Management Authority in a Worker Cooperative: the Case of Tower Colliery

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Introduction

The South Wales coalfield has long enjoyed a deep-rooted debate over the political direction and control of industry and the influence to be accorded to workers. As part of the Conservative government's wider programme of pit closures, Tower Colliery was closed in 1994. The workers, led by the local union branch, organised a buy-out and the colliery subsequently reopened as a co-operative worker-owned enterprise.

The paper will provide a brief but essential historical context and detail the present forms of managerial control at Tower as a way into the discussion of a number of arguments which emerge from philosophical concepts of authority and their contentious relevance to industrial organisation. Our central question concerns how far established philosophical traditions are appropriate to an understanding of management processes in a successful, competitive and profitable 'anti-capitalist' undertaking operating in a market economy.

History 1 : The Colliery

Tower lies on the northern boundary of the South Wales coalfield near the top of a mountain on a spectacular site dwarfed by a glacial cirque some 1200 feet high. It is about two miles from the old mining and iron manufacturing town of Hirwaun. The colliery's name derives from a ruined folly, a tower built on the mountainside by the iron master Crawshay. According to local legend it was used to watch over the work force but, more probably, it served as a retreat to escape from them. The first drift mine was driven in 1864 and the shaft was sunk in 1870. The colliery came into the ownership of Powell Dyffryn Associated Collieries - referred to locally as 'the PD' or, more sardonically, as 'the parish and dole' - in 1935. The company had a reputation for efficiency and for robust labour relations. Following nationalisation in 1947, it was managed by the National Coal Board as part of its South-Western Division. The national strike of 1984 precipitated a massive closure programme and the effective demise of the industry; by 1994 Tower was the last deep mine operating in South Wales (Cynon Valley History Society, 2002). It too was closed by British Coal in April, 1994. Although the workers voted to accept the redundancy offer, NUM members at Tower began to campaign for an employee buyout to establish a workers' cooperative. A group elected by the workforce, the Tower Employment Buyout team (TEBO), assembled a business plan, a technical plan, bank loans, support from the local authority, the Wales Co-operative Centre, donations and, finally, a pledge of £2 million composed of £8,000 redundancy money from each of 237 miners. The Department of Trade and Industry accepted the TEBO's bid in November, 1994 and Tower reopened on 2nd January, 1995. Only employees can be shareholders and, in principle, democratic decision-making is assured on the basis of 'one-man, one vote'. British Coal had claimed the colliery was uneconomic but it has a valuable product - anthracite - and, under the cooperative's control, production has [?nearly doubled] or [increased] to some 600,000 tonnes per year generating annual profits of £4 million. It has overcome some daunting technical problems which might have defeated previous owners and continues to prosper.[1]

History 2: Syndicalism in South Wales

However compromised by the pragmatic of necessity, the form of worker control now established at Tower can be seen as the legacy of nearly a century of experience with utopian ideologies and uncertain expectations. The nationalisation of 'the commanding heights of the economy' under the 1945 Labour Government, while a singular achievement, also represented a singular dilution of left wing aspirations for worker control and demands for state ownership that dominated the labour movement's thinking from 1910 to 1921. South Wales - along with the engineering industry in Clydeside (Kendall, 1969) - was the most active centre of advocating the syndicalist model of worker control of industry. Syndicalism celebrates worker self-reliance as expressed through unionism and aggressively rejects all forms of contact with capitalist employers. It emerged principally from France, from Italy and Spain, was carried to USA to be adopted by the Industrial Workers of the World and was carried back to Britain by Daniel De Leon. Its principal theorist - although herein lies a paradox about the difficulty of theorising an ostensibly atheoretical movement - was Georges Sorel (1916).

