towards seeking community support, and while the secrecy

of early trade unionists in the 1700s had been adopted as a defence against employers/state sanction, the secrecy and conspiracies of black workers in the 1960s and 1970s was very often a protective practice against many white trade union workers and the official union, who were often seen as collaborators in their exploitation. (The specifics of British Airways catering workers is dealt with in more detail in a later chapter).

In addition, the national trend in trade unions in the 1960s of greater shop floor representation, had the very opposite effect for black catering workers in the airlines. The shift of power towards the shop floor within the nationally owned Airlines, which still had a highly sectionalised system of bargaining, was bound to favour those groups with strong bargaining positions, at the expense of the weaker. Engineering workers in particular did well in this period and were acutely aware of the need to distance their bargaining from that of catering workers. This ghettoisation of workers, not only within the labour market, but also in the collective bargaining machinery is one reflected in a number of disputes, e.g. Imperial Typewriters, and Mansfield Hosiery (c.f. Feuchtwang 1981). It, together with other practices in the union machinery, resulted once again in black trade unionists being out of sequence with the wider trends of trade unionism in the 1960s. Furthermore, their lack of significant mention in trade union research, in the 1960s, is likely to be related to: 1) the location in their communities of their activity of industrial struggle; 2) the marginalised areas of work/union structures that they were located in; and 3) the strong vested interests of employers, politicians and unions to marginalise, suppress, or minimise the importance of black struggle in this period. Finally, it seems reasonable to assume that the more overt expressions of black workers' struggle in the 1960s did not come out of a political vacuum, that such expressions were built upon ground which had been fought for in a decade of extreme overt racist hostility; and that many untold industrial struggles still await to be uncovered in the history of black workers in the 1960s.

"Voices Heard", the 1970s.

With the limited existence of the 1960s research we can only speculate on the reasons for official trade union apathy towards black workers' grievances. Such an "avoidance" or apathy is likely to result from a number of structural forces, occupational ghettos (Feuchtwang 1981), and also a number of union and employer conspiracies (of an implicit and explicit nature) to counter any suggestion of racist practice. The events and research of the 1970s, however, were to begin to expose some of these processes, and in particular highlight the general inability of trade unions to translate statements of equality into policies and practice.

On the other hand one of the major problems of comparing black struggles in the 1960s with those of the 1970s is this disparity in the levels of research in the two periods. While research on black people and trade unions, still remains a relatively small area of concern, the work that highlights events in the 1970s is considerably more significant than that of the 1960s, with the result that it could lead one to believe that black conflict in the workplace erupts, almost from a political vacuum, at the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s. However, events in the national airlines would seem to refute this, and the case study itself maps out a consistent struggle against union, managers and wider social forces operating to marginalise the position of black workers in the 1960s. It was no small achievement within this period to have struggled for jobs, housing, and better representation by the union. While their struggle might not have been publicised, trade union officials spoken to were fully aware at the time that more than a rumble was taking place in catering in those early years.

The initial inroads into employment and trade union power structures may well be the most difficult to trace, a point which a number of feminist writers have stressed in relation to women's access to such power structures (cf. Cavendish 1982, Cockburn 1983, Wainwright 1979). The general point being made here is that the visible eruption of black conflict in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to some extent an expression of ongoing struggle, which might well have its origin from the

very point of black immigrant arrival, or even before. One of the main T. & G.W.U. officials at the centre of industrial disputes in this period stated, almost with affection, how much solidarity, discipline and assertiveness the catering workers demonstrated in this period. Such qualities, as anyone who has been involved with trade unions will know, do not express themselves easily. While the catering workers' diversity of culture might well inhibit forms of solidarity given the wide range of cultural and religious origins, their blackness and shared structural location created a number of focal points within which shared interests could be perceived.

The early years within catering (1960s) involved a number of internal struggles which took place within the confines of their own ranks, and what emerged in the late 1960s was a relatively disciplined trade union force which was often able to manipulate white workers' stereotypical perceptions of "Asians" and "Asian workers": For example, very often catering workers used their culture as an impenetrable screen to white officials - such a screen implied a picture at times of cultural anarchy. Many trade union officials expressed the view that it was very difficult "to know what was on the agenda". Asian shop stewards informed me that such tactics were just a few amongst many developed in those early arenas of struggle. Such tactics were considered necessary, given that black workers' trust of unions was limited. Nearly all the accounts of black workers' disputes in the early 1970s identify official union/white trade unionist lack of support, and very often outright opposition, as a major feature of those events (c.f. Miles/Phizacklea 1977, 1978, 1987, Sivanandan 1982, Ramdin 1987). This was an important turning point in official trade union attitudes towards black workers and racism. While authors differ on minor elements of explanation about this change, they are all agreed that central to this change of attitude was the volatile nature of industrial disputes/conflict involving black workers. Mansfield Hosiery Mills and Imperial Typewriters disputes had exposed the somewhat hypocritical stance of many areas of trade union policy and practice. Ramdin, in particular, locates three main factors;

*black workers and industrial conflict; the General
Council critics and the National Front (p.357)⁴¹*

Much of the literature above reduces the "change of attitude" to a relatively simplistic argument, which is as follows: that the dynamic nature of "race" and racism was becoming counter productive in the volatile disputes in this period and that rather than acting as a mechanism for legitimising exploitation, racism, was becoming a focal point upon which black workers could develop their own consciousness. In addition, the argument continues, these disputes compromised the ideological position of trade unions who, in principle, were committed to combating racial injustice, but in practice had no means of delivering such commitments - for much of trade union machinery was dominated and controlled by forces of overt and institutional racism (i.e. racist trade unionists and racist practices). Finally, Grunwick provided an opportunity by which the T.U.C. and large sections of the trade union movement could superficially be seen to be supporting black workers, while in fact their involvement related more directly to the fundamental issue of the right of an individual to join a trade union - an issue all official unions have some vested interest in. The problem with such explanations, is not that they are faulty, but that they, probably, represent only part of the processes involved in change in this period.

In British Airways this shift, not just of attitude, but also of practice, was somewhat more complex. A major force operating in this period, (making major inroads into the collective bargaining machinery) was the emergence of Asian shop stewards. These inroads created significant shifts in power which influenced not only the way other shop stewards and union officials perceived such workers but also their ability to make substantial gains in their industrial struggles.

The internal on-going struggles, through the 1960s and into the 1970s, for the catering workers, had resulted in some degree of control of the collective bargaining process by the mid - 1970s, just at a time in which "corporate politics"

(post Donovan style) had been given some currency in the world of formal industrial relations.

It is difficult to assess, in this instance, to what extent, the case study is representative of wider trends in black struggles. For British Airways catering workers the early 1970s was not an eruption of industrial struggle, it was part of an ongoing process, which had involved, to some degree, a "catching up" on the trends that had taken place in a number of areas of white trade unionism. This process had resulted in greater access to the decision making machinery, but it had only been achieved through sustained informal/formal action, some of which in the 1970s did attract media attention.

British Airways catering workers' disputes, like many others of the period, also attracted the attention of a number of left-wing political groups. The Socialist Workers Party was one that attempted to make inroads into British Airways catering in terms of recruitment, and on a number of occasions requested British Airways shop stewards to speak at their meetings. Shop stewards reported that, in the main, such approaches were treated with a degree of scepticism.

The main source of external support, as mentioned earlier, came from community based groups. Both Ramdin (1987) and Race Today Collective (1983) make much of the role of the Indian Workers Association, and certainly it seems the case that from approximately 1965 to 1975 this organisation was an important source of support for black workers in struggle. In the late 1960s they, according to Race Today, played a major role in a number of disputes. Throughout the 1970s, however, it was mainly verbal and financial help that was provided. Internal political divisions in the Indian Workers Association (IWA) in the 1970s were to result in far fewer direct relationships with black trade union activity than in the 1960s. As mentioned previously B.O.A.C. had commissioned its own private report in order to establish the level of involvement of the IWA in their catering industrial unrest. It was reported by a union shop steward, who had read the

report, that B.O.A.C. had concluded that they had no reason to be concerned - though it does indicate their (IWA) general level of influence in this period. Ramdin gives a good general account of IWA's general role in this period (1987 , pp.395-410).⁴²

One other major issue within the literature is the question of separate black trade unions (Wrench 1987). This issue also relates to the 1980s and therefore will be considered later.

Summary

The history of black trade unionism in the 1960s and the 1970s is a complex one. Here it has been argued that the limited amount of research that does exist tends to distort some of the important features taking place in this period. The over-emphasis on ideological and conspiratorial forces tends to overshadow the important internal struggles in both employment and union structures. In addition these struggles have far greater continuity from the early 1960s through to the 1970s than reported events would imply. Such struggles have often involved overcoming barriers to collective bargaining mechanisms. This exclusion from the collective bargaining machinery effectively in the 1960s and early 1970s had locked black workers out of the wider trends in trade union development, and also inhibited them from making important improvements in their pay and conditions.

Certainly within British Airways, the "catching up" of black workers on the general trends of white trade unions involved a struggle for access into those collective bargaining processes. This was achieved to some extent in the later half of the 1970s. This may well have been unique to British Airways catering as opposed to other black workers, though there is some evidence that workers in car production had similar success. This success though was not dependent on a shift of ideological forces, and will be considered in more depth in the case study itself.

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CHAPTER 4

The Case-Study: A History of the Catering workers

Trade Union struggles

- (1) The Structure of British Airways' Catering
- (2) Comet House and the "Age of the Majors"
(The 1960s Conflict)
- (3) The Corruption; and Turning the Blind Eye
- (4) Conclusion on the 1960s
- (5) Sowing the Seeds of Conflict (The struggle
against official union and management)
- (6) The 1970s and the Struggle for Parity
- (7) The 1970s and the Struggle for Union
Representation
- (8) Why the Strain of Relationship
(Workers -v- Official Union)?
- (9) "Union within a Union"
- (10) Linking the Corruption with the Practices
- (11) Allocation of overtime
- (12) Promotion Procedure
- (13) Job Definition and Grading
- (14) Formal and the Informal Struggle
- (15) Breaking the Practices

THE CASE STUDY: A HISTORY OF THE CATERING WORKERS' TRADE UNION STRUGGLES

The Structure of British Airways' Catering

The overall structure of British Airways Catering has undergone various changes throughout the period that the research covers. This also applies to almost every other section within the airline. The catering structure that is described below is the one that has applied for the longest period of time and is the one that has influenced almost all other catering organisational structures.

British Airways Catering production from 1972 and throughout the 1970s was based on three separate organisations:-

- 1) South Side Catering:- The largest of the units which dealt with all the overseas divisional aircraft catering (long haul flights, non European flights etc.) and European wide-body flights (Tri-Star etc.). It had previously been controlled by B.O.A.C. and had been housed in Comet House where both space and conditions had been poor, particularly in relation to the specific needs of catering production. They moved to a modern unit (1976) in which the conditions and equipment were probably as good as any catering facilities countrywide. This new unit was also located on the south side of the airport. It is this unit which has a general reputation throughout the airline for being the most militant and also the one which has been involved in the greatest number of disputes. Much of the case study deals with this group of workers.

2) North side catering:-

This is housed in a unit close to the main motor transport unit. It serves the majority of European flights and had previously been controlled by B.E.A. It has now been sold to S.A.S. but still provides catering production for British Airways European flights on a contract basis.

3) Airport Cafeteria and Restaurants:-

This constituted a number of cafeterias and restaurants which were located throughout the British Airways network and aimed to provide catering facilities for British Airways staff. Prior to 1972 all these units had either been privately owned or in some cases part owned by British Airways. They had slowly been bought over by British Airways during the late 1960s. They have now been sold back to two separate contractors, Sutcliff Catering and Trust House Forte. British Airways own shares in the latter company.

In addition to these three main organisations, there exists within catering production, a group of workers called "catering loaders", who work with the motor division to load vehicles with catering which they then deliver to the aircraft for loading. The issues of the thesis do not relate to this group of workers.

South Side Catering are by far the largest group and the majority of trade union action and militancy has taken place within this unit. Therefore much of the descriptive analysis of trade union actions and the theoretical arguments in this case study concern this group of workers.

Introduction

They never wanted any Asian to have a chip on their shoulder, have any dignity----- I think between American and English management that I have seen, the American management was so sweet....they would suck your blood without them letting you know what they were doing with you.....the American was very sweet, they would eat with you, joke with you and then suck the blood out of you. The British, will first destroy your dignity.... and then suck the blood out of you. If you got dignity they would attack the dignity part of it....destroy the dignity first!

(Bashir Bhatti, Catering worker shop steward)

While British Airways has only functioned as an airline under this title since 1972, we need to start this historical account in the early 1960s. There are three main reasons for this:-

- 1) The vast majority of present catering workers are of Asian origin and originally immigrated in the early 1960s.
- 2) The vast majority of union struggles while finding fruition in the 1970s can be traced back to an origin in the early and late 1960s.
- 3) The expansion of both the airline's business and catering production occurred in the early 1960s. One of the main reasons for this was the increasing ability of a larger proportion of the population to use air transport. In addition, of course, the overall expansion

of world trade stimulated a rise in commercial business traffic. An important consequence of this expansion was the introduction of aircraft with larger passenger capacity, for example, the Boeing 747. This automatically effected a much greater demand for airline catering production.

British Airways initially was a government owned commercial enterprise until it was privatised in 1987. It was originally formed under the 1971 Civil Aviation Act to take over the activities of British Overseas Airways (B.O.A.C.) and British European Airways (B.E.A.) and of various subsidiaries of the two parent corporations, including British Air Services. It actually did not operate as an Airline under the logo of British Airways until the spring of 1972.

Prior to 1972 the competition faced by nearly all scheduled airlines was minimal, with the exception of the North Atlantic routes. The existence of bilateral route agreements, under the auspices of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), allowed price fixing to occur and thereby ensured to some degree a level of monopoly for airline operators. But as Richard Pryke (1981) points out in "The Nationalised Industries",

What happened in practice was that the flag-carrying airlines, whether in public or private ownership, came to see their role as the provision of a high quality service. In this way they were able, while avoiding price competition, to engage in rivalry. They provided themselves with a raison d'etre and were able to satisfy politicians and airline users that they were providing something in return for the exclusive rights which they possessed and the high prices which they charged.
(p.130)

A substantial part of this rivalry concerning high quality was based on the ability of individual airlines to provide better catering cabin facilities than their rivals. For example, if the fare construction for London to Bombay is the same for Air India as it is for B.O.A.C., then the different kinds of cabin catering supplied could be a crucial factor in attracting passengers.

So, two major factors operated to bring about expansion within the two corporations catering:-¹

- 1) The general expansion of air traffic in the early 1960's.
- 2) The need to provide high quality catering in order to maintain and improve the airline or the airline's own share of traffic.

If we look at the overall staffing levels of what is now British Airways we see a substantial growth in the 1960s while in the 1970s that growth figure remains static. By the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s British Airways starts to reduce its staff as a direct response to the world trade recession.

British Airways Staffing Levels

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Employment (in 000)</u> |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| 1963 | 37.5 |
| 1968 | 44.7 |
| 1969 | 46.8 |
| 1970 | 50.2 |
| 1971 | 52.6 |
| 1972 | 53.1 |
| 1973 | 53.1 |
| 1974 | 53.3 Staff freeze on jobs. |
| 1975 | 52.7 |
| 1976 | 52.7 |

| | |
|------|-------------------|
| 1977 | 53.6 |
| 1978 | 54.3 ² |
| 1979 | 58.0 |
| 1983 | 37.0 ³ |

So it can be seen that the major expansion of staffing within British Airways - and the catering unit was one of the main expansion areas - coincided with the large influx of Asian workers into the Heathrow area in the early 1960's, mainly in Southall.⁴ This new source of labour (Asian workers) was used almost exclusively within the airline's catering production, though in recent years a substantial number of black workers can be found in other trade groups, particularly in Apron services, responsible for loading baggage and cargo on the aircraft. British Airways, as a national airline, requires a wide range of occupations and professions to operate effectively. In order to negotiate with these staff, British Airways, and the trade unions involved, had set up a number of national sectional panels to deal with contractual issues. For much of this case study eleven sectional panels existed of which the catering section were part of the ground services staff panel. This panel consisted mainly of cargo and catering manual workers. The other manual workers that catering came into contact with, as part of their action and practice, were the ramp workers and the engineering workers.

Comet House and the "Age of the Majors" (The 1960s Seeds of Conflict).

During the early 1960s catering workers were by far the lowest paid workers in the airline. The poor pay and extremely bad conditions resulted in a labour shortage in this area. Black labour was seen as a solution to this problem and B.O.A.C. offered a £10.00 fee to every Asian worker who recruited another Asian Worker into the airline catering unit. The majority came from India and were either Sikhs or Hindus, but a small number also came from Pakistan and were Muslims. By 1962 the catering unit was an occupational ghetto, in which high levels of exploitation took place and in which an extensive system of corruption operated. This corruption was mainly operated by the charge hands, who were all white

workers, and took the form of black workers having to make payments for application forms for jobs, for successfully getting the job and for overtime.

An account was given of what the catering unit seemed like from the outside in a interview with a trade union official who was then a shop steward (1960's):

Q. *They were quite militant, they had quite a few disputes didn't they?*

A. *Yeh! but that was all basically the way they had been treated that caused a lot of that. They were treated like rubbish. They were lower life form really.*

Q. *Do you think it was tied up to this corruption thing?*

A. *Yeh, when I first went there they had an old white guy that used to control the bank, where all the staff used to come in for the wash-up. He was called the major. When he wanted a tea break he used to blow a whistle (laughs!) they all went. He was a real colonel Blimp. He retired in the end. But looking back on it, it was diabolical, but at the time that was normal, that was just normal. People weren't aware of the colour **[stops dead, a bit embarrassed, starts afresh]**. People used to think like the colonial days when they were servants, rubbish.*

Q. *That changed a bit because of what they did themselves?*

A. *Yeh - Yeh well I think Basha's⁵ group improved that lot.*

Two things seem certain from this statement. However isolated catering was from the rest of the airline, many people on the outside were aware of much that was going on there, and they generally accepted it as inevitable.

Before 1962 the B.O.A.C. Catering Unit (the largest of the two) was housed on the North side of Heathrow in a set of huts which at that time constituted the core of the airport's operations. At that time very few staff were Asians apart from the

washer-ups (one of the lowest grades). They were mainly European women - the majority Spanish. Some Filipinos were also employed.

It is difficult to substantiate how long the Asians had worked in the wash-up due to the lack of ethnic records, but a full time official of the union who worked in catering loaders then at that time, stated:-

There's always been Asians in the wash-up, as long as I can remember anyway.

In 1962 B.O.A.C. moved its catering unit to Comet House, which is on the South side of the airport near Hatton Cross Station - now part of the central management and engineering unit.

This move coincided with two important events: 1) the expansion of staffing levels within the catering unit; 2) the arrival in Britain of substantial numbers of Black workers.⁶

The B.O.A.C. catering unit in Comet House was very much an autonomous operation managed by white managers, many of whom viewed the Asian workers just like servants in the old empire. It was, as one union official described:-

an outstation - prior to 1975 it was just like an outstation with very little involvement in the general negotiation machinery at Heathrow.

The majority of catering workers then, as now, were members of the Transport and General Workers Union. That membership though, they insist, was in name only, as they rarely had contact with the union officials and only established, what they considered to be meaningful representation in the mid 1970s.

Before the integration of the Airlines into British Airways many of the departments within the separate Airlines were organised in an autonomous way, with a considerable amount of direction left in the hands of line managers. B.O.A.C. itself had a reputation for an old autocratic style of management. Many of its managers had served in the Royal Air Force, which at least in terms of its personnel image projected paternalism.⁷

Very few catering workers employed with B.O.A.C. at the time would endorse that the Airline was in practice benevolent, and much of the evidence presented in this thesis will show that the corporation's catering staff were as exploited and manipulated as any group of low paid catering workers in the country.

The important point here is that in the 1960s each department had far more individual power over its own events and had relatively minor interference from central management. It seems that many trade groups (see discussion concerning ramp workers and engineering workers in Chapters on "Formal Practices" and "Conclusion"), whose bargaining power was strong, favoured this situation. As the statement of the Transport and General Workers Union official's corroborates earlier, the catering unit was very much an isolated one which took care of its own business. As long as the catering unit provided the catering product to the Airline at a low unit cost (which it did) central management was quite happy to leave the internal operational mechanics to local management. Such a situation of course made high levels of exploitation and corruption a real possibility, particularly when one considers two other important factors: 1) the nature of catering production,⁸ and 2) many of the new employees at the time were newly arrived black migrant labour, and were subject to racist and stereotypical views by the majority of white staff working for the airline.

When one looks at the actual nature of labour location within British Airways it becomes apparent that Black workers are located within the traditional "black occupations" (low paid manual jobs). The recruitment of catering workers in

B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. in the 1960s was almost exclusively, with the important exceptions of middle management and chief grades, Asian.

The Corruption; and Turning the Blind Eye

Several Asian shop stewards made extensive statements about the level of corruption within the catering unit. In order to join B.O.A.C. catering unit it was necessary to pay anything up to £500.00. Overtime was often given to catering workers on the basis that 50% was paid back to managers involved in the corruption. Promotion was paid for, and often temporary and permanent staff were fired and then only taken back on the condition that they made a large payment to certain catering charge hands.

Then you had to pay- you had to pay big money. It started off with a £150 for an application form--to make you permanent another £250 and it went up to a £1,000..a £1,000 plus.....The Ariel Hotel was where the agent would go and give you your application form. On the application form the agent would leave their mark or initial so when it came to fill it out they would know that he had taken money for it. So you had to hire the man. (Bashir Bhatti,catering shop steward)⁹

Nearly all shop stewards spoken to in other trade groups said they either knew or learnt that such practices existed and many accepted it as a normal practice related to "Asian culture". The incentive for Asian workers to find employment in an airline is great, particularly in B.O.A.C. All staff, after a short period of employment, are entitled to some form of flight concession. Most airline staff and close family are allowed 90% off the airfare on as many flights as they wish (on stand by basis) and within British Airways all staff, after a specific period of employment are entitled to either one or two free flights a year. Such a concession, particularly to workers of Asian origin, (as flights to Asia are of a high

fare construction) is a major incentive to seek employment within the airline. A job for £500.00 might well seem cheap when you consider that it could save twice that amount on the first return journey to Asia.

The incentive alone cannot explain the practice of such corruption. The content of the jobs and the relationship this group had to other trade groups and to the official trade union organisation are crucial factors that make such malpractices possible. These issues will be discussed throughout the thesis in a number of chapters. Here, in a history chapter, it is sufficient to say that such corruption existed in the early 1960s, that these practices had become an integral element of catering jobs, and that further there was a generally accepted apathy by all other parties who were aware that such practices existed, e.g. central management, trade union officials and shop stewards in other trade groups.

Throughout much of the 1960s the catering workers had no direct representation to central management. They also had no specific union panel or union branch. During this period what developed was a "union within a union", where groups of Asians began organising their own forms of defence against what they saw as extreme forms of exploitation.

There had been attempts in the 1960s to confront this intense exploitation but in nearly all cases they had failed. As early as 1964 they had organised a "work to rule" in order to stop the payment for overtime. It lasted for six weeks with the result that a production backlog was mounting. B.O.A.C. simply called in scab labour on the night staff to clear the backlog. The official union's main suggestion for action in this period was, as one shop steward explained:-

The union suggested we put a ban on overtime. We tried it, but we couldn't afford the loss of money as we work 60 hours a week to earn a living wage. The ban collapsed.

(Race Today)

That a high level of exploitation and corruption did exist cannot be explained by reference to the cultural characteristics of the workers themselves. The view that corruption was culturally related to asian workers was held by many union officials and white shop stewards. This statement by a union official was expressed on numerous occasions:-

What you have got to understand about those workers over there is that corruption is part of the way they live, its happening now in other companies - what we call the Southall Mafia, it's their way of life.

Corruption is not specific to any ethnic group, and in fact the main workers involved in corruption at British Airways' were white British workers.

To summarise very briefly what has been stated so far:

In the early 1960s both B.O.A.C. and B.E.A., like most other flag carrying airlines, underwent an expansion brought about by a relative boom in trade. I.A.T.A. controlled airfares and thus any attempt by individual airlines to capture a bigger share of the market was generally based on attempts to provide a superior quality of service. This type of competitiveness brought about an expansion of catering production within both B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. This expansion also coincided with a relatively large influx of Asian immigrants, many of whom settled in the Southall area which is near Heathrow Airport.

Catering production is generally associated with low wages and unit cost, and B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. were no exception to this rule. The catering units contained the lowest grades of jobs in the airline - in 1974/5 catering manual workers were paid £5 to £7 a week less than any other manual trade group.

The availability of a labour pool of these newly arrived Asian workers, who in addition had very little bargaining power, allowed both airlines to expand their

catering production while proportionately maintaining their expenditure costs. Further, the control of the catering units was very much in the hands of the line managers, and while general policy may well have been determined by central management, the actual mechanics of the operation were in the hands of these line managers. In this way the everyday running of the unit (who was hired, who got overtime, who was promoted) rested in the hands of a catering management housed in the same unit.

Conclusion on the 1960s

Many of the struggles that developed out of the early 1960s were a direct response to the various corrupt practices which had developed in the catering unit. These corrupt practices developed through conditions and practices incorporated within the job content itself. Most struggles that the catering workers initiated were involved with the nature of formal job content and employment practices e.g. promotion procedure, temporary contracts.

Almost without exception Asian shop stewards comment that both central management and official trade union were well aware that such corruption took place, but both turned a 'blind eye' to it. They were both quite happy for things to be as they were providing the corruption was contained within catering and did not directly affect management and official union business.

It must be stressed however, that such acceptance by the respective parties (union and management) and the practices and corruption themselves were not based on racist attitudes alone. This is part of the central argument in this thesis. The existence of such corrupt practices is partly dependent on the ability of such corrupt practices to be implemented within the framework of the job content itself. To put it more simply, the jobs themselves, the poor pay and bad conditions act as a pre-condition for such malpractices to take place.

This therefore makes the central issue of struggle the actual nature of the work being done, and in turn how that work is organised, graded and rewarded. Corruption therefore is only one aspect of the realisation of the actual job content. The argument is not that corruption only takes place in poor pay and bad conditioned jobs, but that in this case the poor pay and bad conditions in the catering unit made such corruption possible.

Therefore, the important issues were the nature of the job and the practices involved, not the corruption, not for that matter the ideology of the individuals instigating corruption, not a group of racist managers lining their own pockets, but the practices which allowed such individuals to pursue their own profit.

Further, while obviously the shared apathy of union officials and management is partially due to racist stereotypes it does not explain fully the general acceptance that such jobs should be monopolised by black workers and additionally that such practices should be tolerated. To a great extent both parties must share a perceived suitability (racist attitude) that such workers (Asians) should do such jobs (catering work).

Managers in particular are not generally concerned if the workers are women, black or European, only that they produce an item at the lowest possible unit cost. It could be argued that it is in the interest of trade union officials to ensure that the 'right' kind of labour is located in the 'right kind of job' in order to ensure a degree of peace, not only for themselves but also between trade groups. Obviously this statement is a contentious one and one which supports the argument that trade union officials are "keepers of the peace". (It is not an argument totally supported here). However, one comment by a union official would seem to imply some support for this argument:

If you pay shit wages, you get shit, the drifters and layabouts etc.

Empirically though, the case study data supports one of the thesis's main arguments, which is that certain jobs act as a pre-condition for intense exploitation and corruption. In nearly all cases where corruption was abolished it was achieved through a staff victory for change in actual job content, e.g. promotion procedure, overtime allocation, job definition.

Sowing the Seeds of Conflict (The struggle against official union and management)

What developed in the early 1960s was a set of isolated catering units (two) staffed at the manual level almost exclusively by Asian workers whose bargaining power and terms of employment were tenuous. Within this environment certain individual managers were able to instigate a system of corrupt practices (e.g. bribery payments for jobs, overtime and promotion), built around the existing malpractices concerned with the job content of these catering jobs (e.g. localised control of recruitment, temporary contracts, promotion procedures).

The catering workers were almost totally unionised but their experience of official union matters was extremely limited. In addition their involvement in union British matters was minimal. The official union on its part played a minimal role apart from issues of common agreement in which other ground service staff were involved. Seven separate Asian shop stewards made the point that the official union's response to the low pay and the corruption was not simply apathetic, it was also at times inhibitive to change. The now national sectional panel representative for catering stated:-

Our first battle was with the union, not management. It was probably a harder battle to win.

Things grew so bad between the catering workers and the Transport & General Workers Union that in 1972 a large section of them attempted to leave this union and join the General & Municipal Workers Union.

Anyone who is aware of inter-union procedure will know that any attempt to switch unions is difficult, due, not only to an inter-union understanding on such matters but also the Bridlington Agreement which makes transfer particularly hard.

In a letter to the catering workers dated 4/12/72, from J.W. O'Brian (Regional Official) of the G.M.W.U., he wrote:-

You are no doubt aware that the Transport & General Workers Union, your old union, have declined to accept the transfer and this has caused the delay. However, there are some grounds for believing that the T.&G.W.U.'s attitude might well constitute an unreasonable refusal to assent to the transfers, and we would therefore have to pursue this with that organisation...

That the G.M.W.U. were willing to consider the issue, and further that they were willing to accept that the T.&G.W.U.'s attitude might well constitute an "unreasonable refusal to assent to the transfers", is an indication of how seriously strained the relationship between the Asian catering workers and the T.&G.W.U. had become.

In the end the workers remained with T.&G.W.U. but the action in itself did bring a response from the union in question, whereby they did, at least on the surface, pay more attention to the workers' problems. However, this incident did not come at the end of a long period of struggle within the union, the incident in itself forms only part of the continuing struggle that the catering workers undertook for full trade union representation.

In the early 1960s the catering workers had neither their own union branch nor authorised shop stewards; basic facilities that nearly all other groups of workers in the airline accepted as a "right".

He never wanted to know [union official]. He never knew me, recognise me....never issue me a credentials when I was a shop steward, for many years I never knew that you needed the credentials, I never had a shop steward card, I was a steward without a card for many years.(Bashir Bhatti,catering shop steward)

By the mid 1960s the majority of manual catering workers were Asians whose pay and conditions were vastly inferior to those of other airline staff. For example in 1974, a cleaning labourer in the engineering unit was on £5.00 a week more than a catering processor, who had to do the same job in addition to assembly-line catering production.

Probably the most effective practice that undermined the bargaining ability of the catering workers, and also allowed corruptive practices to take place, was the existence of large groups of workers on temporary contract. Many of these contract workers had been in the unit for two and three years. As one Asian shop steward explained:-

In the contract the term "temporary" worker means those people who are employed for not more than six months. I have seen several people dismissed at the end of their six months and then re-employed as little as five months later on the same job. In this way for years they can remain 'temporary'. When you are in that position you are afraid to demand anything- (C.P. Chanal,catering shop steward)¹⁰

So it was that many of the poor conditions themselves allowed for the corruptive practices to take place. Thus in order to eliminate the corrupt practices the workers had to struggle to confront the whole nature of their employment and redefine their existence as catering workers. This brought them into conflict not just with management but also with the official union.

Their achievement in the 1970s was a result of a direct response of the network of work practices that had developed in the early 1960s.

Shop stewards in other trade groups have commented that. "What was going on in the catering units (corruption etc.) was 'part and parcel' of the Asian way of life, and something that was bound to happen in an area where the pay is bad and you have poor trade unionists".

Such comments simply justify the existence of low paid jobs - which in themselves make malpractices possible and further place some blame--- "poor trade unionists", "Asian way of life" - on the workers themselves.

When one considers the obstacles that existed in the 1960s for such groups of workers their achievement of equal conditions and pay in the late 1970s (and in some cases higher pay) seems all the more significant. It has been well documented by Verity Sacfullah Khan (1979), that the Asian community is not an homogeneous unit.¹¹ Important political, nationalistic, religious and cultural divisions do exist between Asian workers of Indian, Pakistan, Muslim and Hindu background etc. These divisions did and still do exist within the catering unit, and yet regardless of those divisions considerable unity of action was achieved. Even in 1971 when the India/Pakistan conflict had heightened on the subcontinent the unity of action between workers was intense. As "Race Today" reported in their August 1975 edition:-

Faced with a new sense of rebellion and power, in 1971 at a time when the India/Pakistan conflict had heightened on the sub-continent, management suddenly slashed recruiting Pakistan workers. The move was seen by the workers as a divide and rule tactic.

We didn't show the Pakistan workers any hostility. We never discussed the war or anything. In fact we said, no matter where you come from, in this place, we all get an equally rotten deal. The ploy failed and management went back to recruiting Indian workers.

Such a unity suggests that divisions are not unsurmountable, especially when other crucial factors, such as common exploitation, act to bind them.

The experience of the catering workers in the 1960s was similar to that of many black workers throughout the country; they had entered the labour market at its lowest level and been confronted by a whole range of practices which intensified their exploitation. They had been locked into an occupational trap which was reinforced by the inhibitive reaction of official union organisation and other trade group activity. Much of the inhibitive process was not based upon racial prejudice alone (even though it did exist in extreme, overt forms in this period) but also on a set of trade union practices which evolved around the way that jobs are organised and defined. By the end of the 1960s the seeds that had been sown concerning the mal-employment practices were well integrated into the occupational existence of the catering workers. By the beginning of the 1970s new seeds were being sown, this time by the workers, seeds of overt forms of resistance. There began a new period of struggle which was to find a realisation also in other areas of black employment such as Imperial Typewriters, Grunwicks. This organised opposition by black workers, who opposed not only unfair employers but also what they saw as non-representative unions, was an

expression of the common experience of black workers in the labour market. British Airways catering workers were probably the most effective, in terms of confronting discrimination in employment, of all the groups that have been documented, and it is now to their history in the 1970s that we turn.

The 1970s and the Struggle for Parity.

What accumulated throughout the 1960s was a range of malpractices which compounded even further the intense exploitation that had originally existed in the catering unit in the early and pre 1960s days. As stated earlier, this exploitation seems to have been similar to that experienced by workers in numerous occupations in which black labour was concentrated. The majority of this black labour was incorporated into those occupations that were low skilled and into industries based on labour intensity, i.e. catering, car manufacturing, foundry work.

What generally seems significant in the early 1970s is a whole spate of organised action by groups of black workers which resulted in disputes. This was a sharp contrast to their previous experiences in these occupations.

The 1970s and the Struggle for Union Representation

In 1969 five Asians formed their own panel of stewards none of these stewards had any official union credentials, but all had been voted in by the majority of staff. In the South Side Catering there had only previously been one black shop steward. This shop steward was to become the centre of a struggle between the newly elected shop stewards and the official union.

In the opinion of many Asian workers, Asian shop stewards and one official union officer, this first Asian shop steward was a "management man" and had, to quote, "lined his own pockets." He was to become the first Asian 'D' scale catering worker¹² and many interviewed offered the opinion that his promotion was part of management's way of thanking him for his past services. Tension was intensified even further when he was retained as the official staff representative,

a move which many of the workers viewed as a collaboration between official union and B.A. management.

On the 7/9/70 J. Collier, Official Union Representative, agreed at National level that a far greater flexibility within the catering unit could be achieved. This agreement outraged many of the staff who had not been consulted. At a branch meeting called afterwards, the Asian shop steward was asked to explain why the agreement was reached. The branch meeting became so heated that in the end it finished in chaos. Four Asian workers who were at that meeting stated that much of the disruption had been caused by the shop steward, J. Collier and some management who were in attendance.

After this J. Collier dissolved the panel on which the five Asians sat on and declared the Asian shop steward as the official union representative. It was after this incident that Asian workers started to resign from the T.&G.W.U. and apply to the G.M.W.U. At first the number was 35 but it eventually reached a level of 180. Finally the T. & G.W.U. agreed to provide better representation. The final act in this episode was when the five Asian stewards brought about a union enquiry into why a 'D' scale representative should be steward for the manual grade workers.

