

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

**ACCOMMODATION, RESISTANCE AND REBELLION:
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN A BRITISH COLUMBIA COAL MINE**

by

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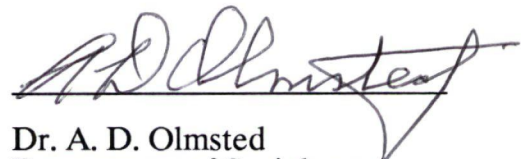
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Accommodation, Resistance and Rebellion: Industrial Relations in a British Columbia Coal Mine", submitted by Michael J. Rouse in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

This study traces and describes the social forces, mechanisms and processes that were critical to social change, during the decade 1981 to 1991, between workers and management at a British Columbia coal mine. The economic recession of the early 1980's, prompted worker/management relations based on "accommodation". However, a series of company, recession coping strategies led to "resistance" and, eventually, "rebellion"--in the form of illegal strikes, work-to-rule campaigns and picket-line violence--by workers against management authority and practices. Through social processes of "aggregative" and "group" collective actions, within the context of a relatively static social structure, workers changed the character of their union, effected social organizational change, and attempted to influence management's industrial relations practices. The critical underpinnings of management's and workers' actions are their respective, and in many ways, antithetical cultures: the organizational culture of management and workers' workplace culture. It was workers' perceptions that management had violated workers' cultural tenets--especially assumptions of "moral reciprocity" and notions of a "social contract"--that sparked militancy. Workers creatively utilized their resources to exercise power individually, and sought their mutual solidarity as a basis for their collective power and security.

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*A man ought to be a friend to his friend
and repay gift with gift.*

*People should meet smiles with smiles
and lies with treachery.*

- Havamal, translation by D. E. Martin Clarke,
The Havamal, with Selections from other Poems in the Edda.

INTRODUCTION

Mainstream industrial relations (IR) research has not considered the fundamental impact of social processes in the "work-a-day" practice of industrial relations. With its focus on institutions and formal contract, IR research has generally ignored both the social processes which can lead to institutional and social organizational change, and the "social contract" between workers and management.

Utilizing an ethnographic, "case-study" approach, I apply anthropological methods and perspectives to "work-a-day" industrial relations practices in a single IR setting. The setting is a British Columbia coal mine that employs a unionized workforce.

Analysis at this level has implications for methodology and theory related to the inter-disciplinary study of industrial relations. It extends IR research to include the impact of organizational and workforce cultures in the actual, daily functioning of labour/management relations.

At another analytical level, the cultures of management and the workforce could be considered "sub-cultures" of the industrial society. However, no claim is made to generality. My study is local in that it is confined to a specific workplace locale and set of relations. Nevertheless, the relations researched are impacted by global, national, provincial, and local structures and events, though these have not been covered in depth. The structure of the industrial relations system, that provides part of the context for the events described, has remained relatively constant over the past decade. Similarly, the structure of the company and the union is unchanged though the individuals that occupy the organizational positions may change.

What has changed--over a ten year period--is the social organization. Social relations between workers and management changed from "accommodation", in the

early years of the 1980's recession, to "resistance", through the middle years of the decade. From 1987 until the present (spring 1991), labour/management relations have been characterized by increasing, militant resistance to management authority, that culminated in "rebellion"--in the form of picket-line violence, illegal strikes and work-to-rule campaigns. This study traces and describes the social forces, mechanisms and processes that were critical to these social changes.

Part One outlines the methodology and describes my participatory relationship to events. The use of anthropological methods is a radical departure from mainstream IR research methods which, I argue, are limiting and problematic when attempting to deal with "on-the-ground" IR practices. These limitations and problems are not, however, purely methodological but emanate primarily from theoretical assumptions upon which IR research methods are based. The theoretical assumptions and models used to analyze events are, therefore, also set out in Part One.

Part Two defines the locale, describes the operation of the Fording Coal Ltd., mine and identifies the groups acting and interacting at the workplace level.

In Part Three I describe the organizational culture of management and workers' workplace culture. The industrial relations structure is described in historical and contemporary terms and analyzed in the context of management's and workers' contrasting, culturally bound perceptions. Workers' culture and the history of Canadian industrial relations has produced an implicit social contract between workers and management; the importance of which has been ignored in Canadian IR research. The economic recession which initially hit coal producers in the early 1980's is, also, described in Part Three. In many ways the recession acted as a catalyst which prompted both the worker response of "accommodation" and a

number of company coping strategies, some of which led to eventual "resistance" and "rebellion" by workers against management practices.

Part Four focuses on the social forces and mechanisms critical to the change in worker/management relations. Discourse, force and ritual were important in initiating and maintaining accommodative relations. However, workers' perceptions that both the social contract and their strongly held cultural assumptions of "moral reciprocity" were being violated, developed into resistance through a process of "aggregative collective actions". "Rebellion", after 1987, was created and expressed by workers' "group collective actions" that resulted in a change in union executive membership, as well as a series of illegal strikes and work-to-rule campaigns against the company.

The conclusion ties together structure, actions and cultures with events, suggesting the limits and possibilities of workers' collective actions in the context of management's current practice of industrial relations. I attempt to highlight the areas of commonality between workers and management, and suggest some mutually beneficial changes in relations directed away from the present course of increased industrial conflict. In the final analysis, the problems of industrial conflict are not just problems of productivity and income, from management's point of view, but questions, from the workers' perspective, of security, of rights and obligations, of reciprocity and of workplace justice.

PART ONE

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

"[Social theory] issues are to do with the nature of human action and the acting self; with how interaction should be conceptualized and its relation to institutions; and with grasping the practical connotations of social analysis."

- Anthony Giddens, 1984: xvi-xvii.

CHAPTER ONE

METHODOLOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodologies adopted for this study can be broadly classified as archival, quantitative and qualitative approaches. The archival materials utilized included newspapers, reports, union newsletters and bulletins, company newsletters, in-house correspondence and memos, and published case studies (e.g. Fantasia 1988, Schein 1985, Peach 1984, Watson 1983, Green 1980, Clarke *et al.* 1979, Willis 1979, Dennis *et al.* 1969, Gouldner 1954).

Some of the limits and qualifications related to quantitative methods are set out, as are the reasons why I have opted for a predominantly qualitative approach to research. Qualitative approaches include unstructured interviews, casual conversation and participant observation.

1.2 QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Quantitative methods have been restricted to particular data. For example, I have found no problem with statistical measures related to coal prices, rate of attrition or level of employment as indicators of the seriousness of the recession which hit coal producers generally and FCL particularly. I hold to this even though, in the case of "attrition", the union and many workers believe that it measures not the number of employees who would normally have quit their jobs, but actually measures the effectiveness of a campaign of "forced attrition" (USWA officer, 1989 interview). Regardless of why employees left FCL, the data clearly indicate the rate and level of job losses as a result of the recession.

Other quantitative data, *e.g.* number of grievances and arbitrations, do

present a problem if used as indicators without reference to the context of their generation. Informant interviews provide clear evidence that a considerable number of grievances were not filed during the mid 1980's because individuals were afraid of repercussions at work. As C.K., an experienced haulage vehicle operator, remarked, "I don't want to be labelled as a 'trouble-maker'. I'll just take the [discipline] steps and keep quiet." Similarly, workers and union officials report that many individuals did not pursue grievances to the arbitration stage because either; 1) the grievance process took so long that the discipline was "worked off" before the option to arbitrate arose, and/or, 2) grievors believed that the company was purposely "pushing" grievances to arbitration in order to put financial pressure on limited union resources, and/or, 3) individuals were intimidated by the quasi-judicial process of labour arbitration and unless the discipline was serious enough, they preferred to avoid arbitration. Additionally, the grievance/arbitration process can be--and in my opinion was--used by both the union and the company for strategic purposes particularly as contract negotiations approached. For the above reasons these kinds of statistical data, commonly cited in the literature as indicators of the state of industrial relations, require considerable analysis. These "facts" do not speak for themselves.

1.3 QUALITATIVE METHODS

The dynamics of the phenomena under study, (*i.e.*, the identification and analysis of the social forces and processes responsible for the movement from one social condition to another through action and group processes) suggested that the use of survey instruments would be of doubtful utility. Surveys record attitudes as if they were static, ignoring the collective dynamic and assuming that group attitudes and feelings can be determined from the sum of individuals' responses. Aggregate

attitudes may bear no resemblance to respondents' actions and attitudes in the context of group interaction and collective action. For example, Rick Fantasia (1988) cites the Lubell Poll of 1959 in which steelworkers surveyed reported overwhelming opposition to and no support for the strike being threatened by union leaders. Encouraged by the poll, management felt no need to compromise their bargaining positions, negotiations broke down and the union--though intimidated by survey results--was forced to call a strike. However;

The workers, contrary to the poll, gave the strike call spontaneous and enthusiastic support. The strike lasted 116 days...the longest in the history of the industry. The militancy of the strike confounded the Steelmasters, and the officials of the union were slow to understand the feelings of their union members (Spencer 1977:12-13 cited in Fantasia 1988).

Another "practical critique" of applying survey techniques can be seen in the incongruity between results reported in The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969) and actions of Vauxhall automobile plant workers after the research was completed. The survey indicated that workers were well integrated into the industrial system, harbored no ill feelings, were satisfied with their wages and behaved according to middle-class patterns. Researchers concluded that "class consciousness", generally, did not exist among Vauxhall workers. Paradoxically, a few months later, *The Times* reported;

Wild rioting has broken out at the Vauxhall car factory in Luton. Thousands of workers streamed out of the shops and gathered on the factory yard. They besieged the management to come out; singing "The Red Flag"; shouting "string them up." Groups attempted to storm the offices and battled police which had been called to protect them (cited in Fantasia 1988:7).

The above examples are not intended to imply that survey research is never appropriate in industrial relations contexts nor that such quantitative data do not represent the "true" feelings and attitudes of workers. I do believe, however, that workers' attitudes are complex. I have found that across time (and often at any given time) attitudes are characterized by exceptions, contradictions, qualifications

and confusions that survey instruments are incapable of revealing. While surveys can ideally record attitudinal trends of individuals, they overlook the dynamics of the collective--the consciousness, attitudes and ideas produced by the "chemistry" of group action/interaction in both the praxis of workers' daily lives and those occasional moments when "normal" industrial relations practices are ruptured.

My approach to the study of industrial relations processes represents, therefore, a radical shift away from that which can be measured by standard survey techniques. Through participant observation, I consider two qualitatively distinct types of "ethnographic moment" (Giddens 1984): times of crisis and daily working life.

Workers' daily lives provide important insight into the developmental processes which precede or "set up" the contexts in which resistance and rebellion occur. Victor Turner (1982:11) writes, "social life...even its apparently quietest moments, is characteristically 'pregnant' with social dramas."

Moments of crisis, though, are also important for understanding industrial relations processes.

The best of all possible moments to achieve insight into the life of a human being is during a fundamental crisis when he is faced with grave decisions which can mean ruin and despair or success and happiness for him. In such crises men reveal what they are and often betray their innermost secrets in a way they never do and never can when life moves placidly and easily. If this is true for the study of men as individuals it applies even more forcefully to the study of men in groups. It is when all hell breaks loose that the powerful forces which organize and control human society are revealed (Warner and Low 1947:1 cited in Fantasia 1988).

I agree with Fantasia (1988) that Warner and Low overstate the importance of moments of crisis for revealing the "true" attitudes of workers. Rather, I believe that it is important to, "...recognize the varying, contextual nature of working-class responses" (Fantasia 1988:16). Industrial relations processes can only be understood by examining "as a piece" management's and workers' daily practices and culture,

institutional expressions, and moments of conflict.

Another reason why I have chosen to rely predominantly on participant observation and unstructured interviews is that while structures and workers' daily routines are fairly stable and long lasting, specific events can be volatile, confrontational episodes of short duration. Examples of such events are; strikes, picket-line violence, illegal strikes or "*wobbles*", work-to-rule actions and spontaneous protests. These specific events make it virtually impossible to collect the amount of detail one would ideally prefer but as Geertz (1973) has pointed out ethnography is not primarily a matter of the amount of data collected, but an interpretive attempt to understand the "structures of significance" in socio-cultural processes.

Identifying socio-cultural processes, specifically the respective cultures of management and workers, represents one of the main methodological foci of this study. I attempted to analyze the cultures using Edgar Schein's (1985) methodology of exploring "dimensions of culture".

1.4 EXPLORING CULTURE

Schein developed his methodology by using and synthesizing anthropological methods in his practical experience and research as a successful organizational-culture management consultant. Schein's (1985) methodology recommends exploring "cultural dimensions" useful in "getting at" cultural values and basic cultural assumptions. I took the liberty of re-classifying them (for ease of use).

1.4.1 Identities and Environments

Explorations in this area represented an attempt to determine the groups' or organizations' basic identity and roles and relevant environments. Research in this

dimension required a reconstruction and analysis of group/organization history that identified major crises and transitions, and reactions to those events. Patterns and themes across the events were analyzed and compared with current strategies. Basic assumptions were then derived from this comparison and checked against current patterns of behaviour.

1.4.2 Nature of Reality: Bases for Decision Making

Research in this dimension sought group/organizations' basic assumptions regarding the nature of "reality". It was an attempt to discover which decisions belonged in the domain of physical, social and subjective realities and assess the criteria used to determine when something is "true" or "real" requiring discussion or action. Action taken was classified according to the applicable domain of reality, coupled with an exploration of the reasons why individuals believed that a decision to take action in those cases could be reached. Basic assumptions and values were developed from analysis of patterns and themes that became evident. These assumptions were then compared with current behavioural data.

1.4.3 The Nature of Time

The time horizon or perceptions of the nature and structure of time in groups/organizations was the focus in this area. An attempt was made to find out whether group/organization time orientation was based in the past, present or future and whether time was conceived in linear, cyclical or other terms. Decisions and actions (in terms of time orientation) were identified and analyzed for patterns that would indicate basic assumptions about the nature of time. Assumptions and values were then compared with current behaviour.

1.4.4 The Nature of Human Nature

Research into the nature of human nature was focused on group perceptions about themselves and others. Reference was sought to "labels" such as hardworking, generous, committed, lazy, self-seeking, etc. An analysis was made of promotion, status and performance appraisal criteria, and reward and control systems used by groups/organizations. Implicit basic assumptions regarding human nature were interpreted from the analysis.

1.4.5 The Nature of Human Activity

Explorations in this area were an attempt to ascertain basic assumptions regarding group/organization orientation *vis-a-vis* their environments. Possibilities included proactive, reactive or neutral orientations. Historical problems originating from outside of the organization/group were identified and responses (if any) analyzed in order to interpret assumptions about orientation. In addition, stories about past and present leaders, and individuals presently perceived to be either successful or unsuccessful group members were investigated in an attempt to identify group assumptions regarding human activity.

1.4.6 The Nature of Human Relationships

Research in this domain was an attempt to explore values and basic assumptions regarding the creation and management of power, control, influence, friendship, co-operation, and affection. I sought the bases of human relationships, outside of institutions, within a range that included tradition, hierarchy, collaterality, group co-operation/consensus, individuality, and competition. Within institutions, I attempted to determine whether relationships were based on autocracy, paternalism, consultation, participation, delegation, collegiality or some

combination of the above. Noteworthy recent decisions were identified and classified according to whether the decisions were made by individuals, groups, or both, and precisely how power and influence were exercised in the decision making process. Stories about past leaders perceived as "good" or "bad" were collected to determine how others believed these leaders related to other people in the group/organization. Contemporary incidents involving confrontation, disagreement or insubordination were analyzed to determine how the group/organization dealt with authority norm violations. Patterns and themes that emerged from these decisions, stories and incidents were translated into basic assumptions about the nature of human relations in the workplace.

The apparent lineality of the cultural dimensions outlined above obscures the fact that, in most cases, interviews, conversations and participation in events provided data relevant to several dimensions simultaneously. Perhaps not surprisingly, basic assumptions in one dimension impacted and, in turn, were impacted upon and were linked to cultural assumptions from another. The complexity and interrelatedness of basic cultural assumptions, about which most informants give little conscious thought, precluded the use of standard survey methodologies.

1.4.7 The "Social Life of Things"

Basic assumptions and values (Schein 1985) represent two of three levels of culture (ch. 2.4). The other is artifacts and creations. I had already collected a considerable amount of data about physical objects produced by workers when Arjun Appadurai's (1986) methodology of exploring the "social life of things" was brought to my attention. Briefly, the methodology involves tracing the life histories of objects.

The objects that particularly interested me were those constructed using "folk technology". I apply the term "folk technology" to common workplace materials, designed for specific uses, that are utilized to construct artifacts for purposes different from those originally intended. By tracing back through time the creation, use and disuse of folk technology objects I discovered the contexts of their construction, and their political and symbolic uses as workers became increasingly more resistant to management authority (ch. 8). I learned about these cultural objects mostly through casual conversation and participation as a worker at the mine (ch. 1.5). Data gathered prior to being introduced to Appadurai's approach were re-examined in the light of his methodology which assumes that cultural objects are "born" in a specific context, have useful "lives" and then "die" when no longer useful or needed.

We have to look at the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. (Appadurai 1986:5)

The "social lives of things" illuminates their human and social contexts.

1.5 PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS

Finally, I want to highlight my relationship to the events under study. One crucial element to my attempt to study industrial relations processes "on the ground" relates to my having been a participant in the events before commencing research. As an employee at the mine for several years prior to beginning my studies, I was perceived as an insider; "one of the boys". This has permitted me to have virtually unrestricted access to events--from the workers' and union's perspectives--as they unfolded.

The context or environment of the research was often one of conflict which means that I have constantly been confronted with questions of partisanship. There

have been, at different times, situations which, among other things, test on which side of the "fence" an individual "sits". For example, if driving conditions at the mine are dusty the operators will slow down until the roads are watered. Anyone who does not cooperate with the group in this form of protest is labelled a "company man". Similarly, during an illegal strike, a person who crosses the picket line to work is characterized as a "*scab*". The result of not appearing to participate or being labelled *scab* can be ostracism, at the least. I have constantly had to walk a fine line--often in a crisis-charged atmosphere--between being "one of the boys" and being seen by management as a "union man". Either characterization would have had negative consequences for research utilizing qualitative methods.

While research among workers or in the union hall was relatively easy, as an employee/researcher, it was more difficult to be accepted among management personnel. There were, however, several factors working in my favour when working with management informants or when I approached management personnel for interviews. Firstly, I believe that most sincerely wanted to assist me in my research efforts. Secondly, I had occasion to suspect that some individuals believed that I had attained some measure of status within the workforce, that perhaps I had some credibility or objectivity with which I could influence workers' attitudes. I believe that in some instances management interviews were granted partly because I was seen as a resource for taking the "company message" to workers. It often took many hours of interviews, conversations outside of work, and riding through the "*pits*" in supervisors' vehicles during working hours to get past the "impression management".

Similarly, while most union officials were sincere in their desire to assist my research efforts, I believe that occasionally, certain union executives attempted to use me as a communications conduit. Though I do not pretend to have maintained

"objectivity" in my dealings with either the company or union, I was always conscious of and careful with what modicum of status and trust I had achieved *vis-a-vis* workers and management. I have attempted, as best I can, to present my findings with some degree of "objectivity" though, certainly, I had much more access to the workers' world than management's.

1.6 SUMMARY

Qualitative methods represent, therefore, the approaches used for collecting most of the data for this study. In dealing with the predominantly oral culture of the workforce, folk technology artifacts (often only known to workers), volatile events of short duration, a conflictual context, and management informants willing to talk but hesitant to fill out formal surveys, qualitative methods--predominantly participant observation--were specifically chosen for the quality of data they would provide.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The dominant framework for analyses of industrial relations is the "Industrial Relations System" (IRS) model (Anderson *et al.* 1989, Craig 1988) which considers "inputs" (*e.g.* legal, economic, political environments), "actors" (*e.g.* employers, employees, unions, government, employers' organizations), "conversion processes" (*e.g.* collective bargaining, grievance arbitration) and "outputs" (*e.g.* strikes, lockouts, productivity, profitability). Industrial relations research utilizing the IRS model is a macro approach designed to identify and correlate system variables of significance to IR practitioners--business and labour leaders, labour lawyers--who hope to use the analyses to better understand the system and to reduce negative consequences of labour/management conflicts, *i.e.* the "outputs" of the IR system. The IRS approach, therefore, is institutional and linear in orientation, although a dynamic of circularity is acknowledged in that outputs at one level become inputs which influence outputs at another.

Anderson *et al.* (1989: 14) rightly point out that industrial relations, as a system, should be perceived within the context of multiple levels.

The onus is placed on the researcher to identify the appropriate level of analysis...[and] show how the work helps people to understand the overall industrial relations system.

The level of analysis selected for this case study is a radical departure from mainstream industrial relations research. It is radical in that the research focus is at the level of "on-the-ground" industrial relations practices: the everyday experiences of workers and management of a particular company at a specific site.

Furthermore, the focus is primarily on social processes, rather than institutional

practices, and demonstrates the importance of culture, social forces and mechanisms in understanding local manifestations of the industrial relations system.

The theoretical approaches, presented in this chapter, begin with a consideration of collective phenomena. Social processes, whether individual or group action/interaction, occur as a direct result of human agency. But action does not take place in a vacuum. As Percy Cohen (1968: 93) convincingly argued,

...in all sociological enquiry it is assumed that some features of social structure and culture are strategically important and enduring and that they provide the limits within which particular social situations can occur.

The concepts of social structure and culture are discussed followed by a theoretical description of two important tenets of workforce culture: moral reciprocity and the social contract. Finally, the predominant mechanisms (other than, but related to collective phenomena) of social stability and change, described in this case study, are detailed: namely discourse, force, ritual and the role of social entrepreneurs.

The link between these theoretical approaches and the series of events that transpired between workers and management of FCL, between 1981 and 1991, can be summarized briefly. During the above time span, social structure remained relatively unchanged. When the recession of the early 1980's impacted coal markets, both workers and management responded with culturally based coping strategies which produced a social organization founded on "accommodation" between workers and management. Discourse, force and ritual were instrumental in producing and maintaining "accommodation". However, as the recession continued, workers perceived that their basic cultural assumption of moral reciprocity and their notion of a social contract with management were being violated. Through discourse and other symbolic communication (including the use of folk technology), and the actions of social entrepreneurs, "accommodation" turned to "resistance". The experience of workers as participants in group collective actions, again changed

labour/management relations to "rebellion" by workers against management authority and practices. The events are a chronology of human agency, founded in cultural assumptions and values, in the context of a relatively stable social structure. Some data examples are included in the theoretical discussions (below) in an attempt to maintain the link between theory and events, beginning with collective phenomena.