In the South Wales coalfield, turbulent industrial relations involving the intervention of armed force and consequent dissatisfaction with the leadership of the South Wales Miners' Federation led to the creation of Miners' Unofficial Reform Committee which published 'The Miners' Next Step' in Tonypandy in 1912. This influential publication dismissed the objective of nationalisation as irrelevant and repudiated both collective bargaining and conciliation: the sole concern of unionised miners should be control of their own industry. By 1918 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain came to agree declaring that nationalisation without joint control would be useless and drew up a draft Parliamentary Bill to that end. Hence the Sankey Commission recommended nationalisation with a considerable degree of joint control. Control was to be vested in Local Councils consisting of three management representatives, four elected workers and three appointees. Under these, District Councils, composed of equal representatives of miners, managers and consumers would appoint managers and run the industry. A considerable measure of joint control became part and parcel of official Labour Party and TUC policy. However, such ambition ended in 1921 with, from the unions' point of view, the disastrous strikes in the engineering industry, a trade recession and, finally, the general strike of 1926. The obituary was provided by the Labour minister Herbert Morrison:

> "this buses for the busmen and dust for the dustmen stuff is not socialism ... it isn't a busman's idea at all; it's middle-class, syndicalist romanticism." (Barry, 1965)

What the labour movement got was nationalisation and joint consultation. The T.U.C. (Trades Union Congress, 1943) had nothing to say about joint control: it proposed nationalisation with union recognition for the purposes of bargaining and consultation. Ominously, the terms of coal nationalisation in 1946 included provisions for joint consultation that were remarkably similar to the proposals of the coal owners' minority report in the Sankey Commission of 1919.

Joint consultation emerged as part of the governments reaction to industrial unrest during the first world war. The 1917 Whitley Committee recommended the establishment of joint industrial committees of managers and workers' representatives to discuss matters of common interest. The result, at least in the public service sector, was a formal consultative process which spread to the private sector during the second world war and was sustained after it by the American human relations school and the nostrum that effective communications were sufficient to avoid unnecessary conflict. Nationalised industries were thus required to maintain a structure of consultative committees. At the National Coal Board, consultation replicated the organisational structure with committees at national, divisional, area and colliery levels. The general view was that joint consultation failed[2] - a conclusion underlined by the 1955 statistic that 73% of the disputes in British industry were to be found in mining.

The early unreflective Labour Party support for syndicalist control, never acceptable to communists, had been abandoned; trade unions, including the NUM, came to regard any invitation from management to join in responsibility with suspicion for it seemed to threaten the unions' ability to resist by their only effective means, collective bargaining. Latterly, this too, to say the least, proved an inadequate medium during the 1984-85 national strike which ended in disaster for mining - an event which seemed to echo the apocryphal comment attributed to a collier on the first day of public ownership in 1947: 'its the same bloody face behind the manager's desk'. So, what happens when the faces change?

The management structure and organisation of Tower Colliery

The surface appearance of authority-control structures at Tower are more familiar than might be expected. Company law prescribes the remit and responsibilities of the Board; more exceptionally, the coal industry is almost unique in British industry in the legal requirement that its managers must posses specified qualifications before being licensed to practice operational management. Such constraints mean that, to a degree, little appears to have changed. There are new 'bosses' but colliery management, work organisation, work roles and operational practices are virtually identical to the situation under British Coal. Except that, well, everything *is* different. Sociologically, it is possible to identify four mutually implicated and sometimes mutually competing sources of effective authority. Tower is a vibrant place.

Charismatic Authority. The driving force behind the buyout, Mr. Tyrone O'Sullivan, presently Chairman of the Board and previously the Personnel Officer and, before that, the NUM Lodge Chairman seems possessed of that illusive quality described by Weber as 'charisma'. He is an exceptional speaker and negotiator and people follow him for who he is. While sometimes the subject of aggressive criticism, it seems undoubted that his remarkable leadership skills and key historical role has secured him a now institutionalised role as the figurehead of Tower. Although now less central to daily operations, he remains a powerful source of political direction and his influence stretches considerably beyond his formal role. That said, his position is by no means unquestioned.