Why the Strain of Relationship (Workers v Official Union)?

Two union officials and two other trade group shop stewards were of the opinion that the main reason for such a strained relationship between the two parties (workers v official union) was a lack of communication. The Asian workers, they argued, were unaware of formal union procedures and as union officials operate under a heavy work schedule their main response to problems is bound to be brought about by those workers who know how to use the official union machinery. This was also the opinion quoted by a Committee of Enquiry, set up to enquire into the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the industrial dispute in the Flight Catering Centre of British Airways, E.D. on Sunday 16th March 1975. The

committee was chaired by Sir Leslie Williams C.B.E. (Independent Chairperson for Conciliation Committee of the National Joint Council for Civil Air Transport). It had also one Trade Union and one management nominee.

Although this enquiry was set up to deal with a specific dispute it did accept that this dispute was part of a far more deep-rooted set of problems and thus stated:-

Although this enquiry arose from a specific incident the Terms of Reference are so drawn as to enable the Committee to make more general observations and the hope has been expressed that it would do so.

And...

The Committee formed the opinion that the situation at shop floor level has deteriorated steadily over recent years.

While the appeal related directly to an unofficial dispute between the workers and management, implicit to the appeal committee's analysis of the event was the committee's acceptance of the strained relationship between the workers and the official union.

Of the three main recommendations it made, two of them related directly to problems of communication. The other was concerned directly with the dispute itself and related to the continuation of a disciplinary enquiry.

The whole point about locating the problem in communication is that, to some degree, it exonerates the trade union and management from any accusation of racial discrimination and places the main emphasis of blame on the workers themselves and their cultural capital (language difficulties).

The report clearly locates the problem in the clash of Asian culture with traditions of British work practices. The Report states:-

3. Shop floor staff are now, predominantly Asians in origin and the Committee believe that a number of problems arise for attention by management and the Trade Unions:

(a) the need to understand the problems arising from the interaction of the traditional Asian living and working community with the British industrial relations outlook and the conflicts of an industrial society;

(b) the need for management to recognise the change and adapt its actions accordingly;

(c) the need for the Trade Union concerned to encourage British trade union traditions and responsibilities among staff of non-British origin.

All the recommendations that directly concerned the problems that had been identified were related to educating the workers themselves. No mention was made of the existing disparity of treatment both by management and the unions towards this group of workers, nor of the whole complexity of practices that had developed within the working environment itself. (For copy of report see appendix 2)

Not only did the suggested problems (as quoted above), attribute to Asian workers the lack of integration to the British working traditions, but also the recommendations themselves compounded the view that the catering workers were "aliens" who had to be fitted into the British order of things, in this case extreme exploitation.

The first recommendation probably illustrates my argument more clearly:-

The Committee recommends:-

(1) that staff representative training courses should contain, as a specific major item, a session(s) specifically directed to educating non-British staff in the role and responsibilities of staff representative in the British working environment. It has been suggested that there should be specific courses for non-British self representatives but the committee is not in favour of these. Such segregation appears undesirable and there are positive advantages in attendance at courses in company with British staff representatives.

Even the last sentence lays an inference of blame on the black shop stewards and implies that little can be learnt on a course of all Asian shop stewards and any positive advantage can be achieved only by the attendance of British staff representatives.

The actual categorisation of stewards into groups of British and non-British is racially discriminative and serves only to camouflage the real issue of working practices.¹³ Many Asian shop stewards admitted to having learnt valuable information from white shop stewards, but the advantage gained was not based on the information being given by a "British staff representative" but on the fact that the informant, from past experience had some valuable information to give, much in the same way that present catering shop stewards through their own struggles are often used as a source of information. The issue of their cultural way of life is discussed in the chapter on "Informal Practices".

It is the general view of black shop stewards that the official union in the period leading up to 1975 played a pacifying role. The Asian workers themselves were acutely aware that their job conditions and pay were inferior to those of other

workers within B.A. The official union made promises to address this problem but very little was actually done. It was the opinion of everyone spoken to in B.A. catering that inertia by the official union was the main reason for the strain of relationship between the two parties. An article in "Race Today" August 1975, states in connection with a B.A. catering dispute of the same year:-

-- the demand for parity with white workers dates back to 1969. it is an issue that has been fought over before. One worker recollected that in November '72 when things threatened to come to a head John Cousins (Senior T. & G.W.U. official) rushed to the scene and addressed the same group of workers "guaranteeing" that within six months the disparity in wages would be sorted out. 'That's the last time we saw or heard from him. If we keep waiting on people like him to sort out our problems we will get nowhere. We've waited six years already.

"Union within a Union"

By the early 1970s the catering workers had identified a whole range of conditions and practices which other trade groups within the airline enjoyed and yet were denied to them, such as permanent contracts, free meal breaks, fixed job definitions, higher pay, fair distribution of overtime, set promotion procedures, free safety shoes.

The identification of such disparities they believed should have been sufficient in itself to bring about a positive response by the official trade union. They also believed that such a disparity was a direct result of racial discriminative practices by both the management and the unions. They believed that the trade union was there to defend their interests, and when it did not, mistrust and disillusionment set in. Their initial response was the setting up on a "union within a union":

In a six weeks' dispute with management, in 1962, the union never came near us. Nobody came to us. We needed the T. & G. as a good umbrella, but we didn't need the union's services, we never needed them then. They never wanted to know what we were doing....they only wanted to know when management were having problems. They were dining and wining with them all the time...I would say that it was 1976 near enough before they started to come to us first.
(Bashir Bhatti, catering shop steward).

The five original Asian shop stewards acted as a nucleus upon which their own catering informal organisation grew.¹⁴ With very little real union experience the catering workers tried out various unofficial actions, like "go slows" and "work to rules" (1964 dispute). By 1975 the extent to which unofficial actions could be contained by both B.A. management and the official union had reached its limit. The enquiry mentioned earlier, held on 16th March 1975, and supported by both management and official union, suggested a need to achieve a far greater level of formal involvement by the catering shop stewards.

Ultimately this led to the catering workers being granted a place on the Ground Services National Panel in 1975/76 and the Union laying on a special course in November 1977 at Eastbourne on union procedures and organisation for catering section shop stewards.

What has to be remembered also is that the whole of British Airways staff/management negotiating machinery was undergoing a dramatic change in the 1970s. With the merger of B.E.A. and B.O.A.C. at Heathrow in 1972 into the one airline management, the need to achieve a higher level of consent from staff became greater. Collective bargaining within the airline was becoming a complete network of consultative committees. The T.&G.W.U., for its part, had a policy

initiated by Jack Jones of greater involvement by lay representatives. In British Airways though all eleven trade groups, which involve various unions, have mainly lay representatives on their National Sectional Panels and this means that formal negotiating machinery exists both across the airline and from the top to the bottom of it.

The incorporation of catering workers into the formal negotiating machinery can then be seen as due partly to this overall trend toward formalisation within B.A. It was also likely to be an attempt by management and the official union to defuse conflict. However, and this cannot be overstated, it was also a process brought about by the catering workers' own struggle for access to formalised bargaining. The reasons for the catering workers wish for access to formalised bargaining will become much clearer when we examine the issue of job evaluation later.

The catering workers had identified a whole range of practices which instigated corruption, high exploitation and forms of racial discrimination. The elimination of these practices was not based upon ideological battles or the identification of intentional action. The focus of their activity was upon the institutional mechanisms which served to ensure the nature and existence of such employment practices. We now need to look at the main mechanism involved in the realisation of discriminatory practices.

Linking the Corruption with the Practices

You can never get anyone to admit that they paid to join British Airways or say they had given money for overtime. We knew it was going on. Management would just say - 'prove it'.

(Catering Shop Steward.)

The Asian shop stewards viewed the temporary contract as a central practice by British Airways which had allowed corruption to take place and generally undermined any bargaining position that the catering worker might have.

In addition to the temporary contract (i.e. individuals employed by B.A. on less than 6 months contract with very little employment protection) there was also the practice of sub-contract work. The staff restaurants at West London Air Terminal are a good example, where catering was provided by Aircraft Catering Services, a company that British Airways part owned with Trust House Forte. The issue of contract labour was one that had been raised at various intervals throughout the 1970s by the catering stewards and other stewards in other areas in which the practice was used, such as engineering and motor transport.

The employers consistently argued that the use of contract labour exonerated British Airways from any responsibility concerning the conditions upon which such contract labour was employed. In nearly all cases the contract labour was rewarded with a substantially inferior rate of pay and conditions than that of British Airways staff. Given that the British Airways catering staff suffered a disparity in pay with other manual workers in the airline, this meant that conditions and pay amongst contract labour must have been extremely poor.

The existence of contract labour had/has two effects:-

- 1) it prevented a comparison upon which reference could be made to B.A. catering workers concerning their better pay and conditions;
- 2) it gave British Airways a cheap source of labour with little or no responsibility towards the workers and in addition no involvement in problems concerning industrial relations.

It is little wonder then that British Airways have reverted to contracting out in the 1980s nearly all their catering, with the exception of the South Side. (See chapter - "The 1980s and a New Era").

To return to the issue of 'temporary contracts'. This practice was to remain a thorn in the side of the catering workers until 1975 when British Airways in principle abolished the practice after a strike.

In terms of employment practices which allowed for corruption, three main areas were located by the catering workers: 1) the allocation of over time; 2) promotion procedures; 3) job grading and definition.

Allocation of Overtime

The low-wage structure in the catering unit made overtime an important issue. An attempted overtime ban in 1962 ended in failure because of a requirement by the majority of staff to work at least 60 hours a week to earn a living wage. The issue was also raised at the National Sectional Panel meeting on 25th October 1973 concerning part-time staff in the catering units. Their dependency on overtime was even more extreme. Most of the part-time workers were on a 30 hour week, which meant any hope of a reasonable wage was based on the ability to obtain overtime.

The staff also pointed out to management that the staff concerned should have an enhanced rate of overtime which should be computed on a daily basis and not after the completion of their 30 hour week. As an example in support of their view they showed how a member could complete 2 hours of overtime duty on the first day of the week, but they would only be paid the flat rate for the whole 12 hours. This they felt was manifestly unfair.

The dependency on overtime, particularly by part-time workers, was great. The procedure for allocating overtime was totally under the control of catering management, which meant they had the means whereby corrupt practices could

be instigated. Thus a combination of factors - low pay, arbitrary allocation, part-time workers - combined to allow corrupt practices to flourish.

Promotion Procedure

Promotion depended on the discretion of the managers. There were no Asians employed as chefs even though some were qualified in previous employment. Where promotion had taken place, as in the case of the first Asian shop steward, bad feeling and mistrust had been created generally amongst the catering workforce.

Many of the Asian shop stewards expressed the opinion that promotion had been instigated either for personal financial gain by individual managers or as a tactic by management to create ill-feeling amongst the workforce by giving preference, for example, to a Muslim or a Hindu. In order to eliminate both practices the shop stewards initiated a campaign to have promotion based on seniority, regardless of colour, creed or ability. (See Agreement in appendix 3).

Job Definition and Grading

The agreement of 1970 which provided a high level of flexibility amongst catering workers had created much ill-feeling. Previous to this agreement the range of tasks carried out by the catering workers had been varied already. What the agreement did was to legitimise this almost free use of catering labour. Catering workers were becoming increasingly aware that they were expected to do a whole range of jobs in addition to the specific function of catering production, and yet were paid less than workers in other trade groups doing only part of the additional function, i.e. engineering labourers on £5.00 a week more (1975).

As my previous argument on discrimination is based on the existence of the job as pre-condition, it follows that the importance given to job evaluation and definition will be significant. Therefore discussion on the whole issue of job definition is explored in a separate chapter. At this point it is sufficient to say that

in the early 1970s the catering shop stewards had identified job description as a crucial element in their struggle for parity. For example, evidence given at a British Airways Race Relations Inquiry states:-

"Grading and Job Description"

All other departments have self-contained grading systems. The higher white workers in our unit all have specific jobs that go with their grades. They know these and do only these jobs. Even the loaders, the workers closest in grade to us with whom we have contact, have a very firm grading system and know the boundaries of their duty. In our unit however, this does not happen, either with the women or the men. Labourers are doing unskilled and semi skilled tasks at the same time. In the wash up section specifically the men are cleaning the work area, dealing with the crockery and cutlery set to be marked and washed. At the same time they are operating machines, cleaning, and often having themselves to repair these machines. These latter jobs are classified as semi skilled in other departments.

Apart from these key areas the catering stewards also identified specific facilities that other workers enjoyed but which were denied to them. The main ones were a paid meal break, free issue of safety shoes (they had to pay for their own), and the facility that was perhaps most offensive to them, free meals for chefs. They received a meal allowance of 12 1/2 p a day which had remained unchanged since 1955. While they helped to prepare the food they were often reprimanded by line managers for eating as much as a piece of toast.

By the early 1970s the Asian shop stewards were left in no doubt that if they wished to abolish the corrupt practices and achieve parity of pay and conditions, then they would have to achieve this mainly through their own efforts, they could not rely on the official union. They did receive help and advice from individual white shop stewards from other trade groups but, in the main, their achievements were made by their own struggle and through their own experiences.

The Formal and the Informal Struggle

What immediately strikes one when examining the minutes of National Sectional Panel meetings, in relation to the catering workers, is the sparse mention they receive in the period from 1971-1974 in comparison to 1975-1977. In the period 1971 to 1974 there are only twelve specific references made while in the period 1975 to 1977 there are forty references made. In terms of actual National Sectional Panel meetings there were approximately twenty in both periods.

While 1971 to 1974 was a period of intense struggle, mainly based on internal disruptive tactics, 1975 was a crucial turning point. The strike on the 13th July 1975 was the first in which the entire Asian workforce in catering walked out.

Also it was the year in which a high level of formal involvement within the negotiating machinery was achieved. As mentioned earlier a national lay representative was appointed in 1975/6. While the catering unit had some form of representation at national level in the period 1971-1974 it is obvious that the introduction of direct representation in 1975/6 had an immediate result in terms of formal involvement. It is also obvious from the minutes of the early period that the National Sectional Panel was well aware of the disparity of treatment in the catering unit. In fact in a meeting on the 14th December 1974 the staff side stated in relation to the catering workers:-

they were somewhat disturbed by the differing treatment of various groups of categories of staff and felt Management's approach left much to be desired.

What seems generally agreed by the parties spoken to was that the later period of formal involvement by catering stewards was directly brought about by the level of informal disruption and activity in the 1971-1975 period. The overall inertia of the official trade union and the overall evasiveness of local management in dealing with the grievances of the catering workers in the early period brought about a response from the catering workers of informal or unofficial action.

Local management often made it very clear that they were not willing to discuss issues concerning corruption. The catering workers for their part replied by stating that until the corruption stopped they would take every opportunity to disrupt production. What is crucial in terms of the analysis presented in this thesis is that corruption was only abolished after the practices which acted as a pre-condition for corruption were eliminated. Their struggles were aimed at eliminating corrupt practices and gaining greater access formalised bargaining. The two bargaining objectives were linked!

The intensity of the struggles taking place at this time is clearly demonstrated by the physical threats made to Bashir Bhatti. For more details see the section on Bashir Bhatti in the chapter on "Formal Practices".

What is also interesting about this earlier period is that black labour within the airline was almost exclusively confined to the catering unit. It is only after 1976 that one finds any noticeable level of black labour other than in the catering units and in the engineering units. To quote one full-time union official in the T.&G.W.U. who was a catering loader:-

I was in catering loading when the first Asian came in there. When he was the first coloured person of any sort. That was about 1976 - I don't think B.O.A.C. liked the idea of coloured guys being seen loading food on the aircraft. You could never prove that sort of thing. But he came in, there was problems to start with - people wouldn't talk to him - after a few months, once they saw that he was one of the lads that was O.K. There's everyone over there now, Chinese, Indian, West Indians, Malaysians, everyone's loading over there -. But the first time you know, he had bloody guts to come in there I think, because it was a forbidden area, there was nobody that ever got to move out of wash up area catering loading.

Question:- So you think it may have been a ploy by British Airways to stop black workers moving out of catering?

Answer:- Yea, but you could never prove that; I mean most probably they had the undercurrent that the blokes didn't want it either (loaders). It wasn't this liberalised attitude as you have got now.

As Richard Hyman (1989) points out in "Strikes", much of the trade union action is based on unofficial practices. In nearly all disputes the official union acts in reaction to shop floor pressure. But, in contrast, much of the day-to-day involvement of shop floor trade unionism, particularly shop stewards, is based on formal procedures. Branch meetings, resolutions, panel meetings all contribute to the laid out formal practices that trade unions operate under at plant level.

Obviously trade unionism at the localised level is far more than just formal procedure and a whole range of cultural, political, social and ideological forces operate as in any other social setting.

In the 1960s and 1970s there was an interplay between informal practices and formal involvement. In the earlier period informal practices were by far the most dominant form of industrial expression for the catering workers, while in the 1970s it was the activity within formal bargaining which dominated. This was partly due to being isolated and ostracised by the rest of the union. In such a situation they had to resort to their own resources, mainly informal or unofficial action. It seems the more successful they were, then the more they became incorporated into the formal machinery of collective bargaining. It is very tempting to view this process as simply a form of incorporation by management and the official union. Certainly this must have been a major motive of both parties.

Previously the official union and central management had been relatively happy to let catering "tick over" by itself. Once disruption started and the catering workers were initiating enquiries into racial discrimination and union underrepresentation then both the official union and central management took a far closer look at what was happening in catering. The incorporation of the catering stewards into the formal machinery was one possible way of containing the problem of disruption.

However, the data supports strongly the view that the process of access to formalised negotiations was a bargaining objective of the catering workers themselves; and that such access did bring substantial rewards.

In addition this process was also due to the respect they gained from other shop stewards in the airline, who have all commented in one way or another that what catering achieved had been done by themselves, "having a go". This respect in turn provides the catering shop stewards with some credentials in terms of general trade union involvement in the airline.

Breaking the Practices

These agreements (National Joint Council/Agreements) have never been given to all the workers and have also been kept away from shop stewards (Catering Shop Stewards). It was only in 1973 that the agreement of 1970 came to light. Then we learnt that the entire airport with the exception of the catering units were paid meal breaks.

(Joint statement made by catering shop stewards at the Race Relations Enquiry in 1975)

In November 1973, the catering shop stewards, after learning that all other workers except their group, were allowed paid meal breaks, decided to take industrial action in the overseas division (South Side).

Management immediately responded by recognising the agreement unilaterally. It was agreed to pay meal breaks from the end of 1973 to all catering units.

This incident raises some important questions, they are:-

- 1) Was this a case of direct racial discrimination against a unit where a high level of black workers was concentrated?
- 2) As the official union is jointly responsible for ensuring that agreements are made known to shop stewards, how far was it directly responsible for discrimination taking place?
- 3) How far did the low level of formal involvement by the catering shop stewards contribute to their lack of awareness of the agreement over three years?

An attempt will be made to answer these questions in a later chapter. What does seem incredible, though, is that such an agreement, which other workers took for granted, could exist for three years and yet remain unknown to catering shop stewards.

On the surface this would seem to confirm three points made earlier: 1) Catering was isolated; 2) There was a low level of formal involvement by catering stewards in the negotiation machinery (The agreement was made at National level); 3) There was a lack of official union contact with catering workers.

In the early 1970s feelings generally amongst the catering workers were that they, as a group of workers, were receiving a worse deal in terms of job conditions and pay, than other groups of workers throughout the airline. All the catering shop stewards interviewed expressed the opinion that much of this was directly due to racial discrimination by both management and the trade union.

How do you respect the union official and the T. & G. when every one else is working 40 hours a week and we are working 44 and half hours in catering and for less money. We pay the union officials wage and you leave catering workers to work more than the rest of the airline. Why not one agreement? The agreement of 1975, cargo, fire workers, motor transport and us, and we are all working different hours...and he let it go on. The agreement of 1969, the official union sign it and let catering workers continue working longer hours, it was because we were Asian workers. (Bashi Bhatti Catering Shop Steward).

Their repeated appeals to the official trade union officials to amend the anomalies and ensure parity with other workers seemed to bring little positive response from the trade union officers.

Shop stewards in the motor division, in the engineering, and in loading stated that the frustration and strain in catering had got really bad in the early 1970s. An engineering steward, Paddy Maher, in particular stated that he had advised the catering stewards that the best they could do was to take unofficial action and force a response from the unions and management. On talking to the catering stewards about advice from other shop stewards, they said that individual stewards, the engineering steward was named, had been helpful and encouraging, but in the end it had been through their own initiative and efforts that any change had come about.

On the 13th July 1975 the entire catering section of the airline walked out on unofficial strike. The union refused to make the strike official or to negotiate over the issue of parity of pay. Their only intervention was to negotiate over some of the other minor grievances, such as free meals and the issue of free safety stores.

Receiving no strike pay, the workers returned to work after six days, yet many of the catering stewards felt that they had achieved more in those six days than they had over the last six years. Through the strike they were able to make the majority of temporary workers permanent, and thus improve their theoretical bargaining position and partly eliminate one area where corruption had taken place. This unofficial strike had been the first action to bring about a real response from the union and management. It also brought about a commitment by management to address the issue of pay parity by setting up a job evaluation system. (See Chapters on "Informal Practices and Formal Practices").

Over the next five years the catering workers were to engage in a number of strikes and disruptive actions, be the subject of various separate industrial

conciliation enquiries and also instigate an enquiry of racial discrimination by the Airline through the Race Relations Committee of the National Joint Council of Civil Aviation (1976). The outstanding issues of promotion procedures, fair distribution of overtime and parity of pay were to become issues that would be won within these five years but only after some considerable struggle.

It was on the 18th August 1977 that the next major achievement was made. At a mass meeting of catering workers the stewards made a recommendation to return to work after a strike over outstanding issues. This strike had been particularly disruptive and had created a considerable back-log in catering production. In addition to the disruption there was little likelihood of management being able to recruit other labour (whether contract or scab labour) as this might have escalated the strike. The catering workers had already gained some credibility amongst other trade groups as good trade unionists.

The strike itself had been based on the issue of overtime. The recommendation by the stewards was based on a provisional agreement made with management on Wednesday 17th August. The agreement was:-

- 1) An immediate recruitment of 25 staff to be attached to appropriate work areas as soon as possible.
- 2) The fair distribution of overtime working within each section.
- 3) The Consultancy Services study report to be available for discussion by Representatives of the N.S.P. on Monday 22nd August.
- 4) When management decide to use the facility of unscheduled up-lifts of catering they will:-
 - i) during normal day work hours inform and consult the Chairman or Secretary of the local Panel Committee.

- ii) Outside these hours, if unscheduled up-lifts of catering are required these will be logged and reported to the Chairman or Secretary of the local Panel Committee the following day, or if they occur over the weekend at the earliest opportunity. After an initial period of three months the exercise will be reviewed by the local Panel Committee.

- 5) The employees undertake to use their good offices that the back-log of work in the Equipment Processing Section will be cleared, if possible, within twenty-four hours of the resumption of work, sufficiently so that aircraft services would be fully catered.

- 6) Panel Representatives of Catering Services South to meet Management Representative within forty-eight hours of his return from leave to present their case for the recruitment of additional staff, and the reduction of overtime working.

- 7) In line with N.S.P. Agreement, there will be no discrimination or recrimination on either side as a result of the dispute.

In effect this agreement took control of overtime away from the line managers and eliminated any possibility of corrupt practices. The formalisation of the procedure reduced the likelihood of overtime being allocated in an arbitrary way at the discretion of individual managers and made the whole procedure answerable to the negotiation panel machinery.

This agreement is quoted in full for two reasons;

- 1) it shows how the formalisation of a given work practice can have the effect of eliminating an existing malpractice, i.e. workers paying for overtime;

- 2) it also shows how the management were now taking the catering workers seriously.

The grievance had existed well back into the 1960s, but the isolation of catering workers within both the airline structure and the trade union framework had largely in the past made their protest over conditions, a 'cry in the wilderness'. The victory in this dispute had abolished another link in the claim of malpractices within the catering unit and provided the catering workers with more confidence to assert their power in order to gain overall parity with other workers.

On 19th August 1977 North Side Catering came out on strike over the issue of staff representatives' facilities. An emergency national sectional panel was called and it was agreed a formal enquiry into the problem would be set up.

What has to be mentioned about this period of unrest is that British Airways was going through a period of aircraft shortage due to the grounding of the Trident fleet over safety inspections. This meant that British Airways were more likely to meet the demands of catering workers over certain issues in order to gain some kind of flexibility through the aircraft shortage period.

In fact, on 31/8/77 British Airways did obtain an agreement from Catering Units North and South on greater flexibility. The agreement was based on the following principles:-

- 1) Longhaul use of shorthaul aircraft catered by Catering Services Centre North.
- 2) Shorthaul use of longhaul aircraft catered by Catering Services South.

- 3) Shorthaul charter of Non-British Airways aircraft catered by Catering Services Centre North.

While this agreement was only provisional it does show that British Airways were now formally negotiating through the union directly with shop stewards. The impetus for British Airways to formalise negotiations generally was two fold. Firstly, it had to attempt to reduce the unpredictable and erratic conflict that was erupting in the catering unit and this meant gaining some kind of order. Secondly, the creation of a new, single, integrated airline, particularly in a period of world trade recession, had brought about an attempt by management to produce a far more co-ordinated product, and this also meant a far greater necessity for control and consent.

The setting up within the newly established British Airways, of a far more centralised industrial relations group, than had existed in the previous airlines, would seem to support my last point. Also, it was admitted in past conversations by five separate British Airways industrial relations officers that they viewed formal collective bargaining, with a high level of lay representation, as the most effective means of ensuring industrial peace.

By September 1977 the agreement in August on flexibility had broken down. A list was drawn up by management of fifteen areas in which staff were refusing to be flexible. They included:-

- Item 4) Refusal by Cabin Catering Service to introduce improved type of glass racks.
- Item 12) Insistence on time and manpower allocation by staff in the dry stores.

These two items have been chosen as they demonstrate that many of the items in fact amount to a change in actual work practices and were not necessarily

contained within the spirit of the August Agreement. It also shows the degree to which catering workers were reacting to given situations. Gone were the days of the 1960s when national officers made the agreements and the catering workers had to work to them, as one shop steward stated:-

At one time John Collier (Trade Union Official) made all the agreements and we had to work them, now we make them.

On the 9.9.77 a new agreement was reached in which the terms of flexibility were clearly laid out. The catering stewards had now accepted the operational need for a limited provision of flexibility, but had also ensured that such an agreement was not an opening for the introduction of new practices or a retrograde step to working conditions in the 1960s.

In 1977 there had been a period of intense, overt action. Disruption caused at a time when management required a higher level of flexibility must have been an essential element in the agreements that were reached in that year. The catering workers had achieved an effective level of orchestrated action because they now had an element of bargaining power.

On the 29th of September 1977 a major agreement was reached between staff and management after what management viewed as a series of outstanding problems (Statement made to staff).

The agreement included 19 items and probably the most important in terms of corruption and malpractices was the issue of promotion. The catering shop stewards at South Side Catering had wanted promotion based purely on the basis of seniority and in that way no possibility of either subjective bias or corruption could be introduced. (See appendix 3 for agreement).

In the end management agreed to a system based on seniority first and ability second. But they did clearly state that in normal circumstances the seniority list would be systematically worked through and when the position was filled, interviewing would cease. It was also agreed that any member of staff who was found to be unsuitable due to their ability to achieve the required standard of oral/written English (the main reason given in the past), would be given paid language training.

The agreement also provided shop stewards with their own Trade Union room and a far greater involvement in issues of negotiation. The clock card system was replaced with a centralised signing in system and an additional payment of £1.16 per week was given (subject to Board of Trade approval) as a "Non-Standard Aircraft and Meal Packing Allowance". In effect this allowance was just a way of paying for more flexibility. Ten years earlier they would probably have taken on more temporary staff and terminated those workers who refused to be flexible.

The whole issue of "Non-Standard Aircraft" equipment dated back to a dispute that went to a Conciliation Committee (Chaired again by Sir Leslie Williams) on 28/8/75. On that date it was decided that only equipment related to the DC10 aircraft should be considered and that a review should be conducted through the Ground Services Staff, National Sectional Panel, Job and Pay Restructuring Exercise.

The introduction of Tristar in Overseas Division, Concorde and the Aer Lingus 747 services in the intervening period between 1975 and 1977 also complicated the issue of job evaluation. As stated above the whole issue was only resolved after two years of disagreement, two conciliation meetings and two working party reports.

To return to the issue of promotion, the new agreement reduced the possibility of malpractices taking place and provided some form of standardisation. It eliminated the earlier practice of bringing in white workers directly as supervisors.

It can be seen then that the period from 1975-1977 transformed informal struggle into formal agreement. The issue of struggle for parity of pay will be dealt with in the chapter, "Job and Pay Evaluation and Job Definition".

Given the gains that the catering workers had achieved, it is little wonder that British Airways made the following comment concerning the catering workers in their 1979/80 Annual Report and Accounts:-

Of particular significance was the considerably improved industrial climate coupled with real productivity improvements and encouraging savings in energy consumption.

The catering workers felt they could now afford to take some kind of rest after a decade of intense action which had resulted in their restructuring much of the nature of their working existence. Their conditions and pay were equal, if not better than most of the manual workers in the airline.

Ramp workers and engineers were masters of the old muscle power negotiations. They stayed out of job evaluation, the new techniques got us more. Our lowest wage was 85p more than the engineering manual worker's rate. The catering workers had been half the wage of the engineers and finished up 85p more, plus a £5.00 meal break, free meals, free coffee and free breakfast. We finished up more than any one!

(Bashir Bhatti, Catering Shop Steward).

1. The expansion of catering was probably more significant in B.O.A.C. than B.E.A. due to the longer duration of flights in B.O.A.C.
2. Source:- R. Pryke., The Nationalised Industries, Martin Robertson 1981, Oxford.
3. Source:- A. Reed., Airline;The inside story of British Airways, BBC Publications 1990 London.
4. By 1965 Ealing Borough(Southall part of this borough) had an 11% black population, mainly Asian. Source...Institute of Race Relations and Southall Right, Southall; The birth of a Black Community, Institute of Race Relations, 1981 London.
5. An Asian shop steward whose name has been Anglicized by white shop stewards.
6. The important point about these two events was that black workers were located within the catering unit. Reasons for this will be considered later.
7. The different styles of management have been well documented by British Airways own historian, Peter Richards, in his study on the integration of the Engineering Operation. The attitudes of differentiated levels of managers and staff within both B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. had been one of the stumbling blocks in the integration. What is also interesting is that the image of benevolent paternalism is one which is commonly associated with the administrative rule of the empire - c.f. George Orwell.
8. This will be discussed in a later chapter.
9. All oral statements are transcribed as stated. However there is a problem in transcribing oral evidence. Often the speakers use non-standard English. It is important not to convey an impression of "inarticulate immigrants". Many of the white chargehands have their own non-standard forms and sound just as inarticulate in cold print. This is not just my own preoccupation with language, but, rather an important element in the way language itself becomes an element in the

ghettoisation of black workers just as much as the chargehands rarely rise to higher levels of management and are confined by their not conforming to the class structure of Standard English of an 'educated' kind.

10. Temporary contracts did exist in other areas of the airline, such as the cabin crew, but nowhere with the same consequences or administered under the same set of rules. This issue will be considered later.
11. V.S. Saifullah Khan (Ed.), Minority Families in Britain, Macmillan Press 1979 London.
12. 'D' scale is a middle management grade.
12. The terms of reference that the report uses, such as Non-British staff - British working environment etc, serve to legitimise the very categories upon which racial discrimination operates.
14. Tony Lane in "The Union Makes Us Strong" has argued that in many respects all union organisation is based on a kind of "union or unions within a union". That is that plant negotiation and representation leads to the focusing of issues at a localised level. One of the results of this, Lane argues, is the tendency for trade unions to become organisations based on economic sectional interest rather than institutions in which wider social and political issues are fought for.

CHAPTER 5

Formalised Practices: Job Evaluation and Job Description

- (1) Incentive to work
- (2) Direct Incentive Pay Systems
- (3) British Airways' Pay Scheme
- (4) Scientific Management and System Theories
- (5) Some forms, developments and modifications of scientific management theory
- (6) Some general criticism of scientific management
- (7) Braverman and the Labour Process Debate
- (8) Braverman and his Critics
- (9) C. Littler:- A Theory of Bureaucratic Control
- (10) The Growth of Bureaucracy within British Airways' Negotiation Machinery
- (11) Littler's Analysis of Bureaucracy - once more
- (12) Section For Formalised Practices
- (13) Conclusion on Bureaucracy

FORMALISED PRACTICES: JOB EVALUATION AND JOB DESCRIPTION.

The integration of the old airlines (B.O.A.C., B.E.A.) to one airline, British Airways, in 1972, presented the British Airways Board with an immense task in terms of standardising rates of pay.

Any large employer is conscious of the possible ill-will that can be generated by the existence of anomalies in wage rates. B.O.A.C., B.E.A., Northeast and Cambrian Airways all had different pay scales, and to integrate these systems into one pay framework of British Airways was bound initially to cause problems. In addition to this, the actual size of British Airways, 53,000 staff (1972), was not likely to make the task of standardization any easier.

A possible factor though in making standardization that much more feasible was the organisation of operations into eleven distinct trade groups, with their own national negotiating machinery. Thus reorganisation could be contained within each separate trade and each group, in addition, could be left to its own devices according to the internal factors peculiar to it i.e. the nature of the job, and the given bargaining strength within the airlines.

In fact this is what happened. Most of the trade groups which comprised the ground staff (clerical, flight operations and ground services) developed with a system of job evaluation. Notable exceptions to this general rule were engineering workers and ramp loaders.

The catering workers were a major force in ensuring that their trade group, "The Ground Services", adopted this system (job evaluation). Their belief was that any system that attempted to give at least lip service to objective pay evaluation of jobs was bound to increase their pay, which they felt was vastly inferior to other groups doing similar work.

The actions involved in the formulation of job evaluation as a pay system, particularly between different areas in the ground services, are an important part of the history of the catering workers' achievement of parity.

The second part of this chapter will deal with these actions and the possible motives of workers and management for settling on job evaluation as a pay assessment system. Firstly, though, the more theoretical issues related to job evaluation such as "scientific management" will be dealt with.

Incentive to Work.

All paid labour involves some form of incentive to work, whether it be vocationally or materially motivated. Thus the whole question of managerial control over the labour process intrinsically involves the ability of managers to provide, or stimulate, the right incentive to motivate workers to an acceptable level of effort. Therefore work incentive is an essential part of managers' attempts to control the labour process.

The range and variety of incentives that are involved are immense. They do not simply consist of direct payment, as in the case of bonus schemes, but can take a multitude of tangible or non-tangible forms, e.g. gift awards for successful sales staff, or job security and status.

In this chapter we are concerned with the issue of "job evaluation" regarding its ability to generate sufficient incentive and ensure for management an acceptable level of control.

The pay system of any company obviously constitutes one of the major aspects of incentive motivation. Job evaluation though amounts to more than just a system of pay as it involves the whole construction of the formal job content itself--what workers are officially meant to do. It is for this reason that job evaluation is so

important in terms of the analysis of the intensification or reduction of discrimination in employment, whether it be based on gender or "race".

The analysis of job evaluation in this thesis is partly concerned with the issues of work incentives and managerial control. In addition it will also be concerned to identify the direct role and motivation of both the official union and the different sections of the work force in the job evaluation process. It is they, along with management, who form the main parties involved in this specific arena of struggle.

Direct Incentive Pay Systems.

There are various methods of assessing pay. Probably the most common amongst manual workers in manufacturing industries is a direct incentive system, based, in the main, on an hourly rate plus some kind of incentive bonus such as piece rates.

