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A STUDY OF LABOUR TURNOVER AMONG WHITES IN A PROCESS INDUSTRY

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JUNE, 1974

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to extend their very warmest thanks to all the present and former employees in the Company who gave so willingly of their time in being interviewed. Particular thanks are due to the General Manager, the Personnel Officer and other senior staff in the Company, who not only deserve great credit for initiating the project, but who were unstinting in their assistance throughout the fieldwork.

Within the Institute for Social Research, we owe grateful thanks to Mrs. Patsy Wickham, our Secretary, for assisting in all phases of the project, Mrs. Ulla Bulteel, our Technician, who had to process numerous forms of analysis on the University computer (with willing help from the staff of the Computer Centre) and Miss Ann Morton, our typist.

We would also like to indicate to the Company how very much we appreciate the fact that this report was allowed to be made more widely available for academic purposes.

The sponsoring Company deserves congratulation, not only for inviting an investigation of its employee relations, but also for its open-minded and positive response to the findings of the study.

Prof. L. Schlemmer,
Director.

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CHAPTER IINTRODUCTION1.1 The Background of the Problem

The subject matter of this investigation is that of labour turnover. Findings contained in the literature on Industrial Organisation suggest that labour turnover is usually a reflection of the quality of morale and employee satisfaction within an employing organisation. However, this assumption must not be made too freely, since labour turnover is also a reflection of external factors. The rate of growth in an economy can raise rates of labour turnover as employees move into positions becoming available in new or expanding industries. The economy of Natal and of its major industrial complex, Durban-Pinetown, is growing fairly rapidly relative to the economy as a whole, and the economy of the country has a relatively healthy rate of growth even at the present time of somewhat depressed economic activity.

Another external factor influencing the rate of labour turnover in particular groups of employees, is the rate of occupational mobility among the group as a whole. White semi-skilled, blue-collar workers in South Africa are generally a group in transition. Due to the presence of large numbers of non-white employees in such positions, semi-skilled blue collar work occupies a residue of whites, relatively large numbers of whom do not identify with their occupations as careers. In their attempts to gain employment which is regarded as more appropriate to the enhanced status of whites, numbers of this group often manifest occupational instability as they move from job to job seeking the avenue to work of higher social standing.

For these reasons, it is unlikely that labour turnover among semi-skilled whites can be explained only with reference to the work situation on the plant itself. Obviously, however, factors internal to the plant situation can aggravate prevailing trends. Equally

obviously, a very favourable plant environment can lead to lower rates of turnover than one would expect in view of the climate of external factors. It is within the latter context that the present study has been undertaken.

1.2 The Situation Studied

During March of 1973, a major Chemical Process company in the Durban region engaged the Institute for Social Research to undertake a study aimed at providing a basis for reducing labour turnover among white semi-skilled Process Technicians. Preliminary discussions with Senior Management in the company had revealed that the problem of labour turnover was not severe in relative terms. The trend over the past years had been broadly as follows :

| | |
|------|------|
| 1968 | 31% |
| 1969 | 21% |
| 1970 | 23% |
| 1971 | 26%* |

These figures appear to be relatively favourable compared with equivalent trends in the Industry as a whole. Nevertheless, the Management considered the problem worth investigating since the emphasis within a progressive company was to maintain exemplary levels of performance. Furthermore, the rate of turnover, such as it was, was a costly problem. Due to the extensive training programme for Technicians, labour turnover was costing the company an estimated amount of over R60 000 per annum.

The problem was stated to be essentially one of labour turnover, and did not involve associated problems of low productivity or high absenteeism. It appears that productivity is favourable compared with that in similar companies both here and abroad, and the absenteeism

* The wastage rate among new recruits was higher than these overall figures - up to 50% per annum.

rate is a mere 4%. Furthermore, the accident record is particularly favourable within the context of the Industry.

Labour turnover among Technicians had been reduced from high levels in earlier years by the progressive elimination of a variety of production and employee relations problems, and by giving the work an enhanced status by assigning the employees the job title of Technician instead of the older term of Operator. Despite the success of these innovations, Management considered that further progress could be made if some of the less-obvious problems could be uncovered by research.

The work of the Technicians involves a high degree of responsibility, both for the optimum functioning of the production flow in a very highly mechanised process, and for safety in a process with high risk factors associated with fires, chemical poisons, and acid burns. New recruits are required to have a Junior Certificate educational qualification, although a school-leaving standard is preferred. By any standards, the levels of remuneration are generous, and the opportunities for both salary and seniority advancement are favourable.

The Process Technicians tend to be recruited from a variety of former occupations, including very low-level clerical positions in the South African Railways and the South African Police Force. It would appear as if the men employed do not generally have an established manual occupational background or working class attitudes. Yet the occupation of Process Technician is also somewhat ambiguous in relation to other types of manual work, since the entrance qualifications are high, and the title of Technicians, within the context of a highly complex capital-intensive production process imparts a higher job-status than that carried by most operative work.

It is against this background that we report on the findings of the study conducted for the company. In discussing the findings we will often refer to problems within the company mentioned by our respondents. It should be borne in mind that these findings reflect the perceptions of former and current employees and are not necessarily true. They are important in as much as such perceptions are in

themselves a problem, whether they are valid or not. Furthermore, we have been as critical as possible, since we see this as the best way of being helpful to the company. Our critical stance does not reflect on the overall policy of the company, however, which impressed us as a most progressive and forward-looking organisation.

CHAPTER IIDETAILED METHODS EMPLOYED IN THE RESEARCH2.1 The People Interviewed

In June of 1973, this Institute was provided with a list of 78 names and addresses of employees who had left the Company between 1971 and 1973. These were men who had been employed in 'Operations' as opposed to Maintenance, and Management. In September, a more current list of 1973 leavers was provided, bringing the total list of former employees to 89. Due to the extremely high mobility of these former employees, an inordinate amount of time was spent trying to locate potential respondents. This often involved contact with friends, neighbours, or relatives; people who were often helpful in providing a forwarding address or in passing on a message. We found that most of the 89 former employees had either moved elsewhere locally, had moved to a different region in South Africa, or had gone overseas. As indicated in the listing below, 84 contacts were able to be made which either led to the completion of interviews or to establishing the fact that the former employee was unable to be contacted or traced.

Summary of Contacts

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Number of former employees interviewed : | 36 |
| Number having left the country (mostly immigrants) : | 15 |
| Number who had moved (including people who had moved to other regions of South Africa as well as those who had changed addresses locally and were unable to be traced) : | 32 |
| Number contacted but unwilling to participate in an interview : | 1 |
| Number for whom no information could be established : | 5 |
| Total : | <u>89</u> |

Due to the higher mobility of younger ex-employees, the sample of people interviewed tends to be characterised by a slightly higher average age and slightly longer length of former service than the ex-employee group as a whole. However, the sample of interviews is sufficiently varied to provide insights relevant to the whole range of ex-employees. We have allowed for this bias in drawing conclusions.

2.2 Individual Interviews with Former Employees

Interview sessions with former employees lasted from 1½ to 4½ hours each and usually took place in the respondent's home. Initially a preliminary interview schedule was designed and used in a small pilot study consisting of a half-dozen interviews. Subsequently the original schedule was slightly revised and used for the remaining interviews. The schedule included questions regarding previous work experience, social life, special interests, past and present salaries, major satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the work at the company, feelings on promotion, training, relationships with fellow workers, Supervisors, and Middle Management, communication channels, wife's attitude toward work at the company, shift work, job aims, initial and final reasons for leaving the company, views on present job, conditions under which one would return to the company, and the subjective "image" of the work and the company. The interview schedule is presented in the Appendix. After it became clear that a large number of ex-employees could not be interviewed, it was decided to interview those available in much greater depth. Thus in addition to the topics covered by the interview schedule, a full depth interview was conducted with the former employees on the employment experiences, usually after the interview conducted on the basis of the schedule.

In some instances two separate interviews were conducted with one individual. During the course of the interviewing, trends emerged which were identified, studied and pursued in greater detail in subsequent interview sessions with individuals interviewed previously.

2.3 Group Sessions with Former Employees

As a follow-up to the individual interviews, two informal evening sessions were held, involving a total number of 10 carefully selected former company employees. Group-depth interviews were held with each group. The purpose of the group discussions was to explore in greater depth group attitudes and feelings about the major issues which had emerged from the interviews. With the aid of tape recordings, a content analysis of each group discussion was made. Responses were enriched by the stimulation of ideas in the group interview, and these responses were able to provide a deeper understanding of the individual interviews.

2.4 Interviews with Present Employees

The original research proposal suggested at least one group interview session with present Technicians in the company. After a careful review of this intended method of study, it was decided that a group of present employees would tend to be more guarded and reticent than the groups of former employees, who were generally quite candid in the interviews as well as in the group sessions. This may be attributed to the fact that, having left the company, they had no reason to feel restrained. It was decided that a limited number of intensive individual interviews with selected present employees would yield greater results than group discussions, since this would allow the interviewer more scope to establish effective 'rapport'.

This phase of the study included individual interviews with selected people in different positions within Operations on each of the four shifts. Interviews were conducted with Technicians, including Works Committee members, as well as with selected individuals in the training department, with Operations Supervisors and with Managers.

Due to the intensive nature of the interviews, the study has been able to provide insights in greater depth than anticipated. All interviews were conducted with respondents in their homes or in

other informal circumstances. No interviews were conducted in the company. A maximum of spontaneity and honesty was achieved.

Details of the characteristics of people interviewed are presented in the Appendix.

2.5 The Analysis of the Results

Due to the nature of the information obtained, it seemed appropriate to concentrate on a 'qualitative' rather than a 'quantitative' or structured form of analysis. The latter would have entailed the loss of a great deal of sensitivity contained in the results. Consequently, an individual 'content analysis' was made of each interview and group interview. The content analyses were employed in two ways :

- (a) A 'background' of insights was built up from the content analyses, and this was used in the formulation of broad conclusions and the interpretation of individual interviews. This 'background' of insights was augmented by a variety of observations and impressions of processes of communication within the company.
- (b) The responses of former employees were able to be classified and graded in terms of a set of categories relating to reasons for and factors associated with leaving the company. In this way, the nature and strength of various factors contributing to labour turnover were able to be fairly clearly isolated.

In addition to this overall approach, the 'turnover factors' isolated for each former employee, as well as certain interview responses relating to his job attitudes and values (see final two items in schedule in Appendix) were subjected to computer analysis.

A variety of different computer manipulations of the data were experimented with. Eventually, a 'Factor Analysis' was undertaken which is aimed at providing insights into the nature of hidden inter-relationships between factors. The results of the factor analysis were subjected to further refinement in order, finally, to produce a picture of the ways in which different factors inter-relate to form 'clusters'. Associated with these clusters are broader 'general factors' which can be assumed to have a pervasive effect on employee motivation.

The results of all these operations are discussed in the following sections.

CHAPTER IIIAN OVERVIEW OF SPECIFIC FACTORS WHICH APPEAR
TO HAVE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO TURNOVER3.1. Factors Associated with the Former Employees'
Decision to Leave the Company

From the content analysis of individual interviews with ex-employees, 32 distinct factors or variables emerged as being related to those ex-employees' motives for leaving the company. (See Table I). For each respondent, every variable identified was rated as having a primary, secondary, tertiary, or no relationship to labour turnover. The motives may or may not be conscious and articulated reasons. In the interpretation of the interviews, underlying motives could often be inferred from the inter-relationship of replies.

In Table I a complete summary of specific findings is given which, at a glance, allows the relative importance of a variety of factors to be assessed in their relation to turnover. Subsequent discussions will elucidate specific findings presented in the table.

The computer intercorrelation analysis (factor analysis) revealed that individual variables tend to form 'clusters'. These clusters are groups of single variables which interact upon one another. It is clearly evident that certain 'clusters' are related to turnover. In the discussion which follows, we will examine individual factors of importance to turnover, and the clusters of factors with which the important individual variables are associated. For this discussion we have selected only those processes of major importance.

TABLE I Relationship Between 32 Variables and Labour Turnover
Among Ex-Company Employees

Figures below reflect the number of respondents out of 36 for whom the variable had a primary, secondary, or tertiary relationship to labour turnover.

| Nature of Factor or Variable Perceived By Respondents | Primary Relationship to Turnover: Number | Secondary Relationship to Turnover: Number | Tertiary Relationship to Turnover: Number | Number of Affected Respondents Out of 36 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Communication within company | 12 | 6 | 7 | 25 |
| Failure of the company to recognise and/or develop individual potential | 11 | 8 | 2 | 21 |
| Failure to identify and resolve personal problems at work or home | 11 | 7 | 3 | 21 |
| Frustrations in job performance | 6 | 10 | 4 | 20 |
| Insufficient reward for initiative | 9 | 9 | 1 | 19 |
| Insufficient reward for responsibility | 8 | 9 | 1 | 18 |
| Rigid organisational structure | 1 | 9 | 8 | 18 |
| Low morale and spirit | 6 | 7 | 3 | 16 |
| Shift work | 9 | 3 | 3 | 15 |
| Inadequate pay | 4 | 2 | 8 | 14 |
| Opportunity for mobility, availability of other jobs | 0 | 3 | 11 | 14 |
| Possible ill-effect upon health | 3 | 6 | 4 | 13 |
| Poor interpersonal relations with Supervisors | 8 | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| Lack of recognition | 0 | 5 | 7 | 12 |

Continued ...

TABLE I (Continued)

| Nature of Factor or Variable Perceived By Respondents | Primary Relationship to Turnover: Number | Secondary Relationship to Turnover: Number | Tertiary Relationship to Turnover: Number | Number of Affected Respondents Out of 36 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Feeling of inability to make effective changes | 8 | 2 | 0 | 10 |
| Inadequate use of safety precautions | 3 | 4 | 3 | 10 |
| Inadequate growth of skills and abilities | 0 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| Social/personal interests in conflict with work | 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 |
| Unfair decision-making | 6 | 2 | 0 | 8 |
| Inconsistent company administration | 5 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| Insufficient reward for personal risk | 3 | 4 | 0 | 7 |
| Inadequate supervision | 0 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Inadequate follow-up of training | 0 | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Low status of job | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Authoritarian supervision | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Poor work motivation in respondent | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Poor interpersonal relations with peers | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Youthful age | 4 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Cost of local housing | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Top-heavy decision-making | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Punitive supervision | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Lack of flexible job assignments | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |

3.1.1 Communication

The one factor which appears to emerge as having the single most important influence on labour turnover among ex-employees was that of communication within the company, i.e. the perceived lack of flexible and effective channels of communication both up and down the hierarchy of authority. This was a factor contributing to the decision to leave in 7 out of 10 cases, and it was a primary factor related to turnover in over 3 out of 10 ex-employees. Communication was found to be positively and significantly related to four other factors (see Diagram 1) :

- rigid organisational structure,
- poor interpersonal relations with superiors,
- failure to identify and resolve personal problems at work or home, and
- low morale.

An additional four variables were positively but less significantly related to the communication factor :

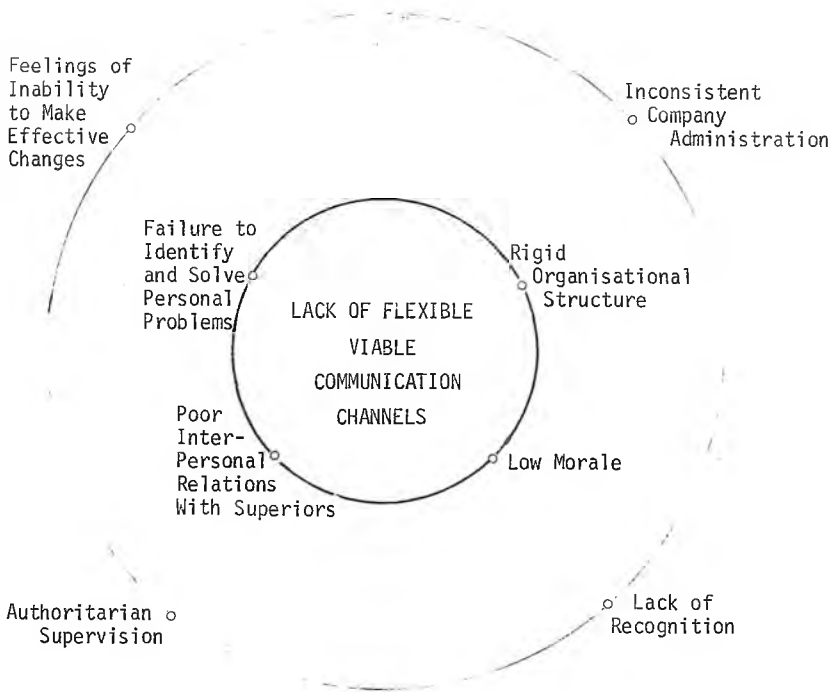
- authoritarian supervision,
- inconsistent company administration,
- lack of recognition of employee as a person, and
- perceived inability of the company to make effective changes.