2.2 COLLECTIVE PHENOMENA

One of the principle reasons for my dominant reliance on qualitative methods, is the recognition of the particular dynamics of group interaction and collective action; dynamics which cannot be captured by survey instruments. The "chemistry" of collective action "produces" consciousness, attitudes and ideas that are quite different in kind from those evident in "normal" work-a-day life. However, this is not a new idea. In the history of thought in social science and philosophy, it has been recognized that there is a substantial difference between two general classes of social phenomena (Alberoni 1984).

Max Weber identified "charismatic power", based upon faith in revelation, and "bureaucratic power", related to stability and everyday life (Weber 1968). Emile Durkheim specified the dualism of "collective effervescence", periods of creativity and renewal in which society tears an individual away from himself and places him in a superior sphere of life, in contrast to organized, stable periods founded on "mechanical or organic solidarity" (Durkheim 1965). In Marxism (Marx and Engels 1976) the differentiation is made between the stage when an individual becomes aware of the contradiction between the form of social relations and the development of the forces of production, and the stage when the individual is not yet conscious of this contradiction and lives a one-sided existence. Nietzsche (1956)

contrasts the "*Dionysian*", characterized by enthusiasm and excess; with "*Apollonian*", characterized by stable, formal harmony. Heidegger (Alberoni 1984) makes the distinction between the "everyday", and "*Anwesen*", and in Sartre (1960), there is the dichotomy between "serial sociality" and "revolutionary fusion".

These dichotomous phenomena represent what Alberoni calls the "two states of the social" (1984:3). While, clearly, their interpretation by philosophers and social scientists emerge from divergent historical periods and levels of analysis, I believe that an understanding of these two states provides insight into the dynamics of collective action in a specific industrial relations context. Following Alberoni (1984), I utilize his classification of the "two states of the social" which distinguishes between "institution" (represented in this study by the IR structure and the formal structure of relations between management and workers) and "social movement" or "collective behaviour" (manifest in the dynamics of workers' interactions and collective actions).

Within the complex of collective behaviour, Alberoni makes an important distinction between "aggregative" collective phenomena and "group" collective phenomena. Aggregative collective phenomena are characterized by a multitude of individual decisions that bring about a general change. Financial investment and tourism are typical examples of aggregative collective phenomena.

In financial investment, each individual speculator behaves in such a way as to increase his personal fortune, to enrich himself, and in so doing affects a series of economic changes. Similarly, in tourism it is not the deliberate removal of large numbers of people from one area to another but the sum of a large number of decisions on the part of individuals, who choose to visit another country, that results in economic and social impacts. I shall present data in chapter seven to demonstrate that the general condition of "accommodation" by workers to

management's recession coping strategies was, partly, the result of aggregative collective action. Similarly, I shall argue, in chapter eight, that the social organizational change by workers to "resistance" occurred, for the most part, through a similar process of aggregative collective action. In short, it was the sum of a multitude of individual decisions that brought about change.

Group collective phenomena are, in many important respects, different from aggregative. In group collective action, the process dynamics produce a qualitatively different change in the interaction and solidarity of those participating. The participants, in this class of collective process, question the social and cultural context that existed prior to the collective process itself, and establish a new kind of solidarity with fellow participants. At the same time, participants become conscious of belonging to a group that has something outside itself with which it may be either in harmony or conflict. The sociological significance of group collective phenomena compared with aggregative collective phenomena is that, although the latter do effect changes and produce consequences, the former produce a new social solidarity. Precisely because they involve the formation of new social groupings with new visions of solidarity, and new perceptions of the possible, group collective processes simultaneously create and express a dynamic collectivity characterized by its own system of solidarity (Alberoni 1984).

The analytical use of the concept "group collective phenomena" in on-the-ground IR research is justified in that the phenomenon is, "...a broadly heterogeneous category which includes extremely small and historically irrelevant social configurations as well as large, historically important social processes" (Alberoni 1984:18). The underpinnings of this assessment lie in Alberoni's thesis that "something" is at work when the nuclei of movements are forming, when social action and interaction create and express change; whether the interaction is in large

or small groups. This "something" Alberoni (1984) calls the "nascent state". Eric Hobsbaum also perceived the existence of this "something" he called the "substratum of idealism", that exists in individuals (e.g. when falling in romantic love) or in societies at times of, "...great moments of liberation and revolution" (1973: 274). Hobsbaum's perception corresponds, in many respects, to characteristics of the nascent state.

Alberoni writes that the nascent state can be defined and described only in relation to another social state; the institutional and everyday-life state. The nascent state is defined as;

"...an exploration of the limits of the possible within a given type of social system, in order to maximize that portion of experience and solidarity which is realizable for oneself and for others at a specific historical moment (Alberoni 1984:20-21).

It is well known that everyday life is predominantly carried on within an institutional framework. The nascent state represents a phase of discontinuity from the institutional/everyday point of view. The nascent state, however, cannot last indefinitely. It has a finite duration. It is a transitional state that appears when there is a failure of those forces which constitute "normal" social organization; when people perceive a failure of "normal" institutional life. At some point a return is made to everyday life and institutional forms but, in the meantime Alberoni argues, a transformation has taken place.

The nascent state creates and expresses a proposal for reconstruction made by one part of the social system. By socially constructing an alternative solidarity, the nascent state unites active participants who were previously independent and sets itself up in opposition to the existing order. The participants who form the nuclei in the nascent state undergo a fundamental experience *sui generis* which leads them to formulate an alternative interpretation of reality. The reinterpretation of

reality produces a recognition of the contingent and forms the basis of an effort to reconstruct internal and external relations (Alberoni 1984).

Paradoxically, participants in the nascent state attempt to introduce a way of life or social relations different from the norm. In doing so, precisely because they undertake to explore the limits of the possible, they are required to assume a form, a structure, becoming in the end an institution and a part of everyday life. The nascent state, therefore, is a transitional social state; a social "mutational factor" of change (Alberoni 1984:20). While the nascent state is not the only agent of change--change can and does occur through organizational decisions or aggregative collective processes, for example--it represents a disruption of normal everyday life and a restructuring of relations (social organization) as a result of the fundamental experience of solidarity.

In chapter eight, I will describe the occurrence and recurrence of the nascent state among workers. It was manifest in illegal strike activity--legal strikes have been institutionalized (ch. 5)--picket-line violence and work-to-rule campaigns which resulted in a restructuring of relations with, both, the company in the form of rebellion, and the union, in the form of new leadership; a leadership which captures, in institutional form, the reconstructed values and experiences of participants in the nascent state.

The nascent state experience of workers, additionally, manifests itself in the creation of a "sodality". Sodality is a term first coined by Elman Service (1962) to describe "secondary groups or associations" in which membership may be voluntary or involuntary. Sodalities represent "special-purpose groupings" of people that are often "secretive and seclusive in their activities" (Hunter and Whitten 1976:362). The sodality that developed, within days of the union and company signing a collective agreement in the summer of 1989, was an informal network of workers in

opposition to both the company and the union. The efforts of the sodality were responsible for the change in union executive members. Later, the sodality (or perhaps another one comprised of many of the same people) again became active--without union sanction--in secretly organizing *wobbles* (illegal strikes) and effective work-to-rule campaigns.

One of the essential points in understanding the formation of sodalities, the experience of the nascent state and other group collective phenomena is that these collective actions occur in response to and in the context of existing structures of relations; *i.e.*, social structure and social organization.

2.3 STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

It is not uncommon in social science literature to find the terms "social structure" and "social organization" treated as synonyms. Raymond Firth (1964), finds it useful to differentiate between the two--recognizing both the relationship and the analytical distinction between them. Others have used different paired concepts to distinguish between the normative, macro level of ideal behaviour and the dynamic and variable, micro level of what people actually do. For example, Bailey (1969) uses "normative" versus "pragmatic" rules, and Buchler and Nutini (1969) suggest "ground" and "strategy" rules. However, none are an improvement on Firth's paired concepts of "social structure" and "social organization".

Briefly, and crudely, they [social structure and social organization] may be said to stand respectively for consideration of *form*, and of *process* in social life. (Firth 1964:35, italics his)

However, "crude" the above nominal definition, it does provide the linkage and differentiation between the concepts; a linkage and distinction drawn out below, beginning with "social structure".

Social structure in the sense of the "*form* of social life" has two

interdependent and interrelated aspects. Firth (1964:46-47), in his discussion of social structure makes reference to "manifest" and "latent" structure. Manifest structure refers to "overtly recognizable patterns" (*ibid.*:46) and latent structure is cryptically described as "those patterns which may be equally fundamental to the character of the society, but are not perceptible to observation" (*ibid.*:47). Raymond Gold (1985) recognized this dichotomy in social structure which he convincingly and clearly describes as "inner" and "outer" structure.

Outer structure is manifest in easily recognizable organizations and associated behaviour. Institutions, such as government, labour relations boards, unions, companies, *etc.*, are examples of formal, bureaucratized organizations which form part of the outer social structure. Behaviorally, outer structure is evidenced by the way people present themselves, their community, their organizations, and their way of life to outsiders (Gold 1985). In addition, outer structure behaviour is evident in the "fronts" people present when dealing with others as representatives of outer structure institutions. For example, union executives, shop stewards, and safety representatives, in their dealings with management, present themselves in idealized forms appropriate to their respective roles--that is, in formal, guarded, categoric, rational, instrumental, normative, impersonal, non-sentimental, untrusting and objective terms.

Inner structure is, for the most part, the antithesis of outer structure. Inner structure becomes evident only after being accepted by the community or, in terms of this study, only when the researcher is permitted access to the inner structure through friendship and/or association. Inner structure is characterized by sentimental and "traditional" behaviour, bonds of friendship, reciprocity, informality, and encouragement of behaviour which gives rise to and affirms human sentiments such as loving, caring, belonging, being morally accountable, and so on (Gold 1985).

Both inner and outer structures represent the "form" or structure of relations. In this study, outer structure refers to the formal roles of management, union executives and workers (in their role as workers), and the institutions of company, union, and government related by formal contract; e.g., the collective agreement and B.C. labour law. The inner structure is the informal network of relations based on friendship, status and reciprocity among individuals.

At the mine-site, the informal network, rather than formal structure arrangements, is often more responsible for "getting things done". For example, the hierarchy (outer structure) in active mining areas, or the *pits* as they are called, prescribes that the *shifter* or *pit boss* be responsible for maximizing productivity and efficiency through the best use of manpower and capital equipment. The onus is on the *shifter* to solve problems as they arise and issue appropriate instructions to workers. The inner structure is evident in the *pits* when workers make decisions between themselves, take it upon themselves individually, or offer suggestions to the *shifter* for more efficient operation. Whether or not such decisions are implemented, or workers' mutual and individual arrangements are permitted, are often dependent upon perceptions among workers and supervisors of the relative status and experience of the workers involved. The more efficient and smoothly operated *pits* (according to interviews with workers and *shifters*) are those where the *shifter* permits, what is in outer structure terms, this "violation" of the formal hierarchy.

Social structure, using the above conceptualizations, implies a sense of stability, of harmonious equilibrium. It is clear that the formal industrial relations structure (ch. 5) was designed precisely for the purpose of achieving stability in labour/management relations. Accounting for changing relations requires an internal dynamic: social organization.

Social organization is "process" (Firth 1964:35). That is, social organization is the aggregative pattern produced by individuals either following or not following the "rules" of social structure. Edmund Leach (1964) has a similar formulation for change. He posits that social change results from a choice of which rules to obey, while, Firth posits a choice of whether to obey or not. Data (ch. 8) indicate that while workers are in the nascent state (ch. 2.2), group "chemistry" permits the unfettered exploration of limits and possibilities which include choices of whether to obey or not, and which rules to obey, if they choose to obey any.

In Part Four I demonstrate that over time the social organizational relationship between workers and management has changed from one of "accommodation" to one of "resistance" and "rebellion". In addition, I believe that workers are in the on-going process of creating an emergent culture of solidarity; a process that could, in time, lead to significant structural changes. Workers have demonstrated, already--during times of industrial conflict--that they can effect substantial changes in inner structure relations. Social change arose within the combined context of social structures and social organization through collective actions. Workers' and management's actions, hinged on interpretations of their work-a-day worlds. Their interpretive frameworks are embedded in their respective cultures.

2.4 CULTURE

Since 1871 with Tylor's definition that culture is;

that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor 1924 cited in Rice 1980:3),

conceptions of culture have multiplied and involuted to the point of chaos.

In the face of this sort of theoretical [confusion], even a somewhat

constricted, and not entirely standard concept of culture, which is at least internally coherent and, more important, which has a definable argument to make is...an improvement. (Geertz 1973:5).

Edgar Schein (1985) provides a nominal definition of culture applicable for industrial relations research. He identifies three levels of culture: artifacts and creations, values, and basic assumptions. Artifacts and creations refer to the constructed physical and social environment which includes technologies, art, overt behaviour and symbolic communication including discourse.

Values refers to groups' perceptions of the way things "should" be as opposed to the way things "are". In this sense ideologies and organizational philosophies can be seen as values if conscious or explicitly stated. Behaviour can be compared to stated values to show congruities and contradictions, both of which yield information about the third level of culture; basic assumptions.

Basic assumptions, according to Schein (1985:14), are the "essence--what culture really is". They are the taken-for-granted, nonconfrontable and nondebatable foundations of culture which preconsciously inform notions about the nature of reality, time, space, human nature, activity and relationships, and human kind's relationship to the environment. The relearning or changing of such basic assumptions is intrinsically difficult. The changing of basic assumptions, however, does not necessarily have to be the result of intentional actions. For example, data describing workforce culture (ch. 4.3) seem to indicate that an unintended consequence of workers' continued militancy--recurring collective action over several years--may be the development of a culture predominantly based in worker solidarity.

The analysis of organizational and workforce culture includes some attention to artifacts and creations, and values, but, relies heavily on the "essence" of culture: basic assumptions. Culture is defined as,

a pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein 1985:9).

This formulation of culture provides an historical component which aids in accounting for basic assumptions that exist at any particular ethnographic moment, while providing a dynamic component--invention, discovery, development--that allows for change.

2.5 MORAL RECIPROCITY AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

While researching workforce culture, it became apparent that one of the central, basic assumptions of workers, which informs much of their behaviour related to the change to resistance and rebellion, can be described in terms of what James Scott (1976), in another context, has described as "moral economy". While borrowing the analytical concept, I have changed the term to "moral reciprocity" in order to better describe the workers sense of "fair trade" in relations with the company. It is the violation of the tenets of moral reciprocity--tied to the implicit social contract (ch. 5)--that has been instrumental in social organizational change.

Anthropologists have long recognized that in most communities, and indeed most societies, reciprocity (closely tied to trust, sharing, social relationships) or the possibility of its withdrawal, is an important social sanction (Beattie 1970). In the workplace culture of miners at FCL, reciprocity has two quite distinct expressions. The first expression of reciprocity is of the type familiar to social scientists, that of gifts in the form of material things, services, entertainments, *etc.*, exchanged freely or obligatorily within a community and acting as a sort of "glue" that holds the social fabric together. This expression of reciprocity is exhibited in workers' relations with each other at work and within the community.

The second expression of reciprocity is "moral reciprocity". Moral reciprocity is involved strictly with the miners' relationships with management. It concerns workers' notions about economic justice, workplace democracy, and their intuitive definition of exploitation: workers' views of which claims on their time, labour and well-being are acceptable and which are not. Moral reciprocity underpins the logic behind workers' perceptions of a social contract and helps explain why some circumstances prompt such indignation and rage that workers are occasionally willing to risk everything, seemingly in contradiction with strong basic assumptions of "security first".

"Security first" is, in many respects, analogous to another of Scott's (1976) formulations: "safety first", though I renamed it "security first" in order to avoid confusion with another basic belief of workers. "Safety first" among workers refers to safety before production at work, while "security first" is a basic assumption related to workers' perceptions of job security.

"Security first" finds expression in values at several levels of workers' lives. At the most basic level, workers are concerned with the immediate security of existence. It would be an exaggeration to compare the unionized employee at FCL, to Tawney's (1966:77) characterization of the peasant as a "man standing permanently up to the neck in water, so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him." Indeed, in the case of the coal miner in this study, it would take a "wave" to just get him "wet". Still, in all things the worker and his family come first.

While programs such as unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, welfare, universal health care, *etc.*, provide a social safety net in Canadian society, FCL workers are concerned to maintain a lifestyle free from the financial hardships associated with reduced income. That is not to say that workers never consciously enter into situations which entail loss of wages. Legal and illegal strikes, and other

forms of job action which result in lost wages have become an increasingly more frequent occurrence at the mine. "Security first" is, however, of fundamental importance in situations of potential conflict with the employer (except in episodes of nascent state experiences when "security" pales as a priority). Data indicate that degrees of resistance are partly related to notions of degree of job security, which itself is a complex combination of perceptions regarding global economics, company profitability, union strength and worker solidarity.

It is a small step from cultural norms of reciprocity and basic cultural assumptions of moral reciprocity to an understanding of the logic behind workers' perceptions of a "social contract" between themselves and the company. The concept comes from Rick Fantasia (1988) who used the term to explain the formation of "cultures of solidarity" when workers are confronted with companies using both legal and illegal methods to break unions. Fantasia used the concept only in the context of "union-breaking" or "union-avoidance" IR strategies. However, when the concept is tied to workers' cultural assumption of moral reciprocity, the formulation takes on deeper and broader meanings. Workers at FCL sincerely believe that, collective agreement aside, the company has a moral obligation, an implicit social contract, which stipulates that the company involve workers in all decisions affecting their working lives, that the company live up to the spirit--not just the letter--of the collective agreement, that the company respect the right of the union and its officers to negotiate and act on behalf of workers, that workers and their union be treated with justice and dignity. In short, workers believe that an implicit social contract exists that requires the company to practice an industrial relations strategy of "union acceptance" (ch. 5). Workers recognize that with such rights come obligations; obligations to live up to the spirit of the collective agreement, obligations to use their experience and creativity to maximize

profit and production with safety, obligations to treat the company and its representatives with justice and dignity.

2.6 FORCE, DISCOURSE AND RITUAL

I have characterized the early 1980's as a period of accommodation between management and workers. Of all the concepts, related to my research, that I have discussed with worker, management and union informants, accommodation is the most contentious. Workers, such as D.R., claim that, "We were never accommodating. It's just that they had us over a barrel. Times were tough and there weren't no other jobs around." Foreman, C.F., said that, "We've always had to force workers into everything. Even back then [early 1980's], making changes was like pullin' teeth." Both of the above quotes, however, when combined with the fact that collective action during the early 1980's was virtually non-existent, support my contention that the period was one of accommodation, primarily compelled by social mechanisms of force or coercion, and the associated, supplementary discourse.

Bruce Lincoln (1989) demonstrates how certain expressions of discourse--including verbal discourse and symbolic modes such as ritual--can be and have been used not only in the replication of established social practices but, more broadly, in the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of society generally. In this study discourse refers, quite simply, to verbal forms of discourse, *i.e.* talk. Discourse, in the form of ideological persuasion, was strategically utilized by management during the recession (early 1980's) to win the consent of workers for increased efficiency, thereby turning simple power into "legitimate" authority. Workers, with a deeply rooted cultural assumption of "security first" (ch. 2.4) joined in the "efficiency or unemployment" discourse. Behind and supplementing the discourse was the

threat of force.

No consideration of discourse is complete that does not also take account of force. Together, discourse and force are the chief means whereby...hierarchies, institutional formations and habituated patterns of behavior are both maintained and modified (Lincoln 1989: 3).

I use a broad definition of force or coercion to mean methods, backed by real or perceived penalties, employed to constrain or impel individuals into obedience. During a time of recession--when the predominant economic discourse in the media and "on the street" focused on unemployment, shut-downs and lay-offs--the perceived non-compliance penalty of unemployment or suspension without pay became a very real form of economic sanction. This was especially true when workers at FCL realized that the company required fewer employees because of volume and price reductions of coal (ch. 6).

The perceived threat of job-loss for non-compliance or non-accommodation was enhanced by workers' knowledge that, in a capitalist system, workers are "forced" to work. Although workers are, in Marx's (trans. Tucker 1978; Worsley 1982) terminology, "free wage labourers", they are relatively not "free" to not work. Workers do not own the means of production, virtually none have substantial savings with which to invest in business (becoming capitalists) or to invest for purposes of earning a living through interest or return on investment. Furthermore, even if other jobs, for which miners are qualified by experience, were available, workers generally believe that conditions at other mines would be relatively the same or the other employers would be at a competitive disadvantage under the capitalist system.

Workers intuitively--and in some cases explicitly--know that the capitalist system is imposed on them and backed up by "force" (Schmitt 1987). Workers at FCL realize that they are "free wage labourers" in the sense that they are not

compelled to work by law or threat of overt physical violence. They are, however, decidedly unfree in that they must work since they (in most cases) neither own nor control the means of production. They are "forced" or coerced, under capitalism into working.

During recessionary times of relatively high "deficient-demand unemployment" (Meltz and Reid 1989), the ability or bargaining power of unions to protect their members is seriously weakened (Kennan 1986). This is particularly true in cases of reduced numbers of employees which translates into decreased union income (through decreased union dues because of fewer members) with which to participate in costly arbitrations or to provide support for suspended or striking members. Such a weakened union position is corroborated by IR research into the relationship between strike activity and unemployment. Researchers such as Gunderson, Kervin and Reid (1986), Abbott (1984), and Smith (1972) have found that legal strikes are less likely in periods of recession and/or high unemployment.

While the ability of economic factors to predict legal strike activity is relatively high, the ability of economic determinants to predict "wildcat" or illegal strikes remains relatively low. The fact that illegal strikes did not occur at FCL during the recession, therefore, can not be attributed solely to the state of the economy. I believe that discourse--shared by workers and management alike--combined with the perception of economic coercion, led to the social organizational relations of "accommodation" between workers and the company.

The combination of force and discourse may have been enough, on their own, to activate relations of accommodation. However, at the workplace, force and discourse were also expressed symbolically--and therefore, powerfully--through management rituals.

By management rituals I mean formalized, repeated behaviour that functions

much in the way Leach (1964) meant when he wrote;

...if anarchy is to be avoided, the individuals who make up a society must from time to time be reminded, at least in symbol, of the underlying order that is supposed to guide their...activities. Ritual performances have this function for the participating group as a whole; they momentarily make explicit what is otherwise a fiction (Leach 1964: 16).

There are two different and not necessarily complementary conceptions of ritual function in Leach's formulation. Firstly, some management rituals are primarily designed to remind individuals "of the underlying order that is supposed to guide their activities". The "reminding" is directed at both middle management and workers. Secondly, the predominant purpose of other rituals is to "make explicit what is otherwise a fiction", that is, ritual is an important part of impression management.