The general aim of direct incentive pay systems is to reward workers materially for increased effort. Of course what constitutes an acceptable level of effort has been an issue of contention between workers, owners and controllers of production from the very origins of bought labour.

It is difficult for any employee to maintain a consistent level of effort at work regardless of occupation. The introduction of mass production intensified the need for management to control the effort of workers' production in order to bring predictability and thus profitability into being (c.f. Weber 1930)

As S. Pollard (1965) states in **The Genesis of Modern Management** in relation to early capitalist production:-

What was needed was regularity and steady intensity in place of irregular spurts of work; accuracy and standardization in place of individual design; and care of equipment and material in place of pride in one's tools. (p.181)

Pollard suggests that early industrialists tried one of two methods, either the "stick" ("unsatisfactory work was punished by corporate punishment, by fines or by dismissal" p.186) or the "carrot" (various incentive schemes). Ultimately, Pollard argued, the "carrot" won the day, not just because the "stick" was bound to create direct opposition from workers who resented being bullied, but also because the "carrot" was bound, to a degree, to reduce numerous aspects of conflict and generate some motivation for workers to work harder.

The implementation and effect of the "carrot" as an incentive has been a matter for debate within the social sciences. This will be discussed later in this chapter. As industrial relations have shown in the 1980s the "carrot" and the "stick" are not mutually exclusive, and where the line is drawn between the two is very much an issue of debate.

British Airways Pay Scheme.

In a wider context all paid labour is based on some form of incentive, which, taken at its basic level, can be seen as a fundamental means of survival. But it is the incentive to maintain and increase effort of productive output which presents employers with more complex sets of problems.

While high unemployment, economic dependency and career occupational structures are all incentive factors which operate to ensure a stability of employment and a low turn over of staff, they do very little directly to ensure increased productive effort. In short in the 1980s, a period of high unemployment, a worker with a high mortgage is not likely to want to lose his/her job, but on the other hand, these factors alone are not going to make a worker work harder than the minimum necessary to keep the job.

Given the complexity of British Airways production, the various skills required and the intangibility of their main product, namely sold airline seats, the ability to affect direct incentive systems across the airline is rather remote.

For this reason, historically, the airline and its previous divisions have had systems based on basic pay rates, plus shift pay. This of course is not to argue that such a system does not have some element of incentive built into it. Differentials, periods of service, grades, and promotion grades all act in one way or another to instil some kind of long-term incentive. Also, British Airways in the past have not been slow to exploit non-pay incentives-- such as rebate travel, the status of working for an airline and security of employment; the latter an incentive which is increasingly difficult to maintain owing to the massive reduction of staff, particularly in the period related to the privatisation of the airline.

In terms of status the airline has been able to provide some element of glamour through the image of working for an airline, but it is an image which has probably been a bit tarnished at the level of catering production. Nevertheless, most staff interviewed believed rebate travel, and the overall image to the outside world of working for an airline are important incentives in their job. It must be stated though, that status in itself is never a sufficient enough incentive to compensate for poor wages and conditions, as the catering workers' own experience serves to illustrate.

Why then discuss direct incentive pay systems, given that, on the whole, British Airways do not operate one? The reason for this is to highlight the necessity for all employers to find some incentive substitute in cases where direct incentive schemes are difficult to implement. It will be argued that job evaluation does provide British Airways management with a means of generating sufficient incentive to ensure acceptable levels of long-term effort, and thus provides a degree of managerial control by consent.

British Airways job evaluation is based on three main principles:-

- 1) Management and staff participation (in fact the onus of submitting the job descriptions is on the staff) and

therefore in theory a high level of consent by staff to work-practices agreed.

- 2) Job evaluation on actual tasks performed thus consistency.
- 3) Job evaluation on the scope of tasks thus an incentive to increase groups of workers' responsibility for job functions and thereby, hopefully increase their work effort.

Scientific Management & System Theories.

If one examines what has already been written in this chapter one can identify certain theoretical implications that have positive links with existing managerial theories on industrial relations--mainly scientific management (e.g. Taylorism) and systems theories. What is to be argued in this chapter is that many managerial theories, particularly those of scientific management, are based on an "ideal situation" for management, and often what exists is a compromise of that ideal situation, due to other forces beyond management control, such as labour resistance and external economic and political forces.

Scientific Management:- For the purpose of this thesis it is only necessary to touch briefly on the basic tenets of scientific management theory. In the case of job evaluation it is important to raise certain theoretical questions, which ultimately are very difficult to answer with any certainty, as one can only speculate. What seems certain is the importance of job definition and job categories as ways either of trapping workers in casual, menial, or low paid jobs, or on the contrary of increasing job satisfaction and prospects.

To confine scientific management theory purely to the works of Frederick Winston Taylor would be wrong. There are various forms, developments and modifications

of the overall school of thought known as scientific management, some of which will be discussed later. In general though, within the social sciences, scientific management is mainly associated with the work of Taylor.

Most of Taylor's writing was at the end of the 19th century. His major concern was to revolutionize the role of management in order to achieve greater control of wage labour within the productive process. He attempted to objectify the role of managerial control and in so doing increase the effort of workers to their maximum capacity. He believed that the piece work incentive, on its own, was doomed to failure. Taylor states:-

It is however under piece work that the art of systematic soldiering is thoroughly developed. After a workman has had the price per piece of the work he is doing lowered two or three times as a result of his having worked harder and increased his output, he is likely to entirely lose sight of his employer's side of the case and to become imbued with a grim determination to have no more cuts if soldiering can prevent it. (p.99)

However piece work is not the only form of incentive bargaining where "soldiering" takes place. A good example can be found amongst the cabin crew's (steward and stewardess) practice of "trial runs" to evaluate the staffing levels, based on certain levels of catering quality on the aircraft. One cabin crew representative, and a cabin crew national representative, admitted that the standard procedure was to make sure that the trial operated to ensure that at least one additional cabin crew member was required above those which were actually needed to do the work. In that way, the additional staff member or members, could be sold back to management at some later date, for some kind of concession, e.g. material reward

or to avoid real redundancies. The irony of this example is that the process of "trial runs" is based loosely upon a form of Taylorism.

However, Taylor argued that direct pay incentives alone were not sufficient to ensure maximum output and he therefore hypothesised two main areas of attack. These were:-

- 1) The need of management to accumulate systematically all knowledge relevant to their own production operation and then formulate that information into set rules and laws.
- 2) That the whole thinking process within production should be removed from the actual operatives and should be the sole property of management. In a practical sense Taylor suggested that this should be centred in a planning department. (p.113)

In this way Taylor suggests that control, scientific evaluation and scientific method provides all that management requires in addition to some form of material reward in order to ensure increased productivity from the worker, who simply performs.

Some forms, developments and modifications of scientific management theory.

The impact of Taylor in the early 20th century on management theory was substantial. Disciples, such as Henry Laurence Gantt, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, all viewed Taylor's theoretical contribution as the foundation of modern managerial theory.

Ernest Dale in **Management: Theory and Practice** attributes to Gantt's scientific management theory the development of the "task and bonus plan". The basis of the plan is the daily task, for example, production of a certain number of pieces

per day and the payment of a daily wage whether or not the workers succeeded in completing the task. But if a worker completed three hours work in three hours or less, they were given four hours pay at the daily rate; those who could not complete the task still got the regular daily wage, i.e. a combination of time work with piece rate.

Probably, the contribution made by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth has more important implications for the analysis of job evaluation. The Gilbreths' work (1948) was concerned with the problem of establishing the most effective method of doing any one function. They both believed that every one had one best way of being operated. This belief led both writers to establish the basis of modern "motion-study" techniques.¹

The actual systematic formulation and evaluation of jobs and tasks into distinct job categories is an essential part of the Gilbreths' scientific management theory. In many ways the foundation of modern "motion-study" techniques has provided an important pre-conditional acceptance, by both management and labour, that jobs can be defined, categorised and evaluated in a systematic fashion

The whole notion of skilled, professional and status occupations is, to some degree, based on an assumption that job content can be evaluated in terms of its general worth. In practice of course, such categories are more likely to be products of various forms of negotiation and struggle.

Another disciple of scientific management theory worth mentioning here is C. Bertrand Thompson (1917) who devoted much of his time to developing systematic ways of objectifying managerial control of the labour process.²

Thompson was a pioneer among scientific managerial theorists, in that he was able to involve labour unions in the actual construction and implementation of modern scientific techniques. In the case of the French General Electric Co.

Thompson's instigation of the participation by the labour unions involved resulted in modern time and motion study techniques being introduced with no resistance from the labour force.

This participative role is, of course, an important element in the job evaluation system, and while it does not simply constitute an elimination of conflicting interests (labour versus capital), it does in its final agreement provide sufficient consent to bring about order in production and thus a degree of managerial control.

This is not to suggest that in totality job evaluation amounts to a managerial strategy to obtain control. In terms of managerial motivation for job evaluation, this might well be the case, but job evaluation is a product of joint negotiations and as such can be seen as part product of union involvement also.

Further, it cannot be assumed that all workers share a common immediate interest (see chapter on trade union theories) and therefore struggles within the evaluation process might well be waged between different groups of workers as well as management (see second part of this chapter). If this is the case, then the construction of job evaluation processes are not the simple product of dichotomous interest, labour vs capital, and are likely to come under a whole range of constraints and differentiated interests, (e.g. different trade group objectives, maintaining differentials).

While the allure of scientific status has been an obvious attraction to some writers in the social sciences, particularly from a positivist/functionalist perspective, it is probably the overwhelming desire of employers to maximise employees' effort, and their control over the labour process, which has stimulated the volume of literature on scientific management, particularly at the beginning of the 20th century. Similarly, the demise of overt scientific management theory in later years may well

be due to the difficulty of implementing it in any pure form and to the general disillusionment regarding the scientific status of the social sciences.

But, as Braverman points out, the impact of this school is substantial on managerial thinking, if not always in a direct or conscious way, and it is for this reason that it is crucial to the analysis of management motivation. The main objective of scientific management theory, in nearly all its forms, is to provide management with sufficient scientific knowledge to allow them to instigate effective mechanisms of control over labour within the labour process. That it has not been achieved makes it no less an objective for management; it constitutes an ideal by which various managerial strategies of control are motivated.

Some general criticisms of scientific management.

Criticisms of scientific management are numerous (some of the more theoretical criticisms raised in the Braverman debate will be considered in the next section). Firstly though, it might be useful to consider some general criticisms made by Ernest Dale in a text book designed specifically for management study. They are:-

- 1) Workers are not merely economic machines which respond to material incentives.
- 2) The tendency for Taylorism to reduce the need for skill and the resistance that this has caused.
- 3) Taylorism has never been able to overcome the basic problem that increased production does not necessarily lead to increased consumption, with the result that scientific management theory could well displace workers from employment. It was therefore bound to cause conflict.

- 4) Both managers and workers are often concerned with short term interests, and as Taylorism is based on long term strategies, there is a likelihood that such strategies may well be terminated before they show any real returns.
- 5) Taylorism was aimed at reducing conflict and yet Taylor's differentiated piece work plan (paying two rates, the lower for those at a median level and the higher for those producing above) was bound to create ill feeling. The standard rate, as a rule, is depressed in order to compensate for the higher grade. In addition to this, any reduction in productivity caused by factors beyond workers' control (e.g. machine breakdown or shortage of materials) would precipitate conflict.
- 6) The whole scientific status of Taylorism is highly dubious.

In support of this final criticism most shop stewards within British Airways expressed the view that time study exercises by B.A. management were usually one way of legitimising management objectives by "dressing them up" in a kind of camouflage. The result of this open scepticism by union representatives, has been only a selective use of them by management and a greater tendency towards joint consultative enquiries. In the case of job evaluation the methods of modern study techniques have been incorporated into a consultative framework.

Even given these general criticisms, the attraction and the possible rewards of scientific management theory remain a strong force of persuasion. It even found favour in the U.S.S.R., when during the economic crisis of the Civil War (1918),

Lenin, expressed support for the "scientific" element of Taylorism (e.g. modern study techniques) while rejecting those elements which suggested the intensification of the exploitation of labour (Wood/Kelly p.81).

It is now necessary to turn briefly to the Braverman debate, and in particular the work of Craig Littler, as his contribution raises some important questions concerning the role of bureaucracy.

Braverman and the Labour Process Debate.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the scientific movement in the shaping of the modern corporation and indeed all institutions of capitalist society which carry on labour processes. The popular notion that Taylorism has been superseded by later schools of industrial psychology or human relations, that it "failed" because of Taylor's amateurism and naive views of human motivation or because it brought about a storm of labour opposition or because certain Taylorian specifics like functional foremanship or his incentive pay schemes have been discarded for more sophisticated methods; all these represent a woeful misreading of the actual dynamics of the development of management. (p.87 Braverman 1974)

For Braverman, Taylorism has become the hegemony of modern management. Braverman believes that it is no longer necessary to classify it as a theory as its principles have become so embedded within the labour process of capitalism.

It is Taylor's analysis of control which Braverman suggests is essential to the functioning of modern management. He accepted that all historical productive

relations have been based on some system of control, but it is Taylor's analysis which- "raised the concept of control to an entirely new plane" (p.90 Braverman).

Using Marx's analysis of capital accumulation Braverman argues that under monopoly capitalism the need to maximise profits is greater than in any other productive system. This maximization of profits requires an effective method of controlling the labour process and Braverman suggests that Taylorism offers this facility.

Braverman's book maintains that this ideal situation for management is now a reality. Under monopoly capitalism, Braverman suggests, workers are degraded:-

They sink to the level of general and undifferentiated labor power, adaptable to a wide range of simple tasks, while as science grew, it would be concentrated in the hands of management. (p.121 Braverman)

Braverman defines Taylorism as based on three main principles:-

First principle:- "*dissociation of the labour process from the skills of the worker*" (p.113). Managers monopolise the task of collecting productive knowledge. They then use that knowledge to produce formulations, laws and procedures.

Second principle:- "*separation of conception from execution*" (p.114). The divorce of planning and doing. All necessity for productive knowledge is removed from the shop floor and is located within managerial planning departments. (The development of time and motion study).

Third principle:- "*task idea*" (p.118). That the operative simply operates tasks which have been pre-constructed by management.

The effects of these three principles according to Braverman are:-

- 1) The maximum fragmentation of work into its simplest constituent elements, in which management seeks to limit all individual jobs to a simple task.
- 2) The divorce of planning and operation.
- 3) The divorce of direct from indirect labour which progressively suppresses that part of the worker's activity that consists of preparing and organising the work in his/her own way.
- 4) The requirement of skill becomes minimised and thus a limited requirement for job learning.
- 5) An overall reduction of the material handled by individual workers.

For Braverman this is the case; workers, in general, have become mere performers in a managerially preordained existence. Braverman views this de-skilling process as an almost inevitable development of monopoly capitalism.

Taking either Taylor's own definition of scientific management, or Braverman's definition of Taylorism, it would be difficult neatly to fit the fact of a job evaluation into that theoretical framework. It is one of the main arguments of this chapter that Taylorism is based on an ideal situation and as such is never attainable.

Braverman and His Critics

The problem of using scientific management theory as an analytical tool is the scope of its definition. As S. Wood and J. Kelly state in Taylorism, Responsible Autonomy and Management Strategy:

The broader one's definition of Taylorism the more one sees it as all pervasive, as Braverman appears to regard it, while a narrow definition suggests a lesser degree of influence (c.f. Palmer 1978). But there is equally the danger that in reacting to Braverman's over-reliance on Taylorism we fall into the trap of minimizing its importance. (p.74)

The whole area of the labour debate on Taylor (scientific management) between Braverman and his critics (e.g. Woods, Littler) seems beset with the dangers of varying definitions and esoteric encounters. This is probably inevitable given that much of the debate is based on theoretical abstraction. In practice, management's use of scientific management may well be mainly political, in the sense that it will draw on a number of different theories and strategies, at given times, in order to achieve perceived management objectives. There are no inherent laws of management theory and management practice. The point that J. E. Cronin (1983) makes, concerning similar abstract theories which are applied to politics in class formation, is as valid for management as it is for working-class life. He states:-

The sum of these difficulties means that politics is likely to be the most problematic index of class formation. Taken together, with the inhospitable findings lurking in the separate literature on the distinct spheres of working-class life, this suggests that the study of the evolution of labour should henceforth depart from previous approaches, based upon the

assumed identity of class and politics, and begin by emphasising the lack of articulation or correspondence between the various levels of working-class existence.
(p.139)³

The British Airways personnel management team is fully conversant with scientific management theory, as well as all the other main management theories. Certainly at the end of the 1970s at least one of its members was an industrial relations graduate from Warwick University.

Scientific management theory, in the context of this thesis, serves only to make suggestions about possible management motivation. It cannot be assumed that intention equals practice or that management operates, at all times, in a dichotomous relationship with a unified labour force.

One aspect of operating in a market economy is the likely existence of a multiplicity of forces and constraints operating on individual employers, e.g. government policy or economic competition. It cannot be assumed that every decision is related to the subordination of labour. What can be assumed is that any system of payment (job evaluation) involves an intention by management to produce sufficient incentive and thus retain an acceptable level of control, and an acceptable margin of profit.

The unions themselves operate with certain motivations and aims, and this then means that their involvement at any level of the collective bargaining process ensures some level of involvement in the construction of the negotiating machinery itself. All that exists within the collective bargaining process is not the creation solely of management, anymore than it can be assumed to be a conscious management strategy into which the unions have been incorporated. Job evaluation, therefore, could not be defined in pure terms, as a mechanism of

Taylorism. Certainly because of the union's involvement, it becomes something else from which both management (control) and labour (improved conditions, control etc.) have something to gain. A similar argument to this will be put forward when confronting Littler's(1982) assertion that certain types of bureaucracy equal Taylorism.

At the beginning of the 1980s Braverman's labour process thesis attracted a great deal of attention and debate, which came to be known as the labour process debate. A good deal of this literature was constructed at the level of abstract theory and involved a wide range of complex arguments, many of which became very difficult to conceptualise in terms of real work situations. It has therefore been decided to concentrate mainly on two central criticisms which were generated from this debate and which relate to the issue of job evaluation. The two main criticisms are:-

- 1) Braverman makes no allowance for labour's ability to resist subordination. (c.f. Woods 1982, Kelly 1982, Littler 1982).
- 2) Braverman romanticizes the image of skill with the result that he overemphasizes the de-skilling process (Beechey 1982, Cutler 1982, More 1982).

In relation to the first criticism, Braverman is certainly guilty of presenting an image in which management strategies are unproblematic. H. Beynon's book, Working for Ford illustrates well that, even at an individual level, the worker has the ability to assert a degree of control over the productive process.

It would be wrong to assume that certain struggles result in the best interest of all workers involved. If demarcation acts as a discriminatory mechanism, in that it locks certain groups of workers (e.g. women or black people) out of certain jobs

(skilled, high status etc.), then various kinds of struggle, such as sectional ones, will simultaneously have a positive and negative effect on different groups of workers according to their location in the labour market.

By adopting a class analysis based purely on a dichotomy of interests, as do Wood (1982), Kelly (1982) and Littler (1982), one is allowed very little scope for an analysis of racist and sexist discrimination practices within the labour market. While workers might well share many long-term interests in their struggles within the labour process, in the short term, the differentiation of rewards and conditions between workers ensures divisions of interest.

While capitalism certainly stimulates the tendency towards differentiation and division, the active role of trade unions in the labour market makes them, very often, co-partners in this scenario. Of course it is not being suggested that labour ever constitutes an equal partner to capital, but in the case of certain discriminatory practices this may well be relatively unimportant.

For example, it has been suggested, that the tight control of entrance into the printing industry by operative hands on Fleet Street has resulted in very little opportunity for women, owing to the assertion that female labour might well dilute the skill status that such printers hold.⁴ The printers' vulnerability to capital might well reinforce such sexist attitudes, but the actual implementation is based mainly on the ability of that group of workers to control that area of the labour market at the expense of women in general. In short the printers' ability to resist Taylorism in this case, results in their instigating a discriminatory practice.

In terms of Braverman's romanticized image of the skilled worker, the criticisms (More, Beechey, Cutler etc.) seem justified. Braverman states:-

For the worker, the concept of skill is traditionally bound up with craft mastery-- that is to say, the combination of

knowledge of materials and processes with the practical manual dexterities required to carry on a specific branch of production. (p.443)

Nearly all the critics in **The Degradation of Work**,(Woods, S. ed.) agree that Braverman's definition of skill is romanticized and that certain areas of capitalist production remain operated by skilled workers. On the one hand More argues that:-

Skill should be regarded primarily as a product of the technological rationality of industrial production and not as "socially constructed". (p.119)

While Beechey suggests that skill could be a product of three constituents:-

First the concept of skill can refer to complex competencies which are developed within particular set of social relations of production and are competencies (in general terms, skilled labour can be objectively defined as labour which combines conception and execution and involves the possession of particular techniques);

Second, the concept of skill can refer to control over the labour process;

and third, the concept of skill can refer to conventional definitions of occupational status.

Those different conceptions of skill are not necessarily coterminous with one another, although they are

*frequently conflated within the literature and may well
coexist in particular concrete instances. (p.64)*

It would seem that Beechey's analysis, in this case, is correct. Certainly the last two constituents are products of social construction, and ability to define the first as a skill is dependent on some element of social categorization, as Beechey herself points out with her example of "housewife labour". "Housewife labour" remains low status while in essence "it is not subject to direct capitalist control", and therefore one assumes that the operation retains conception and execution.

It is the very "social constructive" constituent in the establishing of skill that makes it a dynamic element within the collective bargaining process. All productive processes involve a combination of functions, and "who does what" can be very much part of the various internal struggles between different groups of workers.

Job evaluation as a system of payment and categorization is, therefore, as much an arena of struggle as any other process whereby occupational status and location are formulated. In the case of British Airways the advantage and disadvantage to various trade groups will become apparent as the history of job evaluation within the corporation is told, but, what is important to keep in mind is that throughout the whole process of establishing job evaluation within the airline, the management's commitment to the scheme was very strong.

This kind of commitment to the scheme obviously reflects a distinct objective in the minds of management. This is not to suggest that job evaluation complies to some perfect scheme for management objectives. On the contrary, it is more likely the case that job evaluation is a compromise with trade unions which provided enough control and ensured productive effort to make such a scheme viable for management's objectives.

C. Littler (1982):- A Theory of Bureaucratic Control.

To this point this thesis has rather loosely used scientific management theory (Taylorism in the main) as a theoretical framework for possible managerial objectives. Braverman and some of his critics have been briefly examined. It may be useful now to turn specifically to the work of C. Littler, Braverman's critic.

There are two reasons for this:-

- 1) Littler's analysis examines the contradictory nature of both management and labour strategies.
- 2) His work also examines the importance of bureaucracy.

The development of bureaucracy within the collective bargaining process is one which has concerned a number of writers, such as Edwards (1979) and Clawson (1980). Both writers have argued that bureaucracy constitutes a form of Taylorism.

The increased formal involvement of trade unions in British Airways in the decade, particularly in relation to job evaluation, has made them copartners in the expansion of bureaucratic types of negotiation machinery. It is essential, therefore, that any analysis of job evaluation considers this phenomenon.

The overriding point of agreement between Littler and myself is that Taylorism, or for that matter any other management strategy, does not provide a total solution for capitalist objectives.

All systems of control involve, on the one hand, various managerial motivations and constraints, and on the other, a multiplicity of labour resistance and in-puts. This being the case nearly all aspects of the labour process are open to negotiation. Obviously the strength of bargaining of any group depends on a number of factors internal and external to the work place. Thus the development of the labour process is not predetermined according to any intrinsic laws of capitalism.

Littler's analysis attempts to make sense of the seemingly contradictory labour/capital relationship and he does this by dividing the labour process into three distinctive aspects.

The first is "the relative autonomy of the labour process." Littler, in agreement with Friedman (1977), argues that under monopoly capitalism the range of means to achieve capital objectives is greater than under competitive capitalism. Individual employers are not limited to either tacit or overt methods of oppressive control in order to maximise profits. Various organisations will operate under varying conditions and may often be influenced by various external institutions. Littler gives, as his main example, the role of the state in Japan, where enterprises are, to some degree, "insulated from demand oscillations and can, like private monopolies, exercise more choice over labour strategies." (p.31) Thus under monopoly capitalism the aims of capitalists will remain the same but the means to achieve those aims are open to a wide range of choices.

The second aspect is that of "labour and labour power". Once capital has contracted labour it is then faced with the problem of realising that labour power. It is one thing to hire labour and another to motivate that labour to produce productively. It may well be the case that job evaluation partly serves as a commitment by labour towards productive power. Littler argues here, and this thesis strongly supports his argument, that worker motivation and consciousness act as a wedge between the hiring of labour and the realization of that labour power.

Littler suggest that capital attempts to resolve this problem in a dualistic fashion by treating labour simultaneously as a commodity and a non-commodity. Certainly in the case of British Airways there are signs that such a dual process operates at certain times. British Airways central management, under the Lord King leadership, often makes decisions based very much on a labour commodity basis, while on the other hand, negotiation and involvement of staff at the personnel level

tend to operate on an assumption of labour as a non-commodity,--"we're interested in your point of view."

It does not seem totally convincing though that the problem of labour realization and labour power is simply resolved by a dual process of commodity/non-commodity relationship with labour. Littler himself implies that the process involves more than this when he states:-

Thus capitalism must to some degree seek a co-operative relationship with labour. It cannot just exploit those capacities that can be brought into play by bribery and coercion. Similarly, side by side with labour's resistance to subordination lies the fact that workers have an interest in maintenance of the capital/labour relation and the viability of the units of capital which employ them. (p.32)

Those immediate worker interests of which Littler talks, are by no means unified. Differentiated rewards for workers within any company will have a tendency to motivate certain workers to maintain their sectional interest at the expense of other groups, thus making the labour process more complex than a simple capital/labour interest relationship. The insistence of the engineering workers and the ramp workers (two of the strongest bargaining trade groups in ground services) to remain out of a job evaluation scheme is a clear example of groups of workers concerned to maintain their privileged position in the structure of the airline's labour force.

The struggle of British Airways catering was not simply against the exploitation of management, but also against other trade groups within the airline, whose bargaining strengths had the effect of isolating catering division's struggle from the

main body of management/union negotiation machinery (see chapter on informal practices).

The constant reference by catering shop stewards to their initial struggle within the union serves as a reminder that sectionalism and under representation, while not equaling the exploitative relationship of capital/labour, can certainly have the effect of intensifying that exploitative relationship.

If the labour process is an arena of struggle then those groups involved will have more than a resistance impact on how it is developed. Capital may well own the pitch, but the teams who play on it will be party to how the games are played, even if the official rules are predetermined.

The third and final aspect is what Littler calls, "**the structural dynamics of capitalism**". Littler points out that capitalist organisations are mainly based on profit motive and this does not necessarily mean that their total consideration is given to the productive process.

It may well be the case that some organisations are only partly concerned with maximisation of production, as is the case with some E.E.C. subsidy farming, or, on the other hand, certain companies may well have little or no concern with it, as in the case of currency speculation or various credit manipulators. The existence of capital ownership, therefore, does not necessarily result in struggle by management totally to control and maximise the labour process.

Thus for Littler the labour process involves a struggle for control but also for a whole range of diverse strategies. In addition, capital relations cannot be totally reduced to the analysis of the labour process. For Littler any analysis of control within the labour process must take into consideration capital's tendency to treat labour in a twofold fashion, as a commodity/non-commodity. Yet Littler states:-

Control should be seen in relation to conflict and sources of conflict and in relation to the potential terrains of compromise, bargaining and consent. (p.35)

If control is related to sources of conflict then it is not simply the dualistic tendency of capitalism that defines the arenas of struggle. While sectional interest and conflict are not endowed with the ability to extract surplus value from labour, their dynamic does have the ability either to inhibit or impose conditions on other groups of workers on how that surplus value is extracted, as in the case of printing operatives (see earlier).

Sources of conflict are not limited to capital/labour relations and while all workers may share some long-term common interest in the control of their surplus labour, their interests are not necessarily linked immediately . As Colin Varndell (Cargo shops steward, chair of British Airways Trade Union Council) states:-

The privileged bargaining position of the Air Cabin Crew is nearly always at our expense.

The dynamics of sectionalism cannot simply be equated to a managerial strategy of "divide and rule." Certainly management will exploit such divisions as will any groups who are involved in a struggle for control, yet, in some cases, sectional interest must be a product of privileged groups who struggle to combat their own exploitation and to maximise control over their own labour. This may also mean that the actions of privileged sectional groups within the labour market will have an adverse effect on various other groups of workers.

Little's analysis of the labour process while more sophisticated than many of the other critics of Braverman (Woods 1982, More 1982) still reverts to a dichotomous relationship between management and labour in the work place. His analysis takes account of the diversity, contradictions and varying objectives within the different

camps, but overall the analysis gives very little attention to the importance of sectionalism.

In terms of a "grand theory" of the labour process then the labour/capital relationship is a relevant one. Capital maintains a dominant position in that it controls the final sanction on how capital is used. For example, it has the option of whether labour is hired or not. But such categories as "capital" or "labour" tell us very little about the internal struggles between and within the two groups. While capital, in general, may hold a dominant position in relation to power and control, groups of workers can realise a degree of their own real power, whether it be obtained by struggle or simply by their location within the labour market. Such power then has an affect within the labour process, and might or might not have an adverse effect on other groups of workers.

"What's good for the cabin crew might not be good for catering workers." Cabin crew's part control of their involvement in the labour process might well have the effect of locking groups of black workers out; whether it be intentional, for example by a direct racial bias applied to external recruitment, or unintentional, for example by an insistence that internal transfers within the airline be based on, as far as possible, parity of pay. This would of course exclude most black workers who are located in catering and on lower rates.

Access to power allows workers the ability to impose degrees of control and thereby stipulate certain conditions. It cannot be assumed that every stride forward by specific groups of workers is in the interest of all workers.

It is not being suggested here that workers should not struggle against management exploitation on the grounds that such action might or might not have an adverse effect on other groups of workers. It is a case rather of monitoring those actions in an attempt to be able to implement agreed trade union policy, such as elimination of racial discrimination in employment. Of course this is easier

said than done, but some suggestions on possible lines of action will be made in the conclusion.

It is not unreasonable to seek to eliminate racial discrimination in the collective bargaining process. Shop stewards are often acutely aware of the consequences of various bargaining mechanisms on their own members. There are no tangible reasons, other than the pressure of their own members' sectional interest, that the same shop stewards could not evaluate those mechanisms in terms of eliminating discrimination against black workers. What is required is a much greater political commitment by such shop stewards.

The whole emphasis of law and trade union policy on discrimination is one of voluntarism and the effect of those laws and policies is minimal. In the case of the catering workers, direct results were achieved through their own sectional interest and activity. In this case sectionalism had the effect of reducing discriminatory practices, but what is important to remember, particularly in relation to Littler's analysis, is that the catering workers' struggle was a dual one, against management and various sections of the trade union. Finally in relation to Littler's analysis of the labour process we turn to his arguments concerning bureaucracy.

The Growth of Bureaucracy within British Airways Negotiation Machinery.

From the origin of British Airways (1972) the increased involvement of shop stewards in the formal negotiation and the development of the job evaluation scheme has brought about a massive increase in the bureaucratic collective bargaining machinery.

British Airways by law has to be a member of the National Joint Council for Civil Air transport (N.J.C.). The N.J.C. constitutes the pinnacle of the negotiation machinery between staff and management; any differences at this level would be referred to the arbitration board.

The N.J.C. is made up of a number of British operating airlines. Beneath the N.J.C., within British Airways, are eleven National Sectional Panels. These panels are determined according to various trade skills and contribute towards some degree of sectionalism within the airline. As each panel represents a specific trade group, the differential power of groups and the corresponding response of management tends to be contained and reinforced within the structure of the panel machinery.

Beneath the eleven National Sectional Panels are some 250 local panels, which are made up of localised groups within specific trade areas. These local panels are usually also based on specific grades of staff, e.g. clerks, "D" scale management.

In addition to this, various consultative committees exist, at certain times, to consider specific issues, such as the uniform study group or the study group for formulating job evaluation itself. Job evaluation and company pensions are areas which have constant representation.

In short the whole system of collective bargaining within the airline is a network of bureaucratic machinery. The representation of trade groups through this bureaucratic machinery is, by no means, fairly distributed.

The job evaluation scheme in the ground service area was instigated in the early part of 1974, but it was only finally accepted by the staff in May 1977. Between 1974-1977 a co-ordination committee met on a regular basis, approximately once a month. During that period there also existed a sub committee of four staff representatives and a management team to work on the development of the scheme.

The whole process involved in its formation an expanding machinery of bureaucracy. Once it was accepted by staff then each job function had to be evaluated, which in turn generated another layer of bureaucratic machinery.

Before 1975 catering workers' struggles were mainly waged outside the formal machinery, and many of their criticisms against the official union were based on under representation within existing formal channels of representation

After 1975 the catering stewards gained much greater access to the formal machinery. The important question, particularly in relation to Littler's analysis of bureaucracy, is, what effect did this "incorporation" have on the catering workers, especially in terms of controlling their sporadic outbursts of informal, industrial action?⁵ It would probably be best to attempt to answer this question after we have examined the catering workers' struggle within the formal machinery of negotiations. This will be done in the section on "formal practices". First, an examination will be made of the main points of Littler's arguments concerning bureaucracy.

Littler's Analysis of Bureaucracy.

Littler attempts to draw on Weber's analysis of bureaucracy, or at least some of his ideas, in order to explain legitimacy of authority within the labour process.

This theme was previously pursued by Edwards (1979) and Clawson (1980). Edwards in "**Contested Terrain**" argued that large, bureaucratic organisations do not necessarily produce a dissemination of power. He believes that in such organisations power remains centralised, while giving the illusion of being inherent and depersonalised within the structure of the company. It therefore maintains a far more effective control over the work force. Edwards thus states:-

Above all else, bureaucratic control institutionalized the exercise of capitalist power, making power appear to emanate from the formal organization itself. (p.145)

And,

by establishing the overall structure, management retains control of the enterprise's operations. Once the goals and structure had been established the system could generate under its own steam. (p.145)

Implicit in this argument, and it is developed by Littler, is the belief, or certainly the inference, that bureaucracy is somehow the property of management, and labour is incorporated into it.

In most cases the collective bargaining machinery is incorporated into the bureaucratic machinery of management. That is certainly the case with British Airways. Now whether that location gives British Airways a greater advantage or ownership is very much a matter for debate..

Weber's analysis of bureaucracy is based on three main considerations:-

- 1) Modern organisation or administration as opposed to traditional administration.
- 2) Concern mainly with state administration.
- 3) Concern mainly with legitimate power.

It is the last consideration that Littler relates to his analysis of strategies for managerial control. For Weber "legal authority" is based on five basic beliefs, which Littler summarizes as:-

the five overacting beliefs about legal authority as a belief in a set of abstract impersonal rules, applicable to everyone. (p.37)

Littler argues that Weber's theory of legitimate domination is important, but it tells only part of the story. For Littler, Weber provides an undifferentiated concept of legitimation and in practice there are varying degrees of legitimation in the work place. In addition to this, Littler stresses, there is a day-to-day compliance or consent which cannot be reduced to explanations of legitimation. In a sense one aspect of job evaluation could well be the dual function of control and consent, but we will consider this point later.

While not accepting the totality of Weber's argument concerning bureaucracy, Littler argues that the Weberian notion of bureaucracy relates to Taylorism, and, in addition, that Taylorism exists at one level of the labour process, what he calls, "the structure of control" (i.e. formal bargaining etc.). There are three levels at which the organisation of work operates within the labour process: 1) "job design"; 2) "structures of control"; 3) "employment relationship". The second two, according to Littler, give scope to bureaucratic organisation 2) and 3).