Employee Authority. Ownership of Tower is vested in the employees,[3] and, as shareholders, they elect members of the main Board who have to stand for re-election on a two year rotating cycle. Elections in 1999 and 2001 resulted in defeat for two of the founding Board members indicating not only the commitment to the authority of 'primitive democracy' (Webbs, 1898) but also that no member of the Board is safe. According to some, including Tyrone O'Sullivan, this is 'how it should be'. And, of course, the Directors, who are all working directors, have to account for their actions at the company AGM. These have never been innocuous affairs. While dangerous to generalise, it seems that a continual tension exists between the politicised vision of the majority (which includes nearly all the Board members) and a significant minority among the shareholders who privilege a more instrumental approach to objects of cooperative enterprise.

Legal Authority. As noted above, unqualified formal management authority is legally vested in the Colliery Manager (who is not a Board member) and his team of mining expertise. The mine cannot operate unless he says so and, for the most part, this is not an issue because his authority - which derives as much from his technical knowledge as his legal clout - is uncontested. Insofar as other managers represent his views, they too enjoy strong 'line authority' although this is not unconditional. For example, underground face workers are organised into 'shifts' who are represented to management by elected 'shift captains' who, on almost a daily basis, discuss and agree work operations and also function as the leader of what, in contemporary management speak, would be called 'a self-managing team'[4]. Nonetheless, this legal context is one persuasive explanation for the apparently privileged position which surrounds some managerial functions. It also begins to suggest some entirely defensible reasons for the apparent distance between the ideals of democracy and the realities of managing a complex and dangerous industrial production process.

Union Authority. Everyone working at Tower is a member of a trade union, with the majority in the NUM, (including the 15% who are not shareholders). Initially, it is probably accurate to say that the local NUM lodge, as the instigator and organiser of the cooperative, was the *only* authority. In this respect, we can say the cooperative was founded on the ideals of politicised unionism - although whether we should dub it socialist in deference to those who continue to promote the selfsame ideals or whether, in deference to Morrison's 'middle-class romantics', we should, in pursuit of academic analysis, label it syndicalist remains problematic. While they are still key actors, the unions' authority appears to be somewhat marginalized. Institutionally, they continue to both signify and directly represent the publicly proclaimed (and deeply ambiguous) distinction which is drawn between the 'member-as-employee' and the 'member-as-shareholder'. There are annual negotiations over terms and conditions but, while all enjoy high wages and excellent welfare benefits, bargaining appears to have lost its former edge. The presence of unions clarifies the continuing sectional conflicts over distribution - though few can now draw the lines with any clarity or genuine conviction.

More generally, the contradictions that emerge in the 'management' of Tower are immanent and continuous. Tower, rescued from closure to ensure the survival of a culture which had been formed by mining, continues to resonate deeply with what might be called the 'anarcho-socialist' tradition in which the achievement of nationalisation was a poor substitute for worker control. Unionised workers now own the enterprise but, with what contrived deference South Wales miners can muster, they diligently abide by managerial dictat. Managers have a legal duty to serve the interest of the shareholders and therefore exert authority over the employees, who elect the managers. And the once virtually unchallenged cultural authority of the NUM is now compromised - are the officials and their members shareholders or employees? (On one occasion, perhaps as no more than a conditioned historical response, some workers refused 'a legitimate order' and walked off the job, an act which precipitated a mildly embarrassing 24-hour strike.) Tower has to survive the severe realities of competition in an economy which has turned against coal as a major source of energy. It is therefore a heavily capitalised, mechanised colliery with all the array of strategic planning, development,

marketing, supply, budgetary control, target setting and IT functions. Tower is thus a very modern mine in which all submit to the full burden of bureaucratic and technical control. Possible criticism of the Tower experiment can be expected to emerge from the Marxist or Blaunerian versions of the theory of alienation but, in this case, they are aimed at a worker cooperative the origins of which were expected to overcome that condition.