Together, all these variables appear to act as a process which can be defined, to some extent, in terms of the key variable in the centre of the diagram but which should be understood as a consequence of the relationships between the variables.

Expressions of frustration and dissatisfaction with communication channels occurred throughout the interviews with ex-employees. Interviews with present employees reinforced our impression of its importance. In order for the company to interpret the significance of the communication factor in relation to reasons for leaving, however, the entire process or cluster of intercorrelated factors should be examined.

DIAGRAM 1

CLUSTER OF FACTORS RELATING TO COMMUNICATION



In other words, those ex-employees who were dissatisfied with communication channels, also found the organisational structure to be too rigid, experienced poor interpersonal relations with superiors, indicated a failure on the part of the company to identify and solve a wide range of personal problems, (employee problems not directly related to production) and experienced low morale. To some extent, these ex-employees also decried authoritarian supervision, inconsistent company administration, felt a lack of recognition and considered that the company was unable to make effective changes.

This cluster of factors, or process, tended to operate among people who had adjusted to shift work, who were relatively unconcerned about safety hazards, who included men who had held slightly higher positions, and who felt they had achieved some status and had sound future prospects in the company. On the other hand, there is some suggestion that this process is associated with dissatisfaction with the intrinsic rewards of work; i.e. feelings that the work was no longer exciting, but dull and routine. This process was salient among a significant number of ex-employees who had held supervisory or managerial positions before leaving the company.

3.1.2 Individual Potential

Another key variable which contributed to turnover in 6 out of 10 cases and was a primary factor relating to turnover among 3 out of 10 ex-employees concerns the development of individual potential. This amounted to a perceived failure of the company to concern itself with the growth and development of employees as individuals. This factor was found to be significantly and positively related to two of the variables (see Diagram 2) :

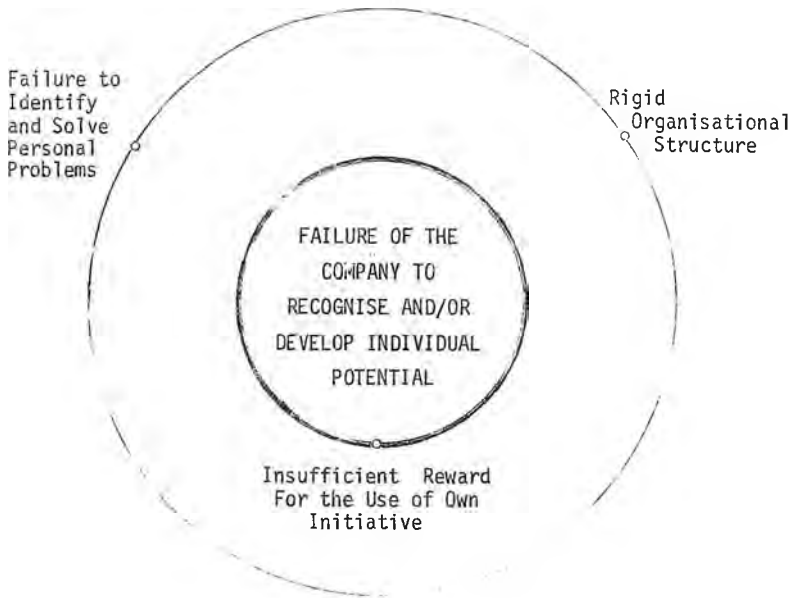
- perceived failure of the company to identify or solve personal problems, and
- insufficient reward for initiative.

There is one additional factor which was positively but less significantly related to this variable, that being :

- rigid organisational structure.

DIAGRAM 2

CLUSTER OF FACTORS RELATING TO THE RECOGNITION
AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL



Those people who felt that their individual potential was unrecognised or undervalued at the company also felt they had not been rewarded for their initiative on the job and perceived a failure on the part of the company to solve their problems. This process, once again, was salient among people who had adjusted to shift work, and who had a positive attitude to work, good relations with peers, were relatively unconcerned about risks to health, and who had not experienced punitive supervision. In other words, the negative effects of the process was particularly marked among men with a generally positive work orientation in other respects.

3.1.3 Solving Personal Problems

A third key variable related to turnover concerned a perceived failure of the company to identify and solve personal problems. Here we refer to a wide range of problems which are not directly related to production, including such problems as those related to pay, leave, promotion, job assignment, housing, family, health, and interpersonal relations with fellow workers. This variable was a contributing factor related to turnover in 6 out of 10 among the ex-employee sample, and in 11 of these cases it was a primary factor related to decision to leave. It was found to be positively and significantly related to five other variables (see Diagram 3) :

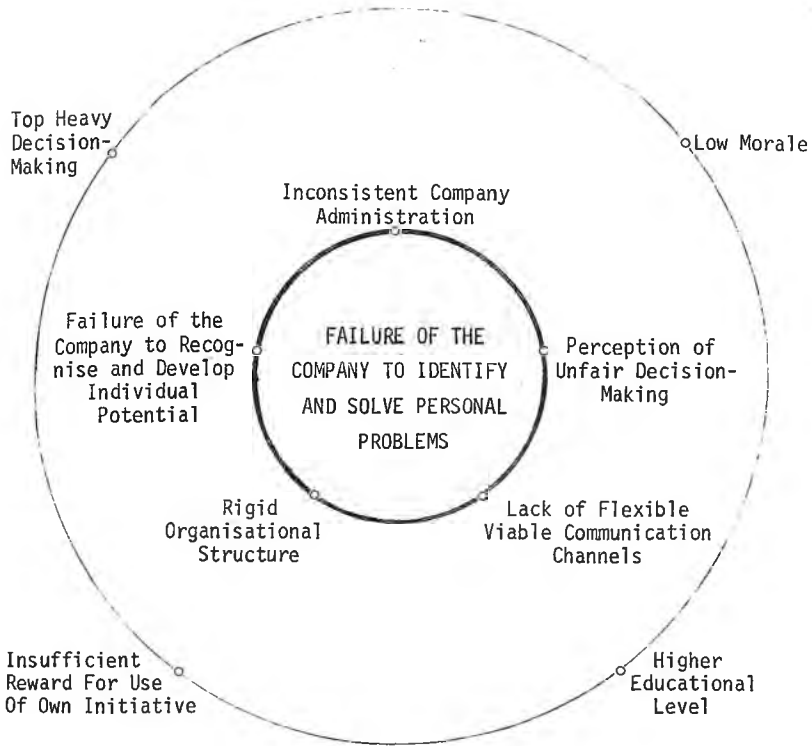
- lack of flexible, viable, communication channels,
- failure of the company to recognise and/or develop individual potential,
- rigid organisational structure,
- inconsistent company administration, and
- perceived unfair decision-making.

An additional four factors are positively but less significantly related to the problem-solving variable :

- low morale,
- perceived top-heavy decision-making,
- slightly higher educational attainment, and
- insufficient reward for initiative.

DIAGRAM 3

CLUSTER OF FACTORS RELATING TO THE SOLVING OF
PERSONAL PROBLEMS, AT WORK OR IN PRIVATE LIFE



This process operated among people who had adjusted to shift work and were interested in job security. To some extent these were people who would have liked to participate more in making decisions and who tended to be matriculants rather than non-matriculants. Once again, a large proportion of the men for whom this process was salient appeared to be very promising material.

It was the cluster of factors relating to problem-solving which seemed to be responsible for a number of resignations which could have been avoided. Such resignations occurred among people who had a relatively good image of the company and who generally felt that it was a good company to work for. When asked, "Are there any conditions under which you would return to (the company) or any other (similar company)?" a number of respondents suggested that this was a possibility. One ex-employee who was interviewed had already returned and another seemed to have seriously considered this prospect. There were several cases of resignation among ex-employees, however, which could have been avoided if both the employee and someone in a supervisory or managerial position had discussed the source of dissatisfaction and explored alternative solutions before it was too late. In many cases, employees did not appear to know of anyone to approach with their problem except the Foreman. Ineffective communication past the Line Supervisors upward seems to have been a great source of frustration and dissatisfaction which may have prevented early identification and resolution of some employee problems. Other cases came to the attention of someone at the "Middle Management" level but, according to ex-employees, were handled in an unsatisfactory manner. In some of these cases company policy and administration seemed to be inconsistent and decisions by superiors were thought to be unfair. Here are some examples :

- (1) Two instances in which only half of the annual salary increment was given to people who had worked at the company for less than twelve months.
- (2) Two instances in which third-grade Technicians were not promoted to second-grade after nine and thirteen months' service respectively. Upon resignation the

problems with promotion came to the attention of the respective Plant Managers, and, according to both ex-employees, they were offered immediate promotion to the second grade with back pay.

- (3) Three instances of job assignment in which the requests of employees who wished to move from job location A to B were apparently not given full attention. These cases involved requests to transfer (a) from a harbour site to the Main Plant, (b) from Operations to an Office Job, and (c) from Operations to a Laboratory position.
- (4) One instance in which a dismissal was thought by a large number of men to be arbitrary and unfair. To some extent this seemed to contribute to an atmosphere of anxiety and job insecurity among many of the Technicians.

In addition to these specific examples there were other incidents in which a perception of unfairness or inconsistent company policy (regarding pay or promotion, for example) was related to reason for leaving.

As illustrated by the previous results, concern about the way in which personal problems are solved is closely related to dissatisfaction with communication channels and to some extent with how decisions are made. Problem-solving is also a source of dissatisfaction among those people who feel that the company has failed to recognise or develop their potential and to reward their initiative. It occurs not only among employees of a shorter length of service whose problems are overlooked or 'lost' in communication blockages, but also among employees who had held higher positions and had a longer length of service. The wide range of both past and present employees who expressed dissatisfaction with the problem-solving process suggests that the company may want to examine the communication process in order to determine how and where decisions are made, and how and what level

employee problems are resolved. Special attention should be given to the flow of communication upwards as well as to the feedback process through both formal and informal channels.

In the following chapter, a more wide-ranging discussion of results and observations is presented, bearing upon the processes we have just examined. Other important factors presented in Table I will also be elucidated.

CHAPTER IVCOMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ORGANISATION AND
PROBLEMS RELATED TO COMMUNICATION

For the purposes of this discussion, the following definition of terms may be useful :

- "Top Management" - includes the Local Company Manager and the Heads of Departments such as Operations and Personnel.
- "Middle Management" - includes those employees at the Plant Manager, Assistant Plant Manager and Day Assistant levels.
- "Supervisory Level" - includes employees at the Foreman and Shift Supervisor levels.
- "Technician Level" - includes employees at Trainee (third grade), Second Grade and Senior Operator/Technician levels.

Many of the insights presented below were obtained in informal interview situations or in general discussions with both present and former employees. They are not statements of fact, but rather of the perceptions of people involved. These insights are offered tentatively.

4.1 Amount of Contact Between Employees at Different Levels of Authority

When asked, "How did you feel about relationships and contact between technicians and management?" most Technicians said they had "*adequate*" contact with their immediate supervisors (Foremen and Shift Supervisors) and less but still "*adequate*" contact with their Day Assistants and Plant Managers.

When asked, "Did you have contact with some of the senior people in the company, i.e. the Personnel Manager, or perhaps the Local Company Manager himself?" the typical response was "*no*" or "*very little contact*". It was indicated by several respondents that the Manager walked around the plant from time to time to see how things were going.

Response to this type of casual contact was very favourable. In fact, many Technicians felt this casual contact with people at top management level reflected a genuine interest in the lower-rung employees.

The vast majority of respondents claimed to have had no contact with the Personnel Department. Many ex-employees said that their only contact with Personnel was in the process of resigning. For most Shift Workers, the Personnel Department, in the words of one respondent, was "*worlds away from the working chaps*". These assertions may not be factual but they represent a view of the situation by the Technicians which is important in the light of the 'processes' discussed in Chapter III.

In summary, Technicians felt they had adequate contact with their Supervisors and with Middle Management and little contact with Top Management. The Works Committee, however, did provide a formal channel through which shift representatives meet with Top Management, although this Committee was not viewed as being at all effective. Significantly though, Technicians did not perceive a direct relationship between the amount of contact with superiors and the adequacy of problem-solving. In other words, although contact between Technicians and superiors was viewed as "*adequate*" this seemed to have no relation to problem-solving which was viewed as ineffective.

Among more senior staff, contact appeared to be perceived as inadequate. Foremen and Shift Supervisors apparently saw one another frequently on an informal basis. Foremen had less frequent contact, however, with Day Assistants and Plant Managers. The Shift Supervisors met weekly with the Operations Manager to whom they were responsible but they claimed to meet only informally with Day Assistants and Plant Managers. The communication between Shift Supervisors and Day Assistants may have been inadequate and may have caused some confusion among employees. A Shift Supervisor, for example, may give a person permission to do something which the Day Assistant then rescinds. The employee may not be sure whom to obey. Apparently, the Operations Manager met with the three Plant Managers and relayed information primarily regarding production. The Plant Managers passed on information to their Day

Assistants but formal meetings at this level were apparently rare. The formality of communication channels appears to have been inconsistent, assuming a more or less formal pattern at the discretion of the particular Plant Manager.

4.2 Attitudes Among Employees as They Affect Communication and Problem-Solving

In general, prevailing attitudes at all levels appeared to inhibit some people from complaining and people tended to cover-up rather than to identify or define problem areas. There seems to have been a widespread lack of trust between Technicians, Supervisors, and Managers. Feelings ranged from scepticism to hostility and antagonism rather than openness and rapport. Technicians appeared to feel that Management was interested solely in production not people. They claimed to have been told in answer to their requests that *"we are here to produce, we are not real estate agents"*, or *"we are not in the money-lending business"*, or *"we are not a welfare organisation"*. The attitudes of respondents suggest that :

few Managers encouraged employees to come to them with their problems, and

many employees were actually fearful of contact with "Management". One respondent said, *"I'll talk to the Queen of Sheba but others are afraid they'll get fired"*. Another said, *"Most people are too scared of losing their job to get together and complain to the Personnel Manager"*.

To a certain extent it was thought by the men that the attitudes of Middle Management reflected views at the top. Technicians seemed to believe that Top Management does not wish to be worried with petty complaints. Consequently they believed that it was in the interests of Middle Management to inhibit complaining. They felt that causes of dissatisfaction were ignored; people who complain were reprimanded, and

problems were covered-up rather than identified. It is, of course, difficult for people at the Middle Management level to know the extent of certain kinds of dissatisfaction at lower levels. Some comments by respondents at the Supervisory level indicated that at least some people at this level felt that "complainers" are no more than trouble-makers. Little effort appears to have been made to analyse causes for the complaints or to take these complaints seriously.

One respondent explained that he did not like long hair or people who complain. *"I either work them to death or fire them"*.

Another said, *"I'll bet that 90% of the complainers leave"*.

Yet another assertion was that *"most problems would be solved if the immigrants were just sent back"*.

The more vociferous complainers may not always reflect the views of Technicians as a group. When this is thought to be the case their ideas are more likely to be ignored by both Middle Management and Top Management. There are cases, however, when the views of a few "complainers" do reflect general feelings which Management may not be aware of. There appears to have been no method of carefully analysing the views of Technicians. It was suggested, rather, that 'group' expression of ideas, suggestions, or complaints had been actively discouraged and specific events were mentioned to substantiate this.

While a few people at the Technician level may be sufficiently confident to say what they think, the majority of people at this level tend to remain fearful and sceptical about the goodwill of Management and hence prefer not to take the risk of speaking out.

4.3 Communication and the Decision-Making Process

Communication typically takes place through the Line Supervisors.

A Technician must go to his Foreman with any requests, complaints, suggestions or personal problems. The responsibility for dealing with this information and possibly relaying it to the Day Assistant or Plant Manager lies with the Shift Foreman. At this point his own judgement may alter or block the original communication. Even if communications follow the logical channel : (Technician → Foreman → Shift Supervisor → Day Assistant → Plant Manager) there is a lot of room for misinterpretation or for urgent requests to be delayed. If a Technician by-passes his Foreman or Shift Supervisor, in order to expedite a request he is likely to be viewed with disfavour since this could reflect poorly upon the Foreman or Shift Supervisor. Personal requests may be overlooked or neglected and there is no acceptable alternative channel of communication available to the Technician.

The view that communication in the company tends to be a one-way process emerged throughout the individual interviews and also in both group sessions with former employees. Communication through the Line Supervisors was viewed as being rigid, frustrating and ineffective in problem-solving. One of the major complaints, and areas of great frustration to Technicians was that their suggestions, complaints and sometimes their requests met with no reply. They had no idea where the communication stopped and how far it got.

4.4 Decision-Making

It has been commonly suggested that the break-down in communication occurs at the Middle Management level. The communication blockage is thought to be two-fold in nature. Technicians, Foremen and Shift Supervisors claimed that they rarely knew what is going to happen before it happened. They were not included in the decision-making process at all. Shift Supervisors, it appeared, are likely to be informed of major decisions which will effect operations just before these decisions are announced. Decisions were thought to be made by a few people in Top Management and these decisions then filtered down.