Furthermore, following Monica Wilson (1954), I believe that rituals, taken as a complex, express the central concerns of a cultural group, that the essential constitution of a group can be understood through the study of rituals. However, not only can the central concerns of a group be understood through ritual, but, social organization can be abstracted from the impact ritual has on participants, e.g. management and labour, regardless of whether or not the participation is voluntary. During one period of time, any particular ritual may, in fact, "function" as intended only to become "dysfunctional" at another ethnographic moment when social organization has changed or is in the process of transformation. That is, the interpretations of rituals by participants change with changes in social relations (ch. 8).

What workers signaled - with real sociological precision - through symbolic and actual resistance was, not only a change in social organization, but, also a construction or reconstruction of social fusion within the industrial relations system: a system itself called into question when resistance escalated to the point of

rebellion. Social fusion (*i.e.* the creation of a group that asserts some measure of independent identity as a segment within the larger unit), as Lincoln (1989) accurately predicts, often depends on and results from the subordination of one group to another.

In the case at hand, management's use of coercion--coupled with what workers perceived to be assaults on the social contract--eventually "created" social fusion. And because force (whether actual or threatened) cannot indefinitely maintain accommodation or stability without the subordinated group's acceptance of the "legitimacy" of the arrangement (Lincoln 1989), by sharing sentiments of affinity or belonging, cleavages developed between workers and management.

Force, discourse and ritual initially created a climate of accommodation between workers and management until the point was reached--from the workers' point of view--that the tenets of moral reciprocity and the social contract were being violated. The result was resistance and rebellion.

Such a stance of resistance depends on--or better yet, amounts to--the continued mobilization of powerful sentiments of affinity, solidarity, and identity at a lower level of integration than that championed by the would-be dominant group, toward whom corollary sentiments of estrangement and hostility are maintained. Moreover, anything that evokes or perpetuates such sentiments may be used as an effective instrument of resistance (Lincoln 1989: 73).

Among those instruments so employed by workers to communicate resistance is a classification of "cultural objects" (Giddens 1984)--"folk technology"; physical artifacts constructed and used by workers for symbolic communication.

2.7 FOLK TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Symbolic communication involves meanings that are shared within a group and/or between groups. Meaning is a conceptual universe which refers to, "not just abstract 'concepts' but significance of any sort" (Geertz 1973:405). Meaning is objective in an ideational sense - "visible, tangible, graspable" - which is "stored" in symbols (ibid.:444). Symbols are signs with significances and can be any social material, *e.g.* words, sounds and images. Any man-made or natural object has the potential to be a meaningful symbol as do institutions, events, rituals, ceremonies, gestures, acts, conventionalized behaviour, relations, qualities and processes. A symbol can be anything that is disengaged from its mere existence and used to impose meaning upon experience (Rice 1980).

A category of man-made objects that became symbols in the process of resistance at the mine are those that I refer to as "folk technology" (descriptions of the actual construction and use of folk technology artifacts appears in ch. 8). I use the term "folk technology" to refer to the process of utilizing common workplace materials, designed for specific uses, to construct artifacts for purposes different from those originally intended. In doing so, these materials are transformed into local "cultural objects". Anthony Giddens writes;

By cultural objects, I mean artifacts which...are distinct from objects generally in so far as they incorporate 'extended' forms of signification. (Giddens 1987:215-16).

The term "folk technology", for purposes of this study, has a somewhat more restricted definition than Giddens' cultural objects. According to Giddens, cultural objects could include the heavy equipment used in mining; pickup trucks, buildings, miners' clothing, etc. For example, a grader parked on the side of a haulage road has an "extended significance" for drivers. As one haulage driver (K.H.) put it;

They [the company] park the grader to put the operator on a

truck...Production means more to them than the fact that we're bouncin' our guts out on these rough roads.

In this context the grader becomes not just another object but a cultural object through the process of interpretation: it becomes symbolic of perceived relations of production. Folk technology is a type or category of cultural object in that folk technology refers only to those artifacts created (from materials at hand) which, like cultural objects generally, are endowed with extended significance and use.

In structuration theory, Giddens (1984) predicts the "transformative capacity" of social actors. Folk technology is one of the mechanisms through which actors transform their working environment (in non-sanctioned ways) by creatively utilizing available resources. The use of resources implies power. "Allocative resources" refers to, "capabilities--or, more accurately, to forms of transformative capacity--generating command over objects, goods or material phenomena" (Giddens 1984:33). The analysis of folk technology demonstrates that workers have some degree of power over their personal space; their working environment.

Workers also demonstrate, through folk technology, their capacity to transform their interactive environment by using folk technology for symbolic communication. Tracing the "social life of things" (ch. 1.3) demonstrates how conflicts and industrial relations find expression in folk technology. These cultural objects become, therefore, power resources or, in Giddens' terminology, "authoritative resources" in that they "derive from the co-ordination of the activity of human agents" (Giddens 1984:xxxi) including symbolic communication.

Just as museum artifacts "...acquire emotional heat and symbolic force," (Tiger 1987:1&34), so too, do cultural objects. The analysis of folk technology leads to a partial understanding of what it is to be a coal miner at FCL--"[objects] help define who we are" (Tiger 1987:34).

Further, folk technology is revealed as one mechanism in transformative

processes from one social condition to another. By drawing out both the political and the meaningful dimensions of folk technology, I believe, I have been able to connect the artifacts with both culture and power. The theoretical approach is at once political, processual and interpretive. Thus, "...a given object in a given context is, in itself, a political determination" (Ferguson 1988:493). That is, some of the folk technology artifacts are revealed as political instruments that are often subversive and a transformative challenge to the status quo: they are part of a process, a pitched political battle. The focus on process relocates analyses of these objects from categorization to signification, in the temporal context of day-to-day working life.

The individuals responsible for the creation and diffusion--whether purposive or unintentional--of folk technology are "social entrepreneurs" in the sense portrayed by Fredrik Barth (1966). Social entrepreneurs include, also, those individuals who take it upon themselves to articulate workers' feelings and inspire militancy. They are, in this sense, "articulators" of group opinion.

In the eyes of members he [the social entrepreneur] is only another member of the group, acknowledged as having the capacity for expressing and transforming into choices what the group itself wants and considers it right to want (Alberoni 1984: 146).

These individuals are a category of informal "leaders" distinct from the formal union leadership. Social entrepreneurs "work up" the momentum for change and, in some cases, organize sodalities that formal leaders are then obliged to attempt to manage and control. When formal leaders fail to adequately manage or steer the "wave" of group sentiment by acting either too conservatively or too militantly, the leaders--as happened to union executives in my study--may be changed.

Formal leadership, therefore, is relatively unimportant in the processes of social change observed at the mine. Rather, it is the consensus among workers,

generated in the process of collective action/interaction, that "created" social entrepreneurs and demanded appropriate responses from formal, institutionalized leadership.

2.8 CLASS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The processes and mechanisms of change described here may be interpreted as the development of class consciousness. But "class consciousness" is a term that I have intentionally avoided using for several reasons. An obvious starting point of explanation is by beginning with the concept of "class".

Debates about class in the literature appear to be confused discussions with people talking past each other. Misunderstanding results because the concept of class has absorbed so much meaning that it is difficult to use. Ira Katznelson writes that this confusion has obtained because, "...they are talking about different dimensions of class" (Katznelson 1986:14) and about different levels of abstraction. According to Katznelson class has four connected layers of history and theory: those of structure, ways of life, dispositions, and collective action. The first layer, structure is analytically used as an "experience-distant" concept while the other three layers must utilize theories that are "experience-near". The matter is further complicated by differences in conceptualizations of class between "social stratificationists" and "Marxists". The former, groups individuals into classes based on shared social characteristics or shared amounts of scarce resources. Marxists' view of class is linked to a generalized theory of historical change focussed on exploitative social relationships between those who own and control the means of production and those who provide the necessary labour power.

As opposed to some nominal definition of class which, I believe, would still be too bulky, I have focussed on group fusion and collective action within a

particular localized context. Even *prima facie* "class action" such as participation by workers in the province wide "Day of Protest" (against the British Columbia Industrial Relations Reform Act of 1987) was interpreted by most workers not as class action but rather as a demonstration of local collective action and a catalyst for further expressions of solidarity.

Class consciousness therefore, cannot be used without being tied to an analytically heavy concept of class. In addition, class consciousness suggests some notion of degrees of consciousness, with the highest level equating with some notion of the "real" interests of the working class (Katznelson 1986). Rather, I want to be able to consider a wide and fluid range of social practices generated in a particular, conflictual industrial relations context at the level of the workplace. To that end, the concepts of "solidarity" or "group consciousness" are employed avoiding reference to class and class consciousness.

2.9 SUMMARY

The theoretical perspectives that I have selected to analyze events at the mine have been presented relatively separately from each other for purposes of organization and clarity. However, in praxis they are intertwined in complex ways. Group phenomena occur within the context of social structure and social organization as interpreted by actors through the "filter" of culture. Mechanisms of change--such as force, discourse, ritual and symbolic communication utilizing folk technology--are themselves products of group phenomena based on cultural values and assumptions. Theory and descriptive data, ideally, need to be considered in all their complex interconnectedness "as a piece" in describing social change at the Fording Coal Ltd., mine.

PART TWO

THE SETTING: A BRITISH COLUMBIA COAL MINE

"Locales are not just places but settings of interaction."

- Anthony Giddens, 1984: xxv.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SETTING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of my study is at the level of the everyday practices of industrial relations at a specific workplace: the Fording Coal Ltd., mine located in south-eastern British Columbia. In this chapter, I describe the locale, provide a brief overview of the mining operation and introduce the "actors": the company and its management, the unions and workers.

3.2 LOCALE

The East Kootenay Region lies in the south-east corner of British Columbia. The region, some 2.83 million hectares, representing 3.2% of the province's total land area, is bordered by Montana, to the south, the Rocky Mountain Ranges and Alberta to the east, and the Purcell Range to the west. The northern boundary falls midway between the communities of Golden and Invermere, B.C. (EDC 1983). Approximately thirty-five kilometers north of the community of Sparwood, is B.C.'s newest community, Elkford, nestled in the scenic Elk River watershed of the Rocky Mountain Trench.

Elkford (population 3164 in 1986 compared with 181 in 1971) is home to most of the unionized workforce and management (and their respective families) who work at the near-by Fording Coal Ltd., mine. The mine is approximately thirty kilometers north of the town of Elkford, straddling the Fording River watershed immediately west of the B.C./Alberta border. The view from *pit* areas, particularly Eagle Mountain *pit*, is one of awe-inspiring, rugged mountain beauty. Except for two or three months in the summer, most mountain tops, as far as one can see, are

snow-capped. From Eagle Mountain *pit*, looking north, can be seen the glaciers of Elk Lakes Provincial Park.

The area around the mine site and the town of Elkford is abundant in wildlife, such as elk, deer, moose, black and grizzly bears, dall and big-horn sheep, lynx, mountain lions, wolverine, beaver, *etc.* Glacier fed rivers and streams run clean and cold, providing excellent sport fishing for anglers interested in trout or Rocky Mountain white fish.

The town of Elkford offers an excellent, family ski-hill with lift, seemingly endless hiking and cross-country skiing trails (many groomed by local volunteers), a golf course, indoor skating rink and soon will have a newly completed indoor swimming facility. There is a small library, and East Kootenay Community College offers credit and non-credit courses in near-by towns. The District of Elkford provides special interest classes, utilizing local expertise, such as aerobics, crafts, first-aid, *etc.* Most residents, particularly those inclined toward hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, or four-wheel driving, value the small town atmosphere and life-style associated with living in Elkford, the "Wilderness Capital of British Columbia".

3.3 MINING OPERATION

Fording Coal Ltd. (FCL), was formed in 1968 by Canadian Pacific Ltd. (60% ownership), and Cominco (40% ownership) (British Columbia 1983) to begin exploration on jointly owned property in the northern end of the Elk Valley. A mine and processing plant were constructed (initial investment \$76 million) and operations begun in 1972 with a 15 year contract to ship annually three-million tonnes of metallurgical coal to Japanese steel makers. FCL operates a strip mine in which "overburden" or waste rock is removed to expose coal. Coal is hauled by

truck to the on site processing plant where it is cleaned and stockpiled for shipment to Robert's Bank on the west coast of B.C. There it is transported by sea to Pacific Rim steel producers and other customers.

Mining in mountainous areas, such as the Rockies, entails special engineering problems related to geology, altitude, climate and economies of scale required for competitive advantage in a global market. It is big business, utilizing high technology and heavy equipment. For example, the "P. & H. 2800" electric shovels, which are used to load out the waste rock, have 23 cubic meter buckets. The shovels are "plugged" into power cables carrying 4160 volts. Trucks that transport the waste rock to dumping areas (called *spoils*) are 170 tonne haulage vehicles, two stories high and about 10 meters wide, with six 3 meter tall, 56-ply tires (costing approximately \$15,000 each). They are powered by V-16, 3,000 horsepower diesel engines.

Other heavy equipment used at the mine includes graders, scrapers, bulldozers (including the giant "D-11N" Caterpillar), "Bucyrus Erie" 60-R and 45-R drills that bore holes 310 mm and 270 mm (respectively) in diameter, rubber-tired dozers, Caterpillar "992" loaders and 120 tonne haulage vehicles which transport "raw" coal to the processing plant. The processing plant and load-out facilities could be considered heavy industry in their own right. By far the largest, and most productive, single piece of heavy equipment is the "Marion 8400" dragline. The *drag*, as it is called, casts out a 46 cubic meter capacity bucket, suspended by steel cables, that it then drags back toward itself until full of either *waste* or raw coal. *Waste* is usually dumped into the cavernous hole left behind from the *drag's* activities in its former position. Raw coal is baled onto a flat pad so that loaders and trucks can come in to load out and haul the coal to the plant. At present, the dragline accounts for 20% of productivity at the mine. Computers are used extensively

throughout the operation in, for example, accounting, inventory control, and production planning which is facilitated by computer generated projections.

The mine operates 24 hours per day, seven days a week. It is a multi-million dollar operation relying on the state of the art in *high tech.* equipment and mining methods. In 1989 alone (Ferne Free Press 1990), FCL moved more than 50 million bank cubic meters (BCM) of waste rock and raw coal to produce 6 million metric tonnes of clean coal (MTCC). Over the next thirty years (until 2020) FCL will produce 180 million MTCC moving 1.2 billion BCM of waste rock in the process (FCL executive, interview). Fording Coal Ltd., is, quite literally, "moving mountains".

There are other coal mines in the area. From the FCL operation can be seen the Greenhills mine (owned by Westar Ltd.) which shares the same access road as the Fording Coal Ltd., mine. In the near-by town of Sparwood is Westar's Balmer coal mine and between Sparwood and Elkford is the Line Creek mine. Approximately twenty kilometers east of Sparwood, toward the B.C./Alberta border, is the Byron Creek mine owned by Esso Resources Ltd.

3.4 ACTORS

Organizationally, FCL is hierarchically structured. The company is controlled from head office located in Calgary, Alberta. At the mine site the general manager holds the top position. Under him are several management layers in various departments, *e.g.* engineering, processing plant, accounting, personnel, maintenance, mine operations, *etc.* The lowest (as in hierarchical ordering) "management" positions in the mine operations department or "*the hill*", as it is called, are the pit supervisors or "*shifters*". Similarly, the lowest management position in maintenance is *shifter*.

The *shifters*, though considered management, are unionized employees represented by a separate Local (9702) of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA). The total membership of Local 9702, which includes office workers, clerical staff and engineering technicians, is approximately 135 (Elk Valley Miner, 1989). Fording Coal's organizational structure is very much a standard, top down authority hierarchy. The term "management", for purposes of this project, refers to all levels of this hierarchy from and including *shifter* upwards. Although *shifters* are unionized, they are, for the most part, treated by workers and senior management alike, as management personnel. Furthermore, they consider themselves management.

The term "union" refers to the officers, safety "reps" and shop stewards of Local 7884 USWA. This Local union represents a membership of 880 employees (Elk Valley Miner, 1989) including tradesmen, processing plant operators, warehouse personnel and equipment operators. Local 7884 is organized according to the standard form for "business unions" with a president, vice-president, treasurer, chief shop steward, *etc.* The union is also hierarchically organized with links to the regional district, national and international organization of the USWA in addition to links with other labour affiliates through membership in provincial, national and international labour organizations. The offices of Local 7884 are located in the townsite of Elkford.

Workers are divided into four "shifts": labelled F, G, H, and I shifts. Work-shifts are twelve hours long on a schedule of four days of work followed by four days off. Transportation from Elkford to the mine site is provided by FCL (other mines similarly provide bus transportation for employees).

FCL employees--represented by Local 7884--come from a variety of different geographical areas. All of Canada's provinces are represented in the workforce,

although most workers are from British Columbia and Alberta. Other countries represented, in small numbers, include England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Switzerland, Korea, Uruguay, Germany, Japan, Spain, India and the United States. The backgrounds of workers are predominantly logging, farming and mining, including hard-rock mining. There are some exceptions, though. A small percentage come from such diverse backgrounds as teaching, geology, engineering, petroleum industry, pulp and paper, retail management, and manufacturing.

PART THREE

CONTEXTS FOR DISCONTENT:

CULTURE, STRUCTURE, RECESSION AND RESPONSE

The structural preconditions in the specific historical process must...be searched for in each case among those conditions which facilitate...and at the same time bring into being alternative kinds of interaction.

- Francesco Alberoni, 1984:42.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The importance to business managers, administrators and market researchers of understanding culture has been made clear by writers and researchers such as Peters and Waterman (1982), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Schein (1985), Kilmann *et al.* (1985), Terpestra and David (1985), and others. Yet it is indeed rare in industrial relations research to find anything more than a vague reference to corporate or workplace culture. For example, one of the most comprehensive texts on Canadian union-management relations (Anderson *et al.* 1989) used in many Canadian and American MBA courses simply lists "Sociocultural environment" as one environmental input (along with legal, economic and political environments) in the IR system. While chapters are devoted to legislative/political and economic contexts, cultural factors are ignored. As this study demonstrates, culture--in the context of industrial relations--is the mechanism through which groups interpret relations of production, IR structure, the legal and economic environments and their own and others' actions. Culture informs perceptions and, as Peters and Waterman (1982) argue, perception is everything. Edgar Schein writes;

rather than arguing for the value of cultural analysis, one might well wonder how we can get along without it. And, indeed, we do not get along without it (Schein 1985:48).

Culture at its deepest level (as outlined in chapter two) hinges on basic assumptions which are the taken-for-granted, nonconfrontable and nondebatable notions invented, discovered or developed in the process of learning to cope with external adaptation and internal integration.

An understanding of the culture of the workers and the organizational

culture of management is critical to making sense of worker and management responses to economic recession, conflicting perceptions of the industrial relations system, the social contract, and workers' movement from accommodation to resistance and rebellion. As a contribution to that understanding, and in order to provide a foundation for discussions of response, conflict and change, I shall attempt to sketch the contours of the organizational culture of management and workers' workplace culture.

4.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF MANAGEMENT

The operation of FCL requires skills in engineering, geology, technology and business management. Through the successful use of these skills FCL learned how to be competitive in a world market system. Fording Coal, from its inception, developed and continues to reproduce an "engineering" culture. A brief review of the design, construction and operation of the mine will demonstrate the organizational influence and hegemony of engineers and their culture at Fording Coal.

It must first be acknowledged that strip coal mining undoubtedly constitutes a major alteration in the physical environment. Derrick Sewell (1971:27) writes, "problems resulting from alterations in the physical environment are typically referred to engineers, since they are believed to have the necessary training and experience to deal with them." Such was the case at FCL. After the preliminary assessment of world markets and profit potential by Cominco and Canadian Pacific Ltd., engineers were largely in control of the project's phases, notably, feasibility studies, design, construction and, to this day, operations. John Brown (1984) points out that features of the successive phases in such projects have relevance to questions of influence and hegemony; a relevance with parallels in the FCL project.

It is obvious that the phases are essentially linear in that each is grounded in the preceding phase and oriented towards those that follow. That is, the design stage works with the data--the "documentary authority"--produced by feasibility studies. The construction phase utilizes the documentary authority of the design phase and translates it, under the influence and control of the engineers, into the physical reality of processing plant, load-out facilities, roads, offices, mechanical shops, mining areas, *etc.* Similarly, the operational phase is dependent upon the construction phase. Management and worker informants point out that once operations began many problems of construction and/or design were identified by workers. These problems were then referred back to the engineers for rectification. Day-to-day mining operations and changes which effect operations, such as opening new pit areas, new construction, renovations and remodelling, all follow the same linear process as the initial project.

The influence and control of engineers from project initiation to daily operations is enhanced by the apparent success of each completed phase and, as phase succeeds phase, the amount of time and money committed to the project increases. The increasing economic commitment and successes reinforce the basic assumptions under which engineers work and make it very difficult to question those basic assumptions.

Engineering culture is rooted in several basic assumptions which flow from and can be subsumed under the concept of "order". Brown (1984:38) writes that, "engineers often appear to display a quiet certainty that their mission in the world is to introduce the order which...they value as a morally and aesthetically pleasing summit of human development."

Engineers introduce order into a potentially chaotic world through a method described as "authoritarian-rational" (Brown 1984). At FCL, authority is located in

structured roles and documents. Roles within the hierarchical organizational structure of management represent authority relations among people. During the developmental phases of design and construction, the chief engineer was the final authority. In the on-going operations of the mine, final authority rests with the general manager: an engineer. Daily operations in the mining areas or *pits*, with regard to removing overburden, and mining sequence *etc.*, are dictated by the *pit* engineers. Authority relations at FCL are strictly enforced. "I just do what I am told" or "There's nothing I can do, I just pass instructions down the line" are common responses to workers questioning supervisors about their instructions or changes in policy. Perhaps the most extreme example of the strictness with which role authority is maintained can be found in a *shifter's* response to an equipment operator's sincere suggestion for solving a problem in one of the *pits*. The *shifter* replied, "You are paid to drive, not to think." The authority, it should be noted, is located in the role rather than the person. The people occupying positions in the hierarchy change with promotions, transfers to other operations, attrition and sometimes demotions.

The authority of documents is of pervasive though largely unnoticed importance in FCL's engineering culture. This particular facet of the culture initially became apparent to me in one of the monthly, company run safety meetings during which one worker (T.J. an equipment operator) began his question/statement to management saying, "You guys always brush off what we have to say by tellin' us that we have no proof, no facts, that what we have to say is just talk, that you want it in writing; well here it is in writing by a safety expert." According to T.J. it was clear that he had to present "facts" objectively determined by an expert if his concerns were to be considered valid. His comments, at the time and in conversation afterward, revealed that he was frustrated by management's past

failure to seriously consider his feelings--based on work experience--regarding a safety issue. This incident also demonstrates that, for management, "facts" are predominantly in the domain of objectivity and documented expert knowledge.