"**Job design**" relates to the division of labour and the technological requirements affecting labour organisation. At this level, Littler suggests that there is an element of control built in.

"**The structure of control**" on the other hand represents a level where far more overt processes of control operate. At this level, the "formal authority" structure of the enterprise, plus the monitoring system, exist.

The final level of "**the employment relationship**" constitutes that part of the labour process which is a product of "capital/labour relationship" arising from the relation of the job position to the labour market.

There is a very real danger here in making such clear demarcations. For example, job design and the utilization of technology are issues which are open to

negotiation, and are therefore often a product of struggles within, what Littler calls, "the structures of control" - for example the Murdock printing dispute.

While Littler accepts that there is a tendency for all these levels to change together, it is difficult to establish how much job design is a result of either or both bargaining struggles and/or the direct result of the technological requirements of production.

This kind of ambiguity is almost inevitable in a debate where theoretical abstractions seem to proliferate as the debate continues. The particular area of Littler's argument which mostly concerns the thesis is what he calls the "separate dynamics of bureaucracy." He views the bureaucratization of the "structure of control" and the bureaucratization of the "employment relations" as two very different processes.

Bureaucracy of "structures of control", Littler argues, is Taylorism. It is a management strategy which is imposed on workers in order to incorporate them within the organisation and achieve their compliance and consent.

"Employment relationship", on the other hand, is not based on Taylorism, but on workers' dependency. Dependency, of course, relates to the ability of workers to seek other forms of subsistence and the ability to organise. The external and internal factors affecting those abilities have been discussed in the chapter on labour markets.

What Littler has attempted to do is provide some explanation for the existence of certain aspects of Taylorism within the work process. He has done this by suggesting that bureaucracy operates in two ways-- firstly as a legitimization of authority which effects an incorporation of labour into the formal machinery and thereby achieves compliance and consent--- and secondly, as a process in the

"employment relationship" whereby dependency is affected by the nature of the labour market and the ability of workers to organise.

Certainly if we look at the bureaucratization involved within job evaluation then some level of compliance and consent is achieved, but that might not be all that is happening. The actual formation of that bureaucracy is influenced and changed by the various trade groups involved in struggle.

They are not simply incorporated into a state of total compliance. Littler of course accepts that workers do resist all forms of subordination, but as catering workers show, their resistance actually resulted in effecting a change in the bureaucracy itself and served to operate, to some degree, to their advantage.

Those struggles would then imply that bureaucracy cannot simply be reduced to concepts of ownership, and is rather, as Edwards's book (title but not his theory) suggests, a "contested terrain".

Finally, one specific statement by Littler needs to be challenged. It relates to what he sees as the recent origins of this process of incorporation into bureaucratic forms of control. He states:-

...did the trade union movement in Britain form a solid bloc of opposition to managerial centralization and bureaucratic forms of control in the inter-war years? The evidence available clearly points to the opposite conclusion. As we said in chapter 9, most union officials accepted the given framework of capitalist and managerial power and moreover, had little conception that neo-Taylorite schemes would alter the structure of control over the labour process. (p.189)

In short, Littler is suggesting that trade unionists were duped, that they were conned into being incorporated into more effective and sophisticated forms of control. Presumably the analysis of incorporation is one he would extend to all trade unionists who accepted participation in centralised forms of bureaucratic negotiations.

Job evaluation serves as a classic example of a bureaucratic mechanism that has reshaped the labour process. The formal bureaucratic negotiations involved in the establishing of job evaluation were as much due to the insistence by the shop floor of greater representation in that machinery, as to any conscious strategy by management to seek control. In fact the expansion of bureaucracy within the collective bargaining process is as much a product of pressure for greater representation by the shop floor; a demand that many trade union leaders, like Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, accepted as steps towards industrial democracy.

All the shop stewards spoken to were acutely aware of the consequences of formal involvement within the bureaucratic machinery of collective bargaining. They might not articulate it in terms of Taylorist forms of control, but they were all aware that such encounters involved a degree of compromise. But in essence all forms of bargaining, bureaucratic or otherwise, involve some form of compromise.

What is important, and very much missing in Littler's analysis, is an awareness that bureaucratic bargaining machinery does constitute an arena for struggle, and one in which various groups of workers, such as the catering workers, have struggled for involvement. As Gerry Burns (shop steward Terminal Three Loading) states:-

*Gone are the days when you could just bring everyone out.
In order to get anything you have to be willing to sit down and
compromise... wheel and deal.*

Section For Formalised Practices

No section on formalised practices would be complete without some mention of the work of pluralists. The section on, **Some Traditional Theories of Trade Unions**, has already covered many issues relating to pluralism, however, here it is important to make particular reference to the work of Clegg.

As already established the work of Clegg focuses on the oppositional role of trade unions and the necessity to ensure effective collective bargaining machinery in order to ensure the pursuit of pluralist interest.

Clegg in, **Trade Unionism Under Collective Bargaining: A Theory Based on Comparison of Six Countries**⁶, provides us with a systematic and important insight into the formal development of collective bargaining. This work was able to identify a number of relating variables to explain the following:-

- (i) a theory of trade union density
- (ii) a theory of trade union structure
- (iii) a theory of union, government and workplace organisation
- (iv) theories of strikes, industrial democracy and political action, employers and the state.⁷

As Poole states:-

Clegg's explanation for variations in union behaviour must be regarded, therefore, as an elaborate and in many respects original development of earlier work by Flanders and the Webbs rather than a minor modification or refinement of their central canons. (p.87)⁸

In nearly all Clegg's work there is a constant reevaluation of the significance of rule making upon the collective bargaining process. While Clegg considers a wide range of factors influencing that collective bargaining process, the formal collective bargaining process itself remains as a central feature of his model. All other factors tend to relate to how they support that process. For example the impact of government policy and union and management ideology upon collective bargaining practises.

A particularly significant development in his work for this thesis was his link of informal practices to that of formal practices. In **The Changing System**, Clegg views the interaction of formal and informal practices as essential features of institutional activity.⁹ His deployment of the concept of "institution" here comes very close to the notion of arenas of struggle. His usage of formal and informal does not produce an artificial demarcation of practice. Such usage takes on a dynamic property within the confines of institutional practices. However there is still a tendency to elevate the role of formal machinery as the more appropriate mechanism for dealing with conflicting interest. While Clegg's model has much to offer its usage here may well deflect from the central argument of, arenas of struggle. Arenas of struggle operate at a number of different levels and locations, within and beyond the institutional workplace. Their influence and range of forces are not limited to intentional collective bargaining variables and often give central place to the dynamic and dialectical nature of factors, such as culture.¹⁰

Probably the major difficulty in the application of pluralism in this thesis is its lack of causal explanations for issues related to class interest and "race", both central to the struggle of the catering workers. Warner has expressed concern about pluralism's failure to address these issues. For while Warner acknowledges that Clegg's model does provide a sophisticated analysis, it too often relates variables that are linked to traditional notions of trade union behaviour at the expense of wider political considerations.¹¹

Conclusion on Bureaucracy.

In many ways it is the dependent nature of workers in a free market economy which compels them towards achieving recognition within the formal bureaucratic machinery, particularly in periods of economy slump. Overall the trade unions within the airline have struggled for greater recognition and involvement in the decision making machinery. Their victories have constituted an expansion of that bureaucratic machinery and their involvement must have affected changes in the nature of its development, whether positive or adverse.

Imagine, for example, a struggle by trade unionists for greater welfare provision, without an expansion in bureaucratic machinery. How would the welfare state deliver it? Bureaucracy expresses certain constituents of Taylorism, but it also expresses forms of managerial compromise. Bureaucracy is not the single property of any one group, and while management may well hold a dominant position because of its institutional power derived from being the owners or controllers of capital, bureaucracy is still an arena of struggle.

Job evaluation serves as a good example of this. It would appear that job evaluation provides for management an acceptable level of compliance and consent (a form of Taylorism), while on the other hand, in the case of catering workers, it provides the means of redefining their job and status, beyond the confines of their previously ghettoised occupation.

What is ironic, in the context of the Littler thesis, is that British Airways' management in the 1990s has made a very conscious move away from bureaucratic management. Lord King advocates very strongly the philosophy of Tom Peters, which encourages a move away from "management from the balcony".¹² He has made it clear that management should be lean, and it should involve itself in the activity of the airline. He states:-

Let's call it visible management- providing leadership from the front. We had been known by the staff as "balcony bosses"; the managers used to appear on the balconies and look down on the staff, before hurrying back into their offices. (p.39)¹³

This chapter has been concerned to argue that bureaucracy is neither the sole property of management, nor does it have an inherent dominant force, which motivates its expansion. Instead it has attempted to argue that bureaucracy is an arena of struggle which develops and changes according to the various struggles that take place within its formation. In the main, job evaluation has been focused upon to support this argument. It is necessary therefore to highlight some of the specific features of job evaluation to support the argument. This will be done not in the next chapter which deals with informal practices, but in chapter 7 which deals with formal practices. The relationship between these two types of industrial practices is essential to the central argument of the thesis; that struggles against forms of discrimination are ones that can be constantly waged and take place in different arenas; that the mechanisms that ensure discriminatory practices are either solely the product of ideological forces nor solely the consequence of intentional action.

1. **"Cheaper by the Dozen", Frank B Gilbreth & Ernestine Gilbreth Carey**, Thomas Y Cromwell Co. New York 1948.
2. B. Thompson., **The Theory and Practice of Scientific Management**, Houghton Mifflin co. Boston 1917.
3. J.E. Cronin., **"Politics, Class Structure and the Enduring Weakness of British Democracy."** Journal of Social History:- Spring 1983 Volm. 16 No. 3...Carnegie Merton Univ. Press,Pittsburg.
4. C. Cockburn., **Brothers, Male Domination and Technological Change**, Pluto Press 1983.

5. The use of the term "incorporation" is problematic in itself, because it assumes certain theoretical assumptions related to the institutionalization of workers' conflict.
6. H.A. Clegg., Trade Unionism Under Collective Bargaining: A Theory Based on Comparison of Six Countries, Oxford Blackwell 1976.
7. Headings taken from M. Poole., Theories of Trade Unionism, London Routledge & Kegan Paul (1984).
8. M. Poole., Theoreis of Trade Unionism, London Routledge & Kegan Paul (1984).
9. H.A. Clegg., The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, Oxford Blackwell 1979.
10. The use of informal practices does to some extent provide pluralism with an "open cheque".
11. M. Warner, review of H.A. Clegg., Trade Union under Collective Bargaining in British Journal of Indsutrial Relations Vol.15 1977 297.
12. T. Peters/ R. Waterman Jr., In Search of Excellence; Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies, Harper & Row ,1981 (New York).
13. A. Reed, Airline; The Inside Story of British Airways, BBC publications, 1990 London.

CHAPTER 6

Informal Practices

- (1) Definition of Formal and Informal Practices
- (2) Issues of Concern
- (3) The setting up of their own organisational networks
- (4) External Forces
- (5) Internal Forces
- (6) Corrupt Practices
- (7) Close Geographic Proximity to Engineering Unit
- (8) National Agreements
- (9) Local Negotiation Structures
- (10) The Nature of the Catering workforce
- (11) The Creation of a Cultural Barrier
- (12) The use of "the hidden agenda"
- (13) "The go-slow"
- (14) Some Initial Comments on informal practices
- (15) The 1975 Strike and the role it played in a shift towards formal practices

INFORMAL PRACTICES

This chapter is concerned to examine the issue of informal practices in industrial struggles, while a later chapter will look at formal practices. This issue has been raised briefly in other chapters, but given its significance in relation to the struggles of British Airways Catering workers it more than justifies examination in a chapter of its own.

Definition of Formal and Informal Practices.

There is of course a need here to establish some working definition of what might be meant by formal and informal practices in industrial struggle. Just as with definitions of organised and unorganised conflict (c.f. Hyman 1989), terms which are more commonly used in industrial relations, there might well be debate concerning the dividing line between what constitutes an informal and a formal practice, or even the suggestion that traditional and non-traditional practices might well be better definitions. There are costs and benefits in the use of all these terms, but the use of traditional and nontraditional would seem particularly problematic in the context of this case study given that it does have a strong cultural inference. For example, what might be viewed as traditional in one culture might well be nontraditional in another, and, given the complexity of the cultures involved, the use of such terms would be highly dubious.

In the case of informal and formal practices there would seem to be a relatively straightforward means of establishing a clear distinction, which is, the difference between those practices which are instigated within or outside the formal collective bargaining machinery and are directed towards employers, trade unions or other groups of workers. Of course such a wide definition is bound to be subject to some problems, and they will be raised in the related areas. The final justification for the use of such terms is the ability to make a distinction between this kind of action and what is often labelled official and unofficial action. Official and unofficial action, both in terms of its common currency and its use in the literature, tends to be

applied to action taken against employers. The use of formal and informal is meant to include the ability to analyse action taken against any parties with which a group of workers perceives itself in conflict.

Issues of Concern.

The purpose of this chapter is also to bring together a number of issues explored in other chapters, such as bureaucratisation, institutionalisation of conflict, action against formal union practice and the nature of interaction with other trade groups.

The chapter will be concerned to challenge a number of well-established assumptions related to such issues, and to argue that formal practices and informal practices constitute different forms of expression within arenas of struggle. These practices are not subject to deterministic forces, such as the institutionalisation of conflict. The forms and nature of political expression instigated in different types of formal and informal practices are a consequence of unintentional action and the different political assessments adopted by workers in struggle.

Access to formal channels is one of the key issues of the catering workers' struggles. This applies to both union and worker/employer collective bargaining formal channels. One of the main objectives of early struggles in the 1950s was representation on local and national decision making machinery. It was the non-representation on negotiating forums, which had taken decisions concerning catering workers' pay and conditions, that generated so much anger and sense of common purpose in those early days.

This is by no means a feature which is unique to catering workers or black workers. The struggle for formal recognition and legitimate representation has been a major dynamic in industrial struggles since the origins of collective action (Thompson 1963).¹ As raised in other chapters (see chapters on Job Evaluation and Description, and Trade Unions.) writers, such as Anderson (1977), Edwards

(1979) and Littler (1982)² have tended to present relatively negative and mechanistic types of analysis of such phenomena. It seems to be a major danger when discussing issues such as, class, "race", gender or trade union action, that models which overemphasize structure tend to deny human action and struggle. There is, of course, a danger in trying too much to underestimate structure and arriving thereby at an idealist notion of history. Marx hinted at a suitable balance between the two when he stated that,

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. (p.165)³

One of the main tasks of research then should be to identify and distinguish the circumstances from the human process. This is no easy task. British Airways catering history is full of situations where people are involved in strenuous forms of struggle, attempting to change and make sense of their lives. The ability to capture even a sense of that seems an impossible task. However academic competence should demand that some attempt be made to convey both the conditions of circumstance and the nature of human activity employed within them.

Much of the data for the historical elements of this chapter come from interviews with some of the main actors involved in events surrounding the catering unit. The accounts contradict one other at some points. That should be expected in a situation in which conflicting interests and reputations are at stake. However, the main part of the oral information provided supports a common view of events over the last three decades.

As mentioned in other chapters, the struggles of the catering workers follow three major periods and processes. The late 1950s early 1960s was a time in which

activity very much involved attempts to establish forms of effective organisation within their own ranks. It involved intense conflict between factions which often resulted in confrontations when emotions ran very high.

The late 1960s early 1970s was a time of struggles for catering workers to achieve access to union organisation and representation. They resulted in a much higher level of unity being achieved by these workers.

Finally, from the mid 1970s the main action focused on the formal channels of collective bargaining. Significant gains were made within this period and not only were they able to maximise their bargaining strengths in periods when improvement in pay and conditions was possible, but they were also able to ensure some level of defensive action when market forces became more hostile in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

What comes out very clearly in the data is that all three periods involved intense, diverse struggles for these workers, and, throughout, leading figures in this struggle constantly analysed the changing situation, in order to achieve their aims. What is remarkable is that within three decades the catering workers grew from a situation of being viewed and treated by other union trade groups on the airport as a marginal group, to be one of the central groups in the collective bargaining machinery and highly respected.

Their struggles also seemed to develop from highly informal practices into more formal modes of trade union and collective bargaining behaviour. One can clearly link this transition to the changing nature of their position in the British Airways labour force, the changing conditions related to the wider forces in industrial relations, and the assessments they made of these situations. The early periods of their struggle in the 1950s and 1960s were times of overt racism. There are numerous accounts of open hostility towards Asian workers and their families found in the data. In the 1950s and 1960s the catering workers' isolation and

marginalisation within the airline compounded their alienation which was expressed both in trade union practice, the lack of consultation, and also in terms of attitude, through an open resistance by other trade groups to allow black workers into their area. This early period was mainly a time of exclusion from formal channels and therefore a tendency grew to turn towards more informal forms of collective expression.

One of the most striking and recurring comments made by non-catering trade unionists interviewed was the unique style of the catering workers' actions. John Collier's (T.&G.W.U. Ground services Official Officer) comments are typical of many:

I found it a very interesting period and I would not have wished to change that.....because they had a way of dealing with problems that other groups didn't have.

There seem to be four main informal practices that catering workers developed within that early period in order to achieve their objectives. They were:-

- 1) The setting up of their own organisational network. This involved meetings at one another's houses, where, very often, factional differences were settled and also plans of strategy against both the official union and management were developed.

Bashir Bhatti (Main catering shop steward) explained:

In those days many hours/days were spent at each other's homes. It was necessary in order to work out differences. Also often we would agree not to agree at meetings, if more could be got from the union.

And John Collier from the official union side commented:

It was just a question---(this related to disagreements in branch meetings between different factions)--you can hardly call it power---but influence and trying stopping other people achieving positions of influence, that was basically what it was all about--but the strange thing was, that in spite of all of this going on at one level, there was still quite, as I understood it, a degree of discussion and negotiation going on between the factions at another level in one another's houses to sort out.....

2) The creation of a cultural barrier which generated an exclusion to non-Asians. It provided a seemingly homogeneous cultural identity when in fact within the catering Asian community, there existed a wide range of diverse cultural forms. Very often, catering workers used to their own advantage that which is a feature of racist ideology, the notion that they "all are the same".

3) Never fully revealing what was on their agenda of demands to the official union or management. This was a highly effective tactic in that once the union and management realised that such a practice was an ongoing feature of catering struggle it became very hard for them (official union/management) to understand what the rules were.

Colin Varndell (Chair of the trade union council British Airways) revealed the union side's frustration at such tactics,

What I've always found difficult in dealing with catering unit was, you never ever really found what the problem was. If the problem was, that they wanted their three lieu days, which they felt were theirs by right because they created the backlog, they never ever told you it was the three lieu days. They told you it was a shortage of staff, it was dumping gear, it was all this

.....

- 4) The development of a whole range of sophisticated practices for slowing the operation down. This is a common feature of assembly line workers, but catering workers had developed it to a fine art. The wash-up was a key area in this slow down process as it created a major health risk throughout the catering unit.

John Collier outlines the effectiveness of such a practice:

I think they had a tradition of in the wash-up for instance they can, and still do, when it suits them, em..... produce massive back logs--- now the difficulty with that as far as the airline was concerned was that it was not only a back log of work to be done it was also a health hazard, and then it puts the unit itself at risk in terms of whether or not it will continue to function, and consequently because British Airways operating a long haul airline and back cater--or cater for quiet long sectors of the flights from the U.K. it is essential for them to retain continuity of supplies. So that is a major disruption for them.

All these practices involved a high degree of internal organisation, but very often created a situation which externally seemed very close to industrial anarchy. The use of cultural barriers for example was highly effective in creating an arena in

which those who were not party to the catering unit had difficulty fully understanding what rules and norms were in operation. One of the most effective elements of such actions was the inability of those parties against whom the action was waged fully to predict or understand the processes involved.

The setting up of their own organisational networks.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a number of significant factors existed which influenced the necessity for catering workers in the nationalised airlines (B.O.A.C. and B.E.A.) at Heathrow to start to develop their own organisational networks for the defence of their collective interest. These factors were both of an internal and an external nature.

External Forces

It is well documented that the arrival of black migrant labour in Britain was often greeted with extreme forms of racist hostility and discrimination.⁴ For black, airline-catering workers it was no different. That hostility found expression both in the areas where they sought housing and in employment. The concentration of black migrant labour into ghettoised housing areas and the setting up of practices, like housing loan pools, were clear indicators of the extent of racial hostility. In addition the discussions in media and the formal political arenas were usually articulated in terms of black immigrants as a "problem". Thus for the majority of black catering workers their perception of a new host society was one full of hostility.

The majority of black labour that worked at the airport from the 1950s onwards was housed in the Southall area. In the 1951 Census there were only 330 people of Commonwealth origin registered in the Southall area. By 1958 that number had risen to 1,400 and by 1965 11% of Ealing's population was black (Southall had been incorporated into the new London Borough of Ealing). The Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights have documented the birth of the black community in Southall and how this community has continually been a focal point for racist

hostility. In addition, they describe the growth of this black community as a direct result of the demands for cheap labour in jobs at the lower end of the labour market. Further, they catalogue a whole range of exploitative practices instigated by employers in the Southall area against black workers and a long history of failure by trade unions to represent fairly black workers and confront those exploitative practices.⁵

It was within this context and historical environment that black catering workers developed a collective mistrust of both employers and the official trade unions.

I tell you there was no one then [1960s/1970s] that I trusted-- there was only one man Paddy Maher [engineering shop steward] and he is not here anymore. I learnt very slowly you know that all whites are against you....They were attacking our race all the time. This generation of white workers were educated by the Raj mentality whereby you humiliate the Asian all the time. (Bashir Bhatti, catering shop steward)

At local and national level too often "their" presence was discussed by white dominated institutions (e.g. trade union, political parties) in totally negative terms.⁶ Nearly all the black catering workers interviewed could provide numerous accounts of hostile experiences encountered at a personal and institutional level. Within both the work community and the housing community these experience were internalised to produce a form of collective awareness. For not only did the catering workers start to organise themselves against racist work practices, as mentioned above, many of them also joined housing loan pools in order to avoid racist practice in the housing market. Again in almost all (if not all) the interviews with black catering workers it was "taken for granted" that racism was a common currency in the white institutions they encountered. It can only be speculation, but in discussion with union officials and white trade unionists there appears to be a

general lack of awareness that a growing black consciousness had been taking place.

At a national level the majority of political discussion concerning black communities arose from the issue of immigration. Here, as Moore (1975) points out, both the main political parties were preoccupied not with issues of principle but rather matters concerned with the mechanics of keeping black people out.⁷ Numerous commentators have identified the 1960s as the decade when any hope of establishing positive and meaningful "race relations" was lost (c.f. Foot 1965, Hall et al. 1978, Sivanandan 1982).⁸ During these ten years, most of the media and the two main political parties concentrated their discussion of race relations issues on immigration and numbers, and failed to be sensitive to black experience in what was a racist and hostile society. The inflammatory speeches of Enoch Powell tend to overshadow the constantly negative rhetoric produced by nearly all elected politicians in this period which produced two relatively entrenched mythologies, 1) that black people were "the problem", 2) that immigration was solely a black phenomena. Gordon Walker (Labour party candidate), in the now infamous 1964 Smethwick election, published an election leaflet in reply to the racist campaign of the Conservative party. It read:

Be fair.

Immigrants only arrived in Smethwick in large numbers during the past ten years- while the Tory Government was in power. You can't blame Labour or Gordon Walker for that.

Labour favours continued control of immigration, stricter health checks and deportation of those convicted of criminal offences. Labour will give local authorities greater power to help overcrowding. Labour will provide new and better housing.⁹

Such a statement is indicative of the assumptions of political parties that numbers were "the problem", and that the firmness of their intent to restrict numbers would reassure a worried white majority populace. The majority of black workers understood the message only too well and their apprehension and mistrust of such parties were based on understandable logic and experience. They also understood well the traditional, ideological and organic links between the Labour party and the trade unions. A number of black shop stewards at British Airways expressed the view that for many black workers at the catering unit, this period of early encounters with British official trade unions was an instant awakening to institutional racism. It was very much in the context of these wider external forces that the internal experiences of black catering workers were given much greater meaning. The need for black workers to be cautious, guarded and careful in encounters with white institutions was an inevitable result of a decade in which such white institutions had consistently promoted the notions of "blacks as a problem".

Internal Forces

If the wider external forces created an environment in which black workers needed to be cautious, then it seems that many of the internal forces brought about a necessity to seek organisational mechanisms beyond those of the official union in order to protect their interest. There seem to have been five main internal reasons for the setting up of their own organisational network. They were, 1) corrupt practices, 2) national agreements, 3) local negotiation structures, 4) close geographic proximity to engineering, 5) the nature of the catering work force.

Corrupt practices.

As mentioned in the history chapter, in the 1950s and 1960s a number of corrupt practices had developed. Corrupt practices are very often a common feature in work places where the work force is in a vulnerable position. The national airline offered some unique enticements which were likely to lead to the development of corrupt practices developing. Nearly all airlines offer some form of concessional

travel. For immigrant workers this offered a strong inducement, given the obvious benefits it provided to return to their country of origin at a greatly reduced cost. Certain managers in catering were not slow to exploit this situation.¹⁰ As mentioned previously, in the 1960s black catering workers were being made to pay for application forms to join the Airline, pay for getting the job and also pay for overtime.

This type of corruption was likely to create an atmosphere of secrecy in which even the victims were reluctant to publicise the practices for fear of being sacked. Those shop stewards that did attempt to raise it as an issue got little or no response from both the official union or higher management. Management, in the main, was not willing to discuss the issue without substantial proof and the official union seems to have either pretended not to be aware of its existence or dismissed it as simply a feature of "Asian culture". The fact that these corrupt practices were operated almost exclusively by non-Asians would seem to support the argument that corruption has more to do with material circumstances and opportunity than any notion of inherent cultural characteristics. Corruption takes place in all societies and the means by which it and its causes are defined will always be subject to forces of power, e.g. social construction of the notion of "black crime".(c.f. Hall et.al.1978)¹¹

While there was a reluctance of management and unions to acknowledge this corruption, certainly those involved were sufficiently concerned about the protests of shops stewards. As mentioned elsewhere, one shop steward, Bashir Bhatti, had his life threatened, the windows in his house smashed, his car paint work scratched, the tyres of his car slashed and on one occasion he was followed home by security police who he believed had connections with those involved in the corrupt practices.

Bashir Bhatti stated:

what you needed to understand was that there was a lot of money involved, in any week, in all the practices going on, anything up to two or three thousand pounds could be changing hands. Nobody connected with it in catering or anyone outside catering was willing to take it on, it was left up to us to do something.¹²

It became obvious to those shop stewards that opposed such practices that some form of organisational network be set up to operate under a system of trust, which did not exist within the formal union structures and organisations. It is significant that a number of non-catering shop stewards in casual conversation were willing to admit that they were aware of what was going on but when interviewed formally stated that they had no knowledge of corruption, "other than that which normally goes on amongst Asians when recruiting".

It was through their own organisational network that some catering workers developed their own strategy for eliminating corrupt practices. The main tactic they developed was continually to enter into disputes which brought disruption to catering production. Initially, management and the official union would not discuss the issues of corruption, only the issues which the disputes raised. Eventually higher management transferred those involved in the corruption out of catering. They never acknowledged the corruption; but simply responded to a lengthy campaign of disruption. This tactic also played a significant role in the informal practice, by catering workers, of never fully telling the union what was on their agenda (this will be discussed later).

Nevertheless Bashir Bhatti stated:

Management (higher management) knew what was going on, they would never admit it, they understood well how far we were willing to go and how much damage we could cause.

Our first form of action was in 1962 when we went out on unofficial action in order to stop the payment of overtime.

Bashir Bhatti outlined how the dispute took place:

A charge hand came to me and ask me why I had done fifteen minutes more work yesterday without permission [also without payment]. I thought you would stand up and say thank you Mr Bhatti for doing 15 minutes more overtime, which meant damn all to me, but I miss my bus, miss my meals and miss everything for your 15 minutes! You are a real bastard and we will do no overtime from today, till the last drop of overtime is finished, until you come back and say thank you. For six weeks the war went on and nobody said thank you...you think that thank you was so difficult. Managers came and apologised, but it was not a sorry we wanted, but a thank you and an end to the corruption. This was the way we were going to stop the payment of overtime. Thank you never came. Believe it or not, there was black, blue food and stink all over...no thank you came....no one asked them is your thank you so expensive. They brought scab labour in on nights and the action was defeated, but we won in the end.

The co-ordination and organisation of such a campaign was considerable. As mentioned above those at the centre of this organisation were placed under massive pressures, particularly in terms of their own safety and their families' safety. Their success was contributed to greatly by the effectiveness of their organisation which they stated very strongly could only be achieved outside the

formal structures of the union. They had their own executive committee which met at different houses. Such a statement must be a major indictment of official union practice in this period.

Close Geographic Proximity to Engineering Unit.

One recurring comment in many interviews with catering workers, trade union officials and shop stewards in areas other than catering, was the importance of the close proximity of catering (B.O.A.C./ Southside) and the engineering unit. Both groups of workers were and still are located in the Hatton Cross area of Heathrow.

Traditionally, engineers and engineering manual workers have tended to have a strong bargaining position within the general collective bargaining framework of British Airways. The unit was made up of a wide range of job functions which involved skilled workers, semi-skilled and manual workers, as well as a good number of clerical workers. The engineering labourers (manual workers), in particular, benefited from this strong bargaining position and it was this group of workers that catering workers tended to measure themselves against. The engineering unit in the late 1950s/1960s had few if any black workers. The close proximity of these units inevitably brought the two groups of workers into contact. Not only did catering workers compare the similarity of their job with engineering labours but also they compared the disparity of pay and conditions. Both groups of workers, in the main, were part of the same union, T.&G.W.U.. What distinguished these two groups of worker were the different trade bargaining panels within the airline and the different ethnic profiles. It might well be worth quoting at length here part of an interview with John Collier (T.& G.W.U. Official) who gives an outline of the events:-

John Collier (J.C.) This was probably one of the more difficult times when they (catering) were trying to establish themselves on the trade union scene-- eventually people-- for instance in that particular time

in B.O.A.C. the focal point for trade unionism was the engineering base and I am not sure they (catering) were treated very seriously by the engineers----Around about this point in time.

Q. What about the 1970s?

J.C. No 1965-67 B.O.A.C. had also up-graded their own engineering unskilled staff to some skilled staff and tended to release a lot of the cleaning work to sub-contractors.¹³

Q. So that is when the disparity started in a sense?

J.C. Yea. But, well so we had that happening in fact in close proximity to Comet House (where catering were located) and the engineering base were along side one another.

Q. Why did they do that?

J.C. Well because the- I think quite frankly the cleaning contracts and things like that they thought were better managed if they were able to terminate the contracts of people very easily as a means of reducing the work standard that they required consistently- it is always easier to do it to someone else's staff than your own.

Q. So you are saying that the up-grading of the engineering staff was partly buying them off, was it, to release the cleaning staff because of their (engineering) bargaining strength?

J.C. I think it helped to create a better industrial relations climate in the engineering base itself.

Q. *So in that period they were being quite militant?*

J.C. *They tended to be very organised and this allowed B.O.A.C., I would think, perhaps to offer them terms of employment that were better than otherwise would have been, and enable, dare I say, presumably, to offset against that costs of bringing sub-contractors, whose terms and conditions of employment were a lot lower than those of airline staff.*

Q. *Because it seem to me that catering measured somehow themselves against engineering, they set themselves a target.*

J.C. *Yes that's right! Largely because they were located in the Hatton Cross Engineering complex, Comet House actually is part of that complex, and so it is quite natural for them to look at people like the semi-skilled engineering people who were perhaps doing the cleaning jobs and had been the lowest rung there. And now they were in fact several rungs up as far as the comparisons was concerned- that was a fact of life that our engineers, the engineers were quite happy to allow it to happen you know.*

The reference here to the sub-contractors relates to engineering cleaning staff and not to catering staff. His comments might seem confusing because he is actually talking about three groups of workers and not two; they are, 1) catering workers, 2) engineering manual workers (who did have some cleaning functions), and 3) engineering cleaning staff (who were sub-contracted). What J. Collier is suggesting is that B.O.A.C. was able to bend to the economic demands of the engineering manual workers because they had been able introduce contract labour into the engineering unit at a cheaper cost. Such events in themselves contributed towards mechanisms by which discrimination in the labour market could take place, and

also provide an example of how the status of skill is socially constructed (see J. Collier's second comment). But that is another story!

The majority of black catering workers interviewed, who were involved in this period, believed the disparity with engineering manual workers to be partly a result of a disparity of treatment by the union. The sense of under-representation of black workers by the union was heightened by the close proximity of the engineering unit and the relatively favourable treatment they seemed to receive from the union. Understandably, a number of union officials perceived the process differently. They viewed the existence of the favourable position of engineering workers as a realisation of their strong bargaining position in the labour market. Of course this difference, in perspective, is more likely to be due to the different standpoints from which the respective parties now view past events.

Nevertheless, catering workers in this period generally distrusted the official union. For them here was a concrete example of disparity of treatment by the union. The opportunity for catering to make a comparison of job function with engineering was an important feature in enabling them to make some evaluation of their own worth. In fact this is an issue that will be picked up later. For example, the present government's willingness to discourage national bargaining, and therefore limit comparability between jobs, is a major mechanism for limiting pay increases or/and creating more differentials.

In addition it seems that a small number of catering workers were becoming acutely aware that the success of the engineering workers was partly due to the engineers' ability to develop their own organisational network within the union and to apply simultaneously pressure on both the official union machinery and the Airline management. It seems that they were learning, like many other black trade unionists, that membership of a union did not by itself ensure equal treatment.

While the importance of comparability is one which is not dependent on a racial dynamic, the concentration of black labour in catering was, more likely, to expose the situation of disparity. Many catering workers expressed the view that the only distinguishing feature between them and unskilled engineers was colour.

National Agreements

In the 1960s two major national agreements generated a great deal of resentment and mistrust amongst catering workers. Which were the Catering Wages Act, enforced until 1965, and the existence of three year pay deals. Both of these collective bargaining mechanisms had provided catering workers with little opportunity for consultation. Many catering workers expressed the view that they had joined the union under the assumption that unions existed in order to represent the views and interests of their members. Their experience of unions in the 1960s was very different. Too often it seems they were being informed of deals being struck with management which seemed to perpetuate their disparity with other workers. Throughout the airlines the three year pay deals had caused discontent and in 1965 there had been a number of disputes in B.E.A. by many trade groups over this issue. Again John Collier (trade union official) outlines some of the events:-

the rest of airlines [non catering workers], that's B.O.A.C. had already had major disputes. B.E.A. had a major dispute in 1965 about agreements, about how they were entered into. Until that time they (all airline staff) were very much saddled with national agreements that had taken place on the wages councils that just notified people-- in fact an event in 68 I can remember, Mick Martins, as one of my shop stewards, that he had just been told by the newspaper about the three years terms of deals that had just been struck and he was very upset.

It seems that these disputes, together with the need for management to make changes in some trade group areas, did bring about increased consultation in specific areas. John Collier identified some of those trade groups as follows:-

there was probably a greater identity from drivers, loaders, warehousemen with their deals because they had been consulted, originally, certainly in 65, about the way that they operated and they had certainly been consulted about the second tier elements and the deal that came in 68 onwards.----- I think it was necessary that they (management) were trying to change working practices and the like, that made it absolutely necessary that they talked to the representatives.

There seems to have been little or no consultation with the catering workers. The official union's explanation for this was the catering workers' lack of organisation in this period. This lack of consultation and the existence of national agreements generated so much resentment by the mid-to-late 1960s that a number of branch meetings was broken up before the police were called in. By the end of the 1960s the catering workers tended to view these agreements with contempt. John Collier states:-

that was probably why they were never too serious in their view about management/trade union agreements, so they never treated them with the same degree (laughs) of dignity that perhaps others might have done.