If there is substance in these claims, the restriction of

decision-making to a few senior officials seems to have helped create a 'secretive' rather than 'open' atmosphere. Employees at all levels in Operations spent a good deal of time guessing what changes or new policies would be implemented. Hearsay was compared and discussed and each man could relate it to his own preconceived ideas. The men felt that there was too little meaningful discussion on policies because people at Middle Management, Supervisory and Technician level were not included in the actual decision-making process. They could only speculate upon 'unofficial' versions of the truth.

Changes in policy which were being considered at top level seemed to reach Middle Management informally. As a result, information which was 'unofficial' at a particular time, was leaked to Day Assistants who in turn passed it on 'confidentially' to some Technicians. An example of this, according to the men, may have occurred recently just before the September 1973 cost of living adjustment was announced. Works Committee members indicated that they had been drawing attention to the rising cost of living for some eight months, and for the need for compensatory salary adjustment. They were told, however, that there would not be a cost of living adjustment to salaries and a circular was reportedly sent out stating that a separate cost of living adjustment was not company policy. At the same time that members of the Works Committee were telling Technicians that there was no chance of a cost of living adjustment, people at the Day Assistant level were telling at least some Technicians that a cost of living adjustment would be forthcoming. Confusion resulted and most Technicians had no idea of whom to believe. When the 5% cost of living adjustment was announced, Works Committee members felt that they had been betrayed.

Many respondents expressed a negative reaction to both the decision-making process, which some view as 'autocratic', and to the general way in which decisions are communicated. General information on official company policy may be difficult for Technicians to obtain. The majority of ex-employees said they had never seen a copy of the salary scale for Technicians and many did not even realise that such a salary scale existed. Men complained that information on salary scales and increments had to be sought from other employees on the job.

Several respondents reported having had difficulty in determining their salary notch on the scale appropriate to their positions. At Middle Management levels, salary scales have reportedly been 'unavailable' to these people. This was also true among some present employees as high as Foreman level. Although it is expected that all employees at the Middle Management level would have copies of the current salary scales, one respondent claimed that only the Plant Manager has a copy.

The general point being made is that many employees may feel that it is often difficult for a Technician to gain access to information necessary to assist him in forming a clear conception of his position within the company.

4.5 Problem-Solving

During interviews with ex-employees a key question regarding communication was asked: "What channels are available for a worker to make a suggestion, lodge a complaint, or clear up a misunderstanding?" Most respondents suggested that the Foreman was the person to see. Eleven out of thirty-six ex-employees mentioned the Works Committee as a communication channel between Technicians and top management. Theoretically, the Works Committee sounded ideal. When asked if this method of communication was satisfactory mixed feelings emerged. On the whole, people tend to assess the Works Committee's effectiveness in terms of results it had achieved. Two major achievements of the Committee were often mentioned :

- (1) An increase in the number of days' leave per year for shift workers, and
- (2) The payment of double-time to those shift workers who work on their scheduled rest-days.

However, examples were also given of various issues which were claimed to have been raised by the Works Committee and never solved. In general, ex-employees viewed the Works Committee as ineffective in

problem-solving. Both group interview sessions arrived at the same consensus of opinion - i.e. that Works Committee meetings were ineffective gripe sessions rather than a viable communication channel between the lower-rung employees and Top Management.

Interviews with present employees tended to confirm this viewpoint. An analysis of their attitudes toward the general effectiveness of the Works Committee in solving problems revealed the following, out of eighteen present employees interviewed :

THREE found the Works Committee to be "*generally effective*".

TWELVE found the Works Committee to be "*generally ineffective*".

THREE were undecided.

Attitudes among past and present employees regarding the Works Committee are remarkably similar. The major advantage seen in the Works Committee is that it could provide representatives of Technicians with a formal basis for negotiating with Top Management. The need for this is something people seem to believe in. In view of the widespread claims that the company fails to identify and solve problems at lower levels, the need for a basis for meeting with Management is viewed as particularly important. Workers (Technicians) seem to feel that it is essential to meet with a body which (i) has an interest in hearing complaints and finding solutions, and (ii) has the authority to initiate change. It is widely thought that most Middle Managers meet neither of these two criteria. In fact, most people feel that the Plant Manager's presence at the Works Committee meetings is so vital that his presence must be a stipulated condition for meetings to take place.

It appears that complaints brought before top management by some Works Committee members have often been petty, and there is some question about how representative such complaints have been. However,

this pattern seems to stem from poor communication or lack of communication at lower levels. Because there is no viable method of solving problems on an *ad hoc* basis at the Operations level, many petty problems are channelled through the Works Committee to Top Management. Many of the complaints brought up at Works Committee meetings are then referred down to Operations, (where they originated), to be handled by someone at Middle Management level. The feeling is widespread that such problems are not adequately dealt with at the Middle Management level.

Another reason for the failure to solve problems at Operations level is that many Technicians appear to have lost faith in any kind of communication with Middle Management. Many people have become frustrated and disillusioned and a few have become antagonistic and hostile. There appears to be a definite mistrust of people at the Middle Management level.

It is generally believed that Middle Managers do not go out of their way to deal with complaints. Interviews with some employees at High Supervisory and Middle Management levels tend to substantiate this idea. Being somewhat remote from Technicians they do not seem to be sufficiently aware of (i) the type of problems, conflicts and dissatisfactions that exist and, (ii) that they could play an active role in identifying these problems and attempting to find solutions.

Apparently some of the staff at Middle Management are experienced former-Technicians who were eventually promoted into managerial positions. While they may have experience and extensive technical expertise they may be lacking in necessary supervisory and managerial skills.

A current source of conflict between some Technicians (mostly immigrants) and Supervisors seems to centre around the extent to which a Technician is expected to undertake maintenance work. When a maintenance or repair operation must be done quickly and a Fitter, for instance, is unavailable, a Supervisor may request that a Technician

do the job. Some present employees have said that accidents have occurred in situations in which a Technician was performing the work of an artisan. Whereas some immigrants feel this may expose them to unnecessary personal risk and also consider that it is not part of the job, Supervisors often tend to feel that it is a Technician's role to undertake the work if no one else is available.

The job description of a Technician in the company appears to be broader in the local situation than elsewhere. In South Africa, fire-fighting and training for fire-fighting, for example, is part of the Technician's role. A Technician may also be called upon to do the work of an Artisan if this is necessary. Some immigrants have refused to pick up a spanner whereas others say that as a consequence of the nature of the Technician's job locally, they have learned a good deal more about the industry's operations. This conflict about the extent to which Technicians should do maintenance work is one which may be related to more important concerns and may affect the morale of Technicians.

In conclusion, it seems that a substantial proportion of Technicians consider that formal or informal communication channels are inadequate in handling grievances and problems not directly related to production. In any organisation, grievances may flow through formal channels which have been established for the communication of technical information. At other times grievances may be communicated through informal channels. It was difficult to determine the relative extent to which complaints, problems, or suggestions were processed either informally or formally. Our general impressions, however, are that :

- (1) Problems are occasionally dealt with informally but this is the exception rather than the rule.
- (2) Formal communication through Line Supervisors is broken or blocked by the shift schedule.
- (3) Problems tend to be dealt with by people with technical knowledge but who may be lacking human

relations and supervisory skills and interests.

- (4) Employees at the Technician level have the impression that their ideas, complaints or suggestions are not taken seriously in the company as a whole.

CHAPTER VPROMOTION AND ITS RELATION TO ATTITUDES AMONG
PAST AND PRESENT EMPLOYEES

The topic of promotion prospects was discussed intensively in the individual interviews with both past and present employees, and several aspects of promotion emerged as major sources of dissatisfaction. Perception of 'unfair decision-making' which was often related to promotion, was a factor contributing to labour-turnover among 22% of the ex-employees. In answer to the general question, "What, for you, were some of the major dissatisfactions with your work in the company?" and, "What were the aspects you liked least of all?"; widespread dissatisfaction with various aspects of promotion emerged.

Although a large number of both past and present employees considered aspects of promotion to be unfair, they said that, in general, promotion prospects were good. In answer to the question "Could you give me your feelings about promotion prospects?", some typical responses were: "*If you study you can get ahead*", "*The company will push you*", etc. It was indicated that the rate of promotion is rapid and that to a large extent promotion depends upon the individual.

On the other hand, many respondents qualified their statements by saying, for example, "*Prospects are good but there is too much favouritism*". It has also been pointed out that there are many positions held by people who have inadequate knowledge of the job or who are lacking necessary supervisory skills. Here are some suggested reasons why, as they emerge from the answers of respondents :

- (1) The rate of promotion may sometimes be too fast, particularly on a unit such as the 'Grey Zone' where turnover is said to be high. The result is that people are often promoted into positions which they

are incapable of handling. Seven out of thirty-six ex-employees interviewed felt that promotion occurred too quickly in some cases. They noted that this resulted in employees becoming tense and nervous in positions with which they could not cope. It was stated that *"those people who remain in the company are promoted whether they are suited for the position or not"*. Two people who had left said they had been *"pushed too hard"* and one of those said he had been *"promoted too quickly"*. This may result in added responsibility and stress for those at Foreman and Senior Technician levels, and may, in turn, cause diffuse tension at lower levels.

- (2) When personal bias has a significant influence upon the selection for promotion, some people without adequate knowledge and skills may be moved into responsible positions prematurely.
- (3) Promotion to higher levels, based solely upon technical expertise may result in positions being filled by people with adequate job knowledge but who are lacking in vital supervisory and human relations skills.

An important question included in the interview schedule was, "Did everyone have an equal chance to get ahead?". Thirty-three per cent of the sample of former employees, and fifty per cent among the present employees said that everyone did not have an equal chance to get ahead. Unfairness in promotion was attributed to three main sources: favouritism, lack of balanced criteria for promotion, and lack of standardisation in the overall promotion process. These three aspects will be discussed in turn.

5.1 Favouritism

One of the major complaints expressed consistently in both interviews and group discussions with former employees was that of favouritism in promotion. Ex-employees perceived the existence of a clique within Middle Management, headed by a man with considerable knowledge but with somewhat less ability to deal with people. Promotion in the past was described by many ex-employees as "*a one-man show*", although this has apparently changed very recently. Throughout the interviews references were made to the necessity of "*back-biting*" in order to get ahead, and numerous examples of alleged favouritism in promotion were cited. It was thought that a man who is promoted is often not the best man for the job. There were also examples reported of promotion being delayed for some people. One ex-employee said he was described initially by his Foreman as "*useless*" and that his promotion to second-grade Technician was delayed. He was later transferred to another shift on which he progressed easily to Foreman level.

Some respondents maintained that there was more favouritism in promotion to Foreman and to higher levels than in the promotion to second-grade or senior Technician level. It was felt that promotion up to senior Technician level depended, apart from individuals' own abilities, upon (i) the Foreman's attitude toward an individual and his assertiveness in actively campaigning for the man's promotion, and (ii) upon the total shift strength. If the shift was a weak one, a man could be held back simply because he was needed on a certain unit.

Roughly half of the present employees interviewed also described promotion as being unfair. Some suggested that positions had been created for friends of people in Middle Management. This was also suggested by some ex-employees who had occupied senior positions. A sore point was that some employees who had left the company two years previously had returned and were rapidly gaining promotion. This caused some tension among senior Technicians with long service in the company.

Due to recent changes, promotion is probably no longer viewed as a "*one-man show*", but rather tends to be seen as being controlled by

a clique of people at Middle Management level.

It seems to be generally accepted by those at Technician level that seniority is directly related to promotion. In other words, if a position of Foreman becomes available, a man with the most seniority may expect to acquire that position. However, it is also recognised by people at various levels that the most senior man on a unit may not always be best qualified for the available position, and there has apparently been gratifying effort on the part of some people in Middle Management to take a wide variety of qualifications into consideration for promotion.

We have reported the views of people interviewed in regard to promotion. How much is true is, obviously, impossible to say. Since it must be accepted that some unfairness in promotion always exists in complex organisations, we do not suggest that any abnormal degree of favouritism exists in the company. One thing is certain, however, and that is that a large number of both past and present employees believe that promotion is unfair and that most see this as being the result of favouritism.

5.2 Lack of Specified Criteria for Promotion

It is generally agreed that the range of tasks in Operations is so comprehensive that both job description and evaluation of job performance are very difficult indeed. Expectations regarding job performance, it would seem, vary from shift to shift and respondents felt that no set criteria for promotion had been established.

Written tests, apparently, are given to Technicians on some units and not on others. Oral tests are sometimes given in addition to, or in lieu of, the written examination. The relationship of oral and written tests to promotion is not clearly understood. Some people believed that if a person scored highly on a written test, promotion would be forthcoming. Others felt differently. It was claimed that

out of a group of several employees who had passed a written examination simultaneously, two, for example, received immediate promotion whereas others with equally high scores waited for several months. The result of such perceptions was that many people felt that their progress was being impeded.

The relationship between training, supervision, job performance and promotion is also important. Some Foremen, it was alleged, expect an employee who had returned from a training course to know all about a certain unit, despite the fact that an employee may have taken a course, passed a test, and yet have a lot to learn. A number of both past and present employees suggested that a follow-up to training courses is necessary. Some employees may be temporarily motivated by a training course but their morale may fall if they are unable to continue to develop their skills and abilities due to inadequate guidance and supervision on the job. The Trainer may expect the Foreman to carry out intensive on-the-job training and the Foreman, on the other hand, may expect this to be the Trainer's role. Perception of inadequate supervision and lack of follow-up of training and the consequent inability to develop skills did not emerge as a major factor related to turnover - it was related to turnover in 7 out of 36 cases. However, this area seemed to be very important to the morale of present employees. Some perceptive employees suggested that an evaluation of training courses be carried out to determine areas of weakness in the skills of Technicians, with a view to improving the training, both on and off the job.

In our investigation it seemed that some supervisors considered that the main criterion for promotion is a pass on a written test, while others believed that it should not be the only form of evaluation. Most respondents who were aware of this issue agreed that the written test alone is a totally inadequate measure of ability and job performance. The oral test was considered to have more merit in that it would allow more scope for a valid exploration of a Technician's knowledge, However, some feared that the oral test allows for a personal bias since there could be little control over the complexity or simplicity of questions asked.

Even though the requirements for promotion may vary from unit to unit, some respondents felt strongly that these criteria for promotion should be standardised for each unit and set out in writing for everyone to read.

5.3 Lack of Overall Standardisation in the Promotion Process

It seems that the opinion of the Foreman is a key factor in the promotion of Technicians to second-grade and senior levels. Each Foreman, however, was said to differ in general outlook and in his perception of how the job should be carried out. Thus each Foreman may have different standards and requirements for promotion. Some of the most frequently mentioned inconsistencies regarding promotion are examined below.

5.3.1 Promotion from Third to Second-Grade Technician

Promotion to second-grade Technician depends, of course, upon several factors: how quickly a new employee learns; how interested he is in the job; how he relates to his peers and superiors, etc. According to respondents, on the average, a new employee is promoted to second-grade within about six months. Within this same period a new employee who is unsuited to Operations is easily identified. Most people agreed, however, that such a person should not be allowed to remain at a Trainee level for several months. He should either be promoted or told he is unsuited for the job.

It is significant that there was conflict of views regarding the minimal requirements of promotion to second-grade level. Some present employees stated that the requirement was to know one unit well. However, another view expressed at a high level in Operations was that a person should know two units well before being promoted to the second-grade.

There were two cases among ex-employees involving lack of promotion to second-grade Technician. One man was employed at the third-grade for nine months; another for thirteen months. In both cases, the lack of promotion and the resulting low morale contributed to their reasons for leaving. In one case the employee was not promoted due to an unsatisfactory attendance record. In the other case the employee was quietly-spoken and apparently was simply overlooked. Significantly both situations eventually came to the knowledge of the respective Plant Managers and both employees were reportedly offered promotion as well as back pay. If this situation were true, it would seem to reflect a measure of indecisiveness in the whole approach to promotion at the junior level.

5.3.2. Promotion to Senior Level

There seems to be some confusion and disagreement regarding the number of senior Technicians who may be employed on a single shift at a time. Some past and present employees believed that the minimum requirement of two senior Technicians per shift is in fact a maximum. It has been suggested that *"if everyone were promoted to senior Technician there would be too many chiefs and not enough Indians"*. In line with this approach, "vacancies" for senior Technician positions become available for which second-grade Technicians compete. The majority of ex-employees interviewed believed that the policy was to have two senior Technicians per shift; one to concern himself with the outside area; and one to work at the panel. On the other hand, the majority (but not all) present employees interviewed believed that company policy was to promote any number of people who were qualified to be senior Technicians. This was viewed as motivational in purpose. Many present employees had the understanding that ideally, every man on shift may attain a senior Technician level. Although this policy is fairly widely understood among present employees interviewed it seems that it is not always implemented. One present employee at Supervisory Managerial level said he understood that there could be a maximum of three senior Technicians per shift. The extra person at the senior level could fill in or rotate with the two regular senior

Technicians. The investigators emerged uncertain of the true position, which is in itself significant.