The authority of documents is also indicated by descriptions of the developmental phases of the mine. That is, each successive phase was legitimated by the documentary authority--the written results--produced by the previous one. Daily operations in the *pit* are subject to the authority of written instructions. Drillers who call their *shifter* to complain that the drilling sequence "doesn't make sense" or "causes extra work for no good reason" are usually told to "just follow the drill instructions and don't deviate". Similarly the digging sequences for shovels and the dragline are determined by "the map" often to the frustration of experienced workers. Shovel operator (D.R.) said, "I should be gettin' paid by the mile today. They moved me all over the *pit* only to end up where I started. No wonder they can't get no production."

The authority of documents is, also, evident in standards and specifications. Noble (1977) describes in detail the development of engineering standards which prescribe standardized methods of proceeding in almost every engineering activity. Much of the training and legitimacy of the profession rests upon these standards and specifications. Engineering culture preconsciously directs management to view with a certain amount of suspicion any activities, solutions, or plans which appear to proceed without the inviolable dictum of a set of clearly spelled-out methods widely approved by all practitioners. They appear to believe that work without such sanctions is by definition "subjective" and therefore an affront to serious professional work which unquestionably must be "objective".

The basic assumption of documentary authority is further reinforced by the knowledge that mining is often controversial (particularly as regards safety--there

was a tragic fatality in the summer, 1990--and environmental considerations), expensive and consequential. FCL management, influenced by engineering culture, sense the need to document the progression of work, productivity and events. To this end, log books, memos, letters, *pit* reports, diaries, equipment availabilities, *spoil* monitor readings (all spoils in use are monitored in an effort to predict spoil failures, i.e., dumping areas "letting go" and sliding down the mountain side), accident investigations, discipline records, *etc.*, are common daily features of all levels of management. The authority of many of these documents becomes evident in management's dealings with their internal and external environments, *e.g.* the union, government agencies and internal relations.

Dealings with the union require documentation in cases of discipline which may go through the grievance process to arbitration. Government agencies need to be supplied with proof of compliance with various legislation. Internally, documents record not only assessments of production but also provide proof that one is doing one's job. For example, D.N., a foreman, explained that he kept extremely careful records of equipment "*down time*" and lost productivity due to power failures, fog or other weather conditions in order to, "cover my ass when the boss wants to know why productivity was down on my shift."

The internal features of engineering reports described by Brown (1984) closely parallel reports and other documents at FCL which include the use of "shall" to mean "must" and contorted sentence structure, to eliminate the speaker through the use of passive voice constructions, designed to give the impression of objectivity. It is, however, the status of these documents as authoritative that I want to stress. Authoritative documents represent to management a statement of the "real facts".

Another basic assumption which underpins the engineering culture is that of action; specifically, active intervention *vis-a-vis* their environments. Engineers

involved in the linear process of getting from design to operation see themselves as persons of action. It is for the end result of "something-being-done" that engineers, management and pit supervisors apply themselves in their daily work. Closely tied to an action orientation is the assumption that "common sense" (grounded in their cultural assumptions) is all that is needed to understand and take action. Anyone who questions what, to management, is immediately obvious or common sensical is seen as interfering with the moral necessity of action.

The necessity to take action translates into management decisions as prescriptions for action. There is an implicit moral dictum that any decision is better than no decision particularly in operations where "time is money". One area foreman explained it this way;

You can't be afraid to make a decision. Even a bad decision is better than no decision at all. I mean the only way to keep from screwing up occasionally is to do nothin' and that's retarded. We got a mine to run.

The action orientation also extends to management's relations with their employees and the union. Both, employees and the union, represent factors that require management and control termed "the strategic management of human resources" by one FCL executive.

Other environmental factors--over which the company has little direct control--including the economy (particularly high interest rate policies and high Canadian dollar value), and labour legislation are subject to lobbying efforts, usually conducted in concert with other mining interests such as the Coal Association of Canada. For example, the issues of high taxes, workers' compensation board over payments, unfavourable monetary exchange rates, *etc.*, have been consistent themes in "Review of the British Columbia Coal Industry" reports (Coal Association of Canada, 1987-1990). Fording Coal management attempts to be proactive *vis-a-vis* all their perceived environments.

There are a number of other assumptions and values which follow from FCL's engineering culture. Clearly, a group of people whose culture appears to maximize order, rationality and active intervention value the managerial skills which facilitate the ends of the organization. *Pit* supervisors and foremen, for example, who can maximize the productivity of capital equipment and manpower are highly valued for their efforts. Similarly, the importance of the IR department is seen as that part of the company which tries to "keep the workers happy and in their place" in the words of one *pit* engineer and as "the department that makes sure employee discipline for policy violations sticks," according to some *shifters* and foremen.

Conceptions of "reality" are generally applied to environments and factors that have or potentially have impact on the organization and its mission. Such factors and environments, therefore, require decisions and actions. The "truth" about realities is almost exclusively in the domain of physical or at least "objective" and verifiable data. Social or "subjective" realities appear to be of little or no concern since they fall outside of the realm of objectively verifiable "truth".

It also logically follows that management as a group that is action-oriented and value order would not and, in fact, do not value a critical-reflective consciousness. Critical-reflective activity, such as assessing the social impact of company policy, is seen as inhibiting future decisions and, therefore, action.

A future orientation to management culture is, in several respects, more important than the present. In the present, decisions are geared to maximizing productivity and efficiency particularly for management charged with responsibilities in mine operations. But "present-maximizing" is modified by senior management, planners and engineers who are focussed on the future. Careful records are kept of activities, policies and production, *etc.*, with an eye to their improvement for the future. The temporal consciousness or time horizon of

engineering culture is one that can be characterized as "present-that-facilitates-the-future" (Brown 1974:42). While a future orientation is evident in management's daily practices, it became abundantly clear during a time of crisis. The economic recession of the early 1980's (ch. 6) prompted a number of coping strategies--grounded in engineering culture--designed to ensure the present and especially the future survival of the mine. One executive reported;

In order to keep the mine open we had to show dramatic increases in productivity. Even though we knew that our profitability would suffer as a result of price and volume cuts, we had to take whatever steps were necessary to demonstrate that profitability would improve over time as a result of the productivity gains we were making now.

Management personnel, almost without exception, think of themselves as hardworking, competitive individuals committed to the goals of the organization. Junior engineers, for example, frequently work extra shifts or after regular hours, not only to demonstrate their commitment to the company, but, also, because superiors make it clear that it is expected of them. Voluntary work, whether it is engineers after hours or *shifters* working through lunch breaks, or foremen "dropping in" on their days or evenings off, contributes to the formation of a social boundary that separates them from workers who, "have to be supervised continually or they'll simply stop working" (M.D. *shifter*) and who, "have to be forced to do everything" (M.E. foreman).

Perhaps the most influential factor in the reproduction of engineering culture at FCL, apart from the success apparent in productivity and profit, resides in the promotion of individuals who demonstrate that they appear to share the norms, values and assumptions of the organizational culture. The following excerpt from an interview clearly describes the strategy used by one worker to gain his promotion (two months prior to the interview) to part-time *shifter*. He has subsequently been promoted again to full-time *shifter*.

I figured that if I wanted to be a *shifter* I had to stand out from the rest of the guys. So if it was, like, foggy or the roads were slippery and guys were shuttin' down, I'd just keep on haulin'. Or if say the roads were really dusty and guys were drivin' real slow, I'd drive like nothin' was wrong. This didn't make me real popular with the guys. They'd call me *scab* an' stuff over the radio but I didn't care; it just helped 'cause the boss would hear and know that I wasn't a union radical or nothin'. I mean safety is important but I didn't want to drive truck all my life. *Shifting* is a better job, it pays better, the benefits are better and you don't pound your body to death like you do on trucks and stuff. Besides when you're *shifting* you get to talk to people and can stop and take a break whenever you want. It's a better job.

Clearly, the strategy which demonstrated that he shared management values, particularly that of maximizing production, was key--in this person's view--to gaining promotion into management.

While violation by workers of operational standards of efficiency--even petty infractions--are, in most cases, immediately met with discipline, generally speaking, management or supervisory failings are not. Senior management are sure to bring such failings quickly and forcefully to the attention of the individual concerned, but the "extra effort" exhibited by subordinate management personnel often precludes discipline or immediate demotion.

In summary, the organizational culture of management is characterized by the following basic assumptions, orientations and values: Engineering culture deals with "things" and environments that are objectively determined to have actual or potential impact on the organization and its goals. "Facts" are represented by documentary authority and expert knowledge. Human relations--in the workplace--are based on authority relations within a structure of hierarchical roles. Management personnel see themselves as hardworking, competitive, and individualistic with a strong commitment to the organization. They have a proactive, interventionist orientation vis-a-vis their perceived environments, characterized by authoritarian-rational methods to introduce order into a potentially chaotic world. Their time horizon can be termed present-that-facilitates-the-future.

The world view and epistemology of engineering generally (Layton 1971, Noble 1977, Brown 1984) and the organizational culture at FCL particularly, is antithetical, in many respects, to the culture of the workforce.

4.3 WORKFORCE CULTURE

The culture of the workforce at FCL is rooted in the history of the labour movement, particularly the labour history and life experiences of unionized workers in resource extraction industries and the relatively short history of industrial relations at FCL. The time horizon of workers can be characterized as "past-that-informs-the-present". In workers' discussions about events or labour/management conflicts, reference is constantly made to events of the past. They even reach back in time to when Canadian Pacific (FCL is a C.P. company) was building the railway to account for management strategies and behaviour. However, workers' consciousness of labour's past victories and defeats, betrayals and heroism does not provide the sole frame of reference for workplace culture. If it did, solidarity and collective action would likely be the norm for miners' work-a-day cultural expression rather than a phenomena of increasing frequency. In order to account for the multiple dimensions of workplace culture, I have selected a central concept that has wide relevance to the varied expressions of workplace culture experienced and observed at the mine. That central concept is "security".

"Security first" is one of the most pervasive basic assumptions of the culture. It is apparent from interviews and observations that a kind of complex "risk" analysis regarding security takes place when workers are confronted with potential conflict. Workers calculate into their conscious analysis, factors such as their financial and social situation, the general state of the economy and prospects for employment, strength of the union, and amount of support they can expect from other workers.

The following two examples, excerpted from interviews, demonstrate the kind of "cost/benefit" analysis that takes place. Haulage driver, L.B., recalled the following;

It was back in 1985, I think it was, when the company was really pushin' for production. It was graveyard shift and I was haulin' in Taylor Pit and the truck I was on went *down* [broke down]. The *shifter* took me to another [170 tonne Wabco] and told me to drive it. Well, [this other] truck had been shut down by other guys and on other shifts 'cause the frame was all cracked and it was unsafe to drive. I *ground checked* the thing and sure enough the frame was cracked all over the place. I said that I wouldn't drive it. A union safety rep., was called and the foreman, and they fought it out. The safety rep., agreed that it was unsafe but the foreman said it was okay and called up the maintenance foreman and the general foreman from downtown; got them out of bed. They insisted that it was safe, there were no other spare trucks to put me on and that if I didn't drive it, I would be suspended without pay. The safety rep., said that they couldn't suspend me over a safety issue and that I would get back any money I lost when I won the arbitration. Well, I got a mortgage and car payments and I've already got problems at home so I figured that even if I did win at arbitration, I would've in the mean time lost my house an' car and probably my wife. So what could I do? I mean the union was strapped and couldn't give me much money, I couldn't collect UIC if I was suspended, and there weren't no other jobs around, so I just said 'to hell with it' and drove the damn thing. Fortunately, a little while later, another truck came spare and I took that one. Next day, [the truck with the cracked frame] went to the rebuild shop for repairs.

The second example is from an interview with an equipment operator prior to the strike vote in 1989. H.H., in discussing how he was going to vote, said,

Well, I think I'll vote strike. The coal markets have improved and we've got some real issues to strike for this time. We built this company and now it's pay-off time. Besides I put off buyin' a new car 'till after the strike and if necessary I can hold on for a while without havin' to look for work to kind'a see me through; not like some of the guys. Some guys got payments up the *ying-yang* which is stupid 'cause they knew a strike was coming. Well, they'll just have to find work 'cause we're not cavin' in this time. We're much more united than last strike.

In both of the examples above it is obvious that "security first" was part of the risk analysis engaged in by workers involved in labour/management conflict. It is also obvious that, as important as economic factors are to workers' sense of security, they are not the sole determinants of worker accommodation or resistance.

Beyond economic considerations of job protection and the earned income to

support his family, "security first" also involves perceptions of worker solidarity, company ability to pay (improved markets), availability of other work if necessary, *etc.* But, there is also another aspect of "security first"; a feeling among workers of valuing the community and its attendant life-style.

Elkford only exists if the mine continues to operate profitably. There is no illusion that the community and its members' valued way of life would continue if the mine closed. Workers see themselves and their families as the community, as a referent of their identity, with a valued life-style that needs to be protected. It should be noted, however, that this may be changing. On two separate occasions in November 1990 and December 1990, a mechanic in the first instance and an electrician in the second said that if "things did not improve at the mine" they would not hesitate to "strike until the mine went broke". Further, the electrician said, "If the mine closes, I'll just take my trade elsewhere and give my house back to the bank; but, we'll drag the mine down first." I hesitate to make too much of these comments at this time because, to date, they represent isolated feelings unshared by the majority of workers. Additionally, the comments were made during a period of heightened conflict at the mine when workers were on an extended "work-to-rule" campaign in protest of the company's unilateral decision to work certain areas of the mine an extra five or more minutes without compensation to the workers. The new company policy is presently the subject of arbitration.

While I cannot yet give too much credence to the espoused desire to win improvements at any cost, the context (a unilateral company decision affecting work) demonstrates the deep-seated value of "security first" extended to securing or maintaining "traditional" work rules. This facet of "security first" often finds expression in "resistance to change".

Virtually any change introduced by management without consultation with

the union is viewed with suspicion. Workers sincerely believe, and labour history bears out, that all gains they have made were the result of struggle. "What we have we hold" is such a powerful motif in the miners' view of industrial relations that any attempt by the company to effect unilateral change is considered a violation of the social contract and is, therefore, greeted with distrust.

As distrustful as workers are of the company, it is somewhat paradoxical that in workers' relations with each other, trust, along with forgiveness, are basic cultural values. Trust and forgiveness among workers have developed as a direct result of both living and working together. It would not be an exaggeration to state that most every worker knows or knows of most others. They meet and develop friendships of varying degrees through their contacts at work, at the union hall, playing golf, hockey, baseball, at house parties, or in church and community groups. Trust and forgiveness are the cornerstones of any friendship, family group or community. In the case of workers' resistance and rebellion against both management and the union, workers used trust--through the vehicle of "snowball" contacts--to develop sodalities, informal networks for action (ch. 8).

I do not want to leave the impression that trust is a cultural value solely in the province of workers. Management personnel certainly, as members of families and the community, operate on the basis of trust. But at work, management personnel do not exhibit, to the same degree as workers, their trust in each other. Rather, management behaviour tends to be distrustful and competitive to the point that it increasingly became obvious to senior executives that such behaviour was becoming dysfunctional. In 1990, company executives introduced a "team concept" in an attempt--a failed attempt to date--to decrease competition between management personnel, increase cooperation and to entrust supervisors with the responsibilities for their areas of supervision without overt "interference" from

senior management.

Much the same can be said of forgiveness. At work, management are notably unforgiving with each other and with workers. Discipline is meted out to employees for infractions or mistakes that most would regard as petty. Workers, on the other hand, are rather quick to forgive their fellows even in cases of what is regarded as extreme violations of cultural norms. An example is the case of N.N. an equipment operator who worked during the *wobble* of May 1990. In the eyes of those who participated in the "walkout", N.N. was a *scab* and rightly subject to ostracism. However, within a few weeks of returning to work, the sanctions against N.N. slowly began to be relaxed. When N.N. participated in an extended work-to-rule campaign in November and December 1990, he immediately left his former status of *scab* behind, was forgiven, and welcomed as an equal member of the group sharing a general condition.

Reciprocity and moral reciprocity (ch. 2.5), as basic assumptions are evident behaviourally, in interviews, and in conversations between workers. Reciprocity at work involves both gifts and services exchanged between friends and associates, *e.g.*, exchanging cigarettes, food, and magazines or books, and taking turns staying awake at lunch breaks (especially on night shifts) so that someone is responsible for waking up the other "napping" operators.

Moral reciprocity is involved strictly with workers' relations with management. Referring back to H.H.'s comments (above) that, "We built this company and now it's pay-off time.", suggests, in an economic sense, workers' belief that having built the efficiency and productivity of the mine to a level unequalled in B.C. they were deserving of the best collective agreement. But, more importantly, as regards the change to resistance and rebellion, it is workers' sense of justice, dignity, workplace democracy and their intuitive definition of exploitation (views

regarding which claims on their time, labour and well-being are acceptable and which are not) that infuses the concept "moral reciprocity" with meaning.

Examples of moral reciprocity can only be abstracted from witnessing workers' reactions to its violation. For example, S.C. is a "career" equipment operator who fully expects to spend the rest of his working life at FCL. By all accounts and from personal experience, S.C. is an experienced operator committed to the company. He requires minimum supervision and often goes "above and beyond" the strict limits of his job description; a model employee, quiet, and not--in management's terms--a trouble maker. On this particular occasion, S.C. was operating a *cat* (bull-dozer) during nightshift *pushing waste* to a shovel cleaning off a coal seam. The rubber-tired dozer, that was responsible for cleaning up rocks which had fallen into the area where the trucks were being loaded by the shovel, was broken down. It is the usual practice that the rubber-tired dozer cleans up during lunch break so that production is not held up. S.C. volunteered to bring his *cat* down from the seam to do the clean up at lunch break. Cleaning up for the shovel took ten of the twenty minutes allowed for lunch break. Nevertheless, S.C. returned to the seam, after taking only ten minutes of his permitted break, to commence *pushing* to the shovel (otherwise production would have been held up for ten minutes anyway). As "quitting time" approached, S.C. brought his cat down from the seam and parked: it was three minutes before shift end. S.C. was disciplined for parking early.

(Actually, S.C. was given a written "counselling interview report" (CIR). According to the collective agreement CIR's are not discipline, but the official company position is that "they are disciplinary in nature but not necessarily discipline" (FCL executive, interview). According to workers, CIR's are harassment if not outright discipline and a vehicle for dossier building.)

After the incident, S.C. was uncharacteristically vocal in his outrage. During the bus ride down *the hill*, S.C. complained about his "unjust treatment", attributing all manner of deviant sexual practices to his pit supervisor and other management personnel. He ended his outburst with, "See if I ever do anything for them again."

Perhaps more instructive than S.C.'s comments alone, are others' reactions to the event. Two weeks later while interviewing an equipment operator on another shift, the topic of S.C.'s discipline came up. P.L., an equipment operator, used the incident to justify his animosity and distrust toward the company. When I asked him why it bothered him so, he replied;

Because that's just one example of the kind of crap that goes on here. The company just takes and takes, and never gives nothin' in return. They don't treat us human. We're just numbers on equipment with numbers. That's why we're on *slow-down* [work-to-rule] to make it cost them in the only way they understand--money. No production 'till they realize that they gotta treat us right.

When pressed about whether or not he had suffered similar mistreatment, P.L. said, "no", but then succinctly, though crudely, expressed one of the tenets of solidarity: that an injury to one was an injury to all. P.L. said, "I just can't help feelin' that when one of the guys gets screwed, I--at least--got my butt pinched."

Violations of the feelings, values and basic assumptions embodied in the concept of "moral reciprocity" are powerful motivators of workers' collective actions in resisting and rebelling against management authority. This is so because workers see themselves as hard working people, committed to the organization--given what workers believe are "reasonable" working conditions--if only to preserve their way-of-life, if not for the company for its own sake.

Workers, however, are reactive *vis-a-vis* their perceived environments. The economy, world markets, labour legislation are not considered environments over which they have any control. It is up to governments, the company and/or the union

to take action. Workers, at work, are generally only concerned with their workplace, worker solidarity, and the state of their union. And, even then, they react to events rather than attempt to control or manage them. But, when they react, they can react quickly, decisively and powerfully through collective action.

The basis for deciding when to react strongly to events does not reside in "objective" evaluation (although a kind of "risk analysis" does often take place). The criteria for assessment lie in social and "subjective" realities based on the relative status of the people concerned and on intuitive feelings regarding events. Tied to these criteria are notions that human relations--including worker/management relations--should be based on friendship, co-operation, participation, consensus and trust.

4.4 DISCUSSION

It would be difficult to find two more contrasting cultures (Table 4.1), interacting in such close quarters, as the organizational culture of management and workforce culture. The difference in epistemologies, values, assumptions, time horizons, histories, intuitions and goals provide ample opportunity for disagreement, misunderstanding and conflict. Through their respective cultural "filters", management and workers perceive events, environments and relationships differently. They act or react based on different value systems. The paradox is that, away from work, both groups share a valued and valuable life-style and high standard of living. At work, both groups share a common destiny tied to world demand for coal. Workers and management do have interests in common.

In Canada, the common interests of labour and capital have been institutionalized in the industrial relations system. In the following chapter I describe the development of the industrial relations structure and the "parallel"

development of the "social contract" between management and workers.

TABLE 4.1 Comparison: Management and Workforce Cultures

<u>Cultural Domain</u>	<u>Management Culture</u>	<u>Workforce Culture</u>
1. Identities and Environments	Role based identities. Environments are those that have potential impact on FCL.	Identities based on friendship and work/ community status. Environments based on past impact.
2. Nature of Reality: Bases for Decision Making	Objectively determined reality. Potential impact requires decisions.	Reality subjectively determined. Past impact warrants decisions.
3. Nature of Time	Present-that-facilitates-the-future.	Past-that-informs-the-present.
4. Nature of Human Nature	Hardworking, committed, individualistic, competitive.	Hardworking, generous, trusting, forgiving, communal.
5. Nature of Human Activity	Proactive.	Reactive.
6. Nature of Human Relationships	Outside relations based on competition. Inside based on hierarchy, and competition.	Outside relations based on tradition, co-operation/ consensus. Inside based on friendship, consultation and participation. Reciprocity paramount.
7. Central Concept	Order.	Security.

CHAPTER FIVE

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS STRUCTURE AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The industrial relations structure was specifically developed to control industrial conflicts in an effort to provide economic stability. The current structure of the Canadian industrial relations system--of which FCL and the USWA are a part--evolved in the form of changing institutions and practices shaped by political, economic and social circumstance. In a "parallel" development, the social contract between labour and capital was simultaneously created and expressed in the process of structuring industrial relations.