In addition while being tied to these agreements catering workers who worked in the canteens were on higher pay. Canteen catering workers were in fact employed by Bue Forte a company in which B.E.A. had major shares. These workers, the

majority of them in the same union (T.&G.W.U.), were not subject to the same national agreements. The airline catering workers were employed in in-flight catering production, a process that they viewed as superior to canteen production. This situation only served to increase their resentment.

By the end of the 1960s the catering workers' experience and perceptions of the official union were highly negative. The existence of national agreements and the lack of consultation were to be major factors encouraging them to form their own organisational networks.

Local Negotiation Structures

In the 1960s catering workers had very few links or channels of communication with other ground service workers. For much of the 1960s and the early 1970s they were linked with cabin crew (air hostesses and stewards) in the negotiation machinery with management. In terms of their job content or job culture the groups had few similarities. Cabin crew had traditionally recruited mainly young, white, middle-class women. Very often they had relatively short careers with the airline and often had high expectations of the rewards of working for an airline. Such different class cultures or work expectations were hardly likely to encourage an alignment between two such groups of workers, for the catering workers were still undergoing a change in their work expectation, which in this period of time, was still relatively low compared to cabin crew.

By the end of the 1960s catering workers felt not only isolated from the official union but also from the majority of other ground services workers. They could see a number of major disparities between themselves and similar groups of workers and increasingly they came to the decision that the only way to confront such injustice was through the development of their own organisation within the union.

Finally, in terms of local negotiation mechanisms, throughout the 1960s the only official Asian shop steward in Catering Division was the Asian shop steward

discussed in the history chapter. The majority of catering workers viewed this person's appointment as shop steward as one which was imposed upon them by the official union. Further, this official shop steward's appointment as the first Asian to gain middle management status caused even more conflict. The post was never advertised and many of the workers believed that he had "simply been rewarded by management for services rendered". The official union also imposed its own union panel on the catering workers. It justified the shop steward role and the imposed panel by suggesting that a near state of anarchy had been reached in the catering unit's union organisation. John Collier stated:

I appointed a panel-- It was impossible to get a meeting to come to any conclusion.

Such a move in itself symbolised the extent to which the formal and official elements of the union had become removed from the views and aspirations of the majority of catering workers. Here again conditions had been created which encouraged the necessity for forming an unofficial organisational network. The final element to be considered in this process is the nature of the workforce itself.

The Nature of the Catering Workforce.

By the end of the 1960s over 90% of the catering workers were black, the vast majority from India and Pakistan. Black labour in the post war period was due mainly to the need to meet demands for cheap labour in the lower sectors of the labour market. B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. catering units were prime examples of this trend. Catering work traditionally had been poorly paid and the conditions at that time were extremely poor. The growing prosperity of the West London area made the attraction of indigenous labour that much harder to achieve. In addition, the use of concessional air travel, as mentioned earlier, provided an important inducement, for immigrant labour to seek employment.

The important features of the catering workforce which contributed to their militancy and to the setting up their own organisation were as follows:-

1) It contained a wide range of cultural and religious diversity, a majority being Hindu, but also with a strong representation of Sikh and Muslim workers. Their main unifying feature was being black in a racist society.

2) Many of the workers were overqualified for the work they were doing. There are two main reasons why such workers remained in the catering unit. Firstly, many of these qualifications were not acknowledged, and secondly, the massive inducement of rebate travel to their country of origin retained workers who normally would have been seeking employment higher up the labour market.

3) Many of these workers had experienced labour politics and trade unionism in their country of origin. Very often these experiences contained a strong anti-colonial element which was not a significant feature of British trade unionism.

4) There existed strong links with political community organisations, such as the Indian Workers Association, which were autonomous from the official trade union.

The cultural and religious diversity of black workers led to the need to develop organisational networks because of a type of dualistic struggle that took place throughout the 1960s. At one level the cultural and religious diversity led to the tendency for distinct ethnic factions to develop. While at another level the common identity of blackness and their shared economic position led to the tendency to unify across ethnic groups. This dualistic struggle caused conflict to result in many

internal struggles and very often the official union was only partially aware of it. Many hours of meetings between and with rival groups took place. But what began to develop out of the 1960s and into the 1970s was an organisation which did not predominantly reflect ethnic difference but the common feature of shared exploitation. The shop steward who was to become dominant throughout the 1970s and 1980s was Bashir Batthi, a Muslim (a minority group), and his power base was drawn from across a wide range of ethnic groups. Here is a clear example of how the pragmatism of economic interest overrides cultural and religious differences. In addition, it is very difficult to conceptualise how such a process of struggle could have taken place solely within the confines of the official union network. On the few occasions that such conflicting interests were given expression, union officials had very few terms of reference to make much sense of them. It seems that the only way the official union could deal with these struggles was to impose their own branch panel (see above), which itself intensified the divisions between the official union and many of the catering workers.

The overqualified nature of many of the workforce is a feature that many interviewees (catering workers, trade union shops stewards and officials) suggested was an important factor in the militancy of the catering workers. A common feature of low paid/poor conditions work is a high turnover of staff. This did not take place in the airline's catering units. One of the main reasons for this was the inducement of cheap rebate travel. In most cases staff were able to gain a 90% fare reduction on all flights. It seems then that this inducement to stay also generated an inducement to confront perceived injustices. In a job where there is a high turnover of staff the likelihood is the majority of staff will "put up" with poor pay and conditions because of their transient nature. Whereas a staff that is not occupationally mobile can only improve their position by improving the job. It seems also that they were, to some degree, occupationally trapped within the airline. Very few other trade groups had black workers until the late 1970s. John Collier himself admitted the extent of racist hostility that existed throughout the airline, when he stated:

Yes--They found it extremely difficult to get transferred out and there was undoubtedly a great deal of racial hostility, perhaps hostility is too strong a word, antipathy would be a better term.

This form of occupational ghettoisation of workers, many of whom were over qualified for the job, must have fuelled their sense of injustice and militancy. The apparent lack of acknowledgement by the official union in the 1960s of this state of affairs seems to have contributed greatly to such workers having to organise themselves to apply pressure to the official union and management to address these injustices. The inertia of the union within this period also had a lasting effect, in that throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s the catering workers often expressed a sense of mistrust of the official union and, on occasion, accused it of collaboration with management. What follows is an extract from the catering workers' written submission to an investigation by the Race Relations Complaints Committee of the National Joint Council for Civil Air Transport (May 1975). The comments are leveled at both the management and the official union.

This report has been compiled by the Shop Stewards of the Overseas Division of the catering unit British Airways Corporation from statements taken from the coloured workers in this Division.

We would like to point out to this Committee from the outset that workers have been extremely unwilling to come forward and especially to allow their names to be used for two reasons.

Firstly because we do not feel that this particular committee is independent of the influence of Management and for this reason our workers fear that if they make themselves known they will be victimised

much more than they are at present. (see copy of submission in appendix 4).

This joint mistrust of the union and management was one which they had come to learn through their experiences in the 1960s. Many of these workers also had experienced trade unions in India and Pakistan and very often had an expectation that unions should be far more political, radical and anti-management. Trade unions in India had a long history of anti-colonial activity as well as a reputation for using informal and unofficial types of action.¹⁴ Many trade unions had taken an active part, particularly from the 1930s, in nationalist independence struggles, as well as having very strong ties with socialist and communist political movements. The British Government set up a commission (The Whitley Commission) in 1931 to examine Indian labour relations. The Whitley Commission expressed very grave concerns about a number of tendencies related to Indian trade union organisation and practices, such as the political involvement of communist activists, being generally too political in nature, their ad-hoc methods, the establishment of ad-hoc unions in industrial disputes and the militant rather than conciliatory way they often operated.¹⁵ Knowles commenting on the Whitley Commission states:

Nationalism and communism were considered by the Whitley Commission to be perversions of trade union principles. Legitimacy in this case was considered to contrast with what was described as political interests. In this case political was defined in terms of the wider aims of communism and the "political excitement" (319) which surrounded national activity, leading to the appearance of trade union leaders such as those associated with the All India Trades Union Congress, which were described as irresponsible. The Commission considered that it was the absence of

strong trade union organisation which accounted for the success of the communists in various strikes.

*"The absence of any strong organisation among the cotton mill workers and a realization of their weakness, combined with the encouragement given by the results of a prolonged strike, enabled a few of the communist leaders, by intense effort to capture the imagination of the workers and eventually to sweep over fifty thousand of them into communist organisation. One effect of these strikes, and particularly the last disastrous strike, (Bombay 1928) has been to render difficult the development of effective trade union organisation during the next few years (1931) **Whitley Commission on Indian Labour p.319***

The perversion of legitimate trade unionism resulting from communism and nationalist involvement is linked to a notion of what constitutes the correct conduct of industrial disputes. The commission thought correct procedure was to follow a policy of conciliation (Knowles p.242-243)

With the exclusion of the reference to communism and nationalism the last comment could easily be applied to the situation of the official union and the catering workers over the last three decades. Very often the official union viewed the catering workers' action as not abiding by the correct conduct for industrial disputes. In many respects the period of the 1960s and the early 1970s was a time when often two very different types of trade union traditions clashed (Indian/"British") and both parties found it very difficult to accept the differing norms that were operating. Given the imbalance of power that the catering workers had in relation to the official union and other trade groups it seems inevitable that such

a situation would influence the setting up of the catering workers' own organisational network.

The existence of links with political community groups is a feature common to a number of industrial struggles involving black workers.¹⁶ A number of writers, Ramdin (1987)¹⁷ and Sivanandan (1982) in particular, have commented on the ways that the marginalisation of black workers within trade union organisations has led to black workers seeking support from their local community groups.

It is difficult to assess how significant were the links between British Airways catering workers and community groups. Certainly B.O.A.C. management in the 1960s were sufficiently concerned to instigate an enquiry into the involvement of the Indian Workers Association (I.W.A.) in industrial disputes in the Airline. As mentioned previously, this report was confidential and undertaken by outside consultants, and one ground service's shop steward who had read the report, stated that the main findings were that the I.W.A. had been providing a supportive role for catering workers in industrial disputes and in their struggle with the union. The report had also looked at the possibility of dispersing Asian workers throughout the airline in the hope of minimalising outside political intervention. According to the ground service's shop steward, B.O.A.C. had decided against this because of its implications for the existing low wage structure of the catering unit.

The I.W.A. , in the main, assisted the catering workers with offers of financial support and help on picket lines. Certainly the official union was also aware and concerned about these links. The ground service shop steward stated:-

The union was just as worried about the Indian Workers Association.----- I think that the situation was like everything else, these people may be thought, well, why do I belong to a union.

All catering shop stewards interviewed stressed that the importance of the I.W.A., in their 1960s/1970s disputes, had been over stated. The real important support had come from their own families and local black shop keepers giving credit.

The decline of links between I.W.A. and the catering workers at the end of the 1970s seems to have been due to three factors, 1) the inroads that catering workers had made in the formal collective bargaining channels had provided them with more effective mechanisms for expressing their grievances, 2) the complexity of the Asian workers, many of whom were not Indian (e.g. the national sectional panel representative was a Pakistan Muslim), 3) major splits in the I.W.A. itself.

As mentioned above the existence of networks and systems of organisation outside the boundaries of the formal union structure is a feature common to a number of industrial struggles involving black workers. Both Ramdin¹⁸ and Wrench¹⁹ have examined the extent to which black workers have attempted to establish organisations separate from the formal union machinery. Wrench, rightly, identifies one of the main problematic elements involved in making a total break from established trade unions, when he states:-

The move for a separate black trade union poses a real dilemma for black activists. At the present time they see their particular interests being ignored by unions; however, there would be dangers in creating a separate union specifically to cover these interests. A separate black union might become isolated and relatively easily ignored by other unions and management; internal pressure on other unions to act on race issues would be weakened, and the end result could be a reduction in the collective power of organised black labour. (1987 p176)²⁰

One of the very purposes of the British Airways catering informal organisation was to gain and establish more bargaining power within the collective bargaining machinery. Total separation from the union machinery would have simply reinforced their isolation, and would have made any improvement of their pay and conditions extremely difficult, given that any gains in these areas are strongly influenced by the ability to make comparison with other job functions.

Accounts of these meetings highlight two issues as paramount:- the achievement of more effective representation by the union, and the discussion of informal and unofficial action to be taken against management. The issue of more effective representation by the union involved, particularly in the 1960s, a number of power struggles between different groups within the catering unit. It is difficult to establish now how many of these groups existed. What seems certain is that very often different groups met to agree on internal differences and also plan a unity strategy against the union itself (this issue is picked up later). The second issue of discussions on informal and unofficial action relates more to the 1970s when the organisation was more unified and existed to plan action against management without the full support of the official union.

The existence of groupings or caucuses seems a relatively common feature of all union organisations and is probably "part and parcel" of all political organisations. The existence of various forms of organisation of black workers seems a somewhat different phenomenon and is probably only paralleled with some women workers and their links with women's organisations.

The structural position of black workers in the labour market, the lack of sensitivity and institutionalised racism within the formal union machinery, and the common sense of identity shared by black workers were and still are major forces which stimulate the growth of organised support beyond the formal union framework. The case study would seem to imply that the development of such informal networks is inextricably linked with struggles for recognition within the formal

negotiation machinery. The informal channels and formal channels are not separate arenas of struggle.

In the case of British Airways catering the size of these networks appears to have diminished almost in proportion to the extent of increased success in the formal machinery. This process is neither an automatic trend, nor simply an institutional mechanism for incorporating or institutionalising conflict. This thesis has been concerned to argue very strongly against both these suggestions. In the case of British Airways catering workers it seems that the transfer of activity of struggles from informal to formal channels relates very much to the practical ability to achieve their own perceived aims. As in the case of other black workers' struggles the setting up of alternative groups is one way of establishing support in a situation where access to formal union representation is prohibited. It needs stressing here also that such an argument does not support J. Rex's assertion of a black under class based on differential access into British labour organisations. In fact the success of British Airways catering workers in the formal collective bargaining machinery would refute Rex's thesis in as much as access has simply changed the nature and character of their on-going struggles. The setting up of informal networks provided an important mechanism for achieving increased bargaining gains and provided a safe environment to work out the other informal practices to be discussed.

The Creation of a Cultural Barrier.

The second informal practice of the catering workers, to be examined, is the creation of a cultural barrier. It is important to stress here that the comments made in this section are taken from accounts of past events given by black catering workers and white trade union representatives (both officials and shop stewards). Many of the comments were not directly related to this issue but served as part of their description of events. What became apparent throughout the fieldwork for this thesis was the extent to which culture was used as a political mechanism by the catering workers, very often as a means of exclusion, by many

white workers very often as a vehicle for racism. In essence culture would seem to be an important instrument of political struggle.

The concept of culture is highly problematic, particularly in terms of definition. There are two general conceptual uses of the term culture. They are either of a definition of artistic expression or form, or related to styles of living. It is with the latter general usage that culture will be discussed here, and the contribution of Gramsci (1982), Fanon (1967) and Saul in this area will be considered briefly.

There are also two problems with the data of this research that need to be stressed. One relates to the extent to which culture is a constantly changing phenomena, and therefore accounts of its existence in the past may well be influenced by the cultural perceptions of the present;²¹ the other, is the danger of inflating its conceptual importance to a point where it provides an overriding explanation of all events thus attributing all causation to the intentional features of cultural and ideological formation. These issues have already been raised in relation to a critique of Gilroy's (1987) work in a previous chapter.²²

Taking these problems into account it will be argued that culture is a constantly changing dynamic force which in terms of its actuality and its perceived form can act as a mechanism for achieving political objectives, rather than being their cause. Not only were catering workers able to draw on their own cultural traditions as a means of ensuring protection against forms of racist hostility, they were also able to manipulate white stereotypical perceptions of their culture as a political mechanism for achieving their own political objectives. Before discussing these mechanisms it is necessary first to examine some recent and past theoretical discussion on the issue of cultural politics.

In recent years a number of writers, such as Barker (1981), Gilroy (1987) and Gordon/ Klug (1986), have linked the notion of cultural politics to the changing

nature of racism, or what now has come to be called "new racism". R. Miles (1989) defines this concept of "new racism" as follows:-

This ideology is seen largely, although not exclusively, to dispense with a notion of biological superiority/inferiority, and to formulate a notion of the Other as being naturally different in cultural terms and to have a natural "home" outside Britain. (p.64)²³

The roots of this new ideological formation is generally linked to periods of historical crisis in recent capitalist development and the need for certain sections of the "ruling class" to legitimize their political domination by the creation of a new hegemony (c.f. Hall 1978). Much of the theoretical origins of this new ideology are attributed to a wide range of writers who have loosely been called the "New Right", writers such as Nozick, Hayek, Friedman, Scruton and Honeyford.²⁴ The "New Right" are viewed by many as the theoretical base upon which the political ideology of "Thatcherism" is based (c.f. Hall 1978, Gordon/Klug 1986). The extent to which such writers form a unifying or coherent body of theory, which might influence the formation of either racist ideology or the political ideological phenomena labelled "Thatcherism", is very much open to question.

N. Deakin (1986) admits as much in the introduction to, **The New Right;image and reality**, when he states:

In spite of the absence of some themes that are present in other right wing groupings elsewhere, the diversity of perspectives to be found in the British New Right is quite sufficient to make it difficult to produce a clear cut definition of the New Right's philosophy and general approach to political and social policy questions (p.6)

While considerable literature has been generated about the "new right" and "new racism" very few substantive conclusions have been drawn about their impact upon racial politics, other than to make very generalised statements about their ability to legitimise "Thatcherism" and racism (c.f. Gordon/King)²⁵.

The use of the concept of culture is obviously fraught with danger, particularly in terms of providing deterministic explanations of human behaviour. Miles has argued very strongly about the tendency to inflate cultural and ideological forces as a total explanation of black oppression. He links some of these trends to the work of Fanon.²⁶

In fact Fanon was strongly opposed to any use of culture which was deterministic in nature. Fanon was strongly influenced by Marx, Sartre and Freud and these three influences are given expression in his work and result in a combination of revolutionary writings which adopt a fusion of sociological and psychological perspectives. Of great concern throughout his writings was the overall effect of colonial domination on the oppressed, and how the oppressed achieved a liberation consciousness.

He argued very strongly against attempts to rediscover and impose cultural forms from the past (pre-colonial). While fully aware that colonial domination involved cultural domination he believed it was futile to attempt to resurrect such cultures in order to adopt them in an attempt to eliminate colonial domination. For Fanon culture was a dynamic force which was given meaning by knowledge of the past, recognition of the present and a vision for the future. He states:-

The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope. But to ensure that hope and

to give it form, he must take part in action and throw himself body and soul into national struggle. You may speak about everything under the sun; but when you decide to speak of that unique thing in man's life that is represented by the fact of opening up new horizons, by bringing light to your own country and by raising yourself and your people to their feet, then you collaborate on the physical plane.

The responsibility of the native man of culture is not a responsibility vis-a-vis his national culture, but a global responsibility with regard to the totality of the nation, whose culture merely, after all, represents one aspect of that nation. The cultured native should not concern himself with choosing the level on which he wishes to fight or the sector where he decided to give battle for his nation. To fight for a national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible. There is no fight for culture which can develop apart from the popular struggle. To take an example: all those men and women who are fighting with their bare hands against French colonialism in Algeria are not by any means strangers to the national culture of Algeria. The national Algerian culture is taking on form and content as the battles are fought out, in prisons, under the guillotine and in every French outpost which is captured or destroyed. (p187)²⁷

Fanon is quoted here at length because this passage embodies much of what Fanon argues concerning culture. 1) While culture is linked to the past it is constantly changing within a political and economic context, 2) its formation is based on material, political and ideological forces, 3) it has a major political

significance both in terms of its actuality and its perceived aspirations. Cauter sums up his position well when he states:

*Fanon had, figuratively, stood before a mirror, trying on the brightly coloured garments of black primitivism and black history for size, and discarding them one by one. He experimented by dancing naked before the white man, spear in hand, but the white man was not impressed. I jostled him and told him point-blank, "Get used to me, I am not getting used to anyone." But the white man informed him that the serious business in the world was the matter of mastering it. So, said Fanon, 'Every hand was a losing one for me.' His final verdict is clear: 'In no way should I derive my basic purpose from the past of the peoples of colour. **In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization.**' Marx after all, had insisted that, 'The social revolution... cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all the superstitions concerning the past.' Fanon added words of his own: Those Negroes and white men will be disalienated who refuse to let themselves be sealed away in the materialized Tower of the Past.' (p25-26)²⁸*

The assertions listed before this quote seem highly relevant to black struggle, whether it be at the point of production or in the wider society. They also relate very closely to concepts and prescriptions that Gramsci formulated in relation to the notion of "hegemony". Gramsci's concern with hegemony did not simply relate

to a form of ideological domination by the "ruling class". Gramsci stressed the need for the proletariat to engage actively in the construction of their own hegemonic bloc, which could be best achieved at a level of popular ideas and culture. This argument is based very strongly upon the belief that ideology and culture could not solely be reduced to economic conditions and that their formation was part of a political and ideological struggle between conflicting attempts to make sense of the world. As Sassoon points out;-

In developing a strategy towards this end, a new hegemony must harness and systematise elements of popular ideas and practice. The concept of hegemony is thus the basis of Gramsci's critical analysis of folklore and popular culture and his discussion of religion and the relationship between the systematic philosophy of the philosopher and the unsystematic philosophy of world view of the mass of the population.
(p202)²⁹

Both Fanon and Gramsci suggest that formulation of culture and the expression of culture take place within a political context. Before providing some details of the political cultural struggles of the catering workers it is worth just briefly examining an argument presented by J. Saul concerning the dialectical nature of ethnicity. The concept of ethnicity, like that of culture, is problematic. Its conceptual development has, to some extent, been informed by an attempt to provide a black perspective to notions of specific cultural formations of groups. The main problem with its usage is that, as it has achieved greater currency in debate, it is used differently by different people at different times.

Saul's use of ethnicity is clearly within a marxist epistemology and is strongly influenced by Althusser and Frank.³⁰ It is the dialectical use of ethnicity within

Saul's work which is of particular interest to the case study. He views ethnicity as an ideological mechanism by which different economic interest groups achieve their differing political and economic goals.

He argues that the "ruling class" in Africa has used ethnicity in order to generate regional separation and to mask class privileged positions. He quotes Kenya after colonial liberation as an example.

He is insistent that ethnicity should not be analyzed in terms of national boundaries but rather as part of the structure of Africa's peripheral position in global capitalism. Because capitalism operates at a world level the development of ethnicity and nationalism by the oppressed can form a source of ideological opposition to imperialism. Thus the dialectical nature of ethnicity can find expression, on the one hand, as a mask to class positions, and on the other, can provide "recruits" (Althusser's term) by means of an ideology that opposes imperialism.

While Saul's argument of ideological formation is clearly locked into a structural marxist model of analysis, (such as Althusser and Poulantzas) with all the problems this brings, he does present a notion of ethnicity that suggests its use and perception are open to dialectical forms of usage. They are not therefore reducible merely to a one dimensional state or cause.³¹ Saul's dialectical model of ethnicity, which is mainly a dual model, is perhaps too simplistic, and what we need to consider is a multi dimensional model of culture.

Fanon, Gramsci and Saul all present models of culture/ethnicity which are not static or subject to one means of expression. Culture and ethnicity can be vehicles which are used by differing groups for their own political and economic objectives and gains. Clearly, this process takes place mainly at the ideological or perceptual level of culture. To suggest that such processes are autonomous from the actuality of culture, however, fails to acknowledge the importance of situations of struggle. People's perceptions of cultural difference are temporary. They change

according to the issues of the moment, and at any one time a person may have a number of perceptions and make a number of differentiations according to the situations in which they are placed.

It would seem, particularly in the case of the catering workers, that culture does operate in a multi dimensional way. For example our perceptions of past cultural experiences are subject to a number of interpretations. Some of these interpretations are based upon racist assumptions, but many will be influenced by a number of different sources, such as folk lore or even family reminiscence. All these forces have the potential to influence the actuality of culture for groups or individuals. This dynamic nature of culture means that the ideological level, the perception level and also the level of actuality of culture are all subject to each other's influence and therefore constantly open to change. Culture has the potential to operate, influence and be experienced in a number of different ways. It can even be perceived as a static racist model. This model can, however, be both a mechanism for oppression or a mechanism for struggling against that oppression, as in the use of "cultural barriers" by the catering workers. If this is the case then it consequently very difficult to conceptualise culture other than in very specific contexts. In the case of the catering workers they seemed to have used one aspect of the perception of culture as an instrument of political struggle. It became obvious to them very early on in their struggle that the white community they worked with and dealt with perceived their differing cultures and ethnicity very often as one. White shop stewards and union officials were aware of divisions and factions, based upon religion and different countries of origin. Nevertheless, for those who would be classified "Asian" the general perception of their culture and ethnicity by white shop stewards and union officials was still based upon a notion of a homogeneous mass.

Catering workers were not slow to exploit this situation. The lack of knowledge and understanding by much of the wider white community of the complexity of catering

workers' ethnicity and culture meant that any white trade unionists entering the catering workers' arena of struggle, were entering a world in which a whole range of work meanings and power relationships were a mystery.

Any method of exclusion is very often used by specific groups to maximise their own power position. The use of language is an obvious mechanism. At the catering unit there existed a whole range of different languages of origin. What the catering workers seem to have been able to produce was a cultural boundary, or barrier, which excluded, to a great extent, the majority of white workers and trade unionists. Within this cultural boundary there still existed a diversity of cultures. What is being suggested here is that this cultural boundary was socially constructed mainly as a political mechanism to fight out the different power battles that took place between different groupings in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and to gain much greater control over the means of their own representation. What one needs to remember here is that throughout much of the 1960s and 1970s the official union was seen as being just as much the "enemy" as British Airways' management.

The T. & G. were just like management. They never did anything for the catering workers. If we had relied on them we would have got nothing. (Bashir Bhatti, Catering Shop Steward)

It seems that this cultural barrier often produced a sense of cultural anarchy of which union officials, like John Collier and Ricky Pither could not make any sense. On several occasions, as mentioned previously in this chapter, the union branch was disbanded. To quote John Collier:

Well throughout the years that I have been dealing with them I have had some very tough meetings with them,

but I have never been physically harmed, and one would have thought that was virtually impossible, the rowdiness of some of the meetings that had taken place, and we have had at least two occasions when we had to close meetings prior to the police being involved.

and also,

every time we tried to hold a meeting we had a riot and I tried to hold one on the ramp of the aircraft catering unit, and that was impossible--- people milling about and shouting--- I had a another in Hounslow where I tried to get a panel elected and I started to get the same sort of arguments emerging and we had to close that meeting before the police came in.

The next section will deal with the highly effective informal practice, of never knowing what was fully on their bargaining agenda. This practice was one thought out and planned within the boundaries created by the "cultural" barriers.

What is interesting, and supportive of the general argument being put forward here, is the differing ways in which black workers used this cultural barrier. It seems that Bashir Bhatti (catering shop steward), in particular, became aware of the need in the 1970s to make in-roads into the wider trade union network of power in order to maximise upon such initiatives as job evaluation. (This will be discussed at much greater length when outlining struggles in the formal practices section). In this period it seems Bashir Bhatti was able to increase his importance as representative and negotiator for catering workers with management because of his knowledge and access to both the "cultural world" of the catering workers

and the formal channels of negotiation within the British Airways system of collective bargaining.

A supposed malpractice that utilised this cultural barrier was reported by one white shop steward, whose name, for obvious reasons cannot be used. He was adamant that until recent years very often Asian applicants for a job would turn up and pass the interview, and then a completely different person with the same name would start the job. It was, he said, only with the recent growing concern with security that the practice had been discovered and stopped. Neither British Airways nor the workers involved are likely to admit to such a practice. It does though highlight the differing way that cultural barriers can be used.

A much clearer example of the use of a cultural barrier in the next section of this chapter on "the hidden agenda" of catering workers will be presented. Finally in this section it is necessary briefly to discuss the ways in which cultural politics was used by white workers within the airline as a political mechanism for discriminating against black workers.

Nearly all the white informants interviewed had a relatively limited understanding of the diversity of the black catering workers' culture. Many of them, particularly J. Collier (union official), R. Pither (union official) and C. Varndel (chair of shop stewards committee and shop steward), said that there had existed, until the end of the 1970s a strong attitude of opposition by the white workers in non-catering sections to black workers gaining access to those sections. We can only assume that such racist attitudes were partly influenced by stereotypical perceptions of black cultures. Two things need stressing here: one is that cultural perceptions are only one aspect of racist ideology; and the second is that racist ideology is not enough, or even necessary at all, for racial discrimination and oppression to take place.

Culture then seems a highly dynamic political mechanism, particularly in terms of its perception. It would seem that the ever changing actuality of culture, would also be influenced by the political cultural struggles of competing groups in order to achieve political and economic gains. It would seem that Fanon was correct to suggest that culture is given real form in the actual process of attempting to achieve liberation from oppressive forces. The next section will look at one of the particular informal practices which utilised these cultural forces, the use of "the hidden agenda".

The use of "the hidden agenda".

So far in this chapter it has been argued that the mistrust catering workers had for the official union and many of the other trade groups within the airline had created a number of informal practices. These practices had, by and large, been developed in order to ensure a safe and trustworthy environment in which the catering workers could plan to achieve some degree of parity with workers doing similar jobs in other sections.

The remaining two practices to be discussed relate to specific mechanisms by which the catering workers created a situation of uncertainty amongst the airline management and the official union. It is difficult to establish the origins of such practices other than that they seem to have evolved from the mid 1960s a period when catering workers mistrust of the union was extremely high. While the last practice to be examined, the "slowing down" of the assembly line, is a practice common to assembly line workers, the use of the "hidden agenda" in negotiations is less common.

Normal practice in trade union negotiation is that the workers inform the union's negotiation team what their bargaining aims are. While it is common practice, often for tactical reasons, not to reveal all the bargaining objectives to the management side, it is assumed that it is within the best interest of workers, for the union's

negotiation team to be fully aware of all the items on an agenda that workers want to obtain.

For the British Airways catering workers, very often, the opposite seems to have been the case. What seems to have started out as a practice employed by the catering workers because of mistrust of the official union and other trade sections, soon became a practice employed for itself, as an effective mechanism for achieving catering workers' bargaining aims. Colin Varndell (chair British Airways Trade Union Council) outlined the position best as seen from a senior union position, when he made a number of references to the practice in an interview. They are quoted at length below:

C.V. What I've always found difficult in dealing with catering unit was you never ever really found what the problem was. If the problem was that they wanted their three lieu days which they felt were theirs by right because they created the backlog, they never ever told you it was the three lieu days, they told you it was the shortage of staff, it was dumping gear etc.

and,

C.V. John (J. Collier Union Official) basically is not a wheeler dealer. John likes everything spelt out, everything showing above and what he couldn't do was come to grips with going to meetings, certainly with Bashir and the reps. (catering shop stewards), who would say that the problem was this, when you'd solved that, it wasn't the problem, its now this, when you solved that , it wasn't that or this and I know for a

fact that I've been with Bashir with 10 items written down, and we've come out solving all 10 items, and when we've sat in the room downstairs and he's said, that really wasn't the problem. The real problems, but its their culture, I mean they are not up front. Right, when I say they, that's the way that they are. They don't tell anyone what the real problems is.

Q. So that caused a lot of problems early on did it?

C.V. Yes because we are not used to it. We are used to some one telling us what the problem is and then trying to solve the problem, to find that you spent all day solving a problem and then someone tells you it wasn't really the problem and the real problem is this.

Q. Do you think they used it as a tactic though?

C.V. I think it's their culture, it's the way no one ever tells you what the real problem is. It's getting better, but it's like the situation of the bonded store where we had consultants in and we put other reps. into the bonded store because we were saying that people could not pack more than one and half 747's (Aircraft) and Bashir was telling us that they couldn't do it and so on, management were saying they could so we put consultants in, I'm talking about people who were labour minded guys looking after the labour of the country from Oxford University who came down, we

put staff reps. with them and I am talking about staff reps. from engineering, Paddy Maher was one and other people, and I can remember the terrible arguments that went on because we would find tomato juice poured all over the shelves which meant we had to take every bottle out and wash it, but the guy from Oxford was no fool and he would notice that there was no tomato juice in their bar box so somebody would have had to have tipped it over it and then said, oh yea, this is why it takes the time because you have to take every bottle out and you have to wash every bottle, you have to wash the shelf now, what used to be silly you don't even cry about it, but now they do two and half -three jumbos (Boeing 747 aircraft) and no one thinks any more of it, but we were going through a complete change ourselves and we must have found it difficult ourselves to look because we had fiddles if you like, the way we slowed work down and speeded it up, but when you are dealing with the Asian community, people say, ah, the bastards are corrupt, but we (the union) weren't corrupt, it was just normal for us and I think John (J. Collier union official) maybe felt, they never tell you the truth. John wanted to come in, he's a busy man, solve the problem and get out. Not come in, solve the problem that wasn't a problem etc., and in the afternoon you're still where you were and in fact the bigger problem still has not come up front- I think it caused John to feel, you know.

Q.*There was a period of hype?*

C.V. Oh yes, when they didn't want him in (J. Collier).

Q. How long did this go on for?

C.V. Quite a while. You see John had negotiated the terms and conditions and agreements and as John said, the only thing the Union got was his word and if you ask people if that's O.K. and they say yes, if you can get us this then you've got a deal, so then when you go in there and get that its oh yea, well you've now got to get this because the guys want, and you spend half your life not knowing what people really want.

Q. So how long did that go on for?

C.V. I think it went on until Bashir found that it wasn't a way of doing business, but Bashir, as I said, was a master of negotiation and having people argue the case but without really telling you. I mean he was lucky he solved 20 problems before he really told you what the real problem was, so he was getting benefits but, I mean their panel meetings were war and peace, I mean they were disbanded.³²

These comments give some indication of the intensity of a period of struggle that took place at the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s. They also demonstrate how racism can be used against stereotypical views. Comments, such as "their culture", are clearly related to a static ideological model of culture,

and are therefore racist. That catering workers were able to exploit such a stereotypical perception of culture, intentionally or unintentionally, in order to create a "cultural barrier" to implement a "hidden agenda", is a good example of how racism can also be used as an instrument of political struggle by the oppressed. It also needs to be stressed here, that while Colin Varndell does express such a static view of culture, he, more than any other non-catering shop steward, provided advice and support to the catering workers and never expressed any form of overt racist comment throughout the study. Therefore, it would seem there is no inevitable link between ideological perceptions and action. Ideology and people's perceptions are not necessarily static and they are only two factors, albeit important ones, in the formation of social processes.

There are a number of clarifications that need to be made out about the above comments and also they need to be compared with the general account of events provided by Bashir Batthi and other catering shop stewards.

This period was a time of extreme conflict and mistrust between the catering workers and the official union. Many of the south side catering unit had attempted to resign from the union en masse. They also made several attempts to have John Collier (official union officer) removed as their union official. This was a period also, according to Bashir Bahtti, when both the official union and the airline's management were reluctant to acknowledge the existence of the corrupt practices mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

The use of the "hidden agenda" was one that Bashir Bahtti insisted developed as a mechanism to force official union and management to address the issue of corruption. Their reluctance to discuss the issue had resulted in the catering workers creating a situation in which almost any issue of contention was generated into an issue of conflict. In this period many issues were placed on the

agenda as a means of ensuring confrontation with management and applying greater pressure for representation from the official union. Bashir Bahtti states:

Our hope was that we would create so much problems, troubles, that it would make the union and management solve the corruption and the issues of parity.