Some Categorical Problems in Analysis

The contradictions and paradoxes embedded in worker cooperatives have been frequently discussed in the field of sociology (Mellor et al., 1988; Waddington et al., 1998; Crossley, 1999). Philosophy, until its recent and welcome turn to work and management, has been occupied traditionally with problems of authority, legitimacy, with rights and duties in the sphere of politics in which these issues most notably manifested themselves. MacIntyre (1981), amongst others, sought to remind us that management is now the most important actor on the world stage: employment may now be a more significant and vulnerable condition than citizenship.

The confusions emerging from Tower are bewildering. To make sense of them we need to re-examine our understanding of concepts developed in the analysis of political relationships and which, by usage and familiarity, have to serve as analytical tools in an unfamiliar setting. The alternative is in the worst sense scholastic, a fruitless and fatiguing process in which we try to determine whether democracy is compatible with management, whether worker control undermines any radical challenge to authority, whether technology is essentially deterministic. There is a possible and philosophically radical approach to this attempt at sense making; that is to concede that, on the one hand, there *is* no sense or, on the other, that there are several different, contradictory and coexisting conceptions of sense. First, we consider some of the obvious conceptual candidates to account for Tower.

Authority

In capitalist business organisations, management authority traditionally derives from ownership. The direction of subordinate work is instrumental to the achievement of business goals identified by owners and the reward or punishment of subordinates' endeavours is justified by the extent to which they meet or miss those goals. These linkages are enshrined in law which makes the interests, and the interest, of owners the prime responsibility of managers who in turn transmit this priority to the shopfloor. Legal concerns about safety, criminal liability or environmental damage qualifies and constrains this duty, but the owners' advantage remains a pre-eminent goal. The legal and social primacy of business ends - underpinned by the considerable practical advantage of limited liability - has certain consequences. There is little room for argument about the ends and not much more about the means chosen to achieve them. Power to enforce both is available to owners and their agents which is abetted by a shadowy, normative accompaniment to the more obvious apparatus of control: the unreflective presumed consensus of ideas and values that the way things are is the way things should be.

But this over-simple claim - which never enjoyed unequivocal legitimacy - has had to be elaborated. Political challenge, the growth of public service organisations and the inadequacy of the enforcement of contractual obligation in production processes that increasingly require active and orchestrated cooperation rather than dogged obedience have all conspired to weaken the dependence on direct control. Coercion has been steadily supplanted with an ambition to secure cooperation through the pursuit of employee motivation. The authority of ownership, diluted first by shareholding and then by corporate stock holding has to be buttressed by alternative claims. These come from managers rather than owners. The first is that managers know what they are doing, have access to special skills and knowledge which give them the *right* to direct the activities of others: managers are experts, even professional. The second is that managers, no longer by birth but by some process of selection, have acquired this right because they have attained leadership (Storey, 1983). The first of these claims is the subject of MacIntyre's devastating assault. The second need not detain us. Both are attempts to 'authorise power'.

Watt (1982) tells us that authority is context-sensitive. Thus, if the instructions of doctors are to be obeyed it is in clinical matters but not, perhaps, in the management of the hospital. If, in Weber's terms, it is to be regarded as legitimate, authority is thought of as properly given to wise advice or appropriate instruction. And, if it is deemed not legitimate, it can be withdrawn by those who are subject to it or, rather, those who comply with it. Compliance, even when constrained by circumstances, is to some extent voluntary on the part of the subordinate. We may also observe that the exercise of power may pass itself off as authoritative until unmasked - at which point it is redefined as

illegitimate. Several recent instances of such de-legitimation of authority in the political sphere remind us that, in the operational distinction of power and authority, matters are not always as they seem. In the management of organisations, the claim to exercise authority has moved away from the entitlements of ownership and, at first sight, some alternatives appear to be abdications of the claim itself.