While the beginnings of the modern IR system can be traced back in time to the early craft unions (Cooper 1949; Zerker 1981; Forsey 1982) and the emergence of an industrial economy (Pentland 1981), the beginnings of the implicit social contract, which developed with governmental structuring of industrial relations, begins, I believe, in 1900 with Laurier and Mackenzie King.

5.2 GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT: THE IDI ACT

In the twenty-five years prior to 1900, Canada experienced considerable economic growth (Morton 1989). Canadian labour, however, did not share the benefits and turned to unionism to fight for an equitable share in the North American standard of living (Forsey 1982; Palmer 1983). Under Sam Gompers' American Federation of Labour (AFL) local unions sprang up from Charlottetown to Windsor (Palmer 1979, 1983; Babcock 1975; Forsey 1982), the Western Federation of Miners began unionizing British Columbia's mining industry (McCormack 1978; Phillips 1967), and the militant United Brotherhood of Railroad

Employees attempted to organize the Canadian Pacific Railway (McCormack 1978).

The labour-management turmoil created by the organizing drives of unions, particularly conflict in the railways, led to Laurier's creation, in 1900, of the Department of Labour. William Lyon Mackenzie King, as an experienced mediator, quickly became Laurier's labour-management peacemaker (Craven 1981).

In the early years of the new century, union organizing drives continued. The United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) unionized the coal mines in Alberta, and the Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies) organized loggers and construction crews engaged in developing western Canada's economic infrastructure (Avery 1979; McCormack 1978). Capital bitterly contested the organizing drives, fighting union certification, and improvements in wages and benefits, resulting in some of the longest and most violent strikes in Canadian history. Troops and police in the thousands guarded factories, streetcars, dockyards and coal mines (Piva 1979; Robin 1968) as labour--through solidarity and strike--fought the power and injustices of Canadian capitalism and sought relief from, "working conditions [that] were brutal" (Abella and Millar 1978:3).

Few industries at the time offered such danger, dirt and harsh discipline of workers as the coal mines. In November, 1906, coal miners in south-western Alberta had already been on strike for eight months when Mackenzie King was sent to the area in an attempt to end a strike which threatened prairie residents, on the verge of freezing from lack of heating fuel (Walker 1950). The major points at issue in the strike were workers' determination that the company give full recognition to the mine workers' union and permit union dues "checkoff". The company's position was that it would meet and negotiate only with its employees individually or through an employee committee, not representatives of the union, some of whom were not employees. The company would not bargain with the union. Mackenzie King wrote

the clauses into a contract concerning union recognition. His impartiality, and insistence on a quick settlement to avoid an imminent death toll, coupled with his brilliant use of publicity, "...turned the tide and brought about a resumption of work and coal production" (Walker 1950:43).

Mackenzie King believed that the issue of union recognition should never justify a strike and further, that legislative machinery could be developed that would function as a medium, with effective publicity, in exposing and remedying the underlying causes and injustices in industrial conflicts. Upon King's return to Ottawa, Laurier suggested that King draft such legislation, providing for compulsory investigation of labour disputes (Walker 1950; Craven 1981). The result was the Industrial Disputes Investigation (IDI) Act of 1907.

The IDI Act was important in several respects. It met the long-standing demand of labour that government investigate labour disputes. It gave weak unions the chance to meet the employer face to face and subject to mediation at a time when certification strikes were generally hopeless. Additionally, the Act implicitly validated workers' claims to the right to organize. It represented the beginnings of a social contract. One of the negative aspects of the IDI Act, as unions were quick to learn, was the "cooling off" period during investigation that allowed employers to continue operations, stockpile product, train strikebreakers, and victimize union activists (Craven 1981).

It is important to note that the IDI Act did not legislate workers' right to organize, it only provided for investigation of strikes, many of which were the result of labour/capital disputes regarding union recognition. However, the number of unionized workers increased dramatically from 133,000 in 1911 (the first year of reliable data) to 378,000 in 1919 (Chaison and Rose 1989). Neither did King's legislation eliminate strike activity. The frequency of strikes dropped from 188 in

1907 to 76 in 1908 but reached a post-World War Two height of 336 in 1919 (Anderson and Gunderson 1989). Nevertheless, the IDI Act was the beginning of the modern industrial relations system and a social contract between labour and capital; a beginning amplified by events in World War Two.

5.3 THE SECOND WORLD WAR: PC1003 AND THE RAND FORMULA

By 1937 union membership in Canada had reached 383,000 (Chaison and Rose 1989) and workers could look across the border to the United States where the Wagner Act allowed unions to finally organize the huge industrial plants that had defied unionization for sixty years. The Wagner Act provided for a National Labour Relations Board (NLRB) which could force unrelenting employers to recognize a democratically chosen union (Morton 1989).

The hard economic times, however, prevented continued union growth in Canada and over the next three years membership never approached the 1937 level. In 1939, when Canada entered the war, one worker in six was unemployed but by 1941 the labour shortage was such that Ottawa imposed selective service on men and women, limited employers' rights to hire and fire, limited employees' rights to switch jobs or quit, and froze wages through wartime wage controls (Morton 1989). Union leaders, including communist unionists, after the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, offered "no strike" pledges and entered into "partnership" with government and capital to aid the war effort, achieving a legitimacy and social standing unprecedented until then. Workers that did strike, such as the gold miners at Kirkland Lake, Ontario, discovered that they would get no help from government even when employers were engaged in unfair labour practices (MacDowell 1978).

As the war progressed, thousands of new workers joined unions engaged in war industries. By 1943 membership reached 665,000 (Chaison and Rose 1989) and

with the war's outcome no longer in doubt, some unions rebelled against wage controls during a time of high inflation (MacDowell 1978). In January of 1943, the United Steelworkers began a strike demanding and winning fifty-five cents an hour (MacDowell 1978; 1982). Other unions followed the lead of the Steelworkers and 1943 surpassed 1919 in frequency of strikes: 402 versus 336 (Anderson and Gunderson 1989). The government could not allow such a high level of strike activity during wartime--1,041,198 work-days lost to strikes (*ibid.*)--to persist. Judge C.P. McTague, chairman of the War Labour Board, had seen the injustice at the Kirkland Lake mine in the winter of 1941/42 and reported that Canada needed an equivalent to the U.S.' Wagner Act to avoid strikes over the basic right to organize (Morton 1989; MacDowell 1978, 1983).

In February, 1944, PC 1003, the National War Labour Order was approved and eventually enacted as a federal statute and adopted by the provinces in 1948. PC 1003 set out clear rules governing the certification, definition and recognition of bargaining units, the enforcement of fair labour practices and retained, from the IDI Act, the "cooling off" period and the right of government to investigate labour disputes (MacDowell 1978). The importance and impact of PC 1003 cannot be overstated. "At one stroke, it brought most economic activity in Canada within a single, comprehensive system of collective bargaining law" (Carter 1989: 33).

PC 1003, however, did not solve for unions an issue that was just as contentious in 1945 as it was in the 1906 coal miners' strike in Alberta: union dues checkoff. While a union could now be certified, its effectiveness depended to a great extent upon its financial backing. In the fall of 1945, the United Auto Workers began a strike against the Ford Motor Company in an effort to win guaranteed checkoff of union dues from every employee in the bargaining unit whether "signed-up" members or not. This demand was based on the premise that all bargaining unit

members benefited from the efforts of the certified union as the sole bargaining agent for employees. The strike ended in arbitration. Justice Ivan Rand agreed with the union position that its representation benefited every worker in the plant. Justice Rand ruled that every worker must pay dues, though no worker should be forced to sign-up, *i.e.* join the union. Since 1945, the Rand Formula has been the basis of Canadian union security (Moulton 1974).

5.4 UNION ACCEPTANCE AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

While many feared a return to the depression after the Second World War, Canada experienced an economic boom. Manufacturers discovered that they could sell everything they produced. They also discovered that with workers' rights to organize enshrined in law, it was less expensive and indeed profitable, given the booming economy, to accept unions in their enterprises rather than wage costly battles. The result was the beginning of what today is known as a "Union-acceptance" strategy (Anderson 1989). Union-acceptance is an industrial relations strategy--tied to the overall corporate business strategy--referred to as the "best-bargain" strategy by Cappelli and Chalykoff (1985) by which a company indicates that collective bargaining is a legitimate means to achieve its IR objectives. Union-acceptance, according to researchers Thompson and Verma (1988), is the predominant IR strategy in Canada which suggests that, to some extent, management shares labour's notion of a social contract.

Union-acceptance does not mean that there are not strikes. Strikes, from postwar to date, however, have been less violent and bitter, and settlements appear to be realistic compromises providing workers with a legitimate share of postwar prosperity (Morton 1989).

The legitimacy that labour leaders achieved during the war, labour's

involvement in political parties (first the CCF and later the NDP), union security based on the Rand Formula, and legalized workers' rights, all contributed to a recognized social contract between labour, capital and government.

5.5 THE STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: FCL AND USWA

The IDI Act, followed by PC 1003 (modelled after the Wagner Act in the U.S.) and subsequent federal and provincial legislation have created a statutory IR structure that regulates most aspects of labour-management relations. Provincial and Federal labour relations boards (*e.g.*, the British Columbia Labour Relations Board, BCLRB) have the responsibility of administering the respective labour codes. Labour relations boards have used their powers to restrict workers and unions from withholding their labour (through strike or slow-down) and have curbed employer interference with union organizing and bargaining activity (Carter 1989).

Canadian labour legislation contrasts sharply with most American jurisdictions having some distinctive characteristics shared by all provinces: the certification process, union security, grievance arbitration and restrictions on strikes.

Certification is a process by which unions demonstrate that a majority of employees wish to recognize a particular union or association as their exclusive bargaining agent. Nova Scotia, Alberta and British Columbia require a supervised vote to establish representativeness (Carter 1989) while other provinces use a vote only in situations where some doubt exists as to the validity of union claims to a majority. In the U.S., a supervised vote is required in all cases (Weiler 1983).

The United Steelworkers of America, Local 7884 is the recognized union representing employees of Fording Coal Ltd.'s Fording River Operation. Article 3 of the collective agreement states;

The Company recognizes the Union as the sole and exclusive representative

for the purpose of conducting collective bargaining regarding all working conditions of employees employed at the Company's operations, and the Company will continue to recognize the Union as long as the Union retains its right to conduct collective bargaining on behalf of such employees under the law.

Unlike some American states where so called "right-to-work" laws restrict union security arrangements, Canadian labour law explicitly recognizes union-management negotiated arrangements for trade union financial security. In some provinces the Rand Formula is mandatory while others allow choice of either Rand Formula, closed shop (only union members can be hired) or union shop (requires employee to join union). To date the province of Quebec is the only Canadian jurisdiction to have "anti-scab" laws which prevent employers from hiring replacement workers during a legal strike (Anderson 1989). Such laws greatly enhance union security while decreasing picketline violence and union decertification drives.

Union security clauses in the collective agreement between FCL and the USWA are contained in article 5 which reads, in part, "...5.02 The Company shall deduct, as a condition of each employee's continued employment, a sum equivalent to Union dues..." Fording Coal and the Steelworkers have agreed on a Rand Formula arrangement for union financial security.

Part of the heritage of Mackenzie King's IDI Act is the statutory right of government--in the public interest--to require all collective agreements to have some machinery to arbitrate or resolve disputes that may arise under the collective agreement. In the United States, grievance arbitration procedures to resolve disputes about contract administration or interpretation are strictly a matter of negotiation between the parties (Brett and Goldberg 1983; Stern and Dennis 1983).

The required grievance procedure for resolving disputes between the USWA and FCL are contained in article 7 of the collective agreement. I will go into some

detail here because the difference between employee perceptions regarding how the grievance procedure should work (part of the implicit social contract) versus how it works in practice, represents one of the important elements in workers' belief that the social contract has been violated (chs. 7 & 8). The following excerpts, therefore, represent a highlighting of some sections workers believe are not adhered to in "spirit" and a description of the grievance process as a system of dispute resolution.

Article 7.03 reads, in part;

The parties recognize that it is most desirable that all efforts be made to develop and maintain a good relationship between employees and supervision.

It is recognized that a variety of disputes or complaints may arise, many of which can be resolved by discussion between the employee and his supervisor. To this end, employees are therefore urged to first attempt to resolve their complaints with their immediate supervisor as soon as possible.

If an employee has a complaint which he cannot resolve with his supervisor, a [Union Shop] Steward may attempt to resolve the complaint on behalf of the employee. The employee will have the option of having a Union Shop Steward present at any meeting or hearing involving discipline.

Should a dispute or complaint become a grievance between the Company and employee(s) relating to terms and conditions of employment, or regarding an interpretation or alleged violation of this Agreement, an earnest effort will be made by both parties to settle the grievance through the grievance procedure.

...The objective of each party during the grievance procedure is to provide as much full disclosure as possible of all known facts regarding a grievance and that every effort should be made by the parties to resolve grievable matters at the lowest level of supervision.

When a dispute or complaint becomes an "official" grievance, it progresses through a series of steps or stages until resolved. I will call the different levels "stages" rather than "steps" as they are referred to in the agreement in order to differentiate them from discipline "steps". There are clearly spelled out time limits for presentation of grievances and company/union responses at all stages. Stage One of the process is the presentation of the written grievance to the employee's foreman who hears the

employee's case and investigates and issues a written reply. If the grievance is not resolved it proceeds to Stage Two.

At Stage Two the employee's general foreman (the foreman's boss) hears the case presented by the employee and shop steward, investigates and issues a written reply. If still unresolved the grievance goes to Stage Three where the matter is taken up by senior management.

At the Stage Three hearing, the employee is represented by the union's Chief Shop Steward and the shop steward who had thus far represented and advised the employee. Representing the company is usually an executive from IR, the general foreman and any other personnel (supervisory or employee) the company requires to provide testimony. Failing a resolution of the grievance that is satisfactory to both parties to the agreement, the grievance is referred to Stage Four which is binding arbitration.

Article 7.04 refers to the arbitration stage;

...(b) The decision of the arbitrator in respect of an interpretation or alleged violation of this Agreement shall be final and binding upon the parties, but in no event shall the arbitrator have the power to alter, modify or amend this Agreement in any respect.

Each party shall pay the expenses incurred in connection with the presentation and preparation of its own case.

The parties shall bear in equal shares the expenses of the arbitrator.

(c) The arbitrator shall hear the parties to the grievance and shall render his decision within a maximum of thirty days following the hearing.

In the event that one party and/or the other are not satisfied with the arbitrator's award, the only remedy is to attempt to change the collective agreement during negotiations for the next contract.

All Canadian labour legislation explicitly limits the use of strikes. Strikes may not be used to gain recognition of a union or bargaining agent nor can strikes

be called during the term of a collective agreement. In most provinces strikes can only occur after exhaustion of dispute resolution provisions and only then after due notice is given to the labour board and employer. The legal strike has, therefore, been institutionalized.

The collective agreement between FCL and USWA contains a "no strike, no lockout" provision in article two:

2.01 The Union agrees that neither the Union nor its officers, nor representatives, nor its members, nor the employees, shall in any way authorize, encourage or participate in any strike, work stoppage, walk-out, slow-down, or any act of similar nature which would in any way interfere with, limit or impede the operations of the Company during the term of this Agreement.

2.02 In case the aforementioned acts should occur in violation of the above, the Company shall, in addition to all its other rights and remedies, have the right to discharge or discipline any or all of the employees taking part in such act or acts, providing, however, that any such action by the Company shall be subject to the grievance procedure if an employee believes he has been discharged or disciplined unjustly.

2.03 The Company agrees that there shall be no lockout of employees during the term of this Agreement. In the event the Company should lockout its employees in violation of this Agreement, the Union shall have the right to seek all remedies that it may be entitled to by law.

The strike or lockout, as coercive tools in labour-management disputes, have largely been nullified by provisions (when followed) such as those contained in the FCL/USWA agreement, resulting in strike action that is largely a predictable event.

From the workers' point of view there are, however, several negative consequences of the IR structure. Firstly, any company that violates the social contract by adopting a "union repression" IR strategy, can "force" worker/union grievances to arbitration. Arbitrations can cost the local union upwards of ten-thousand dollars each, which can quickly put financial pressure on limited union resources: an expense more easily handled by corporations. Secondly, corporations have the resources to hire lawyers in arbitration cases, whereas unions usually have

to rely on the experience of district representatives to present their case. Thirdly, the quasi-judicial process of arbitration is outside the experience of workers. It is a process that most workers (according to interviews and participation) wish to avoid. Fourthly, although collective agreements contain "not strike, no lock-out" clauses, corporations can legally affect the same result as a "lock-out" simply by calling it a temporary layoff or shut-down. Workers, however, do not have any "legal" means of similarly imposing financial strain on companies.

In many respects, union representatives "take on" the normative aspects of management culture (ch. 4.2) when they "change hats" from worker to union official (a recurrent complaint of rank and file members). In fact, the formal, institutionalized, legislated structure of industrial relations requires that unions represent their members in the terms and categories of the dominant culture--i.e. in terms analogous to those of the outer structure--rather than in the terms and categories of workers' culture and experience. During an interview with an arbitrator, he commented,

As soon as I hear the union representative presenting his case in terms of morality or justice, I know that he does not have a very sound legal case. At that point, the union should really give it up. The case is decided on arbitral jurisprudence as it relates to the language contained in the collective agreement, period.

Workers and their union are aware of the power imbalance that exists and, consequently, depend upon shared notions of the social contract to maintain stable relations.

5.6 DISCUSSION

The industrial relations structure that impacts the work-a-day lives of both management and workers at FCL, developed over time and space. Structure was impacted by events across Canada, in the United States and Europe. It is clear that these structures involve overlapping social systems at several levels and are engaged--or rather people acting within them on their behalf are engaged--in producing and reproducing these structures and avoiding crisis (Weiner 1981). Capital sought order and profitability, workers through their unions sought security and a larger share in prosperity, while governments and politicians attempted to avoid political crises of various kinds. As part of the overall industrial relations system, the IR structure, in this case study, forms part of the structural preconditions for action/interaction between management, workers and their union.

The concept of a social contract, that developed along with the evolution of IR structure, is useful, I believe, because of its relevance to the results of labour struggle generally, (particularly labour's new-found legitimacy and prevalent acceptance by industry, government and the public) and industrial relations at FCL, particularly, because of its importance in workers' decisions regarding resistance to management authority. The concept of the social contract imbues workers' actions with meaning; a meaning simultaneously created, interpreted, reproduced and expressed by workers in their work-a-day lives. I shall demonstrate, in chapter 8, that workers' perceptions of the company's violation of the social contract combined with perceived violations of the tenets of moral reciprocity led to resistance and rebellion; violations that were sparked by the recession of the 1980's.

CHAPTER SIX

ECONOMIC RECESSION AND COMPANY RESPONSE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The economic environment in which a company operates constitutes one of the major independent variables in IR research. It is obvious from the history of the trade union movement (ch. 5) and IR research into the economic determinants of strike activity (ch. 2.6), that, "...economic conditions have major consequences for the goals and activities of both unions and employers." (Anderson *et al.* 1989:24). In this chapter I describe a fundamental change in the economic environment affecting FCL that dramatically changed international coal markets: the world recession of the 1980's.

In response to the unpredicted and dramatic change in its economic environment, FCL reacted aggressively with a series of economically effective coping strategies. The increases in efficiency have made Fording Coal the acknowledged leader in cost competitive coal products.

6.2 WORLD RECESSION AND FCL

The size and "certainty" of FCL's contracts (Table 6.1) with Pacific Rim customers fuelled the expansionary economic "boom" of the 1970's. The world oil crisis of 1979 similarly intensified coal development world-wide and expansion of existing mines, including FCL, to meet projected demand.

In 1982 the "boom" came to a halt with the unanticipated demands by Japanese customers for price and volume reductions.

The sudden plummeting of the Japanese steel market hurt the coal market. They were everyone's biggest customer, but, you can't make them eat coal...if they can't use it, they won't buy it; contract or no contract (FCL executive,

interview).

A number of factors were responsible for the unexpected collapse of coal markets. Technological innovations throughout the 1970's permitted increased efficiency in steel production which reduced the proportional input of coal. At the same time, input substitution in manufacturing reduced demand for steel. For example, the weight of steel used in U.S. automobile manufacturing was reduced by 50% between 1972 and 1982 (Dyack 1985). The derived demand for coal is closely tied to the demand elasticity of steel.

TABLE 6.1 Fording Coal Ltd. - Contracts in force 1982.

<u>Customer</u>	<u>Volume (total)</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Effective</u>
Mitsui of Japan	45.0 Mt(met)	15 years	1972
China Steel Taiwan	3.5 Mt(met)	10 years	1981
POSCO South Korea	1.0 Mt(met)	4 years	1982
POSCO South Korea	0.1 Mt(met)	1 year	1982
Korea Electric	0.15 Mt(thermal)	1 year	1982
Korea Electric	1.0 Mt(thermal)	5 years	1982

(Adapted from Maund 1980; supplemented with data from FCL executives, interviews)

Note: Volume in millions, metric tonnes. "Thermal" means thermal coal used in electricity generating plants, and "met" means metallurgical coal used to produce steel.

Japanese steel production in 1982 of 96.3 million tonnes was down from 103 million tonnes the previous year and 107.4 million tonnes in 1980 (British Columbia 1986). The combination of these factors put pressure on coal producers, especially when coupled with the global over-supply of coal as a result of new coal suppliers coming "on line" in the early 1980's in South Africa, Poland, Canada and Australia. In Australia alone, metallurgical coal production from 1982 to 1986 increased 32%; an increase equal to the total capacity of British Columbia's coal producers (Coal

Association of Canada 1987). China and Columbia entered the thermal coal market--an already over-supplied market--selling their product at less than market price in an effort to increase foreign exchange earnings (Coal Association of Canada 1988b). Supplies increased while demand for coal plummeted.

With decreased demand and increased competition from abroad, prices fell. For example, Poland reduced prices in Europe (The Coal Association of Canada 1984) and Australia sold top grade hard coking coal at weak coking coal prices (Marshall 1987 cited in Chomyn 1989).

Fording Coal Ltd., was the first of the Elk Valley producers affected by decreased demand and reduced prices. In March 1982, FCL faced a two-stage price and volume reduction amounting to a 15% decrease in price and a 25% decrease in volume (Vancouver Sun 1982; FCL executive, interview). The long-term contracts, which were assumed to promise stability and security, lacked an enforcement mechanism and permitted a regular re-negotiation of price and volume. Maund (1980) correctly observed that it would have been more correct to describe the contracts as "letters of intent."