Eventually the catering management responsible for the corrupt practices was transferred out of catering. A number of white shop stewards in other trade groups have confirmed this interpretation of events in informal discussions, but none were willing to acknowledge such practices in a formal interview. None of the official union officers that were interviewed accepted that they were aware of such events.

It became apparent to the catering workers that the use of the "hidden agenda" did create a powerful dynamic in the bargaining process. Both the official union and other trade group shop stewards, like Colin Varndell, were very often never totally sure of what the objectives of catering workers were, and just as important, what their plan of action was. Catering workers were becoming, within the airline, a highly volatile group of workers that were not subject to or controlled by official union sanction. The problematic nature of predicting catering workers' motives and actions did provide them in this period, very often, with an effective "cutting edge" in terms of their bargaining style.

The cultural barrier that they had employed and exploited simply intensified this process. Colin Varndell's comments, "but it's their culture", "dealing with the Asian Community" could be quoted several times over from a number of interviews given by trade union officials and white union shop stewards.

Catering shop stewards had partly thought out and partly stumbled upon the two mechanisms which in this period provided them with a degree of success in their struggles for parity with other workers. The combination of the use of a cultural barrier with the use of the "hidden agenda" created at times situations which many who observed events viewed as a kind of industrial anarchy. Certainly many of the other parties involved in negotiation had great difficulty at times in making sense of events, and simply seem to have explained it in terms of "their culture".

Such mechanisms were only given any real potency because of two main factors. The first applied to the organisation of the catering workers themselves. As mentioned above the perception of a unified Asian culture, or characteristics of that culture being the same, was purely an ideological construction which could be employed in a dialectical way by either racists or black workers in struggle. This meant that the ability of the catering workers to perpetuate cultural stereotypes required very little effort, given the extent to which such stereotypes were incorporated into the various forms of British white culture. While on the other hand, the actuality of culture for black catering workers was extremely diverse; which meant that the ability to co ordinate across such cultural diversity, and to use so effectively the "hidden agenda", required a well organised internal organisation. Therefore, the establishment of their own organisational network was a critical feature of their industrial struggles in this period.

The second, and probably the more important factor was the nature of the industrial environment itself. Many labour historians view the late 1960s and early 1970s as a period in which trade union bargaining power was at its strongest for the post-war period (c.f. Hobsbawn 1989, Lane 1974). The general trend within unions was for greater involvement by shop floor representatives in the collective bargaining process. The T. & G.W.U., the catering workers' own union, was one of the main advocates in this movement. In addition, trade union organisations as a whole, and the T.U.C. in particular were coming under increased criticism from

a number of quarters for their failure to challenge racism, both in their own organisations and the workplace (c.f. Ramdin 1987 p357-358).

Finally, British Airways itself was very concerned to encourage greater staff participation. Prior to 1972 it had been made up of four separate airline identities and the introduction of its single corporate identity required much greater consultation and agreement because of the necessity to introduce new working practices. Therefore there was considerable pressure from both the official union and the management for "responsible" staff involvement in the collective bargaining process. The pressure was very much on for the airline to establish bargaining mechanisms which would allow for the transformation of four separate operations into one airline. The official union, for its part, was under pressure from British Airways management to establish "meaningful negotiation" and pressure internally within the union organisation itself, particularly from its leadership, under Jack Jones, to introduce greater staff democracy.

In this industrial environment, the catering workers, through their actions, were able to start to ensure attention from the official union and B.A. management. The official union had to try and make some sense of their aims and action, while management for its part, was likely to be concerned to return to normal production. The catering workers' use of the cultural barrier and the "hidden agenda" was increasingly leading to the union's inability to reassure management that it could "deliver the goods" once agreement had been met.

Such tactics ensured that the catering workers could not be ignored and more importantly could not be pacified. The process by which the catering workers had been marginalised was beginning now to be reversed. Such tactics in the 1980s would most probably be ineffective as the whole environment of industrial relations has changed. Lord King, the head of British Airways now, is a model of Thatcherite

management, and his general approach has nearly always been to inform staff rather than to consult them about changes in work practices.

The catering workers' use of such tactics maximised their bargaining position. It demonstrates clearly a form of "realism". The use of the term "new realism" in recent years has generally been applied to the need of trade unions to be aware of the vulnerability of their bargaining position under "Thatcherism", and to behave accordingly (c.f. Sherman 1986). It will be argued later that "realism" has been a constant feature of trade union practice and one which is based upon the various forms of political analysis that workers employ in order to make sense of their industrial struggles. Catering workers analysis of the "realism" of their informal tactics seems to have been particularly pertinent, and highly effective. The last informal practice to be examined is the use of the "go-slow". In many ways this practice seems to have provided the final "turn of the screw" which provided greater parity with other workers, more effective representation, and also greater access to the formal channels of negotiation.

"The go-slow".

The "go-slow" technique of industrial action is one which has a long tradition associated with collective action. It is particularly applicable to assembly line production. While it is not obviously exclusive to forms of mass production, the "go-slow's" ability to create bottle necks in the productive process of mass production has given it a currency, which is understandably appealing to workers who wish to give expression to industrial grievances.

British Airways' catering production is particularly vulnerable to the "go-slow" as a form of industrial action. South side catering alone produces approximately 24,000 meals a day. Their main product, in-flight meals, is highly perishable. All the food is of an extremely high standard and in the highly competitive business of air

travel, in-flight catering can be a major contributory factor in maintaining and increasing business.

British Airways catering reputation is based upon producing good quality food in a clean environment. There are a number of different places in the catering production at which a bottle neck could be achieved, but the catering workers found that the most effective area was the wash-up. The wash-up department is a crucial link in the production chain. Here all in-flight utensils and equipment, and some catering production equipment itself is washed. To create a blockage here is to produce a possible health hazard and run the risk that environmental health officers could close the catering centre down.

The catering workers found that the wash-up department was the area in which most control over the process of go-slow could be achieved. They had thought out carefully various ways of controlling the speed of this operation, and the extent to which the catering workers have this process down to, what J. Collier (Union official) defined as, a "fine art" has been acknowledged throughout the union network within the airline. There were, and still are, a number of different levels of pressure that could be applied to the process, very often dependent upon the weight of workers' demands.

They could simply apply enough pressure to create a backlog of work within the unit which would require time to make up for the lost production. They could create a blockage which would result in a loss of in-flight catering, not only on flights out of Heathrow, but also for a number of other flight sectors in which the aircraft's origin had been London, e.g. a flight London/Singapore/Hong Kong/Sydney will have all its catering produced at Heathrow. In addition, the unit produces contract work for other airlines, who also would apply pressure to British Airways' management in cases of the catering supplies to their flight. Finally, as mentioned above, there was always the major threat that the unit itself could be

closed down by environmental health officers owing to the back log constituting a health hazard. Such action would of course generate a great deal of bad publicity for the airline. It was possible within a very short period to create chaos in the catering production, with a massive backlog of uncleaned equipment, much of it soiled by uneaten food.

The level of implementation of this action was based upon a multiplicity of factors, the main one being the political judgement of the workers involved. As mentioned above, very often the official union and non-catering shop stewards were not party to the full reasons for such actions. Therefore, such action had implications for challenging control not just of management but also the official union and other trade groups involved in the bargaining process. A number of writers, such as, Beynon (1973), Hyman (1972), Poole (1986)³³, have discussed the sociological implications involved in workers attempting to control the level of output as a mechanism of industrial expression. Generally such discussions have tended to focus upon the simple power relationship between workers and management which results in struggles concerning control over the labour process. In the case of the catering workers their actions were often aimed at a dual target of official union and management. Their challenge was not based solely upon the well-coined demand, "the right of workers to share in the management of their own affairs", but also upon the demand, "the right of workers to be fairly represented".

The use of the "go-slow" by the catering workers is one which has been, and remains, an effective weapon in their industrial struggles and is one of which both management and official union have been targets. John Colliers' quote, stated in full on page four of this chapter, indicates the extent to which the official union were and are aware of the effectiveness of this action:

I think they had a tradition of in the wash-up for instance they can, and still do, when it suits them, em produce massive back logs---

However, the "go-slow", was used far more frequently in the period 1969 to 1977 when formal channels of negotiation were less open to the catering workers. This was also a period in which trade union militant action had a degree of potency. As mentioned above, the merger of separate corporate airlines into the one national Airline in this period had brought about a requirement for greater staff consultation. However, the general exclusion of the catering workers from this process served only to instil in them more resolution to confront the injustices and disparity of treatment they believed they experienced in relation to other trade groups. The general climate of this period was one in which assertive trade unionism was possible. It suffices here to state that the catering workers' awareness of the inconsistency between their involvement in formal union representation and that of other trade groups would seem to be a major contributing factor to their development of informal practices. In such a climate informal practices seem to have had a considerable disarming impact on both official union and management alike.

Of course the implications of such action on the respective parties were different, one lost profits while the other lost a degree of representative credibility. Nevertheless, the catering workers maximised their actions as a means of economic sanction (mainly in the case of management) and political sanction (mainly in the case of the official union). Their struggles had taken place within an arena in which their formal options were limited. Therefore the need to construct and adapt informal practices became an increasing necessity in order to find mechanisms for expressing their industrial grievances.

Some initial comments on informal practices.

In the mid 1970s, a shift in emphasis for the catering workers away from informal practices towards more formal practices of industrial struggle began. Mills (1951), Anderson (1977) and Edwards(1979), have all conceptualised such processes in terms of the institutionalization of labour conflict. While there are significant differences between such writers, their central argument is the same, that formal union negotiations serve to pacify labour militancy and conflict in the interest of capitalism, and that official trade unions are party to this process. This section questions that assumption.

The necessity, for catering workers, to develop informal practices was based upon a number of factors. The catering workers' struggles, like those of all workers, take place in changing arenas of struggle, in which both the forces operating, and the mechanisms for political struggle, have both intentional and unintentional consequences. Thus workers have to make political judgments, upon their own perceptions of "what is politically possible".

The exclusion of catering workers from formal channels in the 1960s and part of the 1970s forced them to construct their own mechanisms of political expression. It also, politically, engaged them in a struggle which was directed both against the official union (along with other trade groups that inhibited their progress) and the management of the airline. The informal struggles were not merely coopted. They were waged in the first place in order to gain formal representation.

The reasons for these exclusions are numerous, some intentional and some unintentional. Certainly the ghettoisation of black labour into one trade group in the airline and the existence of racism amongst the white work force and the official trade union were major contributing factors. The structural position of catering workers, regardless of their colour was another major determinant, in the history and development of the collective bargaining process. As can be seen, when the

particular forms of collective bargaining structures within the airline changed, so did the possibilities for catering workers to gain access to formal bargaining.

Many of these forces in the 1960s brought the catering workers into direct confrontation with the official union. For much of the time, in fact, the catering workers operated with very little reference to official union practice.

We had our own organisation for a long time, nothing to do with the union. We never allowed them to come in to catering because they come to break you. It was only when they came to us first and not management [1976]. (Bashir Bhatti, catering shop steward).

Like many other black workers, who were located in this period in similar structural positions in the labour market, sharing similar hostile ideological environments, their struggles were not simply based on a labour versus capital dichotomy.

The use of informal practices for the catering workers was mainly born out of necessity they became popular because of their effectiveness within the specific arenas of struggle where they were used. Their abandonment or reduction were not based upon an incorporation into institutionalised practices, but upon a political assessment by catering shop stewards, in the main, of the changing arenas of struggle. The sole use of such practices in a now changed environment would most probably have little effect. Their reduced use therefore was based mainly on a political judgement and was in no way a reflection of pacification through the "institutionalisation of conflict". In simple terms, catering workers now (the late 1970s onwards) had a number of other mechanisms open to them in pursuit of their objectives.

In addition, the growing assertiveness of the catering workers in this period was as much a struggle for greater and fairer representation, as it was a struggle against the perceived injustice and disparity with other workers. Part of their struggle, therefore, involved a claim to be meaningful participants in the formal processes of negotiation. The "organisational network", "the cultural barrier", "the hidden agenda" and the "go-slow" were all mechanisms developed separately from the union and management, and were ones which were deployed jointly against management and official union. They were used to achieve more control over the bargaining process and thereby give greater expression to their grievances.

It seems inevitable that within this period, 1969 to 1977, all these suppressed conflicts would result in major forms of industrial action. The week long strike in July 1975, was a watershed for the catering workers, in terms of their access to formal negotiation channels and in terms of achieving some level of parity with similar workers. Before discussing the importance of their struggles in relation to formal practices, the strike and its significance to informal/formal practices will be discussed briefly.

The 1975 Strike and the role it played in a shift towards formal practices.

The strike of 1975 was a challenge to both union and management. It was also a significant turning point for the catering workers, the official union and the management in the way they dealt with their differences. The strike was, in many respects, the first real sign of a move towards more formal modes of negotiation and practice. The workers themselves were making it very clear to management and official union that they wanted to be part of the formal process. In a statement made by the catering workers' committee at the time of the strike this point was made very clear. It reads:-

The action has been forced upon the workers by the stubborn and deplorable attitude of the management refusing to even sit on a negotiating table to consider some of the long standing and legitimate demands of the staff and to redress their genuine difficulties and grievances about working conditions.

The action is, unfortunately, also a result of the failure of the Transport & General Workers Union officials to effectively fight for the rights of its members.

Without going into details of the causes and reasons of the action, we, the undersigned as the Shop Stewards, still impress upon the management to accept our major demands immediately and start negotiations for the remaining. We also urge upon the TGWU to play its desired role for resolving the situation and in getting the workers their just and due rights conceded. (Full document in appendix 5).

In this dispute the workers themselves were not slow to utilise many of the then current political forces, particularly the growing importance of racism as an issue of political struggle. They stated in the same document:-

We are pained to point out that management had been refusing to concede to this demand because of the fact that the Unit consists of mainly coloured workers. The percentage of White workers in the Unit is minor, hardly half percent. We feel that the attitude of the management would have been different if there were

a large number of White workers in the Unit. Management's insistence to refuse to review the wage-structures of the staff of the Catering staff is based on racial discrimination.

As mentioned above, the T.U.C. and trade union organisations were increasingly criticised by anti-racist activists for their lack of commitment to combating racial discrimination and harassment (Ramdin 1987). A number of industrial disputes involving black workers had taken place in the early 1970s, the Mansfield Hosiery Mills and Imperial Typewriters being the most publicised, in which racism had been a major dynamic and in which the official trade unions for their part had been heavily criticised. The catering workers were fully aware of the impact that accusations of racism would have on the union and the management of a national airline.

There was also increasing pressure on the government in the early 1970s to make meaningful amendments to the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968 in order that the law might effectively eliminate discriminatory practices. The 1970s was a period in which racism was firmly placed upon the political agenda. According to commentators, such as Sivanandan ³⁴, it was a period in which the state and the "ruling class" could no longer effectively manipulate racism for its own interests, as racism had become too explosive an issue. (p124) While such an analysis is too economically deterministic in character (see chapter on "Race" and class for extensive critique), it does rightly highlight the changing dynamics of the politics of racism in this period.

Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s black experience and expression were being overtly challenged by ultra right wing political forces. Within this period it was becoming increasingly difficult for those involved in labour politics not to take a stand against overt racism. Such a stand very often amounted to nothing more

than political rhetoric, and of itself, may have inhibited but did not stop individuals, groups of politicians or trade unionists being involved in racist practices. What it did seem to provide though was an ideological arena in which the term "racism" acquired much greater impact. The term was given greater potency in the attack against racist practices and the inertia by individuals to those practices.³⁵ While the catering workers' claim of "racial discrimination" was justified in itself, they were also politically astute enough to know that claims of "racism" against the union and the government owned airline would have greater political impact at this time. Within a week the catering workers had won the strike and the Indian Workers Association were claiming it as the;-

first successful strike action taken by Asian workers in Britain. (Morning Star 19th July 1975).

Eventually the official union had supported the strike and had issued a statement to the effect that they were not guilty of racist practices against the catering workers:

TGWU national officer John Collier had accused the IWA of doing a disservice to racial harmony at the airport by saying the dispute was about racial discrimination which the union had failed to tackle in the past.

(ibid)

At the end of the dispute the catering workers had achieved security of employment (no more temporary contracts), safety equipment, free meals and more importantly, an agreement to set in motion machinery to examine pay structures. They had fought for and won some access to the main channels of

negotiation. In terms of pay parity, management actually made an agreement, at a meeting on the picket line, to reinstate the job evaluation scheme as a means of achieving higher rates of pay, (this important agreement is shown in appendix 6). This then instigated a whole agenda that will be discussed in the chapter on "Formal Practices".

Early in the same year, 16th March, the Race Relations Board had initiated an internal enquiry concerning allegations of racial discrimination by the Airline. The Joint Panel of Shop-Stewards, with the help of the Hillingdon Law Centre, had compiled a report as evidence to be presented to the committee, which was made up of three members, one external chair- Sir Leslia Williams, a trade union nominee- W.P.Blair and a management nominee- J.G. Smith. (copy of this report in the appendix 2). Not surprisingly the committee had failed to accept that the airline had discriminated and only accepted that racism existed at shop floor level. To quote:-

At shop floor level it appears that colour and racial differences tend to be utilised by staff in certain circumstances as forms of abuse and means of protection. This, in turn, exacerbates the frustration referred to above and increase the likelihood of incidents. (page 4 committee minutes, appendix 2).

While this enquiry did little to satisfy the catering workers or avert the strike of July, it did alert the management and union to the necessity of including the catering workers in the collective bargaining process. Both the union and management were becoming aware that the catering workers were a formidable force within the industrial relations arena. The actual details of this report are presented at greater length in the history chapter. What is essential here is to make reference to the main recommendation of the report, which was, to involve the catering workers in

more traditional and formal forms of collective bargaining. The strike of July, it seems, simply reinforced those views.

Thus there were a number of competing forces directing the catering workers towards more formal arenas of struggle. The management for its part wanted much more orderly and predictable forms of bargaining. The union faced pressure from management to ensure orderly negotiation and pressure from their membership for lack of previous representation. But what is crucial here for any analysis is an awareness that the third dimensional pressure was coming from the workers themselves. Their access to formal bargaining structures was not based on incorporation alone, it was part also of their own struggle for greater control over the mechanisms by which their pay and conditions were determined. The strike of 1975 played an important part in this struggle.

It is necessary therefore, now to go on to look at the catering workers struggles within the formal arenas. Also, the role of one individual shop steward, Bashir Batthi, will be highlighted. His role appears to have been critical in this period and it is important to make reference to his contribution within the context of changing social forces. It is essential also to stress that this shift of emphasis from informal practices to formal practices between 1975 and 1977 was never total. While the reduction of informal practices occurred mainly in correlation to the increase of access to formal practices, there were periods and incidents in which both forms of practice operated simultaneously.

1. E.P. Thompson., The Making of the English Working Class, Gollancz, 1963.
2. P. Anderson., The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action, from T.Clarke/L.Clements Trade Unions Under Capitalism, Fontana 1977 Glasgow.
R. Edwards., Contested Terrain, Heinemann 1979 London.
C.R. Littler., The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies, Heinemann 1982 London.
3. K. Marx., The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Taken from, N. Smelser (Ed.), Karl Marx; on Society and Social Change, The University of Chicago 1973 Chicago.
4. Fryer, Walvin, etc. Almost all historical accounts of the arrival of black labour identify the racism and hostility confronted by black people.
5. Institute of Race Relations and Southall Rights:-"Southall; The Birth of a Black Community".
6. When I was a shop steward in the 1970s a union official had expressed his disgust at union members' and officials' opposition on racist grounds to Southall T.G.W.U. branch hall being used for English classes for Asian women.
7. R.Moore., Racism and Black Resistance in Britain, Pluto Press 1975 London.
8. P. Foot., Immigration and Race in British Politics, Penguin 1965 London.
S. Hall et.al., Policing the Crisis: the State and the Law and Order, Macmillan 1978 London.
A. Sivanandan., A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance, Pluto Press 1982 London.

9. P. Foot., Immigration and Race in British Politics.
10. My sources informed me that, in the main, four charge hands were involved.
11. S. Hall et.al., Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order, Macmillan 1978 London.
12. While these figures are speculative it was obvious from my sources that a considerable amount of money was changing hands. A thousand pounds constituted a considerable amount of money in the 1960's.
13. This sub-contracting relates to engineering cleaning staff and not catering workers.
14. All references to India in this section include Pakistan as the term India is used in an historical context and applies to the country mainly before its partition into three separate units.
15. Caroline Knowles., The Labour Party's Commonwealth: An Analysis of Discourses on Political Community in the 1930's, Ph.D Thesis, City University (unpublished).
16. Imperial Typewriters, Mansfield Hosiery and Grunwick all involved a high level of community involvement.
17. R. Ramdin., The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain, Gower Publishers 1987.
18. R. Ramdin., The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain, Gower Publishers 1987.
19. R Jenkins/ J. Solomos (Ed.)., Racism and Equal Opportunity Policies in the 1980's, Chapter 10, J. Wrench Cambridge Univ.Press 1987.

20. R Jenkins/ J. Solomos (Ed.)., Racism and Equal Opportunity Policies in the 1980's, Chapter 10, J. Wrench Cambridge Univ.Press 1987 . J.Wrench's emphasis of reduction.
21. This may well happen in a number of different ways to inflate their cultural importance, as in the case of Gilroy's work which was discussed in the Class and "Race" chapter, or even play its importance down as in the case of white trade unionists sensitive to the social pressure not to be racist.
22. This argument is expanded upon in the chapter on Discrimination, and also in R. Miles., Racism; Key Ideas, Chapter 2, Conceptual Inflation, Routledge 1989.
23. R. Miles., Racism; Key Ideas, Routledge 1989 (London).
24. For an account of all these writers work see, G. Cohen et.al., The New Right; image ad reality, Runnymede Trust 1986 (London).
25. P. Gordon & F.King., New Right New Racism, Searchlight 1985.
26. R. Miles., Racism (Key Ideas), Chapter 2, Routledge 1989.
27. F. Fanon., The Wretched of the Earth, Penguin 1967 (London).
28. D.Caute., Fanon, Fontana 1970 London.
29. T. Bottomore (Ed.)., Marxist Thought, A.S. Sassoon on Hegemony, (London) Blackwell 1985.

30. Saul's writing is strongly influenced by structural marxism and dependency theory.
31. The problematic nature of structural marxism is discussed in the "race" and class chapter.
32. The role Bashir Bhatti played in catering workers' struggles will be discussed in more depth later.
33. H. Beynon., Working for Ford, Penguin 1973 (London).
R. Hyman., Strikes, Fontana 1972 (Glasgow).
M. Poole., Towards a New Industrial; Democracy, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1986 (London).
34. A. Sivanandan., A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance, Pluto Press 1982 London.
35. This process had a parallel in the feminist movement whose struggles to challenge sexism had elevated the political importance of the term, "sexism", itself.

CHAPTER 7

Formal Practices

- (1) Industrial Democracy in British Airways
- (2) Brief History of British Airways Job and Pay Scheme
- (3) The Role of Bashir Bhatti
- (4) How the Struggle in Job Evaluation worked
- (5) The Job Evaluation Committees
- (6) How Job Evaluation Procedure operated
- (7) Summary of the Formal Practices

FORMAL PRACTICES.

This section will be concerned to examine the increasing involvement of catering workers in formal practices of collective bargaining. It will be concerned to argue that such involvement did not merely constitute an incorporation of conflict, or increased managerial control, through the mechanisms of increased bureaucratization. These processes may well have been part of a managerial attempt to expand formal negotiation machinery, but these processes were also partly constructed and moulded by other motives and interests of both staff and management. In short, bureaucracy is not the sole property of management, it is an arena of struggle.

Industrial Democracy in British Airways.

A number of internal and external factors were operating in the early 1970s to ensure the expansion of formal bargaining machinery within British Airways. As mentioned previously, the early 1970s was, for many unions, still a time of assertive trade unionism. They had experienced, for almost a decade, an increasing recognition by many employers and a large section of the state of the importance of their role in industrial decision making. (The reasons for these processes are discussed at length in the chapter on Trade Union history). The Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations of 1965-8 (the Donovan Commission) was a clear expression of this trend. It was an age in which "staff participation" and "industrial democracy" were, at least, on the lips of some employers and trade union officials. Certainly, British Airways management, in principle, were generally committed to some form of staff participation throughout the 1970s.

Within the airline there was considerable pressure operating on both management and staff to agree on more consultative forms of industrial decision making. For management there was both practical and political pressure applied. The merger of the previously separate airlines into the corporate body of British Airways had

brought about a considerable requirement to achieve new forms of common work practices and agreements in an organisation that was considerably complex and diverse. In addition, throughout the 1970s there were constant tensions concerning issues of redeployment, redundancies and cost cutting exercises which made management and staff relations extremely tense. Throughout much of the 1970s the government also applied pressure on the airline, particularly as a nationalised industry, to adopt a positive corporate approach to trade union involvement. The presence of a trade unionist, Alan Fisher, on the Airline Board for much of this period is clear evidence of this.¹

For the staff, the majority of unions involved, at both national and local level, were committed to greater staff participation. Jack Jones (T. & G.W.U.), Hugh Scanlon (AUEW) and Clive Jenkins (A. S.T.M.S.) were all strong advocates of certain forms of industrial democracy. In fact John Cousins, national secretary for the T. & G.W.U. in the early 1970s, chaired many of the meetings at British Airways organised to achieve staff agreement on staff participation. He argued very strongly, not always before a totally convinced audience, for staff to join management in developing greater consultation machinery.

The staff's response to such moves was varied and complex. Certainly many shop stewards in trade groups that had a strong bargaining tradition were highly sceptical of management's motives for wishing to involve staff in more decision making. Ramp workers (baggage/aircraft loaders), in particular, expressed a reluctance to deviate from traditional forms of collective bargaining. Very often, those groups such as provincial staff and catering workers, who traditionally had occupied a weak position in the collective bargaining machinery, were more receptive to these new initiatives. Nevertheless, support or opposition by individual staff representatives could not be guaranteed by their membership of a particular trade group with a particular bargaining strength. Ron Crew, a staff representative from engineering, a group traditionally with a strong bargaining strength and one very divided on staff participation, was one of the leading campaigners for staff

participation (a copy of his paper on staff participation can be found in appendix 8).

The divisions amongst staff throughout the 1970s concerning staff participation were to develop into specific actions which would provide new arenas of struggle within the airline. Nevertheless, sufficient political will existed from both management and the staff side, from the early 1970s onward, to ensure to some degree that new bargaining machinery and practices were on the industrial agenda. Peter Richards, the official historian for the British Airways Trade Union Council (copy of his two reports in appendix 1), identifies the start of this process in 1973, he states:-

One can ascertain that it was in 1973 when exchanges between the BAB [British Airways Board] and the trades union side of the National Joint Council (NJC) began to attempt to extend the sphere of negotiations from the established areas of wages and conditions to wider matters. Indeed, it was in the January of that year when BAB issued an "Industrial Relations Charter" which contained a proposal to set up a "Joint Manpower Advisory Council".The Charter states that it was the wish of the BAB to provide satisfactory career prospects for all its employees, and the Board would undertake "to consult Trade Unions about all major changes in working practice and organization". An appendix outlined the details concerning how this consultation was to take place, and it was explained that management would "Hear the Union's points and, where possible, answer them". Also management would give serious consideration to any counter proposals that the trade union side might care to offer. (p.10)²

Such an invitation by British Airways was bound, to some degree, to set in motion a process by which staff groups would try and maximise their own bargaining strengths within a new arena of struggle. To view this process as simply a ploy of incorporation by management is vastly to underestimate the constraints and forces operating on both management and staff. Also, as the struggles of the catering workers in the 1960s show, access to bargaining machinery is a multi-dynamic process, of which workers struggling for control of that machinery is an important element.

Peter Richards's history provides a good descriptive account of a number of these struggles (see appendix 1). One of the main achievements from these struggles was the setting up of the British Airways Trades Union Council in 1977. A. Reed in his book, **Airline: The inside story of British Airways**, described the process of setting up the British Airways Trades Union Council, as:-

The most significant thing which BA's management accomplished towards the happier state which exists today between it and the trade unions was the establishing, in the late 1960s of BATUC, the British Airways Trade Union Council, at whose monthly meetings representatives of the airline's trade union met across the table with the airline's executive directors. (p.27)

Of course such a statement fails to acknowledge the extent of struggle involved by staff, and between staff, in order to establish such machinery. Some hint of it is made though when he goes on to say:-

No negotiation or bargaining points were allowed (in fact, the TU representatives were quick to blanket colleagues who wanted to start negotiations). Meetings

were a frank exchange of views, and the BA side took the trade unions completely into their confidence on financial and economic matters. (p.27)

It seems then that the 1970s was a decade in which machinery and practices were in a constant state of change. The increase in the consultative bargaining process had expanded the bureaucracy of collective bargaining. This process itself was part of a struggle which took place, in ultimate terms, between staff and management. But an essential feature of its formation and character were the struggles that took place between different groups of workers, the results of which very often had real and immediate consequences in terms of pay and conditions. A clear example of this is the catering workers' struggle within the new job and pay scheme, which itself was based on a much greater level of staff participation in determining job descriptions and rewards.

It was becoming increasingly obvious to many catering shop stewards, that in order to ensure some degree of parity with other workers in the airline, it would be necessary to get greater access and control of these new formal mechanisms of collective bargaining that were developing. Their own informal practices had effectively applied pressure to the union and management for greater recognition of the validity of their grievances. They were aware though that such practices did have limitations in an industrial relations environment that was changing. They were concerned to exploit fully the new rhetoric of "staff involvement", and in the case of the new proposed job evaluation scheme they could see a suitable vehicle for achieving some form of pay parity. In the long process of formulating and agreeing a procedure for job evaluation it was the catering workers that were at the forefront of its establishment.

Brief History of British Airways Job and Pay Scheme.

A meeting was called in the early part of 1974 at Heathrow Hotel where John Cousins (the then T.G.W.U. national secretary) and Howard Phelps (the then

Personnel Director) presented to a group of shop stewards, representing E and M (engineering and manual workers) ramp workers (baggage/aircraft loaders) and ground services staff("gss"= catering, cargo manual workers etc.) a proposal for a bench mark job evaluation system. The E. and M. group decided almost immediately that such a scheme had very few advantages for them and rejected it. This left the ground services staff and the ramp workers who agreed to set up a Joint Study Group, consisting of representatives from management and staff, to examine the proposals.

The early withdrawal of the E. and M. group is a clear example of the way that perceived or/and real sectional advantage can manifest itself within a particular arena of struggle. The engineering workers' assessment of their success in the traditional system of bargaining led them to believe very strongly that any new system of pay evaluation may well operate to erode their privileged position in the wage league of the airline. While on the other hand, the catering workers, who had been grossly disadvantaged under a free market approach to collective bargaining, could see real potential for achieving bargaining gains under a system which espoused an objective evaluation of jobs on a comparative basis.

The staff side of the Joint Study Group started by rejecting any system of evaluation based upon the bench mark model. After much discussion the management side agreed to a point rated system and to the setting up of a sub committee, four staff members and a management team, to develop the scheme. The staff representatives openly admitted to having "zero knowledge of evaluation systems and basically started off the scheme with blank sheets of paper."³

The catering workers though were acutely aware that here was a system that could be manipulated; that success in this process of evaluation was based partly upon a joint knowledge of the mechanics of the system and partly by simultaneously applying forms of industrial pressure on management.⁴ They understood clearly that job evaluation was a very different arena of struggle from

traditional collective bargaining, and that it was located within a different political and ideological framework committed, in principle, to consultation.

While catering were coming to this realization, it seems that the ramp workers also were deciding that the new scheme had a limited potential for them in terms of their sectional interest. They too withdrew from the scheme. At this stage management could see no advantage for them in having a scheme that only ground services staff were showing a commitment to, so they terminated the procedures for several months. It was the consistent pressure by catering workers, through their informal practices and their formal demand for reinstatement, that management agreed to set the scheme back in operation. An agreement to reintroduce the scheme was actually made by management and the catering workers on the picket line in the 1975 strike as a means of settling the dispute. The catering workers understood only too well, that here was a scheme, which at least would address the issues of comparison between job functions and job classification. For them this is what lay at the heart of the discriminatory practices which disadvantaged them in the airline's labour force. They were determined to struggle to ensure that this opportunity was not lost.

Both management and the ground services staff side set about formulating a manual and a set procedure for implementing it.

This process formed an important element in the struggle for parity. For the catering workers had long known, from their own experiences of being labelled "low skilled" workers, and by making comparison of their job tasks with the similar tasks of engineering labourers, that the means and criteria by which jobs are defined can be a crucial element in their evaluation for rewards. The catering workers were therefore concerned to have as much in-put to the formulation of the manual as possible. They were also determined to ensure that they had full knowledge of its implementation and practice, for they were also aware, that in this case, as in many, knowledge meant power!

Finally in May of 1977 the Ground Services Staff were asked to vote on the scheme, which was accepted by a vote of 4-1. Given that there existed approximately 300 different job descriptions in Ground Services alone, with 90 different pay scales, the decision was made to operate a "trial run" of twenty one jobs across the spectrum of the whole trade group. Project teams were set up consisting of one manager, one staff representative and a job analyst who was to ensure that different job descriptions maintained some consistency and accuracy (one shop steward commented that, "they [job analysts] were only put there to give the whole proceedings an air of objectivity") . This exercise proved to be highly significant. Not only did it test the validity of the manual it also began to develop the break points in the grading structure. And so it was that the new struggle began. At this point it is important to discuss the role of one shop steward within the South Side Catering unit who was to play a crucial part in that struggle.

The Role of Bashir Bhatti.

It is always difficult in sociological terms to talk about the role of an individual and their contribution to social formations. Any individual, or group for that matter, is caught in social situations, in which, a whole range of constraints and social forces operate to influence, and even at times determine their behaviour. However, the responses that individuals and groups make to these constraints and social events obviously influence them. Personal perception, political analysis, and more importantly, actions, which are not necessarily dependent on either of the first two factors, can be all important influencing factors in terms of the development of events.

If there were one important issue of agreement amongst all those people interviewed, whether they were catering workers, other trade group shop stewards or official union officers, it was the important and crucial role that Bashir Bhatti played in the catering workers' struggles. Management clearly respected his ability as events have shown. The Socialist Worker Newspaper on 26th July 1975 stated in an article concerning the catering workers 1975 strike:-

In 1971 Bashir Bhatti, a Pakistani was already identified as a militant. Management used the loathsome trick of exploiting feelings about the Indo-Pakistan war. They adopted a policy of deliberately employing Pakistanis as a way of antagonising Bashir's Indian supporters. Bashir recalls: 'I spent a year arguing with my Moslem brothers that they were workers first and Pakistanis second'.

A number of non-catering shop stewards substantiated these events and testified that very early in the catering workers struggles, in the late 1960s, the airline's management had already identified Bashir Bhatti as the most effective of all the catering workers representatives. While the official union did not provide him with shop steward credentials until 1971, for much of the 1960s both management and catering workers accepted his role as staff representative of South Side Catering.

Bashir Bhatti was born in Pakistan, was a Muslim, and had worked for a period in Saudi Arabia. He had come to Britain in February 1962 and started work for B.O.A.C. in catering in the same month. He had been one of the most active of all the catering workers involved in stopping the corrupt practices taking place in the catering unit mentioned earlier (see chapters four and five).

Also mentioned earlier was the extreme pressure he, and his family, were placed under. Threats were made to their lives for attempting to stop such practices. Not only did he have windows smashed in his house, his car continually damaged (e.g. tyres slashed, paint work scratched), but he was also followed home on a number of occasions and continually stopped and searched by the police.