The most significant of these may lie in the task itself. It was no Marxist ideologue who said 'the work and the work alone controls us'; it was Henry Ford. The task determines a sequence of operations, times and networks of cooperation which in turn determine the behaviour of the worker and, in turn, his or her manager. The exercise of authority seems to have been by-passed by a system that makes personal authority redundant: the authority is in the system. Whence comes the system? The immediate answer is that it follows from the application of reason to the production process. In the words, perhaps, the earliest management consultant, the objective is to devise 'the one best way'. This was the claim of Frederick Taylor's *Scientific Management* (1993/1911) and the claim to authority lies in the title: authority rests ultimately on science. The relationship between management and labour was redefined in terms of functional division: management thinks, plans and devises effectiveness and efficiency; labour does what it is told, management merely mediates unalterable design.

Every subsequent advance or increase in sophistication in the managerial delivery of goods or services has rested on the attempt to exercise control by the application of science to the design of the work process, all that has changed is the science and the nature of the work process. Organisational structure and the relationships between management functions emerges from 'administrative science' (the name of one of the most prestigious management journals in the USA). Attempts to exercise subliminal controls follow from the application of psychology to the motivation of the work force while an understanding group behaviour comes from the application of sociological research. Finally, the 'mission' to capture, change and control culture and values reflects the appropriation of anthropological insight to the corporate organisation (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992). Meanwhile the design and marketing of the product itself has moved beyond advertising mere utilitarian functionality to embrace the projection of scientifically determined images. Authority would seem to become more secure the more it is disguised.

The Exercise of Authority in Tower [1,589]

Management authority in Tower would appear to rest on two secure foundations. In the first place the obstacles to its achievement posited in the Marxist analysis of class struggle and alienation have been ameliorated if not removed. The mine is owned by its workers who elect and to some extent control their managers. The qualifications that beset its operation within a capitalist global order are so general in their influence as to be irremovable except in utopian dreams: Tower is as free from oppression as is possible in the real world. Tower inherits a 'workerist' if not a syndicalist tradition which removes most obstacles to cooperation. Syndicalist thinking (Ridley, 1981) argued that the worker is the sole source of value and that the work place rather than the political arena is the only potential source for the emancipation of the worker. One of the radical criticisms of worker cooperatives is that they 'work' too well producing 'self-exploitation' (Mellor et al. 1988). From syndicalist factories in Republican Spain to the present day, the charge is that the authority of elected managers and a common ownership and purpose conspire to produce overpowering and irresistible opposition to absenteeism, poor work and the 'tyranny of democracy'. This is not what we have found at Tower. The workers' cooperative has inherited, along with what we have called the anarcho-socialist tradition and a legally conditioned management structure, the miners' instinctive oppositional sub-culture. The latter, deeply ingrained in folk memory and even more deeply rooted in the miners capitalist and nationalised experience, continues to be the response of first resort whenever predictable issues arise over who holds authority for work organisation (and, indeed, the distribution of profit). While all informants know "we are all in this together", most continue with the belief that 'workers' and 'managers' have different interests even if they are no longer in direct conflict with each other over control issues. As one put it: "They're management, aren't they?"

If syndicalism - as expressed through the collective ownership and control of the means of production by the unionised workers - is the ideological foundation of authority, the second is technical. Colliery managers are mining engineers who are more expert in the occupation than those whose work they direct. Their authority is licensed by law, demonstrated by professional examination and exercised in a practice which, because of its inherent danger, gives it common cause with those subordinate to it. And Tower workers have no doubt about this. On one occasion - a dramatic rise in the level of deadly

methane gas caused by an earth tremor - the mine manager's judgement on both the danger this posed and the solution he devised proved prescient. As one informant put it: "he saved the pit". In another context, the authority of German managers has been demonstrated to rest on their expertise: they know more about the work of subordinates than supervisors and workers so that there is a 'natural' line of authority that does not rest on status or hierarchical position. For the most part, German managers are - or were, at least - graduate engineers, linked to the work force by mutual respect. The Tower co-operators seem to accord similar authority to what the Germans' call 'tecnik' (Harding, 1988). Given this, one might expect a coincidence of legitimising forces, the one emerging from a history of ideological conviction amounting to a culture, the other on the scientific authorisation of command. As hinted above, it is not so.