In conclusion, the apparent inconsistencies regarding promotion to second-grade Technician, the lack of set criteria for promotion and the perception that favouritism exists, all seem to provide a basis for the general belief that promotion is unpredictable or unfair. Quite obviously, the effects on morale must be quite considerable.

CHAPTER VIFRUSTRATIONS RELATING TO JOB PERFORMANCE,
RESPONSIBILITY AND WORKING CONDITIONS6.1 Frustrations in Job Performance

The fourth most important cluster of variables relating to turnover centred around "Point of Job Contact Frustration". This refers to where a person performing a job becomes frustrated by working conditions which prevent the job from being performed adequately or with facility. At some point, for example, a secretary/typist may become highly frustrated by failure of the typewriter to operate properly. In the same sense, Technicians may become frustrated when surrounding conditions become so inefficient or maintenance and repair work is so poor that extraneous irritation becomes the major focus of attention. Constant equipment failure, coupled with what is thought to be poor maintenance and repair, was reported to be a major source of frustration and irritation by ex-employees and present employees alike.

The maintenance staff in the company operates on a priority system, attending first to problems which may be hazardous or critical to production, and lastly to problems adjudged to be of less critical importance. Although emergency repairs may be quickly attended to, minor repairs may remain unattended for weeks. One ex-employee said, *"Of the three boiler pumps, there is rarely more than one working"*. It is the recurrence of equipment failure and what is claimed to be a generally inefficient standard of maintenance and repair which many respondents found to be frustrating and often hazardous.

This broad factor contributed to the decision to leave among 20 out of 36 former employees. It was a primary factor related to turnover in 6 cases. This factor was found to be positively and significantly related to two other variables :

- insufficient reward for responsibility, and

- perceived inability to make effective changes.

It was positively, but less significantly related to :

- concern about possible ill-effects upon health, and
- senior position.

Those people who were frustrated and dissatisfied with equipment failure and annoyed by a perception of generally inefficient working conditions tended to be people who felt that the reward for the amount of job responsibility they carried was insufficient and who felt frustrated by their inability to stimulate constructive changes. To some extent these were older married men in higher, responsible positions who were also concerned about potentially hazardous working conditions and more generally about possible ill-effects of the work on their health.

6.2 Insufficient Reward for Responsibility

Perceptions of insufficient reward for amount of responsibility, which, as we have said, is closely related to other job frustrations, was a factor related to turnover in 18 out of 36 cases. It was a primary factor related to turnover in 8 cases among the ex-employee sample.

The "responsibility" factor was found to be positively and significantly intercorrelated with four variables :

- frustrations in job performance,
- concern for possible ill-effects on health,
- perceptions of insufficient reward for amount of personal risk, and
- perceived inability to make changes.

It was also positively but less significantly related to

- concern about inadequate use of safety precautions and equipment.

What is of major importance in this connection is that so many ex-employees did not view job responsibility in a positive light only, but qualified their assessment of the responsibility they carried. Some viewed it in unambiguously negative terms. Job responsibility can be regarded as an intrinsic source of worker satisfaction — a motivating factor. A key question to answer here is why job responsibility came to acquire negative associations among ex-employees.

Part of the answer is to be seen in the variables with which 'job responsibility' is correlated. It would seem that frustrating or anxiety-producing working conditions detract from the potential motivating effect of job responsibility. The inter-relationship between the factors of 'responsibility', 'concern for health', and 'job performance frustrations' is pictorially represented in Diagram 4, below.

We will proceed now to a closer examination of some of the features of these interacting variables.

6.3 Attitudes Toward Danger and Responsibility for Safety, Equipment and Production

As we already know, concern about the possible ill-effects on health was strongly related to the 'responsibility' factor, which operated among all age groups, and was also related to the 'job performance frustration' which occurred among older men in higher positions. One might expect some concern and anxiety about potential danger and possible ill-effects among employees with a shorter length of service. Respondents seemed to be well-aware of the responsibility they had for expensive equipment and for production and of the consequences of mistakes. The size of the machinery, the noise and the potential danger may be very frightening to a new employee, whereas a Technician with longer service would have had the opportunity to become acclimatised to the work environment. Therefore, it seems significant that concern about danger and health has emerged not only among younger, newer employees, but also among some older men in higher positions.

DIAGRAM 4 CLUSTERS OF FACTORS RELATING TO JOB-PERFORMANCE FRUSTRATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITY

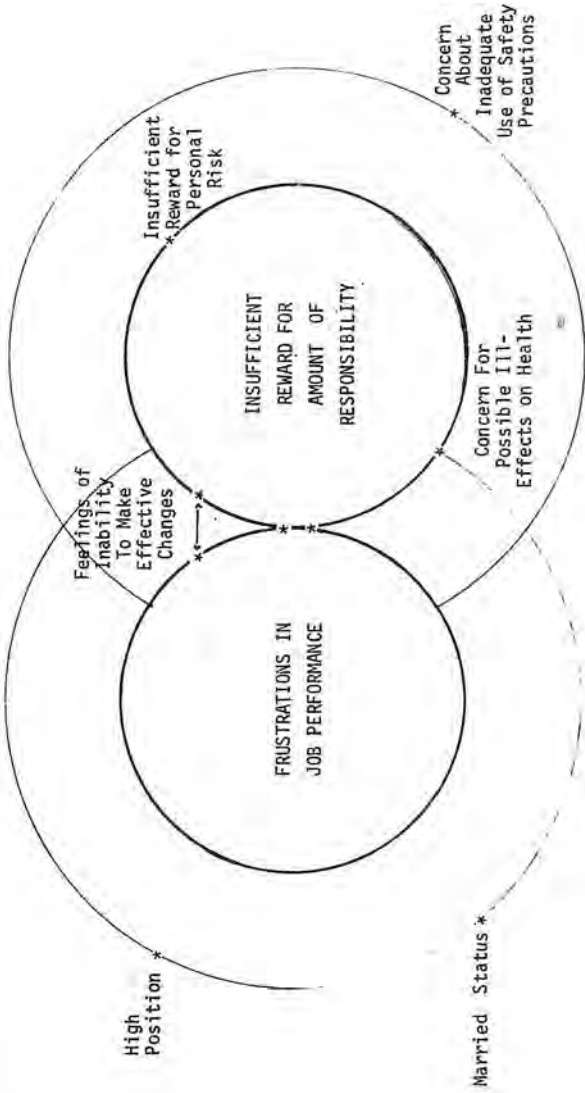


DIAGRAM 4

This points to a shortcoming in the processes which facilitate adjustment to stress. We will return to this aspect in due course.

A very sharp awareness of amount of responsibility and potential danger emerged throughout the interviews. Responses to several types of questions asked on the interview schedule reflect an underlying rather than an overt concern with potential danger and possible ill-effects on health. Some ex-employees viewed their former jobs as being important because of the danger factor and the expensive equipment for which they were responsible. Here are some typical responses to this question: "Did you see your job as important, or not really important?"

"Important. Yes, because of the responsibility to prevent the plant from breaking or blowing up."

"Important. You couldn't let anything slip. It was too dangerous."

"An important job and very dangerous. You could kill yourself or gas someone."

"At first you could turn to the seniors for help but later you were dropped and expected to make your own decisions and be responsible."

In answer to the question, "Did you originally intend the job to be a permanent one?" one ex-employee replied, "Yes, but I was offered a safer, easier job with more pay."

A question regarding pay also evoked numerous responses in which references to dirt, danger, noise, risk-taking, and responsibility were made. Here are some typical responses to the question: "How did the pay rate when one considers the type of work that had to be done?"

"It was not rewarding enough for the responsibility."

"Men risk their lives fighting fires with no compensation but a pat on the back."

"For the amount you need to know it is not excessive. You're paid to handle crises and save the company money."

"For the danger, the pay is insufficient. One boo-boo and you ruin a lot of money's worth of equipment."

One respondent who had described himself as *"crawling around waiting for the place to blow up"* made numerous references to potential danger, denied any serious concern about danger factors when questioned directly. He said, *"It was frightening at first but you get used to it."*

The perceptions of greatest concern to the ex-employee group as a whole were:

- company expectation that some amount of personal risk be involved in the work;
- the discrepancy between the theory and practice of how to handle an emergency;
- general disregard for safety measures and the use of safety equipment;
- neglected maintenance and repair work which created worrisome and hazardous working areas;
- danger of contact with corrosive acid;
- constant exposure to leaking gases; and
- responsibility for expensive equipment.

6.3.1 Attitudes Toward Personal Risk-Taking

Interviews with both past and present employees revealed a genuine concern with the amount of personal risk a Technician is expected to take in his work when an emergency such as a power failure

or a fire occurs, Technicians attempt everything possible to prevent a shutdown. Quick reaction is required. Training courses teach the principles of handling of such emergencies but the men complained that what one learned in a training course was different from how emergencies are actually handled on the units. At such times, the longer, safer, theoretical method of handling the emergency is abandoned. Short-cuts involving great personal risk may be taken. An experienced Technician may be able to judge how much risk is involved, but he is always aware that the chance of an accident is great. Despite its potential danger, the short-cut has become the rule - the informally accepted norm - rather than the exception. The majority of former employees interviewed felt that such short-cuts are necessary. However, although they considered that short-cuts were vital to production and therefore unavoidable, they simultaneously expressed concern about the personal risk and potential danger. A minority viewpoint was that short-cuts to solving problems constituted an unnecessary risk and may be detrimental to production efficiency in the long run.

It would seem that to some extent personal risk-taking is an informal job requirement for a Technician. This plus the fact that group norms among Technicians encourage people to take unnecessary risks has created a climate in which the use of safety equipment is often neglected and a Technician who requests ear muffs or gloves may be teased by others.

6.3.2 Contact With Corrosive Acids

One risk factor often mentioned in the interviews was exposure to corrosive acids, and it seems that several ex-employees had been burned. The chances of a Technician sustaining burns during the course of his work appears to be fairly high. Burns have reportedly been caused by holes in gloves which had passed the water test or by failure to wear gloves, or by negligence resulting from working too quickly and carelessly with sulphuric acids. It has been suggested that burns resulting from contact with corrosive acids are one of the most common type of accidents at the plant. There is some scepticism among the men

about doctors' ability to treat such burns properly. One ex-employee said he almost lost the tip of his finger because a doctor failed to inject the burned area properly.

In general, the problem seems to be that adequate precaution against burns is rarely taken and Technicians who are working under pressure may be careless. Ironically, the consequence of these forms of patterned irresponsibility is heightened anxiety.

6.3.3 Constant Exposure to Leaking Gases

A large number of respondents expressed concern about the constant exposure of Technicians to leaking gases. The major worry seemed to be over possible ill-effects on health which could build up over time. One respondent felt he was more sensitive to leaking gases than other people. Another complained of chest discomfort related to the inhalation of Sulphur Dioxide fumes. Others expressed concern about the potential danger of Hydrogen Sulphide. The fact that Technicians may unknowingly be exposed to escaping gases which are potentially harmful seems to be the cause of some considerable diffuse anxiety.

Both past and present employees who had worked on the Alkalisiation Unit ('Grey Zone') indicated that this unit was generally thought to be more dangerous than others. It was feared that the inhalation of Hydrofluoric Acid (HF) fumes, over time, may be potentially harmful. However, Technicians who worked on the Grey Zone did not seem to have regular medical check-ups. One ex-employee who had worked on the Grey Zone said he had almost died after becoming unconscious (presumably from fumes), falling and hitting his head. He had been wearing a face mask at the time. He recovered after two weeks in the hospital and returned to work.

The major objections to working on the Alkalisiation Unit seemed to be related not only to the potential danger but also to the amount of dirty work and manual labour involved. A Technician on the

Grey Zone is thought to have much less status than a Technician on, for example, the Catalytic Cracking Unit. Senior Technicians on the Grey Zone seem to feel a great deal of pressure from their superiors, possibly due to a high incidence of disrupted production, and the job of panelman is thought to be particularly frustrating. It is factors such as these which cause many Senior Technicians to feel that there is insufficient reward for the responsibility carried and the risks endured.

6.3.4 Attitudes Toward Noise

For some ex-employees the high level of noise was reported to be particularly worrisome, and in one case, noise was cited as a secondary reason for leaving. Although the tendency seems to be for employees to become accustomed to the noise level over time, some Technicians note that the noise level seems particularly high when they return to the plant after a long weekend. Steam from the boilers and certain compressors are reportedly very noisy but ear plugs or muffs are only worn for short periods when exposed to a particularly high level of noise. Ear plugs may be less effective than ear muffs, but it was indicated that ear muffs and a helmet cannot be worn simultaneously. Ear muffs may be uncomfortable and may become quite dirty from oily hand contact. A major disadvantage is that a person wearing ear muffs will be unable to hear communication such as radio calls, etc.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which noise as an isolated factor was a major concern to employees, and to what extent it is related to labour turnover. There are indications that noise does worry some Technicians, and some people with long service claim deterioration in their hearing. Once again, however, medical check-ups are uncommon.

6.3.5 Safety Incentives

Quite a few ex-employees mentioned a company scheme for

rewarding feasible safety suggestions with R10,00. Generally this system is well thought of and has served to motivate some people to point out unsafe equipment or areas of work and to think of improvements. The main complaint about this safety scheme is that sometimes R10,00 may be awarded to an employee without the suggested improvement being implemented or the problem being solved. In one case an ex-employee said he was awarded R10,00 for suggesting that a small safety device be built and installed in a hazardous working area... After a delay of weeks the recommended safety device was installed. According to this ex-employee the device proved to be unsuitable because it had not been properly manufactured, and it was eventually abandoned. Had the Technician himself been involved in the construction of the device, it could have been made in a suitable fashion, according to him.

More generally, it should be noted that an award of R10,00 could be nothing more than a token of appreciation, and it is accepted as such. The gesture of appreciation is felt to become meaningless, however, when the company does not appear to take the employees' suggestions seriously.

Another reward scheme mentioned by a number of respondents was that of providing cake and cool-drinks for the shift which won the competition for controlling pollution. Although this scheme seemed to evoke a competitive spirit, the reward was not such to encourage all employees to take the combating of pollution seriously. It was said that equipment could easily be manipulated or adjusted in order to produce the desired readings without actually reducing pollution. Interviews suggest that the more employees share in the actual benefits of meeting organisational goals, the more they will be motivated to participate. A large number of people felt that the reward of cake and cool-drinks was somewhat patronising and they became cynical about their role in helping to control pollution.

The vast majority of both past and present employees interviewed feel that the company has become a "safer" place to work within the last few years. Within the last three years, the number of reported accidents per year has been greatly reduced. This is credited to concern

and impetus at top managerial level for better safety standards within the plant.

In spite of this, the general view among people at Technician level is that they themselves are often negligent and fail to use safety precautions. This may be due to expectations or pressure to act quickly in a situation, or due to attitudes of nonchalance among Technician colleagues. Thus, group norms as well as actual conditions contribute to the overall feeling that the plant is still a "*generally unsafe*" place in which to work.

Although one might expect the sample of present employees to have less concern for danger and health factors than ex-employees, this was not found to be so. The majority of present employees considered the plant to be unsafe and in need of improvement in regard to safety. The responses and attitudes of present employees towards potential danger factors and safety standards have been analysed and categorised in the following way – out of the eighteen present employees interviewed:

THREE expressed "*few dissatisfactions*" with safety standards and precautions;

TEN expressed "*some dissatisfactions*" with safety standards and precautions; and

FIVE expressed "*many dissatisfactions*" with safety standards and precautions.

This categorisation provides some indication of the overall view of how safe or unsafe work is thought to be in the company. Out of the three present employees who expressed "*few dissatisfactions*" with safety standards, two are presently employed in supervisory positions above Foreman level.

There were mixed reactions among present employees, ranging from pride to cynicism, about the achievement of one million man-hours without an accident being recorded. It has been suggested that the "one million man-hours" were not necessarily accident-free. For

instance, it was claimed that if a man fell and fractured his arm but was able to return to work the following day, this was not classified and recorded as an "accident". Some may have made a nominal return to work and then been booked off sick. It seems that some of the people who returned to work after injury were interested in helping the company achieve the "million man-hours" goal. Others complied simply because it was expected of them. The extent to which individual goals were the same as company goals varied. What did the achievement of one million man-hours without an accident recorded really mean, and whom did it benefit? Some Technicians seemed to be actively involved in trying to help meet this goal while others felt remote and disinterested.

In general the problem of perceived dangers and hazards in relation to the use of safety precautions is a somewhat ambiguous issue. In the nature of things, fears of injury tend to occur at a pre-rational level and the real seriousness of this factor cannot be assessed without intensive depth research with a psycho-analytic focus. Furthermore, people do not wish to be seen as weaklings, and this 'front' may obscure the importance of the factor as well. Therefore, the real effect of this issue on turnover may be more potent than its rating in Table I. would suggest.