In 1983 FCL suffered a second round of price and volume reductions shipping 30% less coal than originally contracted (Calgary Herald 1983). The cycle continued with annual reductions in price and volumes sold to major customers. Table 6.2 illustrates the price trend from 1981 to 1987. During this period, after adjusting for fluctuating Canadian/U.S. dollar rates, average prices fell 27%. I used a cut-off of 1987 to reflect, what I believe to have been, the end of the recession. In 1988 FCL successfully negotiated a price increase with Japanese and other customers (Fording Coal 1989).

Fording Coal Ltd., and British Columbia coal producers, as a group, were in a precarious position. "We were quite literally fighting for our lives as a company."

(FCL executive, interview).

TABLE 6.2 Fording Coal - Average Coal Prices (\$Can./Tonne)

<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>
83.95	82.00	70.95	n.a.	70.49	68.50	61.50

Note: Beginning in 1985 contracts were negotiated in U.S. dollars. These values have been converted to Canadian dollars based on the Canada/U.S. dollar average closing price for the month of March in each contract year using the Bank of Canada Review (Monthly) as source of exchange rates.

(Source: Calgary Herald 1983, Elk Valley Miner 1987).

6.3 COPING WITH RECESSION

In response to global recessionary pressures, glutted coal markets and falling prices, Fording Coal Ltd. adopted three strategies; proactive marketing, cost cutting, and increased efficiency.

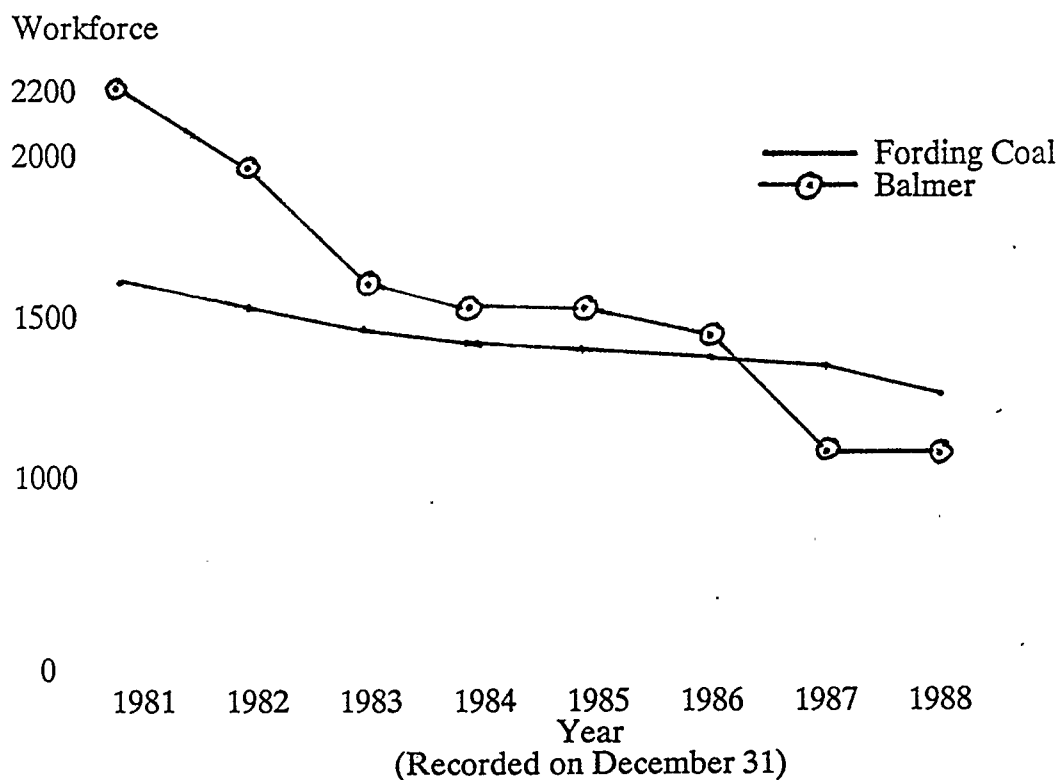
Fording Coal executives realized that part of the recession problem was FCL's over-reliance on Japanese steel producers (FCL executive, interview). The recession signalled the beginning, by FCL, of an aggressive world-wide marketing campaign. As a result of marketing efforts, FCL penetrated markets in Taiwan, Europe, Korea, South America, the United States and Canada: 1987 was the first year coal was sold to Ontario Hydro and Dofasco Ltd. (Fording Coal 1988). The company was successful in spite of the global surplus of product and marketing strategies of competitors. Clean coal sales increased to 5.8 million tonnes (MTCC) in 1989 from 2.9 MTCC in 1983, while, at the same time, increasing their diversity of customers: in 1980 Japan accounted for 78% of FCL's business; by 1989 only 36% (Fording Coal 1990). The result of FCL's marketing thrust was less dependence on

Japanese markets and, therefore, more flexibility.

The cost cutting program was centred around a reduction in the workforce. This was accomplished with technological innovation--which eliminated some jobs--a hiring freeze, attrition, and "work sharing". The work sharing program, quite simply, was a one day per week layoff. Work sharing was facilitated through a Federal government initiative (section 37, Unemployment Insurance Act). The purpose of the initiative was to avert large-scale layoffs by assisting firms to maintain workforces, for a short period of time, during an economic recession. Employees were paid a pro-rated sum, based on their pay scale, for the one work-day per week they were "laid off". Over the seven months of the program (which began in October 1982), each employee, on average, lost 616 hours of work amounting to a mean net pay loss of \$9240. The advantage for FCL of the program was their ability to reduce production while maintaining a complete workforce to; a) maximize use of capital equipment when in operation, and b) keep workers sufficiently employed that workers would not seek positions elsewhere, requiring the company to train new workers when full-time operation resumed (FCL executive, interview).

Attrition, combined with a hiring freeze, was used to reduce the workforce. Attrition, by definition, is the gradual reduction of employees through retirements, "normal" quits and firings, transfers to other departments, and non-replacement of affected positions. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, the workforce declined gradually through the recession as compared with Westar's Balmer operation (one of the other coal mines in the Elk Valley) which suffered layoffs. The total number of employees (staff and general role) was 1604 in June, 1982. By the end of 1988, this number was reduced to 1033 (Fording Coal 1989); a 35.6% decrease.

FIGURE 6.1 Manpower Reduction - 1981 to 1988.



(Source: adapted from Chomyn 1989)

According to one FCL executive, the workforce reduction was accomplished through;

...the gentler approach of attrition...It's not our employees' fault that we overstaffed for our level of operation. That's our fault because we just mismanaged the operation during the good years. Now we accept some of the hardship as a result. (FCL executive, interview).

Another FCL executive had this to say;

Starting in 1982 we [the company] went through great hardship trying to save people's jobs. We did not have a lay-off; not one person was laid-off. After all, in 1981 we had hired a lot of people who came with a dream and we didn't want to lay them off and destroy their dreams. Lay-offs would have been more cost-effective but we stuck to attrition as a gesture of obligation and loyalty to our employees.

These espoused values seem in contradiction to the basic assumptions of management culture (ch. 4.2).

Union officials and workers have a different perception of what "attrition" meant during this period. They claim that FCL's attrition strategy could better be described as "forced attrition", whereby selected employees were targeted for termination. Major, formal discipline (steps, ch. 6.4) was charged against workers for behaviour usually regarded as petty. According to union officials and membership, the discipline program took the form of dossier building. Once targeted, an employee was effectively placed on a "disciplinary track", from which he was usually unable to escape, that led the employee from initial discipline to "voluntary attrition" or termination. A former official of Local 7884--during the recession he was a high-ranking union executive--claims that management identified employees whom they wanted to fire, and subjected those individuals to harassment. The harassment took the form of an unusually strict disciplinary regime (dossier building) and/or the assignment of tasks too physically demanding or psychologically demeaning. According to Chomyn (1989) union claims in this regard have been substantiated by local health care professionals involved in treating affected employees.

When asked about the intent behind its attrition program, management's responses ranged from denial of any hidden agenda to confirmation that through attrition an effort was made to, "divest [itself] of unsuitable employees" (FCL management, interview). From the company's point of view, the advantage of attrition over layoffs was the selectivity it enabled. A layoff would have to conform to seniority clauses in the collective agreement irrespective of skill level, personal ability, adaptability and attitude of the employee. The result would have been, "losing some [employees] we'd rather keep and keeping some we'd rather lose" (FCL

management, interview). In another interview, a supervisor admitted, "Sure, we put pressure on some people and they chose to leave. Some weren't smart enough and got fired." From management's point of view, "attrition" was the correct and common sensical approach to workforce reduction, and, given management culture's time horizon of "present-that-facilitates-the-future", it was culturally consistent as well as cost-effective in the medium and long term.

Increased efficiency, as a recession coping strategy, involved the purchase and efficient use of larger, more productive capital equipment, the 4x4 shift schedule, "hot change", and shutdowns.

During the recession, FCL purchased and put into operation, the five giant "P & H 2800" electric shovels. Additionally, they invested in a fleet of 170 tonne Wabco haulage vehicles used for hauling waste rock, newer and larger bull-dozers, and new, faster loaders. Larger, new equipment is more efficient as a result of less *down time* than older equipment, and greater capacity.

One of the first steps in increasing production was to maximize productivity of the capital equipment. This, partly, entailed finding ways to make loading trucks as fast and efficient as possible. One method was the "ready-for-loading" procedure. Trucks were required to be backed-up, in position to receive a load while another truck was being loaded on the other side of the shovel. The time saving of this procedure was 10 to 15 seconds per load and, mathematically, can account for an increase in production of 2.7% (FCL management, interview). In situations where a shovel could load on only one side, a "double-back-up" procedure was instituted. This involved having a truck waiting (*i.e.* positioned to back into loading position) directly in front of the truck being loaded by the shovel or loader. As the loaded truck was leaving the shovel/loader, the waiting truck immediately backed into position for a load. This procedure was designed to eliminate, as much as possible,

shovel/loader "waiting time", *i.e.*, the shovel/loader did not have to interrupt its loading rhythm to wait for the next truck since when one left another appeared in its place. These two procedures--double-back-up and ready-for-loading--ensured that the shovels kept "*swinging*" and the loaders, loading.

Haulage roads were shortened as much as possible in an effort to decrease "cycle times", *i.e.* the time it takes trucks to travel from the shovel to the *spoil* and back. In a further effort to decrease cycle times, a haulage road improvement program was undertaken to stabilize road surfaces (reducing dusty conditions) by treating roads with potash. When weather conditions, such as fog or heavy snowfall, increased cycle times, trucks used "emergency *spoils*" closer to the shovel for dumping *waste*, rather than the usual and longer haulage roads. When weather conditions precluded truck operation altogether, shovels were moved to the edge of the mountain from where they could cast the *waste* over the mountain side without using trucks. Another innovation to increase efficiency was "angle drilling" at the mountain's edge. Instead of drilling blast holes vertically--as is standard practice--holes along the edge of the mountain were drilled on an angle so that the force of the blast itself cast the *waste* off the mountain, eliminating the need for equipment and manpower to move the material.

In order to further maximize the production of capital equipment and, at the same time "use up" employee vacations, a policy of scheduled mine "shutdowns" was instituted.

Temporary shutdowns have been effective strategies. "When we run, we run at 100 per cent. When we can't, we shutdown for short periods" (FCL executive, interview). An added company benefit is that when the mine is shutdown a considerable amount of maintenance is accomplished while equipment is idle. Every summer since 1982 FCL has had summer shutdowns during which time

employees are expected to take their vacation. This eliminates the need to hire additional workers to cover for those on holidays. Workers have come to expect two weeks at Christmas and at least four weeks in July. Shutdowns have also occurred due to extremely cold weather (equipment freezes up) and delayed arrival of ships at Robert's Bank (the port facility). Table 6.3 shows the number of shutdown days per year not including strikes.

TABLE 6.3 Fording Coal - Shutdowns.

<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>
15	29	20	43	57	60	42	43

(Source: Management and Union officials, interviews; Fording Coal 1988; 1989; 1990)

The most dramatic efficiency gains (according to one FCL executive and three union officials)--excluding those gains that obtained from the large capacity capital equipment and improved mining methods--have come as a result of the simultaneous introduction (July 28, 1981) of the "4x4" work schedule and the "hot change".

Prior to the change in 1981, employees worked a "7&2" schedule with a "dry-to-dry" change. The "7&2" refers to a work schedule designed with three, eight-hour shifts per day involving four work crews or *shifts*. The working cycle for any particular *shift* was twenty-eight days; *i.e.*, seven day shifts, two days off; seven afternoon shifts, two days off; seven *graveyard* shifts, three days off. The "dry-to-dry" change refers to the method of changing from one working crew to another (three times per day). The off-going crew was picked up in the pit areas and returned to the *dry* prior to the on-going crew being picked up from the *dry* and taken to the *pits*.

Under the "dry-to-dry" system as much as four and one-half hours of production per day could be lost solely to changing shifts. According to one FCL executive (interview), "It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that steps would have to be taken to eliminate this productivity loss." The solution was negotiated with the union in the May, 1981 collective bargaining sessions; the right to implement the "4x4" and "hot change".

Under the "4x4" schedule, employees work four 12 hour shifts (two day shifts, two *graveyard* shifts) followed by four days off. The immediate advantage and attendant savings of the 4x4 schedule was that shift change occurred twice per day rather than three times per day. Another gain in production efficiency resulted from reduced absenteeism. Interviews with management and workers, alike, verify that employees were disinclined to lose twelve hours of work (25% of a work "week") on the 4x4, compared with losing eight hours (14% of a work "week") on the old "7&2" schedule. Uncontrollable absenteeism (*i.e.*, employees absent because of sickness or absent without leave) decreased from an average of 22.13% in the three months prior to the introduction of the 4x4 to 9.83% in the three months following its introduction.

The "hot change" also, resulted in increased production. "Hot change" refers to changing working crews in the *pit* areas rather than at the *dry*. The on-going shift is transported to the *pit* in exchange for the off-going work crew who are then transported to the *dry*. Compensation is paid to workers in the form of a "hot change premium" (\$16 per 12 hour shift, changed to \$18 in 1989) for the time spent waiting in the *pits* for the on-going shift and subsequent transportation to the *dry*.

In the three months following the introduction of "hot change" and "4x4", as compared with the three months prior, productivity (measured in BCM/operating hour) increased from an average of 469 to 567, though all of the productivity

increase cannot be attributed solely to the changes since improvements in mining methods occurred at the same time. However, the operating hours per month of capital equipment is directly attributable to scheduling and hot change: an increase of 35%. Another cost saving immediately realized was in bus transportation from Elkford to the mine site and from the *dry* to the *pit* areas. Savings in transportation costs are close to 50% as a direct result of fewer shifts per day.

6.4 ENFORCING EFFICIENCY

The strict disciplinary regime adopted by management was not, solely, nor even predominantly, addressed to "problem" employees. Discipline was directed at all employees--especially workers on the *hill* who directly impacted production--in an effort to enforce maximum productivity.

The company strategy of a "hard line approach" to employees was most evident in management responses to workers' behaviours that caused production delays: delays of even a few seconds were sufficient to incur formal discipline. For example, E.I. (an equipment operator), was disciplined for a production delay of sixteen seconds. After three grievance meetings involving E.I., the shop steward, chief shop steward, and various management personnel, the grievance finally went to arbitration, at substantial cost to the company and the union. The discipline was dismissed by the arbitrator, but the company had made its point: no expense would be spared in disciplining employees for production delays.

Formal discipline involves counselling reports, file notes and "steps". The step system conforms to the British Columbia Labour Code which stipulates that formal written notice be provided to employees, with copies for personnel files, for workplace infractions. Each step is accompanied by various penalties ranging in severity from "probationary" periods of different lengths, during which the step

remains active, to suspensions or terminations. Once an employee has accumulated four "steps", any further infraction can result in suspension or firing.

From Sept. 30, 1983 until October 16, 1986, (period covering grievances prefixed with 83/85 in union records) there were 522 grievances filed. The majority of these were for "unjust discipline" (*i.e.* steps). These "facts", however do not truly represent the level of discipline. Counselling reports (CIR's) are disciplinary in nature and form part of the employee's record as do "file notes" of which the employee might not be aware. Neither CIR's nor "file notes" were the subject of formal grievances during this period, yet were critical ingredients to the "dossier building" strategy of management. Also, I have clear evidence that a considerable number of grievances were not filed during the mid 1980's because individuals were afraid of repercussions at work. Furthermore, informal discipline (*i.e.* verbal warnings carrying threats of discipline) during the recession effectively intimidated workers afraid of being placed on the "termination track".

6.5 DISCUSSION

In economic terms, FCL's recession coping strategies worked. The Fording River mine is not only the leader among British Columbia Coal Producers in productivity (1989, FCL 27.9 MTCC/person-shift versus 22 MTCC/person-shift at Cardinal River mine and 19.5 MTCC/person-shift B.C. average), but is acknowledged as one of the most cost-competitive suppliers of coal in the world.

Fording Coal Ltd., was awarded the 1987 Silver Medal for outstanding achievements in productivity and an Award of Merit for its successes in Marketing, from the Canada Awards for Business Excellence program sponsored by the Government of Canada. FCL was also recognized by the Canada Export Award program sponsored by the Department of External Affairs. Again in 1988, FCL was

recognized by the Canada Awards for Business Excellence program for its success in the North American coal market.

Management's successes, however, have had a cost in industrial relations terms, the extent of which is not yet known. In the following chapters, I describe a change in relations between workers and management that resulted from the company's recession coping strategies. Social organization changed from "accommodation" to "resistance" and "rebellion": a social change that could have negative consequences for the company and the community, if not mitigated.

PART FOUR

ACCOMMODATION, RESISTANCE AND REBELLION

Resources (focused via signification and legitimation) are structured properties of social systems, drawn upon and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction...Power is not itself a resource. Resources are media through which power is exercised...All forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors.

- Anthony Giddens, 1984:15-16.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ACCOMMODATION: FORCE, DISCOURSE AND RITUAL

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1981 and early 1982, coal was still in a "boom" cycle. New subdivisions were being built in Elkford, the near-by Greenhills mine was under construction and many FCL employees were buying homes in newly developed residential areas that offered parks, underground services, wide streets, and scenic views. The sudden and dramatic impact of the recession "hit" virtually overnight and talk "on the street" and at the mine changed from optimism to pessimism and concern.

Fording Coal immediately launched into aggressive recession coping strategies. Workers, for the most part, accepted the idea that increased productivity at the mine was the only way to ensure their life-style and economic futures.

In this chapter I focus on the social forces and mechanisms that helped produce accommodative relations between workers and management; force, discourse and ritual. The chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly, the impact and interplay of "force" and "discourse" is ethnographically expressed by a series of actual conversations and events, typical of social action/interaction during the recession, compressed into a single day-shift. Second, using the same stylistic device, I describe management ritual as experienced by workers and management in the last hours of a night-shift. Some of the conversations were recorded, others were recalled by informants. As a check on the typicality and accuracy of the conversations and events, I had three informants read the passages; each thought that I had quoted them; that I was relating one of their working days.

7.2 FORCE AND DISCOURSE: DAY-SHIFT ON THE HILL

It is 5.45 a.m., April, 1983. Overnight a snow squall dumped another inch on top of the two feet of snow remaining on the front yards of the new houses built in Elkford's phase 8 sub-division. The sky has cleared, you can see your breath. Bob (a haulage truck driver) leaves his house carrying his metal lunch pail in one gloved hand and a steaming, plastic cup of coffee in the other. It is quiet as he walks up the centre of the street leaving footprints in the new snow. Up ahead, Bob sees Larry leaving his house. Larry, also a haulage driver, waits on the street for Bob to catch up and they talk as they walk the two blocks to the corner where the mine bus will pick them up.

"Good mornin' Larry."

"Mornin'. Another dump of snow last night. Think spring will ever come to this valley?"

"Historically it has. The snow's gone down a couple of feet in the last week or two and today's gonna be warm again and some more will melt. You puttin' in a lawn when the snow's gone?"

"I'd like to, but with this work sharin' I'm so broke it'll just have to wait."

"Yeah, I know what you mean but at least we got jobs. They're layin' off all over the province. Even work sharin' is better than UIC."

As they arrive at the corner, they are joined by three other men just as the mini-van, used for transporting *shifters* and the shift-foreman to the mine, goes past. Shortly, the blue and white "school bus" pulls up to the curb. All climb aboard. Inside the bus, some are slouched in their seats trying to have a nap while others talk. There are six more stops before the bus' interior light is turned out, signalling "nap-time" for those not already asleep, and the bus leaves town for the thirty minute ride to the mine site.

At approximately 6:35 a.m. the bus arrives at the mine. Workers troop off the bus and down the stairs leading to the *dry*. The *dry* is divided into three sections; clean clothes lockers on one side, dirty clothes lockers on the other side, and gang showers, individual shower stalls and toilets in the middle. Men of all sizes and shapes, are walking, either in their *long-johns* or naked, from the clean side to the dirty side (women have a separate *dry*) to get dressed for work.

Bob and Larry have lockers in the same aisle. As they are donning their coveralls and workboots they are joined by Chris, a *cat skinner* (bull-dozer operator), who has just arrived on another bus.

"Good Day, eh." says Chris, "You guys hear about Hank yesterday?"

"No. What's Hank been up to now?" responded Bob.

"Paper work."

"Hank got a step? What for?"

"Yesterday when he was haulin' off six shovel he took an extra two minutes on this lunch break. Says he was reading and didn't notice the time. Anyway he got a step for 'failing to apply himself to the job'."

"Well, he should 'a known they're watchin' us like hawks. Is he gonna grieve it?"

"Don't think so. Says he wants to keep his head down and not cause trouble. Doesn't want to end up like Dick, bein' watched all the time so's they can get rid of him."

"Yeah, but Dick's a *dogger*, operates that shovel like there ain't no big production push. I mean, hasn't he clued in that this is recession and the company's just dyin' to get rid of guys who don't put out?"

"Well, you'd think so. Anyway, see you guys after shift." said Chris, as he walked down the hall toward dispatch.

Bob and Larry followed, and after filling their water jugs at a fountain, joined the queue in dispatch where they received their equipment and job assignments. Bob and Larry were both assigned to trucks hauling coal from loaders in "Taylor Pit" to the "breaker" (where coal is crushed into the appropriate size and rock is separated out; the first stage in processing "raw" coal into "clean" coal). After receiving their orders, they left dispatch and climbed into one of the *man-busses*, lined up outside the *dry*, that take workers to the pit areas. The *man-busses* left the dry at precisely 7:00 a.m.

Bob got off the bus at the breaker where his truck was parked. Five men from the off-going *shift* were standing together waiting to be picked up.