Our extensive interview programme has revealed a variety of tensions. Despite the collective imposition of dividend and wage freezes during production crises which threatened to close the colliery, Tower provides considerably better employment conditions than those prevailing under previous managements. Wage rates for coalface workers are currently (2001) in excess of £24000 per year and the sick pay scheme provides for six months on full pay (both being significantly better than what is available for similar work nationally). But employees receive flat rate rather than percentage increases and this has disturbed traditional differentials in pay between coal face workers and craftsmen and between underground and surface workers - both historic problems in the mining industry.[5] Perhaps surprisingly, there are also complaints about 'poor communications'. While, to some extent a ritual complaint, the managers, unfamiliar with and probably unsympathetic to the blandishments of corporate communication polices, have struggled to find an effective means of meeting the new expectations. Formerly, the unions were the primary source of 'trusted' information and regular lodge and open meetings continue to be held.. The AGM and the annual elections for retiring Board members provide events which stimulate wider discussion; and a glossy newsletter is produced but its publication is intermittent and - if only because it is a 'management publication' - seems adequate to the task.

This issue may be symptomatic of a deeper issue faced by all worker-owned enterprises: the perhaps growing distance between the aspiration of the original vision and, as time goes on, the realisation that the routine work experience and work organisation remain just that - routine. Non-alienated work is still work. This may also be reflected in the concerns of some of the cooperative pioneers who report what they regard as more instrumental attitudes among younger miners who are also thought to be less cooperative and less comradely than they ought to be. It is not without irony that similar views are widely heard from managers in more conventional business enterprises. In part, the explanation does lie in the different kinds of work at Tower. 'Managing' is an alien activity within that anarcho-socialist tradition and the necessary functions of finance, marketing and operating the colliery remain remote from the experience of the workers. Time-frames and work content vary markedly and many issues may not be suitable for instant or extensive democratic participation; technology remains a powerful driver of organisational practices. In short, there is tension between direction and execution and the introduction of a real element of democratic control might by its greater visibility have increased rather than reduced it.

Whose Authority?

The socio-economic and organisational aspects of Tower have been discussed elsewhere (Arthur at al. 2001; Smith et al. 2001). We are concerned here to examine the meaning of authority and whether the experience of Tower has changed it. While the relationships between management and workers are by no means disordered, they do seem to exhibit some characteristics of confusion and paradox. Tensions are relieved if not resolved, as in other workplaces, by informal outlets, occasional conflict, continual discussion and a great deal of stoical humour. But such episodes appear inconsistent with expectations that might reasonably flow from the two sources argued to reinforce authority: ideology and science. Cooperative ownership ameliorates the co-operators mutual subordination to the technological imperative. Where is the space left in which to argue?

To the extent that science, at least the applied science of mining, is the arbiter in this matter, it takes us back to the established enlightenment tradition of method, empirical enquiry and truth established by reasoned analysis. It arrives at 'the one best way' unless your methods are mistaken. But, after Heisenberg and Bohr, confidence in the existence of an objective world accessible to reasoned observation has been questioned. Bohr demonstrated that an explanation from the starting point of location would be different from and inconsistent with an explanation in terms of movement; 'we must not begin a sentence in one language, say German, and end it in another, say English'. Long before

