

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Workplace Reform and Weddels Staff:
a Study in Retrospect of Staff
Perspectives**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Master of Philosophy
at
Massey University**

Alan Barry Foster

1995

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| List of Tables: | iv |
| List of Figures: | v |
| Acknowledgements: | vi |
| Abstract: | vii |
| Introduction: | 1 |
| Chapter One : Literature Review | 7 |
| 1.1 Introduction | 7 |
| 1.2 Taylor | 10 |
| 1.2.1 The labour process on Bravermans deskilling critique | 11 |
| 1.2.2 Understanding the labour process from a managerial strategy | 13 |
| 1.2.3 Typologies of managerial strategies | 15 |
| 1.2.4 Labour process as a dual process | 17 |
| 1.2.5 Managerial power to control | 18 |
| 1.2.6 Taylorism undermining the sole creative factor | 19 |
| 1.3 An Economic Perspective | 20 |
| 1.4 Flexible Specialization | 20 |
| 1.5 Ideals Types and Reality | 24 |
| 1.6 Post Fordism and Fordism | 25 |
| 1.6.1 Innovation | 26 |
| 1.6.2 Participation | 29 |
| 1.6.3 Socio-Technical systems | 31 |
| 1.6.4 The quality debate | 33 |
| 1.6.5 Human resource management | 35 |
| 1.6.6 Training and skills development | 37 |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|
| 1.7 | Developing a Model | 41 |
| 1.8 | Conclusion | 41 |
| Chapter Two: | The Meat Industry and Weddel Tomoana | 45 |
| 2.1 | Difficulties the Export Meat Processing is Encountering | 45 |
| 2.2 | Industrial Relations in the Meat Processing Industry | 53 |
| 2.2.1 | Meat Workers Union | 53 |
| 2.2.2 | Other unions in the Meat Industry | 54 |
| 2.2.3 | Employers in the Meat Industry | 54 |
| 2.2.4 | Conflict in the Meat Processing Industry | 54 |
| 2.3 | Weddel and Tomoana | 57 |
| 2.3.1 | Weddel: a brief history | 57 |
| 2.3.2 | Tomoana: a brief history | 59 |
| 2.4 | Total Customer Service | 59 |
| 2.4.1 | Changing Culture | 61 |
| 2.4.2 | Changing Management | 61 |
| 2.4.3 | Changing industrial relations | 61 |
| 2.4.4 | Consultation and information sharing | 62 |
| 2.4.5 | Training and Awareness Raising | 63 |
| 2.4.6 | Project teams | 64 |
| 2.5 | In addition to Total Customer Service | 64 |
| 2.5.1 | International Standards Organization Certification | 64 |
| 2.5.2 | Safety Hazard Teams | 67 |
| 2.5.3 | Towards 2000 | 67 |
| 2.5.4 | May 1993 announcement | 67 |
| Chapter Three: | Methodology | 70 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 70 |
| 3.2 | Selection | 71 |
| 3.3 | Entry | 72 |
| 3.4 | Interview | 72 |
| 3.5 | Analysis | 73 |
| 3.6 | Content analysis and Matrices | 73 |
| 3.7 | Ethics | 73 |
| 3.8 | Difficulties with Entrance | 74 |
| Chapter Four: | Management | 76 |
| 4.1: | Introduction | 76 |
| 4.2: | Analysis | 77 |
| 4.3: | Conclusion | 91 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter Five: Workers at Tomoana | 94 |
| 5.1: Introduction | 94 |
| 5.2: Analysis | 94 |
| 5.3: Conclusion | 108 |
| Chapter Six: Unions at Tomoana | 112 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 112 |
| 6.2: Analysis | 114 |
| 6.3: Conclusion | 132 |
| Chapter Seven: External Participants | 135 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 135 |
| 7.2: Meaning of workplace reform. | 137 |
| 7.3: Conclusion | 145 |
| Summary and Conclusion: | 148 |
| Summary | 148 |
| Conclusion | 152 |
| References | 159 |
| Appendix | 168 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1.1 : Making distinctions between Flexible Specialisation and Mass Production | 22 |
| Figure 1.1 : Bolwijn and Kumpe's four phase model | 28 |
| Figure 2.1 : North Island Sheep and Beef Numbers 1971 to 2000 | 47 |
| Figure 2.2 : Weddel NZ Market Share | 58 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 2.1 : Comparison between a meat freezing company and a market oriented meat processing company | 50 |
| Table 2.2 : Comparing the elements of work structure in a freezing works and a market orientated meat processing plant | 51 |
| Table 2.3 : Chronology of workplace initiatives at Tomoana | 60 |
| Table 2.4 : The implementation of Total Customer Service at Weddel's Tomoana | 66 |