Many times coming home the police stopped me and search the car, yes the actual police.....everyone was told to stop the bastard, it was management. In every

action my car was abandoned otherwise they would stop me. Every time I had action I was stopped by the police and then very quickly i learn in action time, I should not use my car. (Bashir Bhatti)

All of this merely reinforced his determination to end the corrupt practices taking place in the catering unit. He had been one of the main advocates of adopting informal practices to ensure that the management of the airline not only acknowledged that such practices were taking place, but also took measures to ensure their end. It was his ability to remain strong under pressure that won him respect by the majority of catering workers in South Side Catering. He had been elected a senior representative, regardless of the fact that he was a Pakistan muslim, one of the minority groups within the unit. (At the time of his election only 25 workers were from Pakistan out of 350 workers in his section.)

He gained a reputation very quickly for being an excellent negotiator, a skill and an ability that management and official union were forced to recognise throughout the struggles of the catering workers against both parties. That reputation grew throughout the airline in the 1970s, as the staff chair of British Airways Trade Union Council, Colin Varndell confirmed in his statement quoted later in this section.

He was aware of the importance of building a power base, not only within the catering unit, but also within other trade groups. He was particularly aware of how necessary it was to develop those links and mutual obligations with such groups as the formal machinery of bargaining expanded and greater participation of shop floor representation took place. He stated;

we could only start to win by fighting for ourselves, supporting other workers and also gaining their support. When job and pay came I knew that it was

important to make the most of it, and become as involved as possible.

In the early period he drew on a lot of support and advice from Paddy Malher, an engineering shop steward who Bashir knew had as much knowledge and expertise of union bargaining as any other shop steward in the Airline. Bashir Bhatti was only too alert to the fact that as bureaucratic bargaining develops, so too the need to understand and be able to operate effectively the new mechanisms of bargaining becomes greater. Rather than bureaucracy, necessarily, defusing conflict, it was likely to be the opposite. A lack of access to that bargaining machinery, and/or the lack of skills necessary to exploit that machinery which would most probably disadvantage different trade groups in terms of the struggles that would take place within that arena.

Bashir believed the effectiveness of catering workers' struggles in the 1970s period was due to three factors. Firstly, they had become a far more volatile group who were willing to take action, very often independent from the official union machinery (i.e. the use of informal practices). Secondly, they had built a much greater power base within the airline. They had made contact and sought support from other trade groups, but also they had supported other groups of workers, such as cargo workers in the 1970s and ramp workers in the 1980s. Finally, as they became far more involved in the formal channels of bargaining, their increased access provided the opportunity to shape and influence the processes of change taking place in the bargaining machinery.

Bashir took an active part in the writing of the job evaluation manual. He was able to ensure that certain features of the manual would benefit catering workers once the process of evaluating their jobs started to take place. He also served on as many evaluation panels, evaluating other trade groups jobs, as possible. This did two things, it increased catering workers power base with other trade groups, and it was also a way in which Bashir could learn the process by which jobs were

scored and recorded highly. All this was an important part of the catering workers' struggle for parity of pay. For the central issue at the heart of their struggle was the way in which their jobs had been defined as low status, and the way in which this low status had resulted in poor pay and conditions. This traditional process of job categorization had served to ghettoise them and had been the main mechanism by which discrimination had taken place.

Colin Varndell summarised Bashir's role in this struggle in an interview, he stated;-

C.V. I think Bashir Bhatti was clever enough to play the system, and that's what life's about. He realised that creating backlogs and all this ain't the way to go, he was a bloody good negotiator, bloody good negotiator and I think he realised a long time ago that as far as he was concerned, one, you could first of all establish yourself in the trade union movement 'cos they were a big group and they collected their votes.....yes, I think Bashir was clever enough to realise that when we started to elect NSP [national sectional panels] reps. and they were elected by shop stewards, that Bashir was clever enough to realise he "eat" more shop stewards than anybody, so if you had more shop stewards than anybody and you could assist people by putting them behind them,⁵ and he did it for me, then you tended to get involved in his area and therefore you became the guy they would call on to assist them in their negotiations. Now they never ever put their vote behind people just for the sake of doing it. They put it behind people who they felt were assisting them, which is what life's all about, and therefore they got a lot more expertise in there. They also, because of Bashir, got involved in job and pay. Bashir was a very very intelligent, shrewd, bloody worker, he knew the system and he played the system

and he did it in no different way than anybody else, and I don't think there's many people on this airport who have not got a good respect for him, I mean a great respect, anyway because he was clever, and he did it right now by doing that he then started to become, if you like, seen as one of the senior reps. and he was one of the senior reps. Because of the way he did things. Job and pay then came in and he was then able to take his knowledge of how other people worked and to make sure that when the job and pay manual was being drawn up that he feed little bits in here, little bits in there as other people were doing.

Q. So he was actually involved in constructing the Manual?

C.V. Yes. He was about and drew things up and if anything, the people who failed in job and pay were people who didn't get involved and.....decided not to get involved. So he [anyone who didn't get involved] had no input, so when the manual was drawn up the manual didn't assist us but when it was drawn up with its percentages and everything else it certainly assisted those people [who had been involved in its planning] I mean, at the end of the day, catering had a good run, one of the problems is that jobs became out of balance with outside industry of the same function, but in-balance with the airline industry and that's a recipe for a catastrophe [a reference to the much higher pay the catering workers achieved compared to those outside the airline. This issue will be picked up in the conclusion.] But no one can take it away from Bashir, he used the system, he was bloody good at it and whatever they've got its down to him.

Q. Why did he do so well at job evaluation.

C.V. He understood what to put in and also understood that a little bit of arm bending as well, like one set fork lift trucks and every one got [the grade]..... because everyone drove them, and if you didn't give it to everyone your not going to have one man as a single and therefore as long as this man drives them and you know, people who've never seen a fork lift truck got the grade..but then other areas got it as well so he was only doing what other people were doing and he used the manual, and he even became one of the people who marked other jobs and the more he marked other people's jobs the more he learnt what he could push into his, a very shrewd operator.

It seems then that Bashir's role at this time was crucial. The part he played in the job evaluation process was to have a major impact in terms of the struggle for parity by the catering workers. Not only did it provide a mechanism for achieving significant improvement in pay and conditions it also expanded their influence in the airline's industrial relations environment.

In essence the traditional mechanism by which jobs had been demarcated, evaluated and attributed rewards had been replaced by a system which crossed the boundaries of sectional struggles against management. This is probably the main reason why trade groups with strong sectional bargaining strengths, like engineering and ramp, withdrew from the scheme. Of course sectional interests still operated in job evaluation, but not necessarily in a way which locked other groups into occupational ghettos.⁶ The job evaluation system provided a mechanism by which trade groups could transcend sectional boundaries and use other trade groups' job descriptions, or aspects of their job description, as a means

of struggling for a redefining of their own jobs to gain higher rewards. Here was a form of anti-racist struggle which was not based on ideological considerations.

Under the previous traditional "free market" bargaining system, catering workers had been locked into a type of "negotiation trap", in which their bargaining strength was influenced greatly by the fact that their struggles were not linked to any wider frameworks in which to compare their jobs, beyond those of other catering workers in other airlines and industries. Such a traditional "free market" approach would likely advantage groups whose skills were perceived as more marketable, such as engineers.⁷ Their desire to retain a traditional approach was not likely to be based upon an intention to create occupational ghettos, even if that was one of the main features of this system. For such groups, their political assessment of such bargaining strategy was highly unlikely to be based upon a racist ideology, but more likely an assessment of what was in their own best interest. For as we will see later, a return to this traditional system in the mid 1980s was shown to have a negative effect for catering workers without any deliberately racist exclusions.

How the Struggle in Job Evaluation Worked.

This section here links very closely with the theoretical chapter on job evaluation. As mentioned above the final draft of the job evaluation manual was itself the end product of a struggle to realise different sectional interests. (The full manual can be found in appendix 9)

The two main principles for job evaluation were;-

- 1.1. *Equal pay for work of equal value amongst jobs covered by this NSP [Ground services staff national sectional panel] .*
- 1.2. *Increased efficiency and job satisfaction by better restructuring of jobs.*

(page 1 of the manual)

These principles in essence allowed for the formulation of job comparison. The method of evaluating these jobs was based on a point-rating system which involved a consideration of eight factors:-

| Group | Factor No. | Factor |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Skill | 1 | Nature of the Skill |
| | 2 | Experience |
| Effort | 3 | Physical Effort |
| | 4 | Mental Effort |
| Responsibility | 5 | Supervision of Others |
| | 6 | Resources |
| | 7 | Health & Safety of Others |
| General | 8 | Working Conditions |

(page 6 of the manual)

The eight factors were then given a scoring scheme which was based upon an applied rate of 1 to 5 by the members of the job evaluation committee. Each factor was then weighted as follows:-

| Factor | Title | Weighting |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Nature of the skill | X5 |
| 2 | Experience | X7 |
| 3 | Physical Effort | X4 |
| 4 | Mental Effort | X6 |
| 5 | Supervision of Others | X4 |
| 6 | Resources | X2 |
| 7 | Health & Safety of Others | X2 |

(page 7 of the manual)

The chair and joint secretaries of the committee would then calculate the total score. It is not difficult to see how the preparation of job descriptions, scoring system, the weighting system, the make up of the job evaluation committee and their evaluating of job scores all constituted different levels of a struggle to establish job rates and conditions.

The knowledge of the mechanisms by which the scheme operated became an important tool in the struggle for increased rates of pay. In addition the catering workers' involvement in the formula by which the jobs were evaluated, scored and weighted had been an important prerequisite for such struggles. At almost every point of the formulation of the manual there were issues which were products of negotiation and which were to have significant consequences for the way in which jobs were evaluated.

For example the way that "**the nature of the skill**" was scored was divided into three headings, (i) "academic", (ii) "practical/vocational", and (iii) "supervisory". Each was provided with a scoring matrix with clear definitions by which specific job functions were to be located. "Academic" could be scored up to level 3. Level 1, was defined as follows:

*The ability to read, write and understand basic English
and undertake basic arithmetic tasks such as counting.*

or

*The ability to comprehend simple documentation and
instructions (e.g. invoices, coding instructions).*

or

The ability to complete simple documentation (e.g. issue of receipt of stores items).

(page 9 of the manual)

Of course many, if not all, these definitions are open to interpretation. More importantly they are skill requirements that many writers have identified as unintentionally discriminating against black workers, as many spoke English as a second language. But, as the second heading, "practical/vocational skills" was scored up to 5, an area in which catering workers were likely to score highly, this area was likely to compensate for their disadvantage in heading one. One of the main requirements of scoring 3 on "practical/vocational skills" matrix was the ability to operate a heavy-duty fork lift truck. If we cast our minds back to Colin Varndell's comment concerning, "**a little bit of arm bending as well like one set of fork lift trucks and everyone got....(the grade)**", then you get a sense of how struggles took place within the context of the job evaluation process. The manual had been formulated to ensure that areas that were likely to score low were compensated for in others. Then, often it seems, pressure was applied to ensure that the maximum application of scoring took place in the positive areas and thereby a high score was achieved. A central issue of struggle for the catering workers was the weighting factors between physical effort and mental effort. Mental effort had a weighting of x6 and physical effort x4 (see above). Given that catering manual workers were going to score high on physical effort and low on mental effort, this area of the manual was an important area of struggle (see Bashir Bhatti's comments below). This kind of consideration runs through the whole manual.

The Job Evaluation Committees.

The next area we need to look at is the composition of the membership of the joint evaluation committees. The groups themselves were obvious focal points for

formal struggles to take place. The staff and employer both nominated 10 members from each side from which representatives could be drawn to serve on job evaluation panels. These twenty members formed what was called The Job Evaluation Committee.(JEC)

The role of the job evaluation panel was to evaluate and score presented job descriptions. The panels were made up of eleven members, of whom eight only were drawn from The Job Evaluation Committee and allowed to score. They were as follows:

One chair.....

independent and appointed jointly by both sides of the Ground Services Staff National Sectional Panel (Not a member of JEC).....THIS MEMBER COULD NOT SCORE JOBS. Their function was to ensure "fair play".

Two joint secretaries.....

One each appointed by staff and the employer (Not a member of JEC).....THESE MEMBERS ALSO COULD NOT SCORE JOBS. Their function was to carry out all the administrative tasks related to the operation of the panels, before, in and after the meeting.

Four employer representatives.

Drawn from the Job Evaluation Committee. THESE MEMBERS SCORE THE JOBS BEING EVALUATED. They cannot evaluate jobs which are under their immediate control.

Four staff representatives.

Drawn from the Job Evaluation Committee. THESE MEMBERS SCORE THE JOBS BEING EVALUATED. They cannot evaluate jobs that exist within their own work section.

The other committee or panel that existed was called the Project Team. They were staff members who had been elected by the Ground Services Staff National Sectional Panel to check drafted job descriptions. They acted on behalf of the Joint Evaluation Committee and had no fixed number of members.

How the Job Evaluation Procedure operated.

Finally, it is necessary to see how the scheme operated. The scheme itself, in theory, was meant to provide as objective a system of evaluation as possible. It incorporated many features of the scientific management theory methods. It was meant to provide evaluation teams that were relatively detached from the jobs they were evaluating. The manual was meant to provide prescribed formulas by which jobs could be quantified, classified and calculated in a relatively detached way. The outcomes were meant to standardise pay formulas in order to ensure that "equal pay was given for work of equal value". Hardly anyone spoken to, concerned with job evaluation, believed any of this to be the case. Certainly Colin Varndell's comments earlier, "**jobs became out of balance with outside industry**", and comments made by the official union officer for catering, John Collier, that, "**the problem has been of course..tended to over price the catering staff, vis a vis other workers at Heathrow....**" imply that two leading figures in the airline's union network believed that catering workers got more out of the system than they deserved.

Whether you hold with the view that catering workers "got more than the job was worth", and this view will be challenged in the Chapter on, "1980s and a New Era", it seems certain that the job evaluation scheme was not objective and was an arena in which formal struggles took place. It has been demonstrated above that

the formulation of the manual and its interpretation was open to influence. The procedure also provided opportunities by which influence could be brought to bear.

The procedure was as follows:-

Stage one. The manager responsible for the job area that is being evaluated, with the help of the personnel official for that area instigates the proceedings.

Stage two. The manager meets with trade union representatives to discuss the drafting of the job description.

Stage three. The manager drafts the job description.

Stage four. The manager and trade union representatives meet to discuss, make changes if necessary and agree.

Stage five. The draft copy of the job description would be passed to the Project Team (working on behalf of the Joint Evaluation Committee) who would check it against the agreements laid down in the manual.

Stage Six. The project team would hand back the draft to the manager, either in its original form or with suggestions. The manager and union representatives would then have to agree upon the draft as a submission for evaluation.

Stage seven. The signed draft would be returned to the project team who would then ensure that it was agreed for submission by the employers' and employees' joint secretaries for the evaluation panel.

Stage eight. It would be submitted for evaluation to the evaluation panel, who were made up of members from Joint Evaluation Committee. At this stage the job would be scored and graded.

Stage nine. An appeal against grading can be made for two reasons. Either the nature of the job has changed since the original drafting of the job description, or the staff disagree with the scoring or grading of the job. For the latter reason, only one appeal is allowed within any twelve month period.

In practice, struggles could, and did, take place at any one of the stages of the procedure. You need to remember that this whole process was taking place in a period in which there had been considerable disruption by catering workers in the south side catering unit. For line managers (those directly responsible for job areas) this system of evaluation allowed them a mechanism for pacifying staff without seeming to compromise. So very often at the early stages where job descriptions were drafted there was some degree of agreement to ensure that job description gave the maximum possibility of scoring highly. This took place very often in those areas of production where trouble existed. If there were not an agreement, then this often, as in the case of many job descriptions in Ground Services, itself, instigated a struggle.

It is important to say here, that the effectiveness of that struggle was very often dependent on the knowledge and the skill of the staff representative, knowing what to put in the job description and what to leave out. The effectiveness of this skill was very much based upon the use of formal tactics. As Colin Varndell has pointed out, Bashir Bhatti **"was a master of it"**.

This is not to say that conflicts did not take place at later stages. Disagreement occurred between line managers, staff representatives and project teams. Personnel and higher management could also influence events at almost any stage, particularly between stages seven and nine where they had strong representation. Therefore, if they had particular industrial relations problems that needed to be settled, it would often be at this stage of the development that they would apply pressure, resulting in a positive or negative reward for the workers

involved. Some of the actual processes involved in such struggles are better put in Bashir Bhatti's own words:-

B.B. And I say fork lift truck driver [high grade] I brought it up into the store keeper area [lower grade], make sure everyone know the skill of driving fork lift....one week is enough. I argued fork lift can cause fatal accident....I knew how to play the manual. Everybody who drives it should be band four instead of band two or three.....so I high jacked the job up[all the grades above it go up also] with a bit of arm twisting.

Q. How did you arm twist?

B.B. Pressure the management---I said I want this job graded into store keeper. They said that should be impossible....I say O.K. you let me know when you are ready to call it store keeper job, this day there is no one doing the job till we agree. Slowly he would come back to you and say O.K. that is a store keeper job. If you put the bottom grade up everybody else goes up.

Q. Were you involved in the actual formulation of the manual?

B.B. Yes, I was from day one....I was the one who gave it rebirth after it died, because the ramp went out and then E. & M. went out.

Q. So you helped write the manual?

B.B. Yes.

Q. *So you knew fork lift trucks scored high?*

B.B. *Number one I made sure no one had the same understanding of the manual. The physical effort and what it meant. They built up the mental effort [high weighting]. I was arguing that physical effort....humping and lifting was equal....but they wouldn't except because if mental value come down then the management would come down and we would come up. Because in all this mental work it is fixed to the management. So that they had to make some category between physical effort and mental effort. So then I built up the physical effort by arguing that it is repetitive, you are bored mentally not physically, so the mental comes in you are bored mentally.....so it is mental effort O.K. So then I score number two in the mental effort for a labourer. The whole airport was coming to me, saying how did you do it. Mental boredom was a mental effort and should be scored higher.*

To my knowledge no one has been successful in drawing equal with management on physical effort. In my mind physical effort is equal with mental effort but I have never got management to agree....because all they do is mental.

Q. *Did you apply pressure, to get management to accept that physical effort created mental boredom, and therefore scored on mental effort?*

B.B. Backlog was my weapon for ten or fifteen years. Did not clear all the work everyday....it starts building up...leave 5% out, everyday you start building the backlog up.

Q. You used to do that in the wash up?

B.B. I had the best two stewards in there, and you start the slow up at the stale end....these two people were very honest.... John Collier [Official Union Officer] didn't like them. These were the people with power. These were the people that use to help me....I would talk with management, I would say O.K. the backlog will be cleared. And I would get them to cut corners. When you did it by the rules then the backlog build up and the flight get delayed. It got to a stage when they would give us a victory on the first day rather than let it go on. I think it came from high up on management to give in.

It can be seen then how such struggles involved both formal and informal practices.

Finally, a relatively informal practice that seems to have developed within this procedure was carried out by staff representatives on the evaluation panels. For obvious reasons those involved do not wish to be identified. Some staff representatives on the evaluation panels would score highly those elements of a job description that were similar to elements in their own staff's area, just as they would at times score low, elements which were missing from jobs in their own area. It is difficult to know how widespread this practice was or how effective. If it did operate it certainly supports an argument pursued in the Labour Market Chapter, which suggests that the nature of the labour market is influenced and formed by different sections of the labour force and not by capital alone. Here was

an example of one of the many hidden agendas that took place in the job evaluation procedure.

Of course job evaluation was not the only formal arena of struggle developing in this period, but it has been used as an example in this case study because of its central role in the catering workers' struggle for parity. Another important formal mechanism in the collective bargaining process, which had an effect on catering workers, was the British Airways's redeployment scheme. This scheme was jointly worked out by management and the official trade unions in 1974 as a means of dealing with the surplus staff that the airline had inherited from its merger in 1972.

The final agreement for redeployment was reached in April 1975 (a copy in appendix 10). It was agreed that once surplus areas of work were identified, individuals within those areas would be given training and transferred into areas of labour shortage. Where possible people would be located on similar grades, but in all cases rates of pay would be protected.

One of the major consequences for catering workers was that it provided the first effective mechanism for locating black labour throughout the airline. Here was a system of anti-racist practice not based on intention or ideology. The actual mechanisms and guidelines embodied within the agreement ensured practices not effected by racist intention and motive. The limited recruitment of black labour in many of the trade areas, regardless of trade union officials, white shop stewards and management statements to the contrary, had been due to racist intention. Here was a set of practices which bypassed those intentions.

Summary of the Formal Practices.

This chapter has been concerned to show that formal practices do constitute a specific arena of struggle, and while not separate from the influences of informal practices they do require different skills and knowledge. The development and use

of these different forms of practices are dependent on a number of different, and often complex reasons.

As was shown at the start of this chapter, the expansion of formal bureaucratic bargaining machinery is often a product of competing forces. Catering workers fought hard to gain access to such channels, and also were the main party responsible for keeping the job evaluation system in existence. Other groups of workers, such as the engineers and ramp workers, not only withdrew from the system, but also campaigned hard to encourage other workers not to be involved.

We can also assume that management, for its part, was not in total agreement concerning the nature and direction of bureaucratization of the collective bargaining process. Certainly a major impetus for their involvement was the monumental task of merging very different types of national airlines into one, with all their different job grades and job practices. In terms of job evaluation, it did offer, in theory, a mechanism for defusing potential conflicts over pay bargaining. It is important to remember that this thesis is not arguing that the motive or the possibility for managerial control does not exist within bureaucratic bargaining. Rather the argument is that management control is only one element in bureaucratization and that bureaucracy is an arena of struggle.

Also the economic transition within a decade, the 1970s, of an economy in expansion to one in decline, was a major influencing factor, as were the political forces operating throughout much of this period. There was a general consensus concerning a corporate approach to industrial relations which was to last right up until 1979 and the new Conservative government. The impact of this of course was a change of top management at British Airways and the appointment of Lord King in 1981.

While all these factors contributed to the formulation of increased bureaucratic bargaining, it seems to be the workers in the South Side Catering unit, that

benefited the most from it. Their actions within the formal bargaining system seem to have been crucial to achieving pay parity (and at times better rates of pay) with other groups of manual workers within the airline. Job evaluation was only one feature in the development of this bureaucratization, but it was the central mechanism by which catering workers were able to combat racial discrimination and it has therefore been the focus of this chapter.

These industrial practices were not operated merely at an ideological level, they involved the effective application of mechanisms and practices which led to the redefining and evaluation of their work practices. The existence of racist ideology and practices had been highly influential in the location of black labour in the 1950s and 1960s in these ghettoised occupations. But here also were other mechanisms within the labour market, not of an ideological nature (see chapter 2), which served to generate these jobs in the first place. The "way out" for the catering workers from these occupational ghettos in the 1970s was not based upon changing managers' or workers' attitudes, but upon the implementation of practices which "unlocked" the mechanisms by which such occupational ghettos were defined in the first place.

The use of informal practices or formal practices was not based upon notions of mutually exclusive forms of action. At times such tactics were highly complementary to one other, as in periods of drawing up draft job descriptions. There were also times when either, or both were counter productive, as events in the 1980s were to show. The choice and the use of such tactics, in the 1970s forms of industrial action, it seems, were based on political judgements. Catering workers had become experts here.

One of the major strengths the catering workers had in their struggles was that they had a clear objective, notably an economic and political parity with engineering manual workers. This meant that as changes took place within the industrial relations environment, they then set about evaluating those changes and

adapting their tactics accordingly to ensure the achievement of their objective. Their use of informal practices or formal practices was therefore based mainly upon their own assessment of the effectiveness of their use within different arenas. Such an approach could just as easily be defined as a "realism" as those more recent tactics, named "new realism", which relate to the acceptance of the limitations of trade unionism under the present political and legal constraints applied by the Conservative government.

The catering workers' determination to combat racism and racist practice was a strong unifying force in their claim for parity. The effectiveness of their methods was based upon a clear analysis of the mechanisms and practices which served to discriminate against them in favour of other groups of workers. Too often it seems trade union action is based either on an immediate economic sectional interest or a reaction to an adverse condition applied by management. Such tactics are likely to lead to traditional or "off the shelf" methods of action, which are adopted as the situations arise.

For the catering workers their struggle was developed over almost three decades, and resulted in the necessity of developing new tactics, or reverting to old, as the conditions dictated. Such a process encouraged the constant political revaluation of their tactics. That their industrial practices were employed not only against management but also the official union makes their success all the more impressive. They provide important lessons for many disadvantaged trade unionists, not least that membership of a trade union does not of itself guarantee effective representation; that such under representation may well constitute struggle within the union itself; and that real bargaining success can be achieved by developing appropriate practices, such as in job evaluation, to ensure that the mechanisms that operate within the collective bargaining process act in your favour.

1. In fact, Lord King maintains that state intervention was one of the major contributory factors to the Airline's losses in the 1970s. He states:-

"The principle villain of the piece is state ownership. With relatively few exceptions, the airlines of Europe are wholly or predominantly owned by governments. As a result, it is difficult to get most European governments to accept market forces should be allowed free play. And that airlines should prosper or perish as they deserve. There is too much public money, too much political patronage; and too many personal careers are at stake." (p.55/56) A. Reed., **Airline; The inside story of British Airways**, BBC Books 1990 .

The change of government in 1979, and then of top management in British Airways in 1981, heralded the end of a corporate management style, and started the process towards privatisation and "free market" approach by management

For a good account of how the "old order" of management was ejected in the early 1980s, see Chapter 2, Reed's book.

2. P. Richards., **British Airways and Industrial Democracy; A brief account of the formulative years of the British Airways Trade Union Council 1975-1978.** Official History of British Airways Trade Union Council, 1981.
3. Statement made in staff side documentation on history of job and pay. See appendix 7.
4. In support of this statement, see discussion in chapter on "Informal Practices" concerning the strike of 1975; and comments later in this chapter related to the re-introduction of job evaluation.
5. This refers to the number of votes and the representation different sections have on a national sectional panel (NSP). The more staff a group had, then the more shop stewards and consequently the more votes and representatives on the NSP. Catering had one of the highest staff numbers on the Ground Services's Staff NSP.
6. See Stephan Feuchtwang., **Occupational Ghettos.**
7. The use of the term "free market", particularly in this context, is highly problematic. Its usage here is simply to

indicate a more traditional method of bargaining which claims to operate on market forces!

CHAPTER 8

The 1980s and a New Era

- (1) The Ramp workers' dispute
- (2) The Struggle to reduce Catering Wage Costs

THE 1980s AND A NEW ERA

The struggles of the south side catering workers at the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s were, in many respects, a success story. Unfortunately, as the case study has shown, the conditions and gains of the collective bargaining process never stay the same. The 1980s was to become a decade in which the general balance of bargaining power between employers and trade unions was to shift back in favour of management. This shift of power was greatly to influence the work experience of all the trade groups at British Airways. The success of catering was to make them a particular target for management rationalisation. The events of the 1980s, regarding the catering staff, very much support the main arguments developed in this thesis.

As stated above the general climate in industrial relations was one which very much favoured management throughout the 1980s. The reasons for this process have been well discussed by labour historians (c.f. Hobsbawn 1989, Hyman 1981). The Conservative government had, from the very moment of its election in 1979, placed the control of trade union practice very high on the political agenda. They argued that in order to realise their political and economic philosophy of the free market, it would be necessary to minimise the intervention that trade unions made in the mechanisms of the labour market. From the very start the conservative government set about formulating legislation to curb trade union power, and the Trade Union Act of 1984 was the culmination of these plans. The Act effectively hit at the heart of trade union action. As Coates and Topham point out:-

Neither on the larger nor the small scale is Mrs Thatcher willing to advance so much as one millimetre into democratizing the boardroom, but the trade unions are a different matter. Nothing short of the most

comprehensive restrictions on their freedom of manoeuvre will do.

In sum, the Trade Union Act imposes regulations over three distinct areas of trade union government. First, it will regulate elections of trade union executive committees; secondly, it provides for the institution of strike ballots, subject to a penalty which involves the removal of the immunities where strikes are called without ballots; thirdly, it seeks to regulate political funds. (p.64-65)¹

This Act and further legislation on secondary picketing severely inhibited a whole range of trade union practices. Economically trade unions were also under pressure. For much of the 1980s high unemployment resulted in loss of trade union membership and funds. From 1979 to 1982 the T. & G.W.U. lost 28% of its membership.² British Airways own staff went from 58,000 in September 1979 to 37,000 by February 1983.³

More pertinent to British Airways staff was the government's plan to privatise a range of publicly owned industries and services. The government had introduced the Civil Aviation Bill in 1980 with the intention of privatising British Airways at once. The decline of profits within that year and large financial losses in the two following years delayed the airline's privatisation until February 1987. The large financial losses and the pending privatisation of the airline seem to have been two of the main considerations of management throughout the 1980s, and needlessly to say this had a direct effect on the whole range of collective bargaining processes taking place within this decade.

Lord King was brought in as chairman of the airline by the government in 1981. He had been identified, by Margaret Thatcher herself, as an executive who typified all the best qualities of free market management. He was, in her view, possibly the

best person to transform the airline into a suitable enterprise for sale on the open market. Lord King in his usual blunt fashion summed up what that transformation involved:

Simple, elementary stuff, you know. Home economics. Mr. Micawber, you remember? Income a pound, expenditure 19s 6d, happiness, I think he said. And the other way- misery.

And that's the way it was then, but of course we were helped by the Margaret Thatcher government. She knew what she wanted, and gave one the freedom to get on and put it straight. So we set about reorganising the staff. That meant 23,000 people had to come out of the system, because there were 23,000 too many for what we were doing. Then there was no money, so we had to look around and see what assets there were in the company that were not really working and earning, there were plenty of them. There were goodness knows how many hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space surplus to requirements, aircraft surplus, unprofitable routes. It was not really very different to mother's housekeeping money. There was so much for this, so much for that, so much for the other, and if there was anything over, that might be holidays. What we did was to establish a situation where there was something over for holidays. (p.47-48)

4

Lord King's appointment marked a considerable transformation in management styles. One of his earliest tasks was to remove "the old professional airline men" and replace them with "the new generation of executives from commerce outside

the airline".⁵ One of the key figures in this group of new young executives was Colin Marshall who had gained a reputation as an innovator from his management days in American Avis car hire company and Sears Holdings. Marshall was appointed chief executive of the airline in February 1983.

Marshall openly acknowledged the influence of Tom Peters, an author on innovatory management, and both he and King on a number of occasions have publicly expressed views of management which are rooted very clearly in the management philosophy of this author. Peters's work advocates a direct, decisive, practical and non bureaucratic form of management. All his books provide clear and direct formulas for action management. His latest book, **Thriving on Chaos; Handbook for a Management Revolution**, is set out as a set of prescriptions to achieve excellent management. They are; a) creating total customer responsiveness, b) pursuing fast-paced innovation, c) achieving flexibility by empowering people, d) learning to love change, a new view of leadership at all levels, and e) building systems for a world turned upside down.⁶

All this amounts to the encouragement of management spirit at every level of the enterprise, what Peters calls, "horizontal management". He strongly advocates the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy, and states:

*Make bureaucracy-demolition fun- and participative.
Get everyone to nominate forms and procedures for
elimination. Have a committee, made up principally of
junior line people, assess the suggestions and act on
them within a week. Insist that they accept at least 50
per cent.
Give an award to every individual who makes a
nomination, a bigger award for every nomination
accepted-then group and unit awards. Perhaps even*

put "anti-bureaucracy effectiveness" in your performance evaluation scheme. (p.460)⁷

The essence of this managerial philosophy is a move away from corporate forms of decision making and a move towards the elevation of managerial individualism. This means that those throughout the system who innovate and are be efficient and effective for the company will be rewarded. The rest are either rewarded poorly or made redundant. The signs are that management in British Airways in the 1980s learnt these prescriptions well. The King and Marshall management style is direct, often blunt, practical and proactive, qualities which would seem to embody the Thatcherite vision of "good management". Such a managerial style is far removed from that promoted by Taylorism and certainly places little importance on pay formulations which are based on evaluation and comparability. They clearly favoured free market forces.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, in this industrial environment the catering workers were a clear target for rationalisation based on free market philosophy. Trade union practice in general operated in a far harsher climate. The government's commitment to curb trade union power and introduce economic policies based upon monetarism, linked with the effects of unemployment on trade union funds and bargaining power, ensured that the general milieu of collective bargaining encouraged caution and defensiveness for staff negotiators. This was directly opposed to the optimism and assertiveness associated with shop stewards' activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In addition, and specific to British Airways collective bargaining machinery, the issues of privatisation, loss of profits in the early 1980s, over staffing of the airline and the change in management styles all acted to change, adversely, the conditions under which the staff negotiated their pay conditions.

This then was a new era and once again the instrument of political struggle used by staff representatives needed to be re-examined in order to evaluate its

effectiveness. Some trade groups were to do less well than others. The catering workers were not the only trade group to be targeted by management for work practice changes. The ramp workers also were to be identified by management for major changes.

The Ramp workers dispute

Traditionally ramp workers have been one of the strongest trade groups in the ground services operation. In the European and domestic flight area alone they had in 1982 approximately 1,800 staff who were responsible for aircraft loading. As mentioned previously they with engineering staff had withdrawn from the job evaluation system, as they perceived that their strong bargaining position would gain more from the traditional collective bargaining for pay and conditions.

The ramp workers had a reputation for having some of the most political shop stewards in the airline. Certainly Mike le Cornu and Ken Gallagher, two leading shop stewards in this area, have strong links with the Communist Party. When both these shop stewards were interviewed they expressed a mainly class-based analysis of trade unionism at the airport.

Under British Airways' management survival plan, published 10th September 1981, proposals were made to introduce new work practices which resulted in staff losses and changes to work rostering. The survival plan was not the subject of discussions with the trade unions and management attempted to implement key areas of the plan without staff agreement.

In February 1982 the ramp workers came out on strike. In previous times such a strike would have brought the airline to a stop. But in a climate that the ramp workers strike committee described in the ramp strike newspaper as "intended to imbue a "Dunkirk" aura" (see appendix 11), British Airways was able to operate 90% of their normal services using volunteer labour from other trade groups. The strike lasted for eight weeks and gained little support from any other trade groups

except south side catering. The Financial Times on March 24th, in a report headed; "**BA claims ramp staff action crumbling**," outlined the main reasons for the ramp workers staying out. The article stated:

There seem to be four main barriers to the solutions. Ramp workers' leaders wish to avoid the defeat which would weaken their future bargaining power. They believe that BA has broken agreements and imposed changes, and they are reluctant to co-operate with the operations to "privatise" the airline. The staff leaders also feel they are resisting a generalised attack by British management on unions.⁸

The dispute was officially supported by the union and John Collier the T. & G.W.U. Airport official was under considerable pressure to get other trade groups to support the ramp workers. The catering workers were one of the few groups to join the picket line and also come out on strike when supportive action had been requested by the union. The dispute generated much hostility and conflict, not just between staff and management, but also amongst staff themselves. There were various accusations of "nasty tricks" by both sides. Management had accused the ramp workers of bullying workers to stay out, and reported to the press that organised theft had dropped since other staff had been handling baggage. The ramp workers had accused the management of bribing workers to handle their work, of being involved in the arrest of six pickets and generally using the dispute to undermine trade union practice at the airport.