"Top o'the morning, lads." said Bob, "How was your night?"

"Brutal." came the reply, "Didn't stop all night."

"Except for Jim. Ha, ha, ha." said another.

"Shit!" Jim joined in, "I just stopped for a piss and two *shifters* appeared out of nowhere to see what the problem was. They must 'a thought I was *doggin' it* or something."

"You were *doggin' it*." came the retort, "Real men don't need to take a leak in a twelve hour shift. Ha, ha, ha."

"Yeah, it's production before pissin' around here, lately." said Jim, "Anyway, here's the bus. See ya Bob, have a good shift."

While the guys from the off-going shift climbed into the bus, Bob walked to his haulage truck (number 7 truck) to begin the *ground check*. He checked the oil levels, drained the air valves, checked the steering mechanisms, frame, tires, rock ejectors, hoist and box pins, fuel level, wheel seals and lights, *etc.* The truck seemed safe to operate. Bob climbed the ladder, his lunch pail in one hand and his water jug slung over his shoulder, onto the deck of the truck and checked the grease and

antifreeze levels, brake fluid levels and engine. He then opened the door, entered the truck cab and turned on his radios.

After checking the air pressure gauges to ensure that he had sufficient air pressure to re-start the truck, Bob, turned the engine off to check the emergency steering. It worked. He sounded the horn as a warning, then re-started the engine and throttled up the r.p.m.'s to check the oil and air pressure levels, checked, with the test switch, that the "over-speed" warning light worked, and then allowed the engine to idle while he filled out the truck's log book. The two-way radio crackled.

"Number 7 truck." came the *shifter's* voice.

"Go ahead for number 7 truck." Bob said into the microphone as he watched the *shifter's* pick-up truck, with its long, red-flagged "whip-antennae", drive slowly past the front of his truck.

"You got a problem there, 7 truck?"

"No, no problem here, just fillin' out the log book."

"Well, lets get rollin'."

Bob set the log book down, intending to fill it out later, sounded his horn twice to warn that the truck was about to move, turned on his headlights, and drove forward a few feet, stopped, drove backward a few feet, and stopped again, to test both his brakes and the truck's back-up horns. Bob put the truck into forward and under full throttle headed up the mountain toward Taylor Pit to collect his first load of coal.

At first lunch break, 11:00 a.m., Bob parked his truck in a marshalling area and opened his lunch pail. After pouring a cup of coffee, so that it would start to cool, he poured some water into a piece of paper towel that he used to wipe the coal-black dirt from his face and hands. Even so, he left black finger marks on his sandwich. After eating his lunch, Bob leaned back in his seat and stretched out, as

best he could, diagonally across the cab with his feet on the cab heater. He sipped his coffee, lit up a smoke and filled out his log book.

Some movement, out of the corner of his eye, caught Bob's attention. It was a whip-antennae: *shifter*. Bob checked his watch. It was 11:19 and a few seconds.

"Number 7 truck." came the voice over the radio.

"Go ahead for 7 truck." Bob replied.

"You got a problem, there?"

"No, no problem. Just finishin' my lunch."

"Well, by my watch it's 11:20 so lets see those wheels turn."

"On my way." said Bob as he sounded the truck horn with one hand, released the brakes with the other and steered out of the marshalling area onto the haulroad.

With each passing hour, as Bob drove up the mountain and hauled coal down the mountain, the day got warmer and the roads began to thaw and "break-up". Three o'clock finally arrived and Bob parked for lunch next to Larry's truck at the breaker. Bob hurried down the ladder, lunch pail in hand, and boarded Larry's truck to have lunch with him.

"Greetings earthling." said Larry, "How do you like it so far?"

"How do you think? My back's killin' me on these rough roads and the damn loaders won't break down so's we can have a break." replied Bob.

"Hey, if your back's hurtin', just slow down a touch."

"Tell you what, you slow down and I'll follow. I don't want to be labelled a *dogger*. Especially with the *shifter* on my ass like he's been all day. Shit, he must be down on his step quota or something."

"You too, eh? I thought he was only followin' me around." said Larry.

"No, they're down on everybody. Did you see what Jones is up to today?"

"Yeah, he's spent the whole day just sittin' there in his pick-up watchin' Dick

load trucks." reported Larry, "Say, you'd better get back to your truck. There's only a couple of minutes left on lunch. See ya later."

"Bye for now."

Later in the shift, at about 5:00 p.m., Bob was heading back up the mountain for another load. Up ahead was a grader, ditching the side of the road so that the running water didn't eat away the road surface. Bob slowed and followed the grader.

"Number 7 truck." squawked the radio.

"Go ahead for 7 truck." said Bob.

"You gonna follow that grader all the way up the mountain or are you gonna pass him?" said the foreman.

"I'm gonna pass as soon as I can see far enough around the bend to pass safely."

"Well, when you get to the top, pull over and we'll have a little chat." commanded the foreman.

"Hey, Bob." called Larry over the radio.

"Yeah, go ahead Larry."

"You in shit or somethin'?"

"I guess so." replied Bob, "They don't talk to ya unless you are in shit for somethin'."

"Well, good luck partner."

When Bob had driven up to Taylor Pit, he parked his truck next to the foreman's pick-up and climbed down out of the cab. The foreman waved him into the passenger side.

"You takin' it a little easy today?" asked the foreman.

"No, not really. Been given' her hell all day." Bob said.

"Well, you could have passed that grader sooner and your *shifter* says he had to get you going at shift start and after first lunch."

"Listen, I passed the grader as soon as I felt it was safe and he didn't have to get me going. I was fillin' out the log book when he called at shift-start and he tried to get me moving before lunch was even done." said Bob.

"Well, anyway, I just want to pass on that times are tough and they're gettin' tougher. Not all the mines in the valley will likely survive, what with cut-backs in prices and volumes. But if any mine is gonna survive, it's gonna be this one, if I got anything to do with it. You guys know the short-cuts and we expect you to take 'em. And you can tell the other guys that any *dogger* is gonna be 'down the road', so pass it on."

Back on his truck, Bob heard over the radio that Dick had been pulled off his shovel and taken to the *dry*. That meant only one thing: discipline.

At the end of the shift, as Bob showered with the others, he heard that Dick had been given another step for not applying himself to the job.

"What exactly was he doin'?" asked Bob.

"*Doggin' it* as usual," someone said.

"He's gonna get himself fired, if he doesn't watch it." said another.

"He's already doomed. He just doesn't realize it yet. They got his number. He's gone."

"Well, serves him right." said someone from behind a lather of soap suds, "These are tough times and he's not pullin' his weight."

At 8:15 p.m. the mine bus dropped Bob, Larry and the others off at the corner back in town.

"Man, I'm starvin'." said Larry.

"Me too," responded Bob, "But as soon as I eat, I'm off to bed."

"You not gonna try and stay up? We've got *graveyards* tomorrow night. You should try and get yourself *tuned up* for the *all-nighter*."

"Yeah, I know but I'm trashed. I'll get up early and then try to sleep in the afternoon for an hour or two before work." said Bob.

"O.K. see ya tomorrow."

7.3 MANAGEMENT RITUAL: NIGHT-SHIFT ON THE HILL

The following day Bob ran some errands and did some *chores* around the house. In the afternoon he went to bed to try and sleep before night-shift. He could not sleep. After "tossing and turning" for two hours he gave up, got dressed, went to the kitchen to make his sandwiches for work. At five o'clock, Bob ate a light supper with his family, and left the house at precisely 5:45 p.m., to catch the mine bus.

At work the radio was relatively quiet, as it usually was on *graveyards*. Larry said that that was because the "big bosses" weren't around so *shifters* didn't have to do the "impression-management-thing" to "justify" their existence. Perhaps he's right. By two in the morning Bob was looking at his watch again trying to will the hands to move toward three o'clock.

"Hey Bob." It was Larry on the radio.

"Go ahead Larry."

"How do you like it so far?" quipped Larry.

"It's tooth-picks in the eyelids time, man."

"You gonna catch forty winks at three or shall we `dine' together?" asked Larry.

"I'm gonna need a nap. I've been `wrestling with the devil' for the past hour and drivin' with my head out the window tryin' to stay awake and keep this *camel* on the track. And still got five hours to go."

"Know what ya mean. I think I'll end up at the breaker for lunch so if you're there too, I'll wake you up when lunch is over."

"Right on. Thanks man."

Bob woke up from his lunch nap at 3:19 a.m. It always amazed him how he could fall asleep for nineteen minutes and just wake up, without an alarm. It amazed him even more how he could sleep for the minute and a half to two minutes that it took to get loaded at the coal seam. Bob looked over at Larry's truck. No sign of Larry.

"Shit!", Bob said aloud to himself, "He's asleep. And he was supposed wake me up."

Bob sounded his horn, turned on the headlights, released the brakes and drove over to Larry's truck while flashing his lights and sounding the horn. Up popped Larry's head. With his hand, Larry gave the "thumbs-up" sign, turned on his headlights and drove off in a cloud of diesel smoke. Bob turned his truck around and headed back up the mountain for another load.

Sometime around 6:30 a.m. the breaker operator came on the radio to announce, "wakey, wakey everybody it's *show-time*."

"More like *circus* time." said an anonymous voice.

"Where are you at, Bob?" asked Larry.

"Dumpin' my load in the breaker, why?"

"Wonderin' if the *parade* started yet?"

"Yup. They're headin' up the hill with Santa himself at the front."

The "parade" and "show-time" referred to the 6:30 a.m. daily practice of senior management heading into the pits to see what is going on. "Santa Clause" was one of the general foremen. In shiny new "Broncos" and 4x4 pick-ups the "*big bosses*" headed, one behind the other, up the mountain, fanning out into the pits, to

check on operations. That is when the relative radio silence ceases.

"Jack Jones." radioed the area foreman.

"Good morning, sir." responded the *shifter*.

"There's a bunch of rock laying on the ramp coming into the pit. Get your rubber tire [dozer] over there to clean it up. And while I got you on the radio, what's the problem with 10 shovel? How come he isn't loading *shotgun* [double-back-up]?"

"Well, he just moved over to quickly *pick up* the point left on that low face and then he's gonna move back to the high face."

"Forget the point. Just get him into *shotgun* in that high face and lets get some production here."

"Yes sir." the *shifter* replied, "...Number 10 shovel."

"Go ahead for 10 shovel."

"O.K. lets be on the move. Head for the face and forget that point for now. Make sure you set up so we can get trucks in both sides."

"Yeah. O.K., but you gotta get this point before long or I'll be squeezed out."

"I know. We'll just leave it for the next shift...Calling the rubber tire dozer."

"Go for the R.T."

"Get them rocks on the ramp."

"I heard. I'm on the way already."

"Number 64 truck." called the control foreman.

"Go for 64 truck."

"You should be backed up another five or six feet so it doesn't take so long to get under that shovel."

"Yeah, right."

"Did you get that, 64 truck?"

"Yes, I got it."

"Jack Jones."

"Go ahead." answered the *shifter*.

"When that dozer on the *spoil* is tied up like that, pushin', get them trucks to free-dump on the south side of the spoil. We got a lot of waitin' time there."

"O.K....All you trucks haulin' in Taylor, make sure you free-dump on the south side of the spoil when that *cat's* busy."

"6 shovel." called the area foreman.

"Go ahead."

"Do you have to swing so far to load them trucks. Get yourself square to the face. You're wastin' time there."

"Number 7 truck." radioed the control foreman.

"Go for 7." responded Bob.

"Pull up a little so you're closer to the truck in front."

"Yeah. O.K."

"Did you get that 7 truck?"

"Yes. I got that."

"Good."

In the shower at the end of the shift Bob sighed as the steaming water cascaded over him. "Man, that feels good on the old back."

"Didn't think you were gonna make it, partner." said Larry, as he scrubbed his face, "You were all over the road."

"I know. And I wasn't the only one. Did you see the tire marks in the berm by 5 *spoil* there?" replied Bob.

"Yeah. I think that was me. I must 'a nodded off going up 'cause I suddenly found myself climbin' the berm on the wrong side of the road. Scary stuff. Ha, ha."

"Well, tomorrow night will be shorter, 'cause we got a safety meeting for an hour."

"Yeah, Fording's monthly chance to tell us how much they appreciate our good work and give us a hard-hat sticker to prove it, ha, ha, ha."

"Right on. And our chance to bitch back about safety."

7.4 DISCUSSION

Conversations between workers, and, at the workplace, between workers and supervisors illuminate the role of discourse in constructing and replicating practices; particularly those practices related to productivity. Management strategically use a discourse of ideological persuasion that complemented workers' basic cultural assumptions regarding "security", thereby converting the simple power of management into "legitimate" authority from workers' perspectives. Furthermore, workers' discourse between themselves--a discourse focused on "productivity or unemployment"--expressed and created social organizational relations based on accommodation.

This same discursive theme (productivity or unemployment) also reveals the impact of force or coercion, in the form of threatened or actual economic sanctions, in modifying and then maintaining authority and production relations. As Lincoln (1989) rightly points out, the combination of force and discourse are powerful social forces.

When the *breaker* operator called on the radio that it was "showtime", followed by workers' comments about "circus time" and the "parade", what they signalled--with real sociological precision--was the identification of a rehearsed performance; a management ritual. As Leach (1964) observed, such rituals remind,

and, I would add, dramatize (in a theatrical sense) the underlying order--*i.e.* authority relations, efficiency standards, social structure, organizational missions and goals--that is supposed to guide activities at the mine.

The ritual of the safety meeting, about which Larry commented with humor that it was the company's routinized practice to tell workers that their efforts were appreciated, suggests (and this is backed up by interviews) that workers knowledgeably perceive such momentarily explicit "verbal appreciation" as a fiction or mere impression management when compared with work-a-day management behaviour.

The conversations and events ethnographically presented (above) portends an underlying worker/management tension which eventually flares into workers' resistance of management authority. It is also clear that workers were not one-hundred per cent in favour of relationships based on accommodation. Bob's statement regarding workers' chance to "bitch back about safety" identifies what increasingly became a "legitimate" resource exploited by workers: contesting management power using the rhetoric of safety. "Safety" was only one of the resources workers utilized for resistance and rebellion, as the following chapter describes.

CHAPTER EIGHT
RESISTANCE AND REBELLION:
RHETORIC, PROTEST, STRIKE, SLOW-DOWN, WOBBLE.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Social forces and mechanisms played a role in constructing and maintaining relations of accommodation. In terms of collective actions, the social organization that obtained was a function of "aggregative collective phenomena". Workers, in their own self-interest chose, individually, to be accommodating during a period of time that, in retrospect, they characterize as "working in an atmosphere of fear and oppression" (P.T., mechanic, interview). In 1987, a pivotal event occurred that signalled a change from relations underpinned by "aggregative collective phenomena" to those inspired, discovered, created and expressed as a result of and in the context of "group collective phenomena". That event was the 1987, province wide, "Day of Protest" in British Columbia.

The "Day of Protest" was the first occurrence of a *wobble* at FCL since 1981. The "strike" was called by provincial labour leaders to protest the introduction of the new "British Columbia Industrial Relations Reform Act of 1987" which contained provisions that, from labour's point of view, disproportionately favoured capital over labour. During the "strike" Steelworkers picketed at the schools in Elkford and the Line Creek mine, and the teachers set up a picket line across the only bridge leading to both the Greenhills mine and FCL. One former union executive had this to say;

Thank God the teachers set up pickets at the bridge. I think our guys were so intimidated by the company that we could not have found enough brave souls, willing to risk being singled out and fired for inciting a *wobble*, to have done it ourselves. By having the teachers do it, guys were willing to risk taking the day off, and all of them did. What they discovered was that Fording was not as all powerful as they thought. Our guys rediscovered the *wobble*.

What workers "rediscovered" was the power of group collective action. But in order for this single event to have had the impact on workers' consciousness that it had, the "stage" had to have been, already, set for such action: it was.

Between 1982 and 1987, workers, through aggregative collective action, were becoming increasingly resistant and militant, in increasing numbers. In the first section of this chapter I describe the mechanisms that generated such spiralling and spreading militancy. The second section describes management's attempt to improve labour/management relations. The third section is devoted to group collective phenomena, particularly, wild-cat strikes.

8.2 "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"

At the start of a night-shift in 1985, I observed haulage truck driver, M.C., changing clearance lights on "his" haulage truck. I was in the *shifter's* pick-up truck at the time and asked what was happening. The *shifter* said;

As you well know, you can't run a truck unless it has at least one clearance on each side at the front [of the truck], and at least one marker light on each side. M.C. just called, just before you got in my truck, to say that both of his clearance lights on the right side was burnt out and that he was going to try and take one of the two marker lights from one side and replace one of the burnt out lights on the front so he can operate. I said, 'fly at her', cause otherwise he'd be down 'til a mechanic came to replace the lights.

I watched M.C. make the switch and drive off to get a load of coal. On M.C.'s days-off, I happened to meet him at the post-office in Elkford. When I mentioned, in jest, that he was becoming a mechanic, what with his clearance-light-changing skills, he replied, bitterly;

Yeah, and you know what thanks I get? Next shift I was five minutes late for work. The first time I been late in four years and I got a step. Shit, I saved them probably an hour's down-time the night before, but, that don't matter. Five minutes late and it's step-city. Well, enough's enough. No more mister nice guy for me.

In another incident, E.R (haulage driver) related that he had been

disciplined for "failing to apply himself to the job".

I was hauling down from the top [of the mountain] and at lunch time I drove to the very back of the *spoil* 'cause that's the only place on the *spoil* where my radio would pick up CBC. As I was eatin' the foreman and his boss came drivin' by, made a circle and drove up to my truck. The foreman left the pick-up and climbed the ladder and came into my cab. He wanted to know what I was doin' so far off the road. I explained about the radio and all that and he said that it was wastin' time drivin' over here to park and not to do it again. He said a CIR would be in my work record accordingly. After lunch, I timed how long it took to drive back to the haul road from where I was parked; it took eight seconds. And those "precious" seconds came off my lunch time not Fording's production time. I was some "pissed-off" about the whole thing, so I *dogged-it* the rest of the shift.

Both drivers (E.R. and M.C.) made it a point to relate the events to other workers which highlights the role of discourse in changing relations. Implied in both stories is worker perception that the tenets of "moral reciprocity" had been violated. Their discourse served to incite others (certainly close friends of the worker involved) into acts of resistance, *e.g. dogging-it* when the opportunity presented itself.

Resistance, also, involved workers' utilization of a legitimate and legitimating discourse: the rhetoric of safety. Safety standards for mines operating in British Columbia were enshrined in the "Mines Act, S.B.C. 1980, c. 28" (since repealed and replaced by the "Health, Safety and Reclamation Code for Mines in British Columbia, 1990). Workers used the rhetoric of safety when, in many cases, they were really making a statement about power relations; resisting authority. For example, S.M., a 170 tonne truck driver, reported that she was parked for close to two hours on one shift because of foggy conditions. She admitted;

Sure I could have drove in the fog. I mean, I have before, but the conditions were marginal. And I don't do marginal things for Fording Coal anymore. Not the way they've been treating us.

She used the legitimate discourse of safety to justify retaliation. Similarly, roads that workers are perfectly willing to drive on, one week, suddenly become too narrow (the width of the road didn't actually change) to operate on, the next. The change

from workers willingness to co-operate at one time but not another could usually be traced to a disciplinary incident involving one worker who may or may not have been on the shift that refused--for "safety" reasons--to haul on the "narrow" road. In tracing back such instances of resistance, it was usually the case that either the individual involved in the discipline or a "social entrepreneur" seizing the opportunity, "talked-up" the incident with fellow workers, inciting workers' feelings (invoking culturally relevant values such as, "justice", "fair treatment", "dignity", *etc.*) to the point that other "informal leaders" were actively searching for safety standard violations that would justify "shutting-down".

On rare occasions equipment would be vandalized to "create" justifications for not operating. For example, I witnessed one shovel operator dig the bucket into the rock *face* while, at the same time, "swinging" the shovel. The action "popped" off the already loose *saddle-blocks* preventing further operation until repaired. In another case I witnessed a truck driver use his hard-hat to break the truck's back-up mirror. He was *down* until the mirror was replaced. Much more common than these isolated instances of vandalism, is the use of "folk technology" to "save" necessary repairs until *spare* equipment was *manned* (therefore no longer *spare*), or until the worker felt it politically, and symbolically, expedient to *shut-down*.

It is not an uncommon occurrence at the mine to find that a piece of equipment is operating only because the driver has utilized folk technology to perform a temporary "fix" using paper towel or some other "raw material" at hand. Folk technology, in such cases, becomes part of workers' attempts at transforming the interactive environment within the context of industrial relations.

For example, one operator (K.W.) had an electrical problem with his truck preventing it from moving (even though the box was in the down position) unless the hoist override switch was activated. (The hoist override switch ensures that the

truck remains stationary until the truck box is in the down position unless the switch--which has to be manually held in the "on" position--is activated.) K.W. had a plastic sandwich bag (that he had opened flat and then twisted into a plastic "string") wrapped several times around the hoist override switch and the heater control knob, keeping the hoist override in the "on" position. K.W. explained, "This way I can keep runnin' 'til I want a break or 'til some boss hassles me, then off comes the plastic bag and this baby [(truck)] is *down* [for repairs]." In another example, J.S. used several twisted lengths of paper towel (towelling used at the mine is particularly strong. Layers of absorbant paper are interwoven with thread for strength) strung from the driver's door, across his lap and tied to the passenger's door, of his rubber-tired dozer, in an effort to keep the driver's door, which had a broken latch, closed. When told by the *shifter* to work through his lunch, J.S. removed the towel "rope" and said that he would be happy to, but, his door just "popped" open and would not stay shut. His R-T dozer was *down*.

Through folk technology, objects can be constructed as needed, and can be easily, and unobservably, disposed of. Particular forms of folk technology are "born" in a specific context, have useful "lives" and then "die" when no longer useful or needed. For example, in 1984, S.D., an equipment operator was *stepped* for leaving his grader at lunch break in order to have lunch with his *buddy*, an R-T dozer operator. Following the discipline, truck drivers, in particular, began to use to use paper towel to communicate where they intended to park for lunch. This was done to avoid attracting the attention of supervisors through communicating over the two-way radios. A driver would wrap paper towelling around side-view mirror supports at various positions to indicate, to the driver he wanted to meet for lunch, where he expected to be at lunch time (e.g. towel at the top for the *load-out*, middle for a marshalling area, bottom represented the *spoil*). Each time these drivers passed

each other on the haul road they adjusted their speed and the positioning of the towelling until they got a match with their "buddy". When a match was obtained both drivers simply maintained their speeds so that they would end up at the appropriate location without "advertising" on the radio and without having to risk discipline, to one or the other, for stopping early in order to meet. The use of paper towel for communication has been traced from beginnings on S.D.'s shift from where it spread to the other work crews. The practice began to decrease in 1988 as militancy and solidarity increased among workers. Since the company "softened" its approach to discipline (beginning in 1989) the use of paper towel to communicate has vanished. Workers now communicate openly (over the two-way radios) to arrange meeting for lunch breaks.