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my supervisor, Glyn Jeffrey of the Human Resource Management Department Massey University, for all the assistance and used comments he gave me, especially the painful job of proof reading. I also wish to thank my assistant supervisor, Chris Eichbaum Director of Labour Studies at Massey University who provided technical advice, and Martin Tolich, of the Sociology Department at Massey University for the invaluable advice on constructing the methodology and our discussions on the state of horse racing in New Zealand.

Thanks must also go to John Wren, a friend and colleague who put up with me when things were not going the way they should be, Carol Slappendel, who in the early periods of my research gave me invaluable advice on the meat industry and her work on innovation, and Basil Poff from the History Department at Massey who was always willing to discuss my work with me.

Special thanks must go to the staff at Weddel Tomoana who gave freely of their time during a traumatic period in their lives. The invaluable information that they provided culminated how they felt about the issues involved in work changes at Tomoana. I would also like to thank the participants who filled in the gaps of workplace reform from a national perspective and to the library staff at Massey University and the Dan Long Memorial Library.

The concept and arguments of this thesis were presented to the IERA Conference at Waikato University in July 1995 and special mention must be made of Jocelyn Gibson for her support and comments.

Finally I wish to thank my father, Alan, for putting up with me and Phil and Barbara Day who were there when I needed them and Christine Walker for going over the final draft.

Abstract

This dissertation addresses the question of the extent to which the concept of workplace reform has been compromised by the closure of the Tomoana (Hastings) plant of Weddel New Zealand Ltd.

The Tomoana meat processing company in Hastings was part of the Weddel group that went into receivership on 19 August 1994 with the loss of approximately 1800 jobs. The company introduced an ongoing range of workplace measures, starting in 1991, and these measures were still continuing right up to the closure. The meat processing industry has been going through a series of restructuring measures since the late 1970s largely because of various trading difficulties and a sharp decline in sheep numbers. Weddels attempted to improve their position in the market by introducing Total Customer Service ("TCS") supported by International Standards Organization ("ISO") certification and Occupation safety and Health ("OSH") requirements. Alongside these measures was a cost saving and efficiency programme of various procedures such as teams, flatter management structure, skill-based pay system, redundancies and a wage cut of 13 percent for most workers.

The on-site union officials were heavily involved in the implementation of TCS but once the May 1993 announcement was implemented the union was fraught with internal problems resulting in a change of president. All the workers on site, approximately 1800, were put through an introduction of TCS. For the majority of workers that was the last time that they had any direct input into the changes until the wage cuts on May 1993. The workers reluctantly accepted the agreement negotiated by their union on the proviso that all workers could be assessed and reskilled so that their pay would reflect the work that they did. This was never acted upon because the system was too costly.

A search of the literature found that workplace reform is an ill-defined concept because there has been no uniform approach that can actually pin-point and say with confidence, "that firm

is applying workplace reform initiatives". However testing a number of defining characteristics, found in the literature on workplace reform, against the firm's change initiatives may demonstrate whether those initiatives satisfy various definitions of workplace reform. Those defining characteristics are embedded in a participative and cooperative model involving all the stakeholders in a firm.

Was the concept compromised by the closure of Weddel? To ascertain whether this was correct the author reinterviewed a number of participants who had been part of a previous study on the initiatives introduced at Weddel Tomoana. In addition, to get a national picture of workplace reform, a key group of external participants were interviewed. What transpired from the evidence is that workplace reform initiatives at Tomoana were dominated by quality issues and cost saving measures. The participative and cooperative environment through involvement was management driven. The degree of involvement of all stakeholders in the initial stages of the change process was a marked improvement by meat processing industry standards. However this was short lived once management embarked on cost saving and efficiency measures. The trust that was in evidence in the initial stages gradually dissipated.

The conclusion is that the concept of workplace reform was not compromised at Tomoana because it never fully met the criteria as defined by the characteristics found in the literature. "Therefore the Weddel experiment was indeed something considerably different from workplace reform"

*This thesis is dedicated to
my mother , Nora , who died in January 1991*