The factor has three different facets :

- (1) Plant conditions creating the possibility of sudden injury;
- (2) Fears of longer-term and insidious effects upon health;
- (3) Both (1) and (2) possibly aggravated by the fact that group norms among Technicians, bravado and the inconvenience of safety precautions, both in terms of time and discomfort, lead to a relative disregard for strict precautions.

One aspect of the problem may be that strict safety precautions may be dysfunctional for production and that, for this reason, there will always be a temptation in a company to take 'short-cuts' in regard to the

use of safety precautions. Then again, like safety-belts in cars, some safety precautions may be perceived by the men as being both necessary but a sign of timidity. Also, to what extent may day-to-day influences on the men contradict the safety training they have received? We will return to this issue in our final concluding section.

CHAPTER VIISALARIES AND WAGES7.1 General Views on Salaries

The subject of pay was discussed in each individual interview as well as in group interviews with former employees. In addition to a wide variety of questions which were asked regarding pay, two key questions were included in the interview schedule :

- (1) How did your pay rate compared with that of previous jobs?
- (2) How did your pay rate when you consider the type of work that had to be done?

The typical response to question (1) was "good", "adequate", or "comparable to similar companies". Question (2), however, evoked mixed responses. At least one-half of the respondents said that for the type of work that had to be done, the pay was poor. Typical reasons for the inadequacy of the pay were that the work was inconvenient because of shifts, or dirt, noise, danger, and because it entails a great deal of responsibility for expensive equipment and safety.

A content analysis of the interviews with former employees revealed the following results on general attitudes toward pay - out of the 36 ex-employees interviewed :

TWENTY-FOUR respondents made "little or no complaint" about the adequacy of pay;

EIGHT respondents made "some complaint";

FOUR respondents made "major complaints".

7.2 Relationship Between Attitude Toward Pay and Labour Turnover

The relationship between attitude toward pay and turnover among Technicians is a complex one. Only four out of thirty-six former employees interviewed (11%) seemed to have left primarily because they viewed the pay as inadequate. Three out of the four were over 35 years of age and had served for one year or less.

On the other hand, a further ten people (altogether 39%) had the issue of pay, directly or indirectly, as a reason for leaving. Pay often achieved relevance to turnover in its relationship to complaints about promotion, or the costs of housing. The relationship between attitudes towards pay and turnover is explored further below.

7.2.1 The Date of Termination of Service in its Relationship to Pay

In general, those people who left during 1973 tended to have more complaints about the adequacy of pay than those who left in 1972 or 1971. As Table II below indicates, ten out of twelve 1973-leavers had complaints regarding salary, whereas only one out of fifteen 1972-leavers had complaints. The high incidence of complaints about salary among 1973 leavers may reflect the steep increase in inflation after 1972.

TABLE II Year of Leaving According to Complaints About Pay

| YEAR LEFT | LITTLE OR NO COMPLAINTS | SOME COMPLAINTS | MANY COMPLAINTS |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1973 | 2 | 6 | 4 |
| 1972 | 14 | 1 | 0 |
| 1971 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL: | 24 | 8 | 4 |

The probability does exist, therefore, that general attitudes toward pay at present may be far less favourable than in previous years.

7.2.2 Relationship Between Age and Length of Service and Attitudes Toward Pay

The relationship of age and length of service to attitudes toward pay seems to be significant. A man in his early twenties, with a short length of service tends to view the salaries as "*better than average*", whereas a man of over 35 years of age, also with a short length of service, tends to view the pay as inadequate. A man of 35 years of age who had worked at the company for several years tended to have fewer complaints than a man of comparable age with a short length of service. Those who had "*some*" or "*many*" complaints about salary ranged in age from 22 to 47 years. The majority of former employees in this category had worked at the company in Durban for less than two years. The correlation between short length of service and negative attitudes towards pay may simply be reflecting the fact that those who consider the pay inadequate tend to leave soon after joining. Long service and satisfaction with pay does indicate that salaries are an important factor in turnover, particularly with recent rising costs.

7.2.3 Nationality and Attitudes Toward Pay

There was also a significant relationship between nationality and attitude toward pay. Of the sample of former employees interviewed, 31 were South Africans and 5 were immigrants. The majority of South Africans who were interviewed perceived the pay to be good, whereas the immigrants interviewed perceived the pay to be inadequate. This may be related to the fact that immigrants often had very high expectations when coming to South Africa, and they were generally ill-informed about the cost of living in Durban, and the cost of housing, specifically. South Africans, on the other hand, expressed resentment and dissatisfaction of the immigrants, claiming that they were often on higher salaries and received a housing subsidy for two years. This entire

subject proved to be a very sensitive and important issue to a majority of people interviewed – both South Africans and immigrants alike.

7.2.4 Cost Of Living Allowance

Many of the individual interviews, as well as the group interviews suggested that there may be more confusion than understanding regarding many question of salary. One such area of dissatisfaction and confusion relates to the Cost of Living allowance. Apparently there had been a great deal of concern during 1973 about the rising Cost of Living. It was generally understood that it was not company policy to give a separate C.O.L. allowance. In September, however, a 5% C.O.L. allowance was announced. People seemed to feel that a C.O.L. allowance was very necessary, but the apparent inconsistency also created some confusion :

- (1) It was a direct reversal of what employees had been told (i.e. that a C.O.L. allowance was not company policy);
- (2) General opinion seemed to be that the C.O.L. had increased by 11% and that a 5% C.O.L. allowance failed to compensate adequately for the sharp rise in prices. In fact, the rise in overall C.O.L. in Durban was 9,5% (August 1972 to August 1973) and, therefore, this opinion appears well-founded;
- (3) It caused some speculation about the effect of the C.O.L. allowance upon annual increments. (Present and some ex-employees expected that the annual increment would be unaffected, since they had been told that these were two separate increments).

This gives some indication of the widespread and potentially serious negative effect of inconsistency in company communication when it relates to an important issue.

7.2.5. Annual Increment

Another source of dissatisfaction and confusion centred around the actual annual increment :

- (1) Employees understood that the annual increment takes into consideration both personal merit and performance and the increase in the C.O.L. However, these two factors are not differentiated. A man may have no idea what percentage of his increment is based upon the C.O.L. and what percentage is based upon personal merit. Unnecessary speculation and ill-feeling resulting from comparisons of rises often occurred.
- (2) The portion of the annual increment based upon personal merit is allegedly related to a man's grading on the annual rating form. However, the actual relationship between pay and job performance appears unclear. Because the rating forms were widely viewed as inadequate there seemed to be a great deal of scepticism regarding the method of determining the annual increment. This scepticism possibly increased after the 1972 increment since several people reported receiving their annual increment before the rating forms had been turned in.

Here again, we have a clear example of how inconsistent company administration can undermine morale.

7.2.6 Promotion and the Annual Increment

There was a great deal of confusion about promotions and annual increments at the company. It was mentioned that there have been situations in which a man promoted in October or November, for instance, did not receive the usual annual increment in its entirety at the

beginning of the following year. The cases reported among former employees usually, but not always, involved experienced Technicians who had worked at the company for less than one full year. Many had worked for over six months and felt entitled to the full annual increment. Men said that they had been promised one-half of the annual increment in December and promotion later, or a salary review within six months in lieu of the annual rise. Such decisions appear to be arbitrary, since one man promoted in October may have received a full increment whereas another may not. Since the policy seems to be inconsistent, ill-feeling results. There were quite a few such instances of misunderstandings regarding pay or promotion which resulted in employees leaving the company.

Once again, a clear-cut standard policy would have enhanced the fairness of the system and would have served to reduce confusion and ill-feeling.

7.2.7 Shift Allowance

One subject discussed in both groups and in almost all of the interviews was that of the Shift Allowance. The general feeling was that the 10% Shift Allowance was too low. Several respondents had been employed several years ago when the Shift Allowance was altered from 25% of the basic salary to 10%. It was understood by a few respondents that at that time, employees would have preferred a 15% increase in their basic salary, upon which pension is determined and upon which a man's means to buy a house is assessed. From the group interviews it appeared that men understood that originally the reduction of the Shift Allowance was accompanied by a 15% increase in basic salaries. However, the group consensus was that the benefits of this for Technicians were only short term. In other words, in the last few years basic salaries had not increased dramatically and the Shift Allowance had remained at 10%. A Shift Worker was making 10%, not 25% more than day personnel, and most people felt the 25% Shift Allowance should be reinstated.

7.2.8 Compensation for Working on Public Holidays

The second major dissatisfaction related to pay which emerged from both group discussions as well as from the individual interviews was that relating to the nature of compensation for working on public holidays. Some considered that they should have been paid for 'double-time' for working on public holidays. Others felt that one day of leave should be given to those who work on a public holiday. The vast majority of respondents felt that some form of compensation was required. They had been told that the 10% Shift Allowance covered their work on public holidays, but they felt this was not sufficient.

7.3 A Relative Assessment of Wages

Attitudes to pay are never absolute but are based upon standards of pay for other work at a similar level, and to what people believe they can and should earn. Some insight into this is provided in Table III below, which compares those salaries ex-employees earned at the company with the salaries which they were earning at the time of the fieldwork. This table is based upon information given by respondents in the interviews and upon information gathered through follow-up questionnaires. The table below does not take account of the numerous other reasons for valuing a job (e.g. fringe benefits, or opportunity for advancement, etc.) and, therefore, cannot be used as a measure of job satisfaction.

Of the 36 ex-employees interviewed, 12 were in positions involving shift work, whereas 24 ex-employees were not. Six out of the eight people earning less than they had been earning at the company were in 'day' positions. However, the remaining 18 people, all on 'day' work, were earning salaries either comparable to, or higher than, their former salaries in the company. What this suggests is that the company has to compete with many other firms which pay equally good wages to people with Technician skills, but for work which is less dangerous and does not involve the inconvenience of shift work. However, this single comparison is not necessarily critical, since our information

shows that a wide range of job qualities other than pay, shift work, or danger, influences any decision to stay or leave. We must conclude, though, that salaries at the company may not be superior to salaries at other firms offering work to people at the Technician level.

TABLE III Comparative Salaries at the Company and in the Present Position of Ex-Employees

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 | People were earning salaries <u>LOWER</u> than their salaries at the company; |
| 9 | People were earning salaries <u>COMPARABLE</u> to their salaries at the company; |
| 13 | People were earning salaries <u>SOMEWHAT HIGHER</u> than their salaries at the company; |
| 3 | People were earning salaries <u>SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER</u> than their salaries at the company; and |
| 3 | People had started their own businesses and their salaries <u>COULD NOT BE DETERMINED</u> . |
| <hr/> 36 | Total |

7.4 Overall Assessment of Pay

Analysis of the individual interviews and the group interviews gives a complex picture of the relationship between turnover and attitudes toward pay. To what extent do people actually leave the company because the pay is inadequate? The results of the study indicate that pay is not the most important primary factor related to labour turnover among Technicians. An overall assessment is that salaries in the company are competitive, but that they are falling in relative terms. They are no longer perceived to be as competitive as they were thought to be several years ago. Here are some indications why :

- (1) The majority of complaints about salary came from 1973 leavers. Those who had left the company in 1971 and 1972 had little or no complaints about salary.

- (2) Present salaries seem sufficiently high to attract people, but in the case of new employees around the age of 35 years the salaries are not adequate to retain them. Younger employees, for whom the salary is less critical, may stay or leave for reasons intrinsically related to job satisfaction rather than pay.
- (3) Numerous complaints were made about the high and steadily rising cost of housing in the Durban area. There are indications that some ex-employees and some present employees paid as much as one-third of their gross monthly salary for housing.
- (4) Current statistics indicate that the overall Cost of Living in Durban had risen by 9,5% from August 1972 to August 1973. The price of food alone had risen by 15,4% within the same time-period. Consequently, the feeling that the company's salaries were not keeping abreast of the rising Cost of Living seems justified.
- (5) A substantial number of ex-employees had left the Durban area and moved to other regions of South Africa. It seems that many of these moves were financially motivated although this impression is very tentative.
- (6) The vast majority of ex-employees were earning salaries at least comparable to their previous salaries at the company, if not higher.

Interviews with present employees also indicated that employees had a wide range of concerns relating to job satisfaction, and that the issue of pay was not a primary source of dissatisfaction. However, respondents in the company were not representative of Technicians as a whole, since they tended to have an average of 4,75 years of service at the company. When asked "Why do you think many people leave the company?" a significant number of present employees said, "*for better pay*".

63.

In our concluding section we will draw together arguments relating to salaries and wages.

CHAPTER VIIISHIFT WORK

Shift work was found to be a contributing factor related to turnover in 15 out of 36 former employees. It was a primary factor related to turnover in 9 of those instances; therefore, among 25% of the ex-employee sample.

Shift work as a factor causing frustration was found to be positively and significantly related to two variables :

- higher age, and
- social or personal interests in conflict with the demands of work.

It was found to be positively but less significantly related to :

- higher status positions,
- perception of insufficient reward for personal risk,
- concern about possible ill-effects upon health,
- concern over inadequate use of safety precautions.

Those over 35 years of age tended to feel that shift work was a young man's job, and a large number of people who had left the company because of the shift system said they had social or personal interests which conflicted with the shift schedules. Shift work was considered to be particularly appropriate for people who have a preference for forms of outdoor recreation like swimming and fishing.

To some extent those people for whom shift work was a factor contributing to the decision to leave were status-conscious and were concerned about potential danger and possible ill-effects to health arising in the work environment. These factors were both of most relevance

among those who had been in supervisory positions in the company. What we have here, then, is a syndrome of factors indicating that the older Technician, who feels that he would like to achieve a position in his community, who has family responsibilities, whose leisure preferences are dictated to some extent by others in his family, and who is also, not surprisingly, a more cautious individual desirous of guarding his health, finds shift work to be very inconvenient. In the general community, shift work is taken as an index of low social status, and many of the wives of older Technicians may be instrumental in encouraging negative attitudes to shift work.

CHAPTER IXATTITUDE OF EX-EMPLOYEES TOWARD SPORTS
ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

Games such as rugby and cricket have been a source of great pleasure to many employees, and inter-shift sports competition seems to have contributed significantly to a sound spirit among employees on the various shifts. In answer to the question "What were some of your major sources of satisfaction at the company?" many respondents mentioned sports which the men organised among themselves. It has been indicated to us that employees have organised a Social Club and planned events on their own. However, the company has made two fields available to its employees for sports, although it is widely believed that construction is scheduled to take place on these fields.

At one time plans for a clubhouse were drawn up and some employees had the impression that the company would assist with finance. No one is certain about what happened to the clubhouse plans and why these efforts were abandoned. Although not all employees play sport, this does seem to be an important facet of life for many employees, and generally the men are concerned about the continuing availability of sports fields and facilities. Many ex-employees feel, therefore, that the company should play a more active role in encouraging sport, and this could be important to general morale.

CHAPTER XATTITUDES OF EX-EMPLOYEES TOWARD INDIANISATION

Since attitudes toward Indianisation were not identified in the early stages of the project as a factor significantly related to labour turnover, the topic was not investigated systematically. Furthermore, the topic did not emerge during the course of interviewing as an area of concern or dissatisfaction. If it had it would have been pursued in depth. Consequently, only a broad qualitative analysis of attitudes toward Indianisation is possible. We are satisfied, however, that the most salient aspects of the issue have been identified.

Generally people are aware that the company presently employs Indians of matric level as Technicians. One respondent described how he had watched the process of Indianisation take place. He said that in 1968 Indian cleaners were brought on to the units. They later became firemen. Then they became Technicians, on "off-sides" and Unit II. It seems to be a general opinion among white Technicians that Indians have performed well and have been very stable employees. There has reportedly been very low turnover among Indian Technicians.

Despite these acknowledgements, however, white Technicians appear to feel competitive towards Indian Technicians and there does seem to be a measure of underlying resentment and tension. We are quite certain, however, that feelings about Indianisation are not a significant factor related to labour turnover, or to job dissatisfaction. During the course of 54 interviews, the subject of Indianisation was rarely mentioned unless in answer to a direct question by the interviewer. In answer to the question "What were some of your major dissatisfactions with your work?" the subject of Indianisation was not mentioned at all. This is not to suggest that there are no feelings of dissatisfaction regarding Indianisation but that, in the larger perspective, these feelings may not be sufficiently salient to be critically related to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Eighteen ex-employees were asked, broadly, the following question: "Do you think the job of Technician should remain a white job or could it be opened to non-whites?" Here are some typical responses :

"Yes, to those with the same capabilities."

"Yes, but they must be paid equally to whites."

"Some of these Indians are darn good."

"It's the right thing. Blacks are more stable."

"At the second or third operator levels, yes."

Fifteen out of eighteen respondents suggested that Indians would be capable of performing the job of Technician satisfactorily, and some volunteered the opinion that Indians are very intelligent. The general feeling was that Africans, on the other hand, were not capable of performing the job. Three out of eighteen respondents suggested that the job of Technician should remain in white hands. One of these men said that the dirty work should be relegated to Indians. Another said he simply did not approve of the Indians working at the same occupational level as whites. A third respondent said that Indians, although intelligent, are cowards by nature; an idea also suggested by one or two other people who were not formally questioned. This appeared to be a rationalisation used by some whites for retaining whites in supervisory positions and at the Senior Technician level. The same respondent who said that Indians were basically cowardly also noted, however, that Indians were responsible and stable workers and that operations seemed to run smoothly on 'Indian' units. He was unable to give any specific examples to illustrate the alleged cowardice, although he said he thought they would tend to flee from a fire.

Even among those respondents who freely acknowledged that Indians were capable Technicians, however, we could detect an underlying feeling of uneasiness and some anxiety that Indians could be more stable than whites, and superior in job performance. It is well-known

to the whites that Indian employees are all matriculants whereas white Technicians often are non-matriculants. There seems to be some concern that Indians are approaching the status level of whites. One respondent warned: *"Indians are O.K. in the minority but when they are in the majority they throw their weight around and become useless."* Another said, *"People moan about the Indians but they don't try any harder"*, suggesting that his colleagues were anxious about being shown up as poor workers by the Indians. Similar kinds of status anxiety have been noted by observers of white construction workers in the Transvaal, where non-whites have made rapid progress in recent years.

In summary, we would suggest that the negative feelings regarding Indianisation represent a vague disquiet which has as much to do with perceived threats to a superior racial status as with more concrete fears about job competition. The relatively 'low key' of the anxieties regarding job competition probably derive from the fact that white Technicians are generally not strongly identified with their job as a life-long 'trade'. They see alternatives for themselves in the longer run. One employee said in this connection, *"People are not as worried about tomorrow as they are about today."* Attempts to 'professionalise' the position of Technicians in the Chemical Industry could well lead to greater feelings of anxiety about inter-race competition. It is a well-known fact that whites closest to the 'craft' tradition of the established trades are most sensitive about these issues. A high level of specific job-commitment among white Technicians in the Industry would have many advantages, but the possible disadvantage of greater resistance to opportunities for non-whites has to be taken account of.

CHAPTER XIDISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS11.1 The Nature of the Industry

A number of studies have shown that Process Industries and Petro-Chemical Industries in general are characterised by higher than average levels of worker satisfaction. Blauner (1964), for example, in a comparative study of employee attitudes in a variety of industrial settings, found that Chemical Industry employees had a significantly greater sense of purpose and meaning in their work. This derived from the high degree of responsibility which was attendant upon work in chemical operations, and from the freedom of activity and association which the type of technology allowed. These rewards were unmatched in any industry he studied with the possible exception of the Printing Industry.

Another author, Woodward (1964), has suggested that as far as personnel relations and motivation is concerned, Process Industries are "batting on the easiest possible wicket".¹⁾ This author, inter alia, says of this type of industry that the technology involved is conducive to relatively small primary working groups, first line supervisors with a limited span of control, and high ratios of management to workers; all factors facilitating the emergence of strong loyalties and close association at all levels between superiors and subordinates. Personal relationships develop which blur the edges of role relationships and make both role-conflict and innovation easier to deal with.

Cotgrove (1973), after a study of five Process Industries in Britain, suggests, like Blauner, that the level and type of technology in Chemical Industries enhanced the level of employee satisfaction. In four of the five plants studied, intrinsic reasons for liking the job predominated over extrinsic reasons. Factors stressed were the chance to learn, the interest of the process itself, the absence of close

supervision, and the opportunities to use initiative. The same conclusions were reached by Wedderburn (1972). In the Process Industries she studied, employees found considerable interest in their work, felt that they had some discretion, and the nature of supervision was appreciated. In these industries she found lower rates of turnover and absenteeism than in the other industries (mainly machine production plants). The author explains this by suggesting that in the Process plants, the control systems were automatic and built into the production system, having the effect of extending the opportunities to allow the Technician greater initiative and freedom. Furthermore, this also allowed the relationship between supervisor and supervised to become one of joint problem-solving. In the Process Industries, the supervisor's role was also seen as stemming from his greater knowledge and expertise, rather than from the authority of his office. The nature of the continuous flow process also tended to make teamwork the dominant feature of plant relationships, with attendant benefits to morale.

11.2 The South African Context

A basic question to ask, then, is why the plant we have studied does not conform to the general characteristics of Chemical Industries as outlined above, particularly as regards labour turnover. Part of the answer lies in the nature of the South African context. The employees we have studied are South African whites, and this in itself has important implications. The South African economy is characterised by chronic shortages of skilled manpower. Whites, who represent less than 20% of the total labour force in the country, have markedly higher levels of educational attainment and industrial skill than blacks. Added to this, their dominant political and social position in a white race oligarchy, in both formal and informal ways guarantees privileged access to better jobs. A particular feature to note, as well, is that the province in which the industry is situated - Natal - has the fastest-growing regional economy in the country. Given these background factors, it would be surprising indeed if labour turnover were not higher than would be the case in a Process Industry with identical policies and internal relationships abroad.

The status of the type of work involved — that of blue-collar Technician or Operative — is also of importance in South Africa. Due to the absence of unifying social bonds between blue-collar workers in different racial categories, and to the very large proportion of whites in white-collar positions in the economy, white blue-collar workers in South Africa tend to take as their comparative reference groups not other categories of blue-collar workers but employees at white-collar or supervisory levels. While white blue-collar workers may be well-remunerated, they probably do experience sharp status deprivation in their positions, particularly if these positions include the social stigma of shift work. Relatively low job-commitment among white Technicians and Operatives is a consequence of these factors. It is our belief, therefore, that the problems of high labour turnover among white Technicians will never be solved completely — these problems can only be reduced. The indications emerging from our study, however, are that many opportunities exist in the company for a significant reduction of labour turnover.

11.3 Labour Turnover in Relation to Company Policy, Personnel Relations and Work Organisation

In outlining some of the findings of studies conducted in Process Industries abroad, it was suggested that the nature of the technology in these industries made it possible to attain high levels of employee satisfaction. In one study the nature of work organisation was found by the author to be related to low levels of absenteeism and labour turnover (Wedderburn 1972). Is this generally the case? The conclusion reached by Tiffin and McCormick (1962, p.329) more than a decade ago still appears acceptable today, i.e. that "various pertinent studies suggest at least a moderate (though complex) relationship between attitudes (of employees) ... and employment stability." In an inventory of scientific findings (Berelson and Steiner, 1964, p.408) it has been concluded that "Absenteeism and labour turnover, in the modern industrial establishment, are greater ... among disaffected workers, and in situations of low vitality of informal work groups."

The present study would support this conclusion, since the evidence presented thusfar shows quite clearly that the factors mentioned by ex-employees as contributing to their decision to leave the company can readily be subsumed under the headings of employee "disaffection and low vitality."

In addition to personnel relations, morale, communication and other "human" factors in the workplace, it has been argued that the nature of production engineering and control systems and of task organisation and task frustration also have a significant effect on employee satisfaction, productivity and turnover. (Woodward 1964, p.14; Lupton 1966, pp.35-38). In our findings, frustrations encountered in coping with maintenance problems and plant-failure emerged as the fourth most salient factor in order of relative contribution to labour turnover. Whether our ranking is precisely correct or not, could only be ascertained in a larger study, but there is little doubt as to the importance of these problems.

However, these are very general conclusions, and our research has provided much greater detail on the factors contributing to work dissatisfaction or satisfaction and morale and on the relationship between these attitudes and labour turnover. Very broadly speaking, it would seem that the company has not been able to benefit fully from the advantages which the type of technology can offer, as has been the case in the firms studied in the United States of America and Britain. Very generally, we have found that some of the very features mentioned as advantages in the overseas studies have been sources of discontent in the local company. This observation applies particularly to the high degree of responsibility conferred upon the Technician and the close and informal relations with Supervisors. It is to a more detailed consideration of our conclusions and of relevant theory that we now turn.

11.3.1 Employee Satisfaction and Needs: Some Theoretical Observations

The psychologist Maslow (1954) proposed a hierarchy of needs

as a basis for human motivation. His thesis was that certain lower order needs required to be gratified or substantially satisfied before higher order needs could become activated as a basis for, *inter alia*, work motivation. The needs he conceptualised, in order from the "lower" to the "higher" needs are :

- physiological needs;
- security needs;
- safety needs;
- social needs, belonging and membership needs;
- needs for esteem by others and for self-esteem;
- self-actualisation needs.

Later, Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) and Herzberg (1966), on the basis of a particular type of empirical research, suggested that the nature of employee needs was such that certain occupational characteristics provide for job satisfaction while their absence does not cause dissatisfaction, while the absence of other different job characteristics cause dissatisfaction, whereas their presence, correspondingly, does not provide positive satisfaction. As a consequence of this a "two-factor" theory of job satisfaction was proposed, with certain intrinsic job-content characteristics being called "motivators" and certain extrinsic or job environment characteristics being called "hygienes". To some degree the theory of Maslow and that of Herzberg can be reconciled, since the "motivators" encompass Maslow's higher order needs for self-actualisation (work itself, achievement, possibility of growth, responsibility, advancement, and recognition) while the "hygienes" include Maslow's lower and intermediate needs. (In Herzberg's scheme, work status is regarded as a "hygiene" factor). A study by Friedlander and Walton (1964) provided some evidence relevant to our interest by showing that employees' reasons for remaining with an organisation were intrinsic to the work itself, while reasons for leaving corresponded to Herzberg's "hygiene" factors.

The Herzberg and Maslow theories have been vigorously

criticised for being formulated in categories which are too neat and mutually exclusive. Herzberg's theory in particular has been rejected by many on the grounds that the results obtained in the original study were a function of the methods of research which he employed. Empirical tests of both theories have failed to provide consistent verification of the postulates. (J.G. Hunt and J.W. Hill, 1972). Hunt and Hill, in addition to providing a useful summary of research, also make the point that neither of the two theories incorporates a rigorously defined connection between need-motivation and job performance. They suggest an alternative theoretical approach; that of V.H. Vroom, which incorporates a path-goal hypothesis firmly linking performance with occupational needs and attitudes. Vroom's approach builds on that of earlier authors and suggests that an employee's performance is determined by his choice of "first level alternatives" for behaviour in the workplace. These first level choices (or performance) have an importance for the individual which is determined by the relationship he perceives between them and "second level outcomes", i.e. his actual occupational needs and goals. The relationship is termed "instrumentality" and the strength of the goal or need is conceptually described as "valence". Hence this theory allows for an assessment of the strength of motivation to perform on the basis of the connection the employee sees between performance and goal attainment and on the strength of the goal. The theory is further refined in that the concept of "expectancy" defines the likelihood that a worker will link "effort" to successful performance; i.e. a first level outcome. These precisely formulated connections between effort — performance — gratification of needs, represent, in our view, a distinct advance on the Herzbergian assumption that satisfaction of a need will influence worker performance.

Our own findings allow us to make certain empirical observations about these theories and hence facilitate an understanding of the problems in the local company.

11.3.2 Employee Needs and Satisfaction in the Local Company: The Applicability of the Theories

Former employees were asked to rate a variety of ideal job rewards in order of preference. The following is the mean pattern of ratings which emerged :

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| High Ratings | - salary |
| | - security |
| | - opportunity for advancement |
| | - happy working environment |
| Intermediate Ratings | - fringe benefits |
| | - creative work |
| Low Ratings | - sympathetic management |
| | - respected work, i.e. status |

From this pattern of ratings the inference can be drawn that among the type of employees having worked at the Company, "hygiene" factors tend to be rated more highly than other factors. The intrinsic factor which achieves the highest rating, that of "opportunity for advancement", is not necessarily only an intrinsic factor since it does relate very closely to an improvement in working conditions and pay. The essentially intrinsic factor of "creative work" was rated as first, second or third most important by a minority of roughly 37%.

One assumption commonly made within the framework of the Maslovian and Herzbergian theory is that at lower occupational levels, i.e. semi-skilled manual work, "motivators" are centred around factors which are extrinsic - external to the work itself. (Friedlander 1965) (Centers and Bugenthal 1966). Also in choosing a job or in deciding to remain on a job, the person at a lower level of occupation is more influenced than others by financial and social considerations. If the Technicians interviewed in our study represented a lower level of occupation then our results would substantiate this assumption.

However, the nature of the Technicians' occupations is such as to place them in somewhat superior blue-collar work so no firm conclusion about Friedlander's assumption can be drawn.

Our findings may, in a sense, be a contradiction of Maslow's theoretical position because our respondents, although of low occupational status, cannot be regarded as being materially deprived. As a privileged stratum of white blue-collar workers their levels of remuneration exceed those of many white-collar grades. Furthermore, the fairly ready availability of other work for whites also probably means that their security needs are not without gratification.

The overall trend in these ratings should not, however, be allowed to obscure the fact that the ratings were by no means uniform. A substantial minority gave high ratings to intrinsic factors. The factor of "creative work" which was rated highly or fairly highly by 3 out of 10 ex-employees is of most significance, since the other "intrinsic" factor, opportunity for advancement, can disguise a partly materialist position.

The variation in findings demonstrates one of the disadvantages of the Need Hierarchy theory for industry; this being that one seldom has a labour force which can be regarded as homogeneous in regard to occupational goals and needs. Some are motivated by "higher" needs, some by lower order requirements. We cannot assert that the ex-employees, as a group, would all respond equally or similarly to, say, higher levels of remuneration, on the one hand, or enhanced opportunity for creative work and advancement, on the other.

A cluster analysis was performed on the replies to all questions of 21 ex-employees. These questions, which could not be submitted to the entire sample, related to personal characteristics, reasons for leaving the company, and included the ratings of ideal occupational goals referred to above as well as a check-list of words describing characteristics of work in the company; respondents were asked to tick relevant words. These words covered favourable and unfavourable aspects of work in the following areas :

- intrinsic factors,
- prospects for advancement,
- social status of work,
- conditions of service and pay.

The results of the cluster analysis are tentative because of the low numbers involved but nevertheless can shed additional light on some of the weaknesses in the Maslow and Herzberg approaches. The results of this cluster analysis do not warrant detailed discussing but did reveal, inter alia, that :

Among some men, an ideal desire for happy working conditions, high pay, job security and occupational status (all hygiene factors) was correlated with frustrations due to impediments to growth of skills and abilities (an "intrinsic" factor).

Thus it would seem that the two sets of factors in the Two Factor theory are not mutually exclusive among all employees.

Then again, a small group emerged who had left the company because of pay, but who did not rate pay as important in ideal terms; their concern with remuneration was rather forced upon them by the high cost of local housing and by their higher age, responsibilities and lack of seniority. Thus frustrated "hygiene" needs are not always the result of lower-order job goals.

Generally speaking, however, the broad results of this cluster analysis point to a fairly consistent tendency to emphasise either the material factors, or human relations factors, or intrinsic and self-actualisation factors. We have described the two small "deviant" clusters mentioned above simply in order to demonstrate that concern with so-called higher and lower order needs can sometimes appear simultaneously in the same person or group.

We have seen how "hygiene" factors generally tend to be

dominant in the self-expressed needs of the group as a whole. However, when we consider the ex-employees' reasons for leaving the company, isolated on the basis of lengthy depth-interviews, the picture alters somewhat. Among the 31 factors identified as relating to turnover (Table I), we find that the second most salient factor and the fifth and sixth most salient factors concern frustrated "higher order motivators" — the development of individual potential, initiative and responsibility.

If one assigns weights to the various types of factors contributing to turnover based on whether the factor was in a primary relationship to turnover (weight 3), a secondary relationship (2), or a tertiary relationship (1), then the following pattern emerges for the various types of factors : see Table IV.

The factors have been formulated in categories similar to the Maslovian/Herzbergian systems as far as possible, with the distinction between "motivators" and "hygienes" retained, and with the specific factors within the two broad categories ranked according to Maslow.

From the results in Table IV, we note that "hygiene" factors, once again, tend to outweigh the "intrinsic" factors. However, the one dominant hygiene factor, "company policy, etc." is not a pure factor and relates almost as much to "intrinsic" as to "hygiene" issues. If the factors are taken individually, the intrinsic issues are undoubtedly very important. being primary causes of the decision to leave among 28 out of the 36 ex-employees. (More than one primary reason could be identified in each respondent). There can be little doubt from these results, however, that despite the dominant materialist value orientation among the group as a whole, the lower order "hygienes" such as pay, working conditions, etc. are of lesser significance in causing the dissatisfaction which leads to turnover. This illustrates the danger of constructing theories on the basis of self-report inventories and questionnaires only; an apparent weakness in the methodology of Herzberg.