The catering workers' support had been given mainly from beliefs of trade union and class solidarity. The King administration at British Airways created a general belief amongst staff that the airline was in a state of critical survival and that a major sacrifice was needed by all staff. British Airways News reported on February 19th:-

Volunteers help fight to survive

Since the Ramp strike began on Tuesday last week, staff from all over the airline have left their normal day-to-day work to keep Terminals 1 and 2 running. They found muscles they didn't know existed and have worked all hours in support of their airline. As a result we have run most of our operation, carried our passengers and preserved most of our revenue. Why have we asked them to do it? Why have they done it so willingly? Like all of us they understand the problems faced by the airline- that the fight for survival must be won or all our jobs are at risk. They're all volunteers - no pressed men...or women. Some of our myopic colleagues would call them "blacklegs". In the history of industrial conflict in Britain, blacklegs have, I believe, been a miserable lot because they have undermined their colleagues' solidarity in support of jobs, good pay and working conditions. But in this present dispute, ask yourself; Who is undermining whom? In the face of the worst financial crisis in the history of this airline all groups of staff have tightened their belts and contributed to becoming more productive.⁹

The dispute certainly came in a period in which the airline was facing heavy losses. Both Mike le Cornu and Ken Gallagher (ramp shop stewards) expressed in an interview that BA management had been careful to pick the right time to force the issue with the ramp workers. BA management had intended to use the ramp dispute to show that the traditional forms of trade union action, so often used in the 1960s and 1970s, were now redundant.

The catering workers' support was also given at a cost. Opinions were very divided in catering centre south concerning the support of ramp workers. Violence broke out on the catering picket line with Bashir Bhatti (shop steward) being hit by a catering worker wishing to enter the catering centre. The T. & G.W.U. carried out its own enquiry concerning the incident and finished up sanctioning the worker. The divisions lasted long after the strike and were severely to hamper the previous solidarity shared by the catering workers. It is ironic that an issue perceived in traditional class terms should have divided the workers when issues related to "race" had in the past united them.

The ramp workers' dispute, which the ramp workers lost, was thought to be an important crossroads for trade union activity within the airline and a clear indication that the isolated efforts of industrial action by specific trade groups would be severely opposed by management. Notions of industrial democracy were a thing of the past, and staff involvement was now based on Peters's model of "horizontal management", in which all staff involvement should be based on the pursuit of higher profits.

The support that the catering workers gave to the ramp workers will surely have been observed by the management. However, their main concern must have been the catering workers' success in the 1970s to increase their pay levels. These levels have been estimated by union officials to be 30% higher than those achieved by other catering workers, outside the airline, doing similar work. So it was that management requested the airline's solicitor to explore the legal implication involved in a number of alternatives for reducing catering workers' wages.

The Struggle to reduce Catering Wage Costs.

In the early 1980s the north side catering centre (catering for European flights) was sold to an outside catering firm, as well as all staff canteen catering at

Heathrow. This left south side catering which dealt mainly with long haul flight catering, always the higher quality catering production. It was also where the majority of industrial action had taken place.

There seem to be two main reasons why South Side Catering was retained within the airline's network. Firstly was the need to retain some control over the quality of catering production in this area. British Airways in recent years has placed much emphasis on the quality of catering production on long haul flights. The competition between airlines on these flight sectors is particularly fierce, and catering presents a specific area of the airline's product in which improvement can always be made. Secondly was the increase in the bargaining strength of the catering workers themselves. The major in-roads that the catering workers in the 1970s had made to the wider union network in the airline was now to make them a much more difficult group to marginalise. It seems, that on a number of occasions almost all the other trade groups on the ground services national sectional panel made it clear to management that they would support the catering workers in any action they took against being sold off. While management must have viewed the defeat of the ramp workers' dispute as a major victory, it is highly likely that they wanted to enter into another major dispute, while trying to achieve profitability for privatisation. The likelihood also was that the catering dispute would achieve a much greater level of support from other trade groups than the ramp workers' dispute. It would have been difficult to present this dispute as "bloody mindedness" and "pure self interest".

These speculations are supported when we consider the response of management to a secret report, carried out in July 1983 by the airline's solicitor, J.R.J. Hammond. The report which somehow got into the hands of catering shop stewards, looked at the legal implications involved in a number of alternatives aimed at reducing the wage costs of catering workers. The report claimed that the main problem to consider was how catering workers at catering centre south could be employed at wage and salary levels equivalent to those outside the airline.

The alternatives to be considered were as follows:-

(a) The existing contracts of employment could be consensually terminated (the employees receiving severance payments in return for agreeing to the termination), and fresh contracts of employment could then be offered with a new subsidiary of British Airways formed to operate catering centre south.

(b) Existing contracts of employment could be unilaterally terminated by British Airways- i.e. the employees could be dismissed- and fresh contracts of employment then be offered by x Ltd., the employees rights to severance payments being built in to the arrangements.

(c) Existing contracts of employment could continue, but be varied by an agreement whereby the employees gave up their rights to their existing wage and salary levels in return for capital payments equivalent to the severance payments that would be made under the two preceding schemes.

The solicitor's recommendation was based in favour of alternative (c), given that the two other alternatives may have contractual problems if individuals or groups of staff opposed implementation of such schemes. Certainly British Airways' management must have been aware that the staff would be likely to oppose all three. In fact catering shop stewards made it known, through informal channels, that this most certainly would be the case.

For whatever reason British Airways did not implement any of these schemes and looked for alternative mechanisms for achieving wage reductions. In the light of the threat of these proposals, catering workers agreed to increase their productivity.

The final significant point to be made about the report was the official union's response made in a letter (dated 25th August 1983) from the T.& G.W.U. legal department to R.G. Pither (an airport officer). It read:-

In conclusion, we consider that the problem for British Airways is that the staff employed at Catering Centre South receive salary levels 30% higher than those applicable in outside aircraft catering businesses. Privatisation is a device to get around this "problem" and we consider that, in the final analysis, the attitude of the Courts would be sympathetic to British Airways.
(see appendix 12)

This letter seems very defeatist. It could equally be argued that the problem was that catering staff outside British Airways were on salary levels 30% lower than those of the staff at catering centre south. Many union officials interviewed accepted this assumption that the catering workers had bargained their wage levels to an unrealistic level. Such attitudes would seem to have a degree of acceptance of the notion that low-paid occupations certainly legitimise occupational ghettos. In their defence, it was not likely to be their attitude alone which would result in the reduction of catering workers' salary levels, but the removal of bargaining mechanisms which allowed for comparability of job functions with other trade groups, i.e. job evaluation.

While the attitude of union officials to catering workers' salary levels was unlikely to enhance the defence of their gains in the 1970s, it was the return to an industrial environment based on the philosophy of free market forces which was to provide the overriding pressure for a reduction in their wage levels. In addition the reduction of bureaucratic forms of bargaining was to place the catering workers in a position far more vulnerable to market forces.

In the end the adverse bargaining pressures on catering workers in the 1980s proved to be too much. In the pay negotiations for 1988/89 the staff agreed to reduce wage levels for all new catering staff entering the airline to a rate comparable to other catering workers outside British Airways (see appendix 13 for pay agreement). John Collier (union official) described these negotiations as amongst the most protracted and heated that he had been involved in. They represented a considerable shift back in pay to the levels mid 1975 and were justified by the official union as necessary in order to ensure that catering was not sold off by the airline.

While these latest events can well be seen as a set back for the catering workers, all those interviewed agreed that catering workers had, through the bargaining strengths they had gained, warded off much of the harsher treatment that British Airways had planned for them in the 1980s. However gloomy the immediate future looks for the catering workers, it is certain that they will continue to struggle against official union and management for what they perceive to be just wages and conditions; for all those concerned the future promises to be eventful.

1. K. Coates & T. Topham., **Trade Unions and Politics**, Basil Blackwell 1986.
2. Source., Labour Research August 1983.
3. Source: A. Reed., **Airline**, BBC Publications 1990 p.28.

4. A. Reed., Airline, BBC Books 1990.

When one shop steward read this quote he said:-
"Yea 23,000 went on a permanent holiday".

5. A. Reed., Airline, BBC Books 1990 p.34.

6. T.Peters., Thriving on Chaos Pan Books 1987.

7. ibid.

8. Financial Times, Wednesday March 24th.

9. Article by Operations Director Howard Phelps., British Airways News, February 19th 1982.

CONCLUSION

- (1) Unintentional Discrimination
- (2) Racism as an Instrument of Political Struggle
- (3) Bureaucracy as an Instrument and Arena of Struggle
- (4) The notion of "class", "race", "gender" and "culture" as forms of political discourse
- (5) Labour Market Formation
- (6) The Role of Trade Unions in Anti-racist Struggle
- (7) The Concept of Realism

CONCLUSIONS

This case study covers in the main three decades of the catering workers trade union history. Within those thirty years they have fought hard against racial injustice and have confronted the dehumanising processes created by racial discrimination. When white managers referred to them in the early years as, "you black bastards", and charged them for doing overtime, then they confronted that racism and demanded dignity. They also realised that racial justice could not be achieved solely by challenging racist ideology and intention, and that the main mechanism for achieving parity of pay was related to bargaining practices.

Their achievement against both racist intention and racist practice makes their story more pertinent to an understanding of anti-racist struggle.

As stated in the previous chapter the events of the 1980s, while gloomy, support the main arguments pursued in this thesis. They are; (a) that racial discrimination does not take place by intention alone; b) that racism can constitute a political instrument of struggle for both racists and anti-racists, thus the effect can become the means; c) that bureaucracy is not the property of any one interest group and it is both an instrument and arena of political struggle; d) that notions of "class", "race", "gender" and "culture" are forms of political discourse which are mainly used as forms of justification for political action; e) that the labour market is not solely formed by the dichotomous relationship of labour and capital, and that sections of the labour force are actively involved in its formation; f) that trade unions are not monolithic and unified institutions, and that they very often form specific arenas of struggle of their own, in which union memberships, particularly for black workers, do not equal fair representation; and finally, g) the concept of "new realism" is by no means new; Workers are constantly evaluating the reality of the laws of economic and political workings within the given situations where they find themselves, and applying different forms of political tactics according to

their own evaluation of the situation. In short the world of collective bargaining is a highly dynamic one.

Unintentional Discrimination

One of the major problems of highlighting the importance of unintentional racism, is that it might be interpreted as a detraction from the importance of intentional racism. That is certainly not the intention in this thesis. However, as the case study shows, there is a range of mechanisms and practices which cannot be reduced to ideology or intention and which effect or eliminate forms of racial discrimination.

The work of Lustgarten, in the area of discrimination law, and Wainwright, in the area of employment, have both shown the significance of unintentional action on discriminatory practices.¹ There has, nevertheless, been very little work which has attempted to identify specific examples of such a phenomenon. This thesis attempts to fill that gap.

There are abundant examples of intentional racism operating against the catering workers throughout the case study history, but it would seem that the main mechanism by which this group of black workers overcame discriminatory practices was through a bargaining mechanism of job evaluation. The actual practices and conditions of collective bargaining were the major factors in both the effect of discrimination and its elimination. In periods in which free market forces were allowed to operate, such as the 1960s and now again in the 1980s and 1990s, catering workers were disadvantaged and ghettoised in low-paid occupations. Those groups who had strong bargaining positions in this period, such as ramp workers and engineers, maximised these strengths at the expense of the catering workers. Indirectly and unintentionally they were party to the discriminatory processes by which catering workers are ghettoised in low paid occupations. Neither of these conditions was brought about by, or relied upon, intentional racism.

In the 1970s when bargaining became more bureaucratic and formalised, catering workers achieved major bargaining gains. They were able to identify clearly the mechanisms and practices which they needed to manipulate in order to achieve their bargaining aims. The two essential features within this process were that the specific arena in which they struggled was very much limited to the boundaries of the airline itself and therefore limited the impact of free market forces; and secondly, there was the opportunity through job evaluation to compare the specifics of their job with other trade groups.

The fact that the present government has been able to reduce the ability of workers to make comparisons of job task, has been one of the most pessimistic features of its approach to industrial relations for low-paid workers. This has been achieved mainly through encouragement of localised bargaining.

It would seem that an important message here for anti-racist struggle is the need to pay attention to practices and outcomes, in addition to attempts to identify the origins and the intentions of racism. A good example of this, mentioned in the chapter on Formal Practices, relates to British Airways need to redeploy staff at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. The redeployment scheme emerged, in many ways, as the most effective way of locating black workers throughout the airline, very often on higher grades. Here was a clear example of unintentional anti-racism!

Racism as an Instrument of Political Struggle.

It is often assumed that racism is solely the property of racists and that its use acts exclusively as an instrument of oppression. The catering workers use of "the cultural barrier" would suggest that racism can effectively be used against racists. Whether catering workers were in fact aware of this phenomenon seems of secondary importance. What was crucial to its use was that it did create a political barrier, based on notions of culture, which white shop stewards and union officials found extremely difficult to penetrate. This "cultural barrier" was mainly a product

of racist and stereotypical assumptions about Asian workers. It provided a barrier behind which catering workers could develop their own organisational networks in an environment of safety and trust, qualities not in abundance in the hostile times of the 1960s and early 1970s.

One of the major dangers in the general use of the term racism is the way in which it is used as a blanket statement to cover diverse forms of ideological formations. One of the encouraging features of recent literature in this area is the analysis of the dynamic and complex nature of racism (Barker 1981, Miles 1989). However, even here, has been little, if any, mention of the dialectical potential embodied within racism as an instrument of political struggle.

It is understandable that so little work has been done in this area, given the horrendous effectiveness with which racism has been used historically by racists in order to pursue their economic and political objectives. However, those who have come in contact with any form of black politics must be aware of the way that ideological perceptions are used by groups to create a system of exclusion. Such mechanisms are instruments of political expression and are therefore important to identify and understand as part of the process of anti-racist struggle.

The catering workers use of the "cultural barrier", whether intentional or unintentional, created situations in which white shop stewards and union officials operated at a marked disadvantage. It was very often difficult for them to make sense of the informal rules that were operating. At times these situations were a direct result of racist perception of "Asian culture". There were times also when catering workers responses to racism were, understandably, highly hostile. As Bashir Bhatti points out in relation to attempts by a trade union official to intervene in the 1975 strike:-

Because he was a pain in the neck at that time.....he spoke language of management at the time...he spoke

to them and then he would come to us. In 1975 he would have been killed there I tell you if he had attended more meetings, he realised very quick and he ran way..

All in all, racism and the politics of "race" served as a highly dynamic force in the political encounters between catering workers and the official union and management. It is not suggested here that racism should not be opposed as part of the ideological battles involved in aiming for "racial" justice. Only that, racism, as an ideological construct, is an instrument of political struggle and can therefore be manipulated in a number of different ways by different interest groups. What lies at the heart of anti-racist struggle is the actuality of experience and practice. Racism as an ideology is an instrument in this struggle.

Many white shop stewards and union officials who held stereotypical and racist views, did, at times, provide much help and support to the catering workers. Action and practice can never be reduced, at all times, to a single ideological mechanism. No individual responds simply in an automatic fashion every time to her or his own attitudes, any more than her or his own attitudes are static. Attitudes are influenced at any given time by a whole range of factors and ideas. For example, nearly all non-catering workers interviewed had developed a respect for catering workers as trade unionists after 1975. This respect was based partly upon a changing attitude towards some of the individual catering workers involved, but also upon a realisation of the changing power relations that catering workers had within the airlines' collective bargaining machinery.

Top of the catering workers bargaining list was not a desire for management and other workers to like them, but a determination to achieve racial justice through parity of pay and conditions with workers doing similar work. Attitude, ideology and intention were only single factors in this process. This argument in no way justifies racist ideology.

Bureaucracy as an instrument and Arena of Struggle.

A common theme, not just in industrial sociology (c.f. Edwards, Littler), but also in anti-racist literature (c.f. Sivanandan, Duffield) is the notion of incorporation. Such arguments, generally suggest that structural conflict, whether experienced by exploited workers (black or white) or oppressed black people, is defused or diverted by incorporation into bureaucratic and formal systems of organisation.

Incorporation must have been a major incentive for management and the official union to formalise bargaining. This can clearly be seen from the responses of management and the official union to the intense forms of conflict taking place around the 1975 catering workers' strike. These responses were also linked to the actual demands of the catering workers themselves. Many of the catering workers struggles at this time were centred on access to formalised channels of negotiation.

The development, then, of bureaucratic forms of collective bargaining constituted an arena of struggle and also an instrument of struggle. This can be most clearly seen in the case of the conflicts which surrounded the job evaluation system. The kinds of informal pressures that the catering workers applied in the process of formalised negotiations surrounding the grading of jobs typify that process. Management was often pressurised, by the catering workers, into making concessions towards more formalised systems of bargaining. Thus the expansion for formalisation of job evaluation was partly a direct response from industrial pressure created by the catering workers themselves. They could clearly see that a formalised mechanism, mainly a system for comparing jobs (job evaluation) , was a way they could achieve parity of pay.

In fact, the erosion in the late 1980s of their pay differential, was influenced greatly by the erosion of such bureaucratic forms of bargaining. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the new management style of King and Marshall was to eliminate "unnecessary" bureaucracy and establish forms of "horizontal management". Such

trends resulted in the minimization of corporate forms of decision making, and the elevation of the individual's role in the common goal of the maximization of profit for the airline. What British Airways euphemistically call "putting people first".²

Those who overemphasize the role of incorporation do a massive injustice to the struggles that take place by exploited and oppressed groups attempting to gain access to machinery which may provide some improvement in their condition. Such assumptions are often based upon dubious notions of a grand and co-ordinated conspiracy to deradicalise black militancy. It is not the notion itself of conspiracy or the motivation to deradicalise black militancy which is dubious, but the primacy that such elements have in the kinds of struggle such theories are applied to.

Of course conspiracies take place, and managers and trade union officials too are motivated to control conflict and deradicalise militancy in certain situations. These processes are very often, however, only elements in specific arenas of struggle. Very often also the details of these theories are over simplified. An example of this is the extent to which it is assumed that conspiracies can be co-ordinated or have an inherent logic, and that there is a clear dividing line between those who conspire and those who are conspired against.

Duffield's (1988) recent study of Indian ironfoundry workers typifies this approach. In this case study Duffield links the deradicalisation of black ironfoundry workers to incorporationism into formal bureaucratic types of collective bargaining. He states:-

As with the managerial inspired negotiating machinery, it indicates an absorption of the Indian shop floor movement into conventional trade unionism, in this instance being toward the left rather than the right of the movement. Nevertheless, as with the latter,

compared to the spontaneity and wide ranging informal links of the 1960s, one is presented with the bureaucratisation of the Indian shop floor movement. Interestingly, it is only through this process of institutionalisation that a better understanding with the representatives of white manual workers was able to develop. The paradox of this situation is that the incorporation of Indian workers into formal negotiating machinery marks the political decline of the shop floor movement during the 1960s. Indian workers became heirs to the institutional sclerosis of the British labour movement thus opening their ranks to the apathy and absence of political culture characteristic of the white working class. (p.176-177)³

Such analysis fails to acknowledge that bureaucracy itself is an arena of struggle. Bureaucracy's existence, is often an effect of radical action rather than it being a cause for deradicalisation of workers. In short workers themselves often struggle to gain entry to systems of decision making and are aware that there are cost/benefits operating in such access. To assume the incorporation thesis as applied above implies that workers are being duped.

Further it provides a highly simplistic notion of what the British labour movement constitutes. It fails to acknowledge the highly complex and diverse nature of trade unions and other institutions that are associated with the term, "the British labour movement". Only by presenting "the British labour movement" as a homogeneous mass can he make the contentious statement about it being apathetic and lacking any political culture. Certainly there are tendencies within nearly all trade union organisations to promote economic issues over political, but to assume that this equalled an "absence of political culture" ignores countless examples of trade

unions who struggle over political issues: for example at the centre of the ramp workers dispute was the issue of privatisation.

Finally, Duffield also seems to ignore some of his own data. For earlier in the same chapter he states:

The committee, besides harmonising the economic interests of black and white workers, acted as a mediator between these and management. For the shop stewards concerned, the establishment of this new negotiating machinery is said to have witnessed, from the beginning of the 1970s, a steady improvement in industrial relations. Although latent divisions remained, the workforce was progressively depolarised at the same time as relations with management improved. By giving the Indian shop stewards more authority management, using the terms of the CIR [Commission on Industrial Relations], successfully turned shop floor spokesmen into trade union representatives. This transformation can be seen in a significant change of attitude. A decade after the first Coneygre strike, which marked the coming of age of Indian self-representation, the Indian senior shop steward at Coneygre was of the opinion that without the trade union Asian workers would still be nowhere in British industry. He claimed that "through our union we have got everything we wanted in the foundries" including better pay, access to promotion and safer conditions. This attitude contradicts the spirit of self-help which animated the Indian shop floor movement during the 1960s. It is the outlook of a movement

which has become bureaucratized and absorbed into the dominant relations of power. (p.173)⁴

It seems that Duffeld wishes to hold on to an incorporation thesis regardless of what individual shop stewards state as significant personal gains for workers in pay and conditions. Such a thesis overlooks that incorporation is only one element functioning within the development of bureaucratic forms of negotiation.

Bureaucratic bargaining is not the property of any one single party and conflicting groups will struggle to manipulate and control the mechanisms by which bureaucracy operates. In the case of industrial relations, management generally operates at an advantage given that it occupies positions of greater power than work groups. But the development of bureaucratic bargaining does involve the engagement of managers with workers to establish laws and procedures, and these also become instruments of struggle. Thus bureaucracy becomes an arena, and also an instrument of struggle. The success of the catering workers in the 1970s was due to their ability to apply pressure to the construction of bureaucratic forms of negotiation, and at the same time to develop the skills to manipulate the mechanisms of these new procedures.

The notion of "class", "race", "gender" and "culture" as forms of political discourse.
The chapter on "**Race**" and "**Class**" examined a number of theories, mainly within the marxist tradition, which have looked at the relationship between "race" and class. All these theories were found to be problematic, mainly because of the tenuous links they attempted to draw between notions of economic determinants and ideological constructs. The main problems identified were the inability for such theories to sustain a correspondence between the economic base of society and the other levels of social formation, the deterministic nature of those theories which identified capitalist laws of motion, and finally those reductionist theories which provided primacy of political revolutionary action to specific groups.

In an attempt to provide some political importance to the concepts of class, "race", gender and culture the work of Hindess was examined. While Hindess's academic work has involved flirtations with a number of different brands of sociological perspectives, including structural marxism, his main concern has always been with socialist politics. His later work has increasingly rejected notions of economic determinism and has advocated the concept of class as a social construct used by groups to engage in political discourse.

Neither this thesis, nor Hindess (1987) for that matter, is suggesting that the location of individuals or groups within the economic structure of society does not influence and affect their existence. It is with the two central issues within classical marxism and much of modern marxism that contention is engaged: especially the dichotomous model of class which purports that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat have different inherent and objective class interests, and the notion of the primacy of revolution and human liberation to a specific group, whether it be the proletariat or urban social movements (Gilroy 1987).

In relation to the first issue, that of inherent and objectified class interests, there are a number of problems. The issues of "race" and gender, both social constructs, have, in particular, presented defenders of class politics with major problems. The apparent social injustices which both black people and women suffer can not be reduced simply to aspects of class theory. In addition the complexity of labour market formation results in major differences in the immediate economic interests of workers and of those who are excluded from work. While capitalists have a dominant role in labour market formation the active engagement of different groups of workers in the development of the labour market results also in workers not sharing immediate class interests. This seems to have been the case in British Airways. For example, the engineering workers strong bargaining practices in the 1960s reinforced the occupational ghettos of catering workers. Also, in the same period, the active discouragement of black recruitment by other trade groups instigated discriminatory practices.

The notion of primacy of liberation specific to any group is also problematic. Very often such theories have elevated the political significance of one group at the expense of others and thereby been guilty of inverted elitism (c.f. Fanon, Sivanandan, Gilroy).⁵ Historically, also, liberation movements, particularly those advocating socialism, have drawn on a wide body of support from different interest groups, for example the revolutions of Russia, China, Cuba and Mozambique. In order to sustain such theories it is necessary, very often, to attribute the identified liberation group with some inherent law of motion that has its origins in capitalist development. (See discussion concerning Gilroy for example.) This often results in labelling groups or individuals who manage to struggle to make economic gains, as

"a movement which has become bureaucratized and absorbed into the dominant relations of power." (taken from Duffield's quote on page 332). The net effect of all these arguments is the elevation of the political importance of specific groups at the expense of others. Such arguments are politically restrictive and fail to acknowledge the significance of political action taking place in diverse arenas of struggle.

The importance of using Hindess's work here is his concept of the social construct of class as a form of political discourse. While class may well have an objective state or being, as does being black or a woman, there is no justification for assuming that such an individual's or a group's state of being has an objective interest or inherent laws of motion. Individual and group interest will be subject to a range of forces (e.g. racism, sexism) and their specific location within the labour market will be a major contribution.

The notion of class then becomes an instrument for justifying political action by groups in certain situations, such as the ramp workers in their dispute in 1982. The social constructs of class, "race", gender and culture are not merely ideological constructions. They are formed out of an interplay between the actual existence of groups or of individuals the ideological constructions of such notions of class,

"race", and people's perceptions of such notions. This is a highly dynamic formula for the construction of class, "race", and other social constructs, as forms of political discourse. This is demonstrated in the case of the catering workers use of "cultural barriers". Such cultural formations are influenced by the workers' own experiences, by the racist and stereotypical attitudes of both workers and trade union officials and also by the catering workers own perception of those racist attitudes. Further, these social constructs often take place in situations which are influenced by unintentional forces and structural restraints, as in the case of the catering workers location in the labour market. To repeat what has been stated in the "Race and Class chapter, "social constructs can amount to the formation, the formulation and the justification for action."

Labour Market Formation.

As often seems the case, classical marxism and the economic philosophy of the "new right" (Hayek 1960)⁶ share common ground on certain aspects of labour market theory. While both draw very different political conclusions both promote theories of the labour market based upon inherent laws of motion. What seems evident in the case study is that intentional and unintentional actions by groups of workers and other agents, such as the official trade unions, did influence labour market formation.

The dominant position that capital plays in labour formation is obviously crucial to any analysis of the labour market. However, here also it is important to be aware that capital does not operate in a unified and inevitable way, a point acknowledged by most modern marxists (Thompson 1983). Nevertheless, in the main, analysis of labour in labour market formation tends to present its role in a mainly defensive way. A far more proactive role needs to be attributed to specific groups of workers in the development of the labour market. The role of the engineers and the ramp workers in the 1960s, understandably, was based on a protection of their differentials. One of the unintentional consequences of this was, in a period of traditional bargaining, the compounding of the ghettoisation of black catering

workers. In addition, an intentional consequence of workers in this period was the active restriction of black labour into non-catering trade groups.

The whole process of the formalisation of collective bargaining, and particularly the job evaluation system, began to reveal mechanisms by which labour market formation could be identified. The job evaluation system focussed on job classification and the construction of job function, two central features of labour market formation. The improvements that catering workers made were due, in part, to the ability to locate and influence such mechanisms. The system of job evaluation provided a means by which mechanisms and practices could be manipulated and outcomes monitored. In the case of the traditional forms of free collective bargaining these processes are far more difficult to identify. In either case the market is still influenced by the intentional and unintentional practices of different sections of workers.

This then means that any meaningful commitment by trade unions and employers to eliminate racial discrimination requires an examination of the practices and outcomes of the labour market.

The role of Trade Unions in Anti-racist Struggles.

The history of trade unions in anti-racist struggle is not a good one. The vast majority of research in this area tells a story of black workers in the 1960s failing to achieve any meaningful representation from trade union officials; of the official union too often failing to acknowledge representatives of black workers and too often being insensitive and unsympathetic to the accusation by black workers of racism in the work place. Such research also identified the common trend of black workers' struggles first being waged against their official union and then against management.⁷ Wrench (1987) summed up this history as follows:-

This leads us to the poor record of the trade union movement in this sphere: to put it bluntly, black

workers in this country have served the unions far better than the unions have served black workers. According to the features that are normally associated with trade unions: comradeship, solidarity and a desire to bring about improvements in the conditions of the working people, this should not be so. In reality, history shows the record of the trade union movement to be characterised, at worst, by appalling racism and often an indefensible neglect of the issues of race and equal opportunity. (p.162)⁸

The history of catering workers at British Airways confirms this poor record of trade unions. For much of the early period of the catering workers' experience they treated the official trade union as merely an umbrella organisation, in which they very often acted as trade union members only in name; their organisation and action was based very much upon their own representation.

The reasons for this poor record are far more complex than Wrench's quote implies. In fact the majority of research in this area provides a similar kind of causation for the poor representation of black workers in trade unions, that of racism.

Certainly the existence of the ideology of racism within union organisations has played a major part in influencing the experiences of black workers in trade unions. However, to reduce all causes of discrimination to the ideology of racism is problematic. The catering workers serve as a good example. Their improvement within British Airways took place within a work environment in which there is little concrete evidence that racist attitudes have changed that much.

Of course nearly all authors in this area provide definitions of racism which go beyond ideological racism. For example Sarup identifies three types: personal,

institutional and state racism.⁹ There is throughout the research very little detail of how institutional racism operates in practice in the workplace.

One of the major problems of analysis in this area is that trade unions are too often discussed as a unified mass which is meant to embody certain ideals and beliefs, such as those quoted by Wrench,

*comradeship, solidarity and a desire to bring about
improvements in the conditions of the working people,*

Implicit are the assumptions that trade unions are an expression of working class interest and that as organisations they have developed out of a need to protect unified working class interest. The chapters on, "Trade Unions and Trade Unionism", and "The Labour Market", both challenge these assumptions.

Firstly, trade unions are not monolithic organisations. They are highly complex and diverse in the nature of the membership and organisation. Given the diversity of the labour market itself, the very fact that unions are organised around the work place ensures this.

Secondly, there are no inherent reasons why trade union organisations should embody beliefs based on solidarity or socialist ideals. Their existence within such organisations is due to the process of political discourse, in which various groups have used such ideas as an appeal for action in much the same way as notions of "racial justice" have been used by black workers.

Thirdly, trade unions like all organisations are subject to unintentional forces which affect their practices. For example, the "first in last out rule" in redundancy agreements can act to disadvantage women and black people. Also, the withdrawal of the engineers and ramp workers from the job evaluation scheme had

the unintended consequence of delaying its introduction, and thereby delayed the mechanisms by which catering workers achieved parity.

Finally, it is this very fragmented nature of trade unions that provides them with political potential and makes them arenas of struggle. These struggles take place very often within a locality of both an economic and political nature. This can be seen most clearly in the actions that feminists and black workers have undertaken in localised union organisations. The catering workers serve here as a classic example of a group of workers who adapted their tactics, first mainly informal and then mainly formal, as a means of achieving greater political and economic representation. It was in particular their attention to labour market mechanisms and practices which provided them with so much success in the 1970s.

National trade unions since the end of the 1960s have never been lacking in ideological and political commitment to combat racism. Their main problem has been the inability to deliver it. If improvements are to be made in this area then much greater attention will have to be made to practices and outcomes. This will of course involve considerable monitoring of trade union and management collective bargaining practices. They need to co-ordinate and encourage equal opportunity agreements which are incorporated into local and national agreements. Such equal opportunity agreements must involve targets of black representation throughout organisations and must contain action plans to achieve such targets.

Of course in the present free market climate any interventionist approach is likely to be discouraged. However, this should not lead trade unionists to an acceptance of racist practice or to be negative or defeatist about trade union practice in general. For if trade unions do constitute arenas of struggle then it is possible within specific situations, to make significant political advances, as the catering workers showed in extremely hostile times. What is required in such situations is the political will and the skill to analyse the specific mechanisms by which advances can be made. The success of these actions will depend upon a range

of other factors, such as bargaining strengths, the interaction with other trade groups, unintentional forces and the actions of management. However, these processes are very much based upon the specific practices of trade unionists in the work place and it is to this final issue we now turn.

The Concept of Realism

In recent years "new realism" has become a key term in trade union vocabulary. It is usually applied to a need for trade union constraint in a period of political hostility towards trade union practice:

The TUC's policy of "new realism" was first articulated by Alastair Graham, then general secretary of the CPISA, at the 1983 Trade Union Congress. With the support of Len Murray, and eventually the backing of Congress, he argued that the TUC should enter into discussions with the Tory government. (p.25)¹⁰

The term "new realism" has acted as part of a national debate, in which, what is often seen to be traditional trade union methods (those often typified by the actions of the miners in the 1984 miners strike) have been heavily criticised. The term "new realism" is based upon the assumption of an "old realism". In practice the distinction between these two terms is based upon a belief by the "new realists" of that which is realistic and that which is unrealistic ("old realism").

The catering workers' trade union experiences have shown that a wide range of practices lay open to trade unionists and that their application is mainly dependent on political judgement. No clear distinctions exist between what is practical, realistic and responsible trade union action, and that which is perceived as impractical, unrealistic and irresponsible. In the end, the measure of the realism of trade union action is whether it works!

The catering workers' use of informal and formal action was not merely a product of arbitrary events. Certainly trade union tactics and methods do develop by accident or by unintentional forces, but in the main, they are a result of political judgements made by the workers involved. These processes of political judgement develop constantly throughout the various work localities in which workers are struggling to achieve economic and political objectives. Within British Airways the trade group representatives who were interviewed had all made political judgements and analysis of the industrial scenarios taking place within the airline. These judgements were also influenced by other ongoing ideological struggles, such as the political discourse concerning racism, "race", class and other social constructs. They were also based upon what they perceived as practical and realistic regarding their own position within the labour market. It would seem that "realism" has always been a paramount consideration in trade union action.

The combination of the many forces operating to influence the decisions and actions of trade unionists makes collective bargaining a highly political and dynamic arena of struggle. Workers are constantly attempting to make sense of their situation. In order to do this they apply their own evaluation of the reality of the laws of political and economic workings to the specific work situations they find themselves in. This then requires them to formulate tactics in order to achieve those political objectives. In the case of the catering workers it seems that this process can be highly creative. They clearly based their objectives and tactics upon an evaluation of where they were at any given time.

They identified correctly that management indeed was an obstacle to their political and economic objectives, but that the official union and other trade groups in the airline also played a similar role. Their real success, in terms of pay parity within the airline, was the ability to identify the appropriate practices, such as job evaluation, that could enable effective bargaining. In order to achieve this however, they had to undergo major struggles within their own trade union organisation. These struggles involved confronting intentional and unintentional racist practice

in a number of different arenas of struggle. They clearly demonstrated that a realisation of workers' political interest may well involve conflict with other workers/unions as well as with managers. Here is a good example of realism.

In the three decades that this case study has covered, the catering workers in the south side unit of British Airways have constantly struggled for both parity and racial justice. These struggles have involved, at times, considerable personal sacrifices. They have been undertaken very often in extremely hostile environments and have involved high levels of conflict. These workers have shown that even in adverse times it is possible to ensure that essential issues, such as racial justice, remain on the political agenda. Trade unionists can learn from these experiences, and ensure that anti-racism remains high on the trade union agenda!

1. L. Lustgarten., Legal Control Of Racial Discrimination, Macmillan Press 1980.

D. Wainwright., Discrimination in Employment, Associated Business Press 1979.
2. British Airways 1985-86 Report and Accounts, states:-
"Our successful 'Putting People First' training gave everyone within the airline a better insight into how to go about their jobs every day and in every way. As a follow up to this a "Managing People First" course has been devised which is specifically concerned with helping anyone who has the responsibility for managing other people, whether staff or other managers, to become more expert at getting the best from him or herself in every situation." (p.11)

3. M. Duffield., Black Radicalism and the Politics of De-industrialisation; The Hidden History of Indian Foundry Workers. Avebury Gower Publishing Co. 1988.
4. ibid.
5. F. Fanon., The Wretched of the Earth, Penguin 1967.
A. Sivanandan., A Different Hunger, Pluto Press 1982.
P. Gilroy., There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack, Hutchinson 1987.
6. F.A. Hayek., The Constitution of Liberty, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1960.
7. Ramdin, Wrench, Fryer, Sivanandan.
8. R. Jenkins & J.Solomos (Ed.)., Racism and Equal Opportunity Policies in the 1980s. Chapter 10, J.Wrench Cambridge University Press 1987.
9. M. Sarup., The Politics Of Multiracial Education, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1986.
10. Counter Information Services Report., Assault on the Unions, CIS Summer 1984 Pluto Press London.

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