postmodernism promoted the equivalence of alternative narratives, small particle physics suggested the possibility of different, parallel universes which require different, possibly mutually inconsistent explanations. At the risk of stretching an analogy, we might adopt the same limited inconsistency in the explanation of the canons we apply to human behaviour recognising that it is not susceptible to theoretical explanation by reference to consistent, canonical definition. Bergson's scepticism on this score was absolute, carried to the point of requiring philosophy to invent new concepts that are "flexible, almost fluid representations" adapted to an understanding of change and 'flux' and to be substituted for the intellect which, when it does attempt to study living things, it treats them as though they were inert". Living things cannot be treated as though they were inert, they cannot even be treated as though they are consistent; "we are the artisans of our personality, and we are creating ourselves each moment of our lives" (Gallagher, 1970). There is a resonance between Bergson (and William James) and recent work in biology where the old primacy of reason has been challenged by a re-evaluation of emotion in directing our behaviour, subsequently disguised by reasoned explanation, by rationalisation (Damasio, 2000). Research on managers' behaviour has challenged an earlier doctrine that managers determine their strategic plans by rigorous analysis and rational thought: reasoning often seems to follow their feeling about what is to be done. Jackal (1988) goes further: managers shed their normal moral values when they go to work, we might say that they 'create' themselves in different compartments of their lives.

If such inconsistencies are good enough for managers, they might suffice to explain the errant behaviour of Tower's miners. The apparent paradox of conflict among shareholders against the mine they own might seem to be an inconsistency in a working democracy but this might be the result of a theoretical rather than a real contradiction. The democratic constitution of the state is not necessarily challenged when opposition to the poll tax leads to riots in Scotland. In politics and in industrial relations, some issues are both perishable and intense, there is little chance of waiting until the next election to overturn a policy. Syndicalism recognised the need for 'direct action' and its advocate, Sorel, acknowledged the unavoidable difficulty of explaining an a-theoretical, a-philosophical movement in philosophical terms.

To the extent that philosophy is an activity essentially concerned with intellect, the problems we have discussed may reside in philosophy, not in Tower. Perhaps they are problems *of* philosophy, not *for* philosophy.

Footnotes

1. The confusions, contradictions or paradoxes that will emerge in this discussion are foreshadowed by the fact that the buyout was made possible by a Conservative Government's legislation to privatise the mining industry, that the buyout was supported by then Secretary of State for Wales, Mr John Redwood and that the decision was announced by the head of the DTI, Mr Heseltine, at the Conservative Party Conference.

2. But, if we begin to examine the meaning of 'failure', we discover what the process was intended to achieve: industrial peace. Consultation emerged as a response to an emergency which, at one time, was believed at government level to threaten revolution. It was nurtured by a movement in 'social science' - the inverted commas are necessary here, at least, in homage to Popper - that saw conflict as the consequence of misunderstanding, inadequate research or ineffective communication. Consultation 'failed' to achieve the objective of peace because of the vigour with which it was pursued. A study of the minutes of committees at each level over a period of eighteen years revealed that most of the items discussed were raised by management, most of them concerned statistics of past performance and hardly any of the discussions generated any conflict of views. The conclusion was that "in terms of one of its main objectives, the promotion of cohesion, the consultative machinery was an irrelevance because it was so much concerned with unity that it could not take the steps to achieve it" (Anthony, 1973).

3. The initial workforce of 230 has expanded to over 300 cooperative members over a period of 6 years. (New employees are assisted to find the £8,000 required to become full members of the co-operative.) There are also some 45 contact workers.

4. Significantly, elected shift captains are not a new but a very old phenomena in mining. Interview data suggests their role is little changed although both the temper of their relations with mine managers

and the character of that relationship has changed. As one put it: "We're all supposed to be on the same side now."

5. Tower is not only a good employer, it is a good neighbour (although some residents of Hirwaun who protested unsuccessfully against the extension of the coaltip might disagree). It supports a local rugby club, an annual motor cycle road race, a South Wales opera company (it is itself the subject of a modern opera composed by Alan Hodinott), a local choir, community groups, enterprises, educational groups. Tower is regularly visited from afar, is the subject of world wide interest and its Chairman is invited to travel on its behalf. Such extramural duties cause some scepticism as to the different meanings of 'work'.

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