TABLE IV The Relative Importance to Turnover of Factors Causing Dissatisfaction Classified Broadly According to the Maslow and Herzberg Hypotheses

(Reasons 36 ex-employees gave for leaving the company based on depth interviews, and weighted according to whether reasons were in a primary (3), secondary (2), or tertiary (1) relationship to turnover)

| Type of Factor Causing Dissatisfaction in a Hierarchy According to Maslow* | Weight | No. of Ex-Employees For Whom Factor Was a PRIMARY Cause of Leaving Company |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Motivators:</u> | | |
| Growth of skills and potential | 78 | 11 |
| Self-esteem / Recognition / Reward for effort / Responsibility / Initiative | 106 | 17 |
| <u>Hygienes</u> | | |
| Social status of work | 11 | 2 |
| Interpersonal relations with peers, Supervisors | 42 | 9 |
| Supervision | 33 | 5 |
| Personnel problems | 50 | 11 |
| Technical frustrations | 42 | 6 |
| Company policy / Administration / Decision-making / Communication systems | 157 | 32 |
| Job security | Nil | - |
| Working conditions | 44 | 11 |
| Health and danger fears | 62 | 9 |
| Salary / Living costs | 35 | 6 |
| Personal life | 23 | 6 |

* The classification follows Hunt and Hill (1972, p.246)

These results, however, are most significant for the fact that they show clearly that the higher order issues (intrinsic factors) are not only significant as motivators as Herzberg suggests. We have shown clearly that their absence contributes not only to dissatisfaction but to the decision to resign.

Generally speaking then, our results tend to show that one of the basic hypotheses in the Two-Factor theory, i.e. that of a clear distinction between causes of satisfaction and causes of dissatisfaction does not necessarily always hold, and also that other clear-cut theoretical distinctions between types of factors and their ordering become somewhat blurred in the light of empirical reality.

11.4 Conclusions Relating to Labour Turnover Among Technicians

In the introduction to this report it was indicated that a variety of methods was used in conducting the study. The major method employed was that of intensive focused interviews among former Technicians, but interviews were also conducted with present employees. These interviews were conducted with two aims in mind; the first aim being to obtain results applicable to the particular individuals interviewed, and the second aim being to gain broader insights into the human environment in the company and to gain an understanding of communication processes. The interviews among present employees in the company also included a number of interviews with special informants, like members of the Works Committee, for example, designed primarily to provide a broader understanding of communication processes in the company.

Because of this dual approach, there are two sets of factors which can be discussed in their relationship to turnover. The first set of factors comprises those which related to the company as a total "system" and these are tentative findings because no thorough-going in-depth study of the plant as an industrial organisation could be made. It would appear, however, as if much useful information emerged from this approach. The second set of factors relates to the motivations of individual employees, and here the evidence adduced relates to the specific factors which influence Technicians to leave the company.

11.4.1 Broad Characteristics of the Company as an Employing Organisation

In conducting the study we explored a series of broad "image" factors which attract people to the company. Some of these factors are :

- (a) The view that the company offers good pay in relation to work experience.
- (b) The image that the company is a secure place to work with good fringe benefits, medical aid, and pension scheme, etc.
- (c) The image of the company as an international company of high standing.
- (d) The relatively free availability of jobs at the technical level.
- (e) The relatively rapid opportunities for promotion and the image that the company offers employment prospects at relatively good pay for people who are not specifically qualified for any particular trade, profession or technical vocation.

In attempting to attract recruits to the company, it might be to the advantage of the company to emphasise some of the aspects of its reputation mentioned above.

On the other hand there are certain images of the company which are essentially negative and which may indirectly contribute to employees' reasons for leaving and which may make it more difficult to attract the most suitable recruits. In this particular analysis no quantitative assessment can be given of the relative importance of these different factors in influencing people to leave. These are broad, pervasive images of the company and the effects are likely to be subtle and indirect. However, the effects are not necessarily of lesser consequence, since the morale of employees can be substantially weakened

by such factors. Some of these negative "image" factors are:

- (i) The feeling the company is more interested in production than in its employees as human beings.
- (ii) The feeling that the company is unwilling to address itself to complaints and suggestions which require any expenditure of company funds.
- (iii) A sense of insecurity resulting from the feeling that a person may be summarily dismissed because of a simple mistake, or may be dismissed at the whim of some superior. Although this image is present in the minds of many ex-employees it is not suggested that it is based in fact. It may be based on hearsay and rumour surrounding instances of dismissal. This may, in fact, be one indirect consequence of the strong emphasis which has to be placed on not making mistakes. The nature of the process makes this unavoidable, but men may have exaggerated notions of the consequences of small mistakes. Furthermore, it does appear, from estimates provided by management, that the rate of dismissal varies between 10% and 20% per annum. This figure is sufficiently high to create a climate of insecurity, irrespective of the causes of the dismissals, for example, which may be entirely justified. From interviews with ex-employees who had been dismissed, it would seem as if some of the dismissals represented a form of resignation; i.e. the employees were "*asking for it*". Hence one component of labour turnover can have undesirable side effects, like insecurity.
- (iv) The lack of any required job qualifications for the position of Technician appears to relate to a feeling of job insecurity and, in some cases, of low job status. This can be regarded as an image of the type of work, rather than as an image of the company. Since most of the ex-employees interviewed were not highly concerned with job status, this

is probably not a very important factor, However, this image may be preventing the company from being able to recruit whites who are more status concerned, as very many South African whites are.

- (v) The perception that Technicians are treated merely as unskilled labour by some members of the administrative staff and by some members of management. This does in fact appear from our quantitative analysis as well.
- (vi) The view that a person with potential will not stay at the company but will easily find better prospects elsewhere. Once again, this may be related to the image of the type of work but undoubtedly it is also connected with the image of the organisation itself.

It should be noted that these broader images of the company are views from the vantage point of the semi-skilled Technicians. It is quite conceivable that the image of the company is totally different among other grades of employees. We are also in no position to say whether the images of the company are less favourable or more favourable than the images of other similar industries in the eyes of semi-skilled Technicians. For all we know, the perceived characteristics outlined here may be similar to the reputations of other companies. Therefore, these insights are not offered in a spirit of any implied criticism of the company, but simply so that management will be informed of the characteristics of the "company image" among the semi-skilled Technicians.

In some ways, the "images" of the work itself are inevitable. For any group of white South African employees, whose status and job aspirations are generally higher and more ambitious than those of similar people in, say, a European country, the very fact of the work being semi-skilled work with no particular qualifications as entry requirements, and of a type which in other companies can be performed by black people, is likely to lead to less favourable images of such work. Once again, it needs to be emphasised that these issues are

probably most salient in regard to the problem of effective recruitment. A general certificate of vocational qualification for the Chemical Industry is likely to improve the image of the work, but as said before, is likely to make white employees more resistant to the granting of opportunities to blacks.

In general, only further research could indicate how necessary it may be to devote attention to the complex task of attempting to improve the broad image of the company and the type of work it offers, in the eyes of present, past and potential semi-skilled white work-seekers.

11.4.2 Factors Relating to the Decision to Leave the Company

Here we discuss certain broad conclusions emerging out of the interviews with former employees and with present employees relating to those factors which tend to cause, or contribute to, the decision to leave the company. These factors have been discussed in detail in previous sections and they have been set out in a comprehensive form in Tables I and II. The reader is referred back to these tables, in which we have set out the number of employees for whom each factor was a primary, secondary or tertiary cause of resignation or dismissal or the weights of the factors in terms of relative importance. It is not necessary to repeat the listing of factors, nor to discuss the "clusters" or processes, in which these factors are inter-related with one another. However, in this section, we can broadly summarise some of the basic conclusions reached in previous sections and offer certain additional comments on the nature of these conclusions.

a) Communication and Related Problems

Possibly the most important basic factor relating to labour turnover is that which can, in general terms, be labelled Communication. The feature of the company organisation which appears to create problems

in this area is one which derives from what is seen as the lack of any adequate formal channel for the receiving of "feedback" from the ordinary Technician, at a level where problems can be effectively dealt with or processed. This is not necessarily always a disadvantage since in some organisations informal channels for upward communication of this type perform perfectly adequately. In this company, however, it would appear that there are breaks in the continuity of communication due to shift work, possibly to the orientations of people at the Middle Management level, and because of other factors discussed. Informal communication up the line of authority does not flow with the facility that it should.

A further factor might be one which is often characteristic of production organisations which are capital-intensive and based on highly advanced technology; this being a relative under-evaluation by Middle Management of the human factor in production in comparison with the importance of the advanced and expensive machinery which is seen to be the basis of production. What is suggested here is that possibly the response to or the processing of complaints, grievances, requests, suggestions and non-work-related personnel problems could be improved.

What appear to be imperfect channels and machinery for the transmission and processing of communications from the bottom to the senior levels of the hierarchy of authority could have a two-fold effect. Firstly, there is the effect of this type of communication failure on human relations, resulting in poor employee morale and not inconsiderable frustration. Secondly, it can lead to an employing organisation being relatively "insensitive" to the individual and social requirements of certain sections of the labour force.

We have demonstrated in earlier sections of this report that the factor of communication is related to the extent to which individuals consider that they are recognised and appreciated, and it is also related to a perception of the company as being unable to respond to the needs of employees both at work and away from work. It also seems to relate to perceived weakness in supervisor-employee relations, and has a direct link with poor morale and a feeling of alienation and powerlessness. The

correlation between communication problems and the perception of a too rigid organisational structure in a sense points to the basic cause of poor communication - too rigid role definitions and role relationships.

This area of problems appears to be preventing full employee satisfaction in the whole area of human relations needs (the need to belong, the need for warm supportive work environment, the need to trust and be trusted and the need to feel that the company is concerned with employees as human beings and their problems). Technicians are unlikely to articulate these needs - their verbal style will prevent it - but these are important needs for those Technicians who do not aspire to intrinsic work satisfaction - possibly the majority. In parenthesis, it may be added that in our experience, Indian Technicians are likely to have even stronger needs in this area than whites.

b) Problem-Solving and Personnel Relations -
Non Work Related

A syndrome of problems with probably the same root cause in the organisational structure as problems connected with communication, specifically concerns the response of the company to the personal problems of employees. The two sets of problems are closely inter-linked but those affected by the response to personal problems appear to be more sensitive to human relations aspects than those for whom the failure of communication is the major element. The former group is also somewhat more intrinsically motivated as regards work, and also does not appear to have the same set of grievances about supervision. It might be that this group comprised better workers; they did possess slightly superior education.

Problem clusters under a) and b) above, therefore, are very closely linked, but the first has a somewhat greater component of communication and supervision problems, whereas the second cluster has a greater component of sensitivity to human relations, concern for employees, and frustrated intrinsic work needs.

c) Unsatisfied Intrinsic Needs

Both a) and b) above overlap to some extent with the more intrinsic work-related issues; b) slightly more than a). It is because of problems under this heading of work-content and work-recognition frustrations that the company is losing more talented or potentially talented employees.

Basically, the thrust of these problems is the frustration caused by lack of recognition of initiative, responsibility, and of personal potential as an employee. These people also are human relations motivated (or frustrated) as well: their level of needs is not only at the intrinsic level. Supervision problems are not important in this cluster of factors. It needs to be emphasised that these higher-level dissatisfactions are not connected with the content of the work - work was not found to be boring - but with the aspect of recognition. Hence the company does not necessarily have to face the arduous challenge of job enrichment programmes or the like. In general, the people most affected by problem clusters a), b) and c) are not materialistically oriented; i.e. motivated by lower order hygiene needs.

d) Frustrations Connected with Technical Problems and Productions

Also of considerable importance in relation to turnover is a cluster of factors which are centred around what are seen to be frustrating characteristics of the day-to-day work of the Technician. Of central significance here are maintenance problems which are seen to cause inefficiency and which are related in the minds of men to danger and longer-term health hazards. The very presence of this type of frustration is, quite understandably, also related to the perception of the company organisation as unable to make the sort of changes which would ensure that work can be performed with greater safety and facility. What is quite crucial in this regard is that this set of factors detracts from what should be a strong motivating characteristic in the work of Technicians. This is evidenced by the

fact that "job responsibility" is very often seen to be insufficiently rewarded in the light of the type of frustration mentioned. Therefore, the possibility exists that the company is losing the effect of the potential motivating factor of "responsibility" because the people who should be motivated relate the responsibility to frustrations and danger and then make certain invidious comparisons between their working conditions and pay. We have already noted that a strong factor associated with satisfaction in studies of similar companies abroad is that of high job responsibility. This would appear to be a potentially strong motivating factor in the local company because of a substantial proportion of ex-employees with higher order motivations. However, these motivations are being blocked by the difficulties described.

e) Other Factors

The basic factors discussed above are of greatest importance but not of exclusive importance, and a number of other factors contribute to labour turnover. These have been discussed in detail in the body of the report and a full discussion need not be repeated here. These other factors appear to be more relevant to employees with lower order motivations.

Very briefly, it can be said that the additional factors of shift work, pay, social and personal interests in conflict with the demands of work, the danger element, poor relations with superiors, the perception of unfair decision-making and a view of company administration as inconsistent, particularly as regards promotion, are of substantial significance. Each of these factors warrants attention and the discussion of the nature of these factors in the body of the report should give some indication of the ways in which these problems arise.

Of particular importance here, however, is the factor of remuneration. This is a rather ambiguous factor in our analysis, because of the fact that it was not assessed as being of major importance as a contributor to turnover, and yet on the other hand, the self-ratings of ideal job characteristics suggests that adequate pay is a not

unimportant consideration for the sort of person who becomes a Technician. Its importance is further enhanced by the fact that if pay is increased sufficiently almost all other problems can be minimised in the sense that it would become very much more difficult for men to leave to take up other employment. Therefore, manipulation of the pay scales alone can undoubtedly reduce turnover very considerably, but, of course, at great cost to the company. By the simple expedient of making it almost impossible for people to obtain alternative employment at equal or higher rates, they are more or less forced to remain in the employ of the company. However, although effective in a sense, this would be an inadequate solution because the type of improvement brought about, i.e. the raising of salary scales, would not necessarily improve job performance or morale. High remuneration is not a strong motivating factor. Therefore, success could be achieved at a cost - both of a financial and an organisational nature. At the very least it is felt that reliance should not be placed on pay scales to reduce turnover without the company addressing itself to the problems of major priority listed in these conclusions.

A further reason for this suggestion emerges from some of the correlations between the answers of ex-employees who left because of salary considerations or who deplored the pay and working conditions in the company and other factors. These groups tended to be men of shorter service, who disliked shift work, who found the type of work to be inadequate in terms of social status, who wanted greater opportunities for advancement, but who are not, it appears, responsive to intrinsic rewards in work. They may, therefore, be men who tend to be difficult to motivate at higher levels of satisfaction, and even if pay were increased to satisfy them, would still be dissatisfied with shift work and the status of the occupation. Great efforts to satisfy this group in a material sense may have limited success.

Finally, we would like to emphasise a general point made earlier. This is that the effect of potentially motivating factors like responsibility, use of initiative, freedom of movement and a job which is perceived to be interesting, tends, for some employees, to be nullified or even transformed into a source of dissatisfaction. This

is generally because of the lack of recognition which men perceive or because of working conditions or the nature of supervision. In the case of high responsibility, for example, it seemed that the more working conditions were perceived to be inefficient, and the more concern there existed about dangers to health, and the less the men felt appreciated, the less job responsibility was seen as an intrinsic job reward. This, essentially, appears to be the major difference between the situation in the local company and that described in the overseas studies to which we have referred. The close relations with supervisors made possible by the type of process, while imparting benefits to morale elsewhere, appeared to be turned into a disadvantage by mistrust and fears of favouritism in the local setting. Close supervision was too often seen as punitive. The intimacy of interaction which might have been a positive factor generally, could too easily be marred by the influence of a particular personality.

These findings are quite interesting from a theoretical point of view, since they demonstrate how difficult it is to find "motivators" and "hygiene" factors operating independently in the real-life factory situation. Our cluster variables discussed under a), b) and c) above were in fact bridging the two types of factors outlined in the Two-Factor theory.

However, these features are of disadvantage to the company and deserve serious consideration. Adapting Vroom's theory, which we discussed earlier, albeit rather loosely, we can conclude that for many of the ex-employees a particular effort could not be expected to result in the type of performance (first level outcome) which would gain recognition (second level outcome) or job goal). This could have been due to technical frustrations, or the orientations of Supervisors, or the response by Management to individual input. In other words, the system within which some of the men worked was not conducive to "goal-path" efforts. We are of the impression, however, that this sort of problem is not at all uncommon in the local industrial setting.

CHAPTER XIIRECOMMENDATIONS12.1 Selective Recruitment

Although this research project was undertaken as a preliminary project, not intended to provide a firm basis for employee selection, it was nonetheless hoped that the findings would give some indication of the type of person who should be selected in order to reduce turnover. In some cases of high turnover, the problem can be reduced by selecting people in terms of age, previous employment history, education, social attitudes and interests, social status and other variables; a procedure which is likely to increase the proportion of people likely to stay in the firm and decrease the proportion of people who are highly mobile in terms of job changes. However, it has proved impossible to make such recommendations in the present report for a variety of interesting and important reasons.

Firstly, of the 89 ex-employees in the universe of former employees, only 36 were able to be interviewed. Of the remainder, 15 were migrants who had gone overseas, and 37 could simply not be found or contacted for interviewing in Durban. The majority of these men had moved elsewhere. Therefore, the indications are that more than half of the people who left the company between 1971 and 1973 are younger, highly mobile people who tend for a variety of reasons to move from job to job and place to place fairly rapidly. Some of these people were included in the interviews, but the majority proved to be too elusive. As indicated in the first section of this report, the research design was re-orientated to allow for an investigation of a smaller number of ex-employees in very much greater depth, as well as to allow for a range of interviews among present employees at the company.

The recruitment of the highly mobile type of person just described could probably be reduced to some extent if an employer were

to adopt the following criteria for the exclusion of certain applicants: erratic job histories, low commitment to living in Durban, the perception of opportunities elsewhere and in a variety of types of employment, a disproportionate interest in pay compared with other aspects of the work, leisure pursuits and family and courtship patterns which would make it difficult to adjust to shift work, inability to give good credit references, a need for high salaries for reasons mainly connected with recreational pursuits, and a reluctance to accept lower pay for short trainee periods before attaining full employee status. (In regard to the latter point, a cost of living component during the trainee period could avoid unfair discrimination against married recruits).

However, the adoption of such criteria is not likely to solve the problems. First of all, the employment market, certainly over the last few years, has been a buyer's market, and it is possibly true to say that few companies can afford such rigid criteria for the selection of semi-skilled whites. Secondly, even the highly mobile person such as the one who would be excluded by the selection criteria listed, ceases to be mobile at some point in time, and for this reason people with the characteristics mentioned cannot always be excluded. Thirdly, impressions gained during this study, particularly while conducting interviews at the company, suggest that a fair proportion of the type who might otherwise be highly mobile tends to stay, and the company, therefore, would be losing potentially good employees if such rigid criteria of selection were to be adopted.

The sort of white recruit who would probably impart greatest labour stability to a company such as the one studied, at a junior level, would be an intelligent person with high promotion potential, but who is at the same time not too well educated, security conscious, amenable to shift work, and who has working class attitudes. This type of person is rare among whites in South Africa. The fact that less-skilled white occupational strata have tended to drift upwards, floating on the tide of black employment advancement has meant that work attitudes appropriate to semi-skilled employment have become severely attenuated in modern urban society. Restricting recruitment to this type of person would be rather impractical.

For this reason no attempt will be made in this report to suggest any more specific criteria for the selection of new recruits. The labour needs for white Technicians is probably such and likely to remain such, that the company will have to take more or less all comers in order to meet the daily running requirements and so that a sufficiently varied junior trainee-group exists from the ranks of which future supervisors can be drawn. The criteria for labour stability mentioned earlier might be employed, however, simply to exclude the very markedly unstable type of employee. In selection interviews, the procedure should be sharpened to enable selectors to identify these people. In this regard it is important to note that simply asking direct questions about attitudes and intentions is not likely to prove effective. A pre-prepared list of questions should be asked in a carefully designed approach in order to elicit possible contradictions in answers which will pin-point the person who attempts to make a good impression but whose real concern is simply to earn good pay for a short while, while pursuing some recreational interest or short-term goal.

It appears obvious from this discussion that if the category of work performed by the more highly mobile or unstable Technician could be performed by non-white employees the situation would be more satisfactory all round. Could a new category of work not be created on those units currently operated by whites which would allow for the entry of non-white employees at the third-grade Operator level? This would mean that more rigorous selection among whites could be introduced. Such non-white staff members could have promotion opportunities on other units presently being operated by non-whites. Although we were not specifically required to investigate attitudes towards the employment of non-whites as Technicians, it does seem that apart from a certain measure of status-threat to white employees, which involves a sensitivity to being regarded as less efficient and less stable as workers than non-whites, the white employees did not show any great degree of hostility towards the Indian Technicians already employed in the company. There was general agreement that the Indian employees were good Technicians and if some differential categorisation of work would allow the whites to protect their own job-status interests, a

"sub-category" of non-white employment on the white-run units could quite easily be created without arousing any undue feelings of hostility or threat. These statements are tentative because our impressions of the attitudes of whites to Indianisation were not gained in any systematic manner.

Of greatest importance, however, appears to be the need to reduce labour turnover among those employees who are not by nature occupationally mobile or unstable, and who would be able to make a sound contribution to the organisation if their services could be retained. Such people were very strongly represented among the 36 former employees interviewed and if a considerably larger proportion of this type of employee were to remain in the service of the company, then many of the problems in regard to the recruitment of supervisors and foremen could presumably be overcome. If such problems were overcome to a degree, then, of course, another danger would arise - that of over-recruiting the more able person with the capacity to rise to supervisory level. Hence it is necessary, perhaps, for the company to plan a strategy for recruiting two types of employee in target proportions: the type with high potential for promotion and the type who is likely to impart labour stability at the Technician level.

Further conceptualisation of this problem is necessary, however, and a follow-up study aimed at laying the basis for a "selection battery" is being planned.

From the discussions presented earlier in this report, it seems that the quality of supervision at the Foreman and Middle Management level is an important cause of job-frustration among Technicians. This is probably to some extent an outcome of high labour turnover resulting in a need for people to be promoted to supervisory positions fairly rapidly without their having required the necessary maturity and wisdom for acting in a supervisory capacity. It is fairly clear that the men do not generally have the same image of their supervisors as people with high expertise and experience as appears to be the case in the Process Industries studied overseas. This may be due to rapid promotion to supervisory level (a problem which a lowered rate of

turnover could solve) resulting in performance insecurity among Supervisors. Strongly represented among the ex-employees interviewed, even among those who had been employed at the second and first grade Technician level, were people who clearly had the abilities required for promotion to supervisory levels. It is with a view to retaining a larger proportion of this type of person in the service that our ensuing recommendations are made. In the recommendations which follow no attempt will be made to argue the points since such arguments have been presented in the discussions and, in some cases, in the conclusions as well. The reader, therefore, is referred to the discussions in the body of the report for the motivation underlying the recommendations.

12.2 Recommendations

12.2.1 Separation Interviews

If a Technician resigns, there should be someone on the staff who is able to conduct an adequate interview with the person about his reasons for resignation, and an attempt should be made to persuade him to stay if appropriate. A number of the people studied indicated that they had tendered resignations and remained on in the service for two weeks and had not been approached by anyone to discuss the resignation. This, apparently, is not the practice elsewhere, and in some overseas companies, where every attempt is made to discover what the reasons for resignation are and to attempt to clear up certain problems which may have caused the resignation. A very small but nevertheless very significant proportion of people may just have been persuaded to reverse their decision if such an approach had been adopted.

12.2.2 Facilitating Communication - A Welfare/Liaison Officer

It seems clear that attempts must be made to improve channels of communication within the company, focusing on, in particular, the resistance to feedback or communication from the bottom to the top of

the authority hierarchy past the Shift Supervisor and Day Assistant levels. Furthermore, it seems necessary to alter the orientation of a significant proportion of people at Middle Management level, particularly as regards complaints. Complaints should not be seen in negative terms only but should be seen as an indication of poor morale and job-frustration which is potentially serious for labour turnover. Furthermore, it is necessary to improve the way in which complaints and feedback as well as requests etc. are processed at higher levels within the organisation so that the men at the lower levels at least form the impression that their communication is being taken seriously.

Since formal channels for the communication of instructions down the line from Senior Management to Middle Management to Supervision and then through to the Technicians do exist, these self-same channels could theoretically function as avenues for the communication of feedback. However, in an organisation which is geared to advanced and complicated technology and where technical expertise may have to be a prime criterion for the appointment of staff in Middle Management and Supervision, it is often not possible to employ the type of Supervisors and Junior Managers who are likely to receive and transmit communication of problems not related to technology and production with the necessary sympathy and insight. Therefore, we would suggest that alternative means of dealing with the variety of problems we have discussed be instituted.

In view of the pressing administrative duties of the personnel office in any large concern, we would suggest the institution of a formal "branch-line" of communication, in the form of a Welfare/Liaison Officer housed separately from Senior Management; preferably in comfortable quarters near to one of the panels. The role of such a person should be two-fold :

- (a) To process individual problems and complaints where possible. However, so many complaints and problems are likely to reach a sympathetic Welfare Officer that it will be impossible for him to deal with all of them specifically. In this case it will be up to

him to indicate to the men that he is dealing with the particular type of problem in general, which introduces his second task.

- (b) To formulate certain general assessments of problems and to make appropriate recommendations to the personnel officer.
- (c) To deal with issues arising from what appear to be a fairly common incidence of drinking problems among Technicians. Rates of social pathology such as alcohol misuse are generally high in South Africa, and are probably even higher in "marginal" semi-skilled blue-collar employees.

A Welfare Officer like this need not necessarily be a man (although the work situation will probably favour a male). He should preferably be a qualified social worker or have equivalent experience. The company should avoid appointing ex-police or army personnel. The appointee should undergo the full training course for Technicians simply so as to be sensitive to the problems of work performance.

12.2.3 Labour Relations

The company should strive for somewhat greater incorporation of the Works Committee and probably also the Operations Foremen into decision-making regarding many aspects of policy. At the very least there should be full consultation and, very importantly, followed by full reasons for any decision which is at variance with the recommendations of the Works Committee or the Operations Foremen. Another very important aspect of communication is that between the Works Committee and the men they represent. One of the failings of a Works Committee system is the all too common phenomena of alienation of the Works Committee from the rank and file. There was some evidence of this in the company. For this reason a form of "House Union" or Company Union

structure should be considered, in which the rank and file has a distinct sense of membership, and in which fairly regular meetings between the men and the Works Committee can take place. Works Committee members should not have to canvas the opinions of men privately. This canvassing can never be balanced and only facilitates the alienation of the rank and file. A House Union structure could overcome this, and also would discourage petty complaints emanating from individuals.

12.2.4 Consistent Company Policy

In any organisation people are concerned about aspects of policy which, even indirectly, might affect their interests. In these areas, company policy should be made explicit and clear and should be perceived as consistent. In some ways, as has been indicated, company policy is ambiguous from the point of view of the Technicians. One example is the confusion which seems to exist in regard to the number of Senior Technicians which can be appointed in each unit and shift. This sort of ambiguity does tend to lower morale and should be avoided if possible.

12.2.5 Job Description at Middle Management Level

The following comment is tentative since it is not based on a full-scale investigation of the internal functioning of the company. However, a strong impression was gained that there might very profitably be an analysis and job description of occupational roles at the Middle Management, Day Assistant, and Shift Supervisor levels. The investigator could not obtain a sufficiently clear conception of the way in which these roles differed and overlapped, particularly in regard to their effect on the requests and careers of the Technicians. This suggestion is made primarily with the morale of Technicians in mind, and does not imply any criticism of the technical expertise or the adequacy of technical job-definitions of positions in Middle Management. The occupational roles at Middle Management level should also involve

training and refresher courses in human relations within industry. Where changes are brought about in the roles of Middle Managers, this could lead to role-strain and adjustment problems. There should, therefore, be constant monitoring of the role-behaviour of Supervisors.

12.2.6 Promotion

The company should strive for standardised procedures and criteria in the evaluation procedures for promotion. It is not suggested that such standardisation does not exist, but what is important here is that it is often not seen to exist by men at lower levels. The procedures should be seen to be above all suspicion and above all accusations of favouritism. The role of oral and written tests in the evaluation of job performance must be made more explicit. There should be clarity and consistency in regard to the procedure and criteria for the promotion to Senior Operator and a consistent policy known to all in regard to the number of Senior Operators who can be appointed in each unit.

12.2.7 Employee Evaluation

The evaluation form submitted annually in regard to each employee is seen by Technicians to allow too much scope for vague and subjective evaluation on the part of the Foremen and others. Although we do not question the evaluations (indeed we have no basis for doing so) we do know that it would probably be advantageous to morale and good communication if there were more aspects to the evaluation form which are specific, e.g. how many units does the employee know? What skills has he mastered? What training schedules has he completed? etc. This suggestion is tentative but it does seem very necessary to lower the high level of anxiety which appears to exist regarding evaluation. Above all the evaluation needs to be seen as scrupulously objective. The possibility of involving Trainers in evaluation should be explored, since this might minimise suspicions of favouritism by superiors.

There is probably also a need for frequent feedback to employees — at least every six months — in which an employee is given a written schedule which makes specific suggestions as to what he needs to accomplish and in what areas he needs to improve.

12.2.8 Dealing with Poor Job Performance

In any organisation where youthful recruits are employed who may have a tendency for sporadic "delinquency" in regard to attendance and attitude to the job, it is probably necessary to take positive steps to avoid a vicious circle of declining morale among people who may have been guilty poor attendance or poor job attitudes. The problem referred to here is that the negative sanctions for poor attendance and poor attitude to job, be they in the form of delayed promotion or otherwise, can often lead to an aggravation of the very forms of behaviour making the negative sanction necessary in the first place. This is quite normal and natural, but in a situation where there is a shortage of recruits, it might be an advantage to the company to try to minimise this effect. Here the intervention of somebody like a Welfare/Liaison Officer could be very valuable indeed. However, should it be impossible to appoint such a person, then other means should be explored to attempt to intervene in the vicious circle at some point in order to give the men an opportunity of proving their good intentions anew.

12.2.9 Reward Systems

Although no concrete recommendations can be made in the following area, it is suggested that the company review certain aspects of its "reward systems". The investigators are aware of, for example, "cake and coke" parties as a reward for meritorious action to minimise pollution, and certain other small rewards for safety suggestions, etc. These reward systems and forms of inter-unit competition are regarded fairly enthusiastically by the men and the impression has been gained that they respond with interest. However, the rewards offered can

obviously not be regarded as anything more than tokens, and unfortunately, they are seen as such. This can all too easily lead to an attitude of some cynicism and levity about the whole process. We do not know how true it is, but some of the men spoke about a practice of artificially manipulating processes in order to obtain good dial readings without significantly altering pollution. For all we know this is technically impossible, but nevertheless it was one indication of a lack of seriousness about certain problems. Our own tentative view is that symbolic rewards such as group performance ratings (which Foremen can take some credit for) may have advantages over tokens such as cake and cold drink parties.

12.2.10 Training Follow-Ups

It is suggested that the company might consider some form of training follow up in order to strive for greater continuity in the training programme. This relates very closely to the whole question of the requirements for promotion. The present system tends in some ways to allow various types of informal group norms to become too firmly established at the lower levels of employment, and these, plus uncertainty in connection with the role of training and promotion, tend to inhibit what could be the positive effects of "motivators" like greater responsibility on the job, etc., etc. Perhaps the company could consider organising it in such a way that Foremen continue a particular training programme, on the job, in order to make sure that the growth of skills and abilities among the more promising men proceeds with greatest facility.

12.2.11 Technical Job-Performance Frustrations

In the report, much was made of technical frustrations arising in the performance of work. This is a serious problem and has a high relationship to turnover among more promising people. Here it does seem as if the company might very well look at the maintenance function on

the plants closely to see if the lower level maintenance operations, the shorter maintenance jobs, cannot be conducted in such a way that the operators experience fewer frustrations with faulty equipment and time-wasting diversions which become magnified out of all proportion. These matters also relate to the perceptions of danger. In this connection no specific suggestions are made but the following ideas are offered simply in order to give some idea of what the problem is about. The possibility of more Fitters being available at night should be considered. The possibility of consultations between Technicians and Maintenance men being expanded may warrant attention. The possibility that a Technician should be present when the Maintenance staff are repairing something might also be taken into account. These types of changes, and others of which we obviously cannot be aware, may very well go some way towards minimising certain frustrations which have the effect of limiting the positive effect of high job responsibility on work motivation.

There is, of course, the possibility of allowing Technicians to perform some of the running maintenance work themselves. This has been found to be in the interests of employee satisfaction and productivity in the Esso Company in Britain and in the Triomf Fertiliser Company in South Africa. Taking over maintenance activities enabled Process workers to gain greater control over the operation of machines and greatly enriched their jobs. This may, of course, require productivity bargaining with the Union, as was the case both with Triomf and Esso.

12.2.12 Safety

The problems in regard to safety precautions appear to be both very complicated and deserving of serious consideration. The position seems to be, as indicated in the report, that there are the formal "theoretically" required safety procedures on the one hand, and a variety of informal adjustments to these procedures which are introduced probably without the Safety Officers and Trainers and the company knowing about it. This is inevitable in any organisation - it occurs

almost without exception. Even though such short-cuts are supported by, and indeed arise out of, informal group norms among the men, the problem is that they also lead to heightened diffuse anxiety about safety and long-term dangers to health, to which the Technicians are not necessarily willing to admit openly. This anxiety can have all sorts of negative effects on morale