Increasingly, as the recession wore on, management's morning ritual became increasingly dysfunctional. Gradually the impact of "show-time" changed from reminding workers of operating standards and management authority to providing an opportunity for communicating resistance. The following example, in which a worker utilized his folk technology resources, demonstrates the political symbolism of his actions, not only to the individual involved, but to other workers on the *hill*.

J.D. was operating number 79 truck. It was night-shift. The electrical *card* (printed circuit card) that controls forward propulsion was loose in the electrical cabinet. J.D. had tied it in place with some paper towel. At approximately 6:40 a.m., I recorded the following conversations and events.

"79 truck." radioed the area foreman.

"Go ahead." responded J.D.

"What did you stop there, for? You got a problem?"

"Just stopped to clean my windows."

"You're to clean your windows at the shovel if you get some waitin' time. Otherwise you're to keep haulin'."

About two minutes later, I heard J.D. on the radio, telling his *shifter* that his

truck was down for no propulsion. His report was answered by three other workers who, one at a time over the radio, chuckled, said, "Right on!" and "Hudda-go J.". His fellow workers knew that it was a "political break-down". On the *man-bus* ride down the *hill* at shift-end one worker said to J.D.

"Hey, J., I saw you in the electrical cabinet. How long did you have the paper towel on that propulsion card?"

J.D. replied with a smirk, "Oh, about seven or eight hours."

While supervision, of the kind exhibited by management in their morning ritual, does not, of itself, constitute harassment, in the context of the last half-hour of a twelve hour night shift, often worked under marginal conditions such as fog or snow, already tired employees increasingly interpreted this ritualized management behaviour as "needless harassment". Harassment that, from workers' growing, militant perspective, justified resistance.

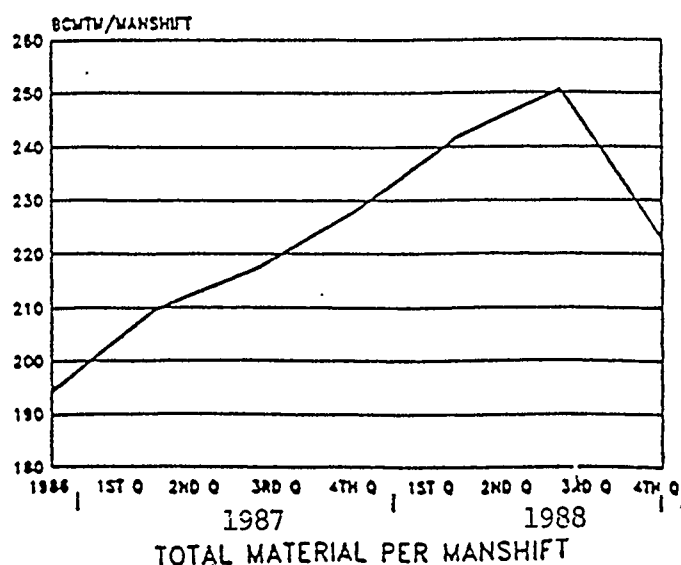
In defense of the company, it was not and could not be known whether the recession of the 1980's would turn out to be "terminal". The dramatic increase in efficiency, productivity and profitability clearly demonstrates that the business and IR strategies, informed by management's culture, were successful, in economic terms. They were successful, that is, until 1988. The following excerpt (Figure 8.1) from a company newsletter indicates a dramatic change. Worker resistance had escalated to a level that impacted production.

In another signal event, a number (estimates range from 12 - 30) of FCL workers (represented by the Steelworkers' union), in 1988, approached the president of the more radical United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), asking him to take over as the union representing FCL employees. The attempt by one union to take over from another is known as a "*raid*". After more than 50% of FCL workers signed-up with the UMWA, a vote, supervised by the B.C. Labour Relations Board (BCLRB), was carried out. The *raid* failed but had important consequences. The

raid signalled that workers wanted more militant representation from their union. This did, in fact, occur.

FIGURE 8.1 Fording Coal - Newsletter excerpt.

One area of concern is depicted in the following graph. For the last four (4) months of 1988 and going into 1989, we have seen a marked drop in our productivities.



(Source: Fording Coal 1989)

Under pressure from the members, and some "back-room politics" that would provide data for an entire thesis, "...on November 15, 1989..the whole Executive resigned (USWA 1989; Fernie Free Press 1989c). Elections were held and a new, more militant executive was elected. One of the new union executive explained that the union was now "hardline", left-wing, and militant.

We have no choice. There has been anarchy down here [at the union hall]. If we don't take aggressive action to defend the C.A. [collective agreement], the men will do whatever they have to on their own (USWA executive, interview).

The *raid*, also, had an impact on FCL's management.

8.3 "THE RAID REALLY WOKE US UP"

The decrease in productivity, increasing incidences of threatened and actual *wobbles*, and, particularly, the UMW *raid* prompted Calgary head office to attempt to change labour/management relations at the mine. A Fording Coal Ltd., executive told me;

The *raid* really woke us up to the fact that many of our employees did not feel part of our success. I guess you could say that there was a certain degree of disciplinary over-kill by some control foremen in the past. But the biggest problem is lack of communication. We have not adequately communicated to our employees that their efforts have been appreciated.

His statement is corroborated by the following quote from the company newsmagazine, The Carbon Copy;

Improved employee communications and recognition will be a priority this year. To this end, a regular news-letter will be published and an employee recognition program will be instituted (Fording Coal 1989a).

Some workers did notice a change at the mine. For example, a "letter to all members", written by a mechanic in the *shops*, that appeared in the USWA newsletter, reads;

...I have seen a few examples of a softer line taken by the company (e.g. unpaid leave for special circumstance, greater flexibility on shift preference). There are still a lot of hard line [management] attitudes in existence on the mine site but do not forget that it took many years to develop them and it will take many years to get better...Although this may sound strange we must make sure that production does not drop off...[or] they will revert to their former ways (Dunfield 1989).

Through an attempted "softer" approach to labour/management relations, improved communication, employee recognition, and a management "team" concept, FCL was attempting to introduce a change in the organizational culture of management. A change that, not only takes time, but is also "intrinsically difficult" (Schein 1985).

According to *shifter*, N.C., production still remained the number one priority. No "marks" were given for supervisor's interpersonal skills in dealing with

employees. N.C. claimed that his comment, to a control foreman, that he had had a "good talk" to a worker who had parked a couple of minutes early at the end of the shift, was met with the curt reply that "the *dogger* should have been stepped". Shift foreman, F.L., related that they [foremen] were told to be, "a little more courteous" when talking to employees, but that discipline had to be maintained.

The most articulate expression of workers' feelings, regarding the employee recognition program, is contained in a letter written by, equipment operator, Ross Wilcox, after being notified that he was to receive a lapel pin in appreciation of his years of service. His letter to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, FCL (published in the USWA newsletter) reads, in part, as follows;

I believe the true test of a [sic] employee's value rests in their ongoing treatment rather than a service recognition program...I am left with the impression that Fording Coal places no value on my 14 years of service. My individual treatment by the management at Fording River Operations...shows, in my opinion, no recognition of service or dedication given to the company...It is for that reason I feel I must turn down your offer of a lapel pin. I could not, in all conscience wear it with pride and appreciation (Wilcox 1991).

When this letter appeared in On The Line, the general consensus, among workers with whom I spoke, was that the letter expressed their own feelings. The attempt by management at organizational culture change to improve relations has largely failed, to date.

8.4 "SO WHAT ARE THEY GONNA DO? FIRE ME?"

If the goal of union leaders and "social entrepreneurs" within the workforce was to increase solidarity among workers, they have been successful. The attitudes and actions of workers, after the "1987 Day of Protest", bear little resemblance to the attitudes and actions of workers in 1982, for example. After the "Day of Protest" workers' resistance became even more militant, encompassing more and more workers, culminating in group collective acts of "rebellion", such as picket-line violence during the 1989 strike, a *wobble* on the first day of the new collective agreement (called the "C.A. *wobble*"), a series of other wild-cat strikes, and work-to-rule campaigns. The latest *wobble* occurred March 26 and 27, 1991, just days before the mine was to cease operations, in any case, for a scheduled Spring shut-down.

The process of group collective action engenders a fundamental change and a virtually instantaneous re-evaluation of "normal" social relations. This re-evaluation and re-interpretation of "reality" forms the basis of an effort, by participants, to reconstruct internal and external relations.

The reconstruction of internal relations is best exemplified by the C.A. *wobble* in 1989, on the first day of the new collective agreement. Workers had already signalled, *via* the large numbers who actively supported the UMWA *raid*, that they wanted a more militant union. When word spread, among workers, that with the signing of the C.A. those who had participated in the picket-line violence had not been guaranteed immunity from company discipline, and were, in fact suspended, workers rebelled. An operator from the plant reported;

If I'd 'a known the company wasn't going to "forgive and forget" the incident [picket-line violence], I'd never have voted for the contract. As it was I only voted in favour 'cause the union said it was a good deal. Now, after talkin' to the guys, I'm not so sure.

Suddenly, though, "forgiveness" was not the only issue. Others began to talk about

how narrow the vote was for acceptance of the agreement--50.77% in favour (Ferne Free Press 1989a)--suggesting that FCL had purposely *hired-on* twenty-seven people during the month before the strike in an attempt to swing the vote (less than six votes did make the difference between acceptance or rejection). The motives of the union, regarding advocating acceptance, were questioned, particularly concerning voting irregularities that some claimed had occurred (the vote was not supervised by the BCLRB). Some workers took it upon themselves to contact the BCLRB to get the vote over-turned but failed since the labour board only recognizes two parties to the agreement, the company and the union, and neither called for a supervised vote.

When a senior union executive climbed onto the tail-gate of a pick-up truck to address workers at the "picket-line", exhorting them to start back to work, he was shouted down and forced to abandon the scene entirely. The wobble continued, lasting just over a week (Ferne Free Press 1989b). During the wild-cat, workers began to organize a sodality to dispose of the current union officials; by November they were successful. Workers--as a result of their collective experience--questioned, set themselves up in opposition to, and then recreated, their internal relations to better reflect the attitudes created and expressed by their collective action.

Other *wobbles* occurred. As an example of the group dynamics of collective action (a nascent state experience) and participants' attempts to restructure external relations, I have chosen a wild-cat that began May 28, 1990, which lasted for four days (Ferne Free Press 1990a). This particular *wobble* is interesting because, for the first three days, there was no picket-line. Workers simply did not *show-up* for work. A sodality was in operation, again.

Utilizing the technique of "snowball" contacts based on trust, workers phoned workmates who then phoned others, resulting in unified absence from work. The

same network was in operation again, on the night of May 30. Workers had decided that they could not continue to allow FCL management to maintain coal shipments while workers were on "strike". Surreptitious arrangements were made to stop a train.

The night of May 30 was cold, and drizzling rain. Cars and pick-up trucks began arriving at a pre-arranged section of isolated dirt road near the rail-way tracks that led to the Fording River mine. After parking, they walked (about 600 meters) to the tracks where they waited for the coal train scheduled to arrive within a couple of hours (the schedule was known because one of the workers, whose job at the mine was to confirm train arrivals, had done just that, from his home). In spite of the cold and wet, workers were in high spirits, laughing and joking, and sipping coffee and tea from thermoses.

Responding to my question about whether or not he feared discipline for his part in the strike, J.V., an equipment operator, replied;

So what are they gonna to do? Fire me? They can't fire me without firing everybody else. We don't even have picket lines up and almost nobody except for a few *scabs* are going to work. The guys have really pulled together this time. Look around you at all the people here. It's one o'clock in the morning, it's cold and pourin' rain and look at all the people here just to stop a train from going into the mine. The guys are united and the union will go to the wall for us this time.

J.V.'s statement was greeted with cheers from the small group that had gathered about as we spoke.

At about 1:35 a.m. the lights of the train could be seen coming up the narrow valley. Two vehicles had made it up the dirt road and were parked, one on each side of the tracks, with their headlights pointed toward the on-coming train. The train thundered closer (the ground shook). Suddenly the train's brakes locked on with a deafening screech. The train's inertia carried it about 30 meters past the "picket-line" and workers (approx. 100) scrambled along the steep sides of the track

to get in front of it, blocking the path to the mine with their bodies.

One of the men from the train came out and in good-natured discussion passed the time until his supervisors arrived, at about 2:20 a.m. The Canadian Pacific supervisor took out his notebook and wanted to know why workers had stopped the train. One of the workers was "volunteered" to provide a list of grievances that included, "safety", "job-posting" violations, "trades" disputes, discipline, and FCL's failure to follow grievance procedures. As the list was being read others shouted out their complaints.

"Sally, over there, [pointing] was cornered by a boss and intimidated into sayin' the union was forcing her into filin' a grievance which is bullshit." said one.

"Harry can't get vacations to solve family problems." said another.

"They're just treatin' us bad." yelled another, "We're settin' production records and still get no respect."

"Our livelihood's at stake here. We want them to cut the crap." shouted another voice from the back.

It seemed that workers wanted all problems, real or imagined, solved as a result of their actions. When asked what they wanted, they wanted everything.

The following morning (day four of the *wobble*) a "picket-line" was set up at the bridge to prevent traffic from going to the mine. The union and the company met with BCLRB officials in Cranbrook, B.C., in an attempt to end the walk-out. Workers agreed to return to work on the conditions that no one would be disciplined for their part in the "strike" and on the promise of expedited negotiations to address the formal concerns presented by the union on workers' behalf.

8.5 DISCUSSION

During the recession, workers increasingly perceived that the tenets of "moral reciprocity" were being violated. Individual actions of resistance (often using folk technology), coupled with the emotive discourse of "social entrepreneurs" and the legitimating rhetoric of safety, undermined company attempts--through force and discourse--to continually reproduce accommodation and unchallenged management authority. Management's discourse, however, was ineffective without a complementary discourse from workers, and, as Lincoln (1989) has pointed out, force alone, cannot maintain relations indefinitely.

Workers' resistance began to negatively impact production, prompting FCL to try and improve relations. Management's attempt to change labour relations failed, however, because the basic assumptions of management did not change. Management personnel and company newsletters "said" the correct words but, supervisors' actions "said" the opposite.

The "Day of Protest" strike in 1987 reawakened workers to the power of collective action. Through the transformative, process dynamics of group collective action, workers changed the "character" of their union and attempted to alter external relations that they now perceived to be contingent and coercive. All indications point toward the creation of a "culture of solidarity" among workers that may, in future, make it extremely difficult for either the union or the company to convince workers to, at some point, begin to rely, once again, on formal, institutionalized mechanisms to solve IR conflicts without resort to illegal workstoppages. Nevertheless, workers' discourse and actions are "communicating" with power, that violations of their perceptions regarding moral reciprocity, and the social contract will not go unchallenged.

CONCLUSION

The economic recession of the early 1980's acted as a catalyst that prompted a series of company coping strategies and, initially, an accommodative relationship between workers and management, suggesting the sufficiency of a purely economic analysis of industrial relations at FCL. However, increasing resistance by increasing numbers of workers, throughout the recession, culminated in collective acts of resistance even before the recession's end (increased prices, in 1988, signalled the improvement of coal markets), which undermines the acceptability of IR analysis in strictly economic terms.

Managers and workers are not simple automata, confined to stimuli reactions. They are knowledgeable agents, acting and interacting in a complex environment perceived through the filters of their respective cultures.

Underpinning the social processes described in my study are these two contrasting cultures that developed, over time, as each group learned to cope with their problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein 1985). The culture of the workforce is rooted in labour history. The organizational culture of management is founded on the influence and hegemony of engineers responsible for the design, construction and continuing operations of the mine. In many respects these two cultures are antithetical, often permitting, different interpretations and reactions to events.

Management's reactions to the recession, in the workplace, involved cost-cutting and increased efficiency, enforced by a strict disciplinary regime, communicated through discourse and ritual. Workers' initial accommodative reaction was based on "security first" assumptions and a discourse, shared with management, of "efficiency or unemployment". Relations of accommodation,

however, were eventually superseded as workers' perceptions that strongly held cultural tenets of "moral reciprocity" and the "social contract" were being violated. But, workers were bound by the constraints of the IR system--the outer structure, in Gold's (1985) terms--requiring them to seek solutions to their perceived needs outside of the IR system.

In Canada (as with most western industrialized nations) a bureaucratic system of industrial relations has been imposed by the state to defuse industrial conflict. The industrial relations system sharply limits and channels workers' collective actions and, while limiting employers' actions to some degree, strategies available to employers, within the system, narrowly confine the industrial action options of workers. For example, the "no strike, no lock-out" clauses of the collective agreement do not prevent management from "legally" achieving the same results as a lock-out, simply by calling it a "temporary shut-down"; workers have no such "legal" recourse. Similarly, both the union and management can utilize the structurally imposed grievance system for strategic purposes, *e.g.* either party can "flood" the system at great expense to both. Solidarity and collective action tend, therefore, to emerge only when the union or the company circumvent bureaucratic channels and/or the "spirit" of the industrial relations system--the social contract--and workers seek, or are forced, to rely on their mutual solidarity as the basis for their power and security.

Until the "Day of Protest" in 1987, workers had increasingly demonstrated their resistance through "aggregative collective action" (Alberoni 1984), a more militant discourse, and retaliatory acts, often utilizing the resources of folk technology. The protest strike reawakened workers' knowledge of the power of "group collective action". During illegal strikes and other group collective actions, the participants who formed the nucleus of the rebellion, experienced what Alberoni

calls the nascent state in which participants unite and question or reinterpret as contingent, their former "reality". The "group chemistry" of the nascent state creates and expresses a proposal made by one part of the social system as participants set themselves up in opposition to the existing order. The experience of workers in the nascent state resulted in a restructuring of internal relations--a more militant union executive--which more closely reflected, in institutional form, their collective-action experiences, and attempted a restructuring of external relations with the company.

While workers failed to affect outer structure changes, they have managed, from time to time (and for short periods of time), to change their inner structure relations with management *via* work-to-rule actions. By affecting changes in their internal and external relations, workers may be in the very process of creating an emergent "culture of solidarity" (Fantasia 1988).

It is important to stress that social change at the mine has not been linear. Rather, it has been an advancing and receding "contested transformation" (Johnson 1979:237). There have been times when the tide of discontent among workers seemed likely to swell into a potentially violent tidal wave of anarchy, only to recede, once again, into relative calm and quiet. Both the company and the union, each in their own way, have acted to temporarily constrain potential chaos. Stability and relative harmony that would benefit workers, the company and the union, depends, however, on change that goes deeper than saying the correct words or providing better remuneration for employees. As Kervin (1988: 232) points out, an understanding of cultural and social mechanisms, "...provides an understanding of not just why things are as they are, but also how they can be changed." The change required is socio-cultural.

Two of workers' basic cultural values, trust and forgiveness--values shared by management personnel in their roles as community members--seem to be the

missing ingredients in labour/management relations. Trust and forgiveness as the cornerstones of a "friendship" developed for mutual benefit could reduce industrial conflict in the medium to long-term. As a start, management should abide by the social contract, not just the "letter" of the formal contract, between the union and themselves. That is, FCL should change from what appears to be a "union-repression" IR strategy to a "union-acceptance" strategy that recognizes the legitimate right of the union to be a party, through negotiations, to all decisions impacting, at least, those areas covered by the collective agreement. For example, the "Gain Sharing Plan" (bonuses for workers based on improvements in profit, productivity and safety) unilaterally presented by FCL in 1990, as a "take it or leave it" offer to employees (it was rejected by the union with the support, as far as I can tell, of the majority of workers), if offered again, should first be negotiated with the union and then, jointly, presented to workers for ratification.

Changes must also occur in the work-a-day practice of industrial relations. FCL executives correctly recognized that the behavioural expression of their organizational culture was becoming dysfunctional, not only in IR terms, but in economic terms as well. The discourse of change, however, must be backed by education for front-line supervisors to improve inter-personal skills, and, if necessary, replacement of "hard-line" disciplinarians in middle management positions if their behaviours do not change; that is, discourse must be backed by re-training and, as a last resort, by force.

Workers and their union, for their part, must respond positively to evidence of positive change. Perhaps they should follow the advise of one management person who suggested at a safety meeting in the fall of 1990 that, "...we should at least try to be or pretend to be friends and perhaps the rest would come." When I asked a group of workers, after the meeting, what they thought of the idea, one

replied, "FCL has demonstrated time and time again that they are much more dangerous as a friend than as an enemy". Given workers' time horizon of "past-that-informs-the-present" and the context of industrial relations at the time, her response could have been accurately predicted. I am not convinced, however, that the response would have been the same in a different IR environment.

Workers' and management's interests have areas of commonalty. During an interview in February 1991, P.N., an equipment operator, said;

We want to do a good job and we do a good job. Most workers aren't out to screw the company just 'cause they're the company. We want the company to succeed probably as much as the company does. I mean, I'd rather work for an outfit that makes money rather than one that doesn't and you don't know if it'll go broke next day. But we also got to be treated as humans and appreciated for our work.

Similarly, the union would co-operate fully, I believe, with company attempts to improve relations. For example, prior to the most recent *wobble*, March 26, 1991, at a meeting held at the union hall, one union executive said;

Listen, I've told you guys that the *wobble* is illegal and not supported by the union. But if you intend to go to the bridge [to set up a picket-line] regardless, just do one thing...make sure you let the Greenhills workers through the line so they can go to work. We all recognize that Greenhills management are reasonable and we all wish we had the same. So don't do anything that will stop their production. They deserve better.

If FCL's management was "reasonable" (however defined by this union executive), the union would, similarly, actively discourage their members from taking any action that would impede production.

At Fording Coal Ltd.'s Fording River Operations, the story of industrial relations has been an anthology of missed opportunities and squandered possibilities for a more co-operative working environment. The power of worker solidarity and the social organizational change that has already occurred, now threatens to undermine FCL's position as a stable supplier of cost competitive coal products on the world market.

Changes in labour/management relations are needed to avoid and divert the continued escalation of industrial conflict. As in any set of social relations, relative harmony depends on mutual understanding and trust. If cooperative interaction between two such unlikely partners--given their respective, antithetical cultures--is going to become a reality, it seems necessary that the two groups come to terms with the important differences represented by their separate world views. At stake are the continued existence of the mine in an increasingly competitive global market, and the valued life-style of workers, management and their families in the beautiful, mountain community of Elkford, B.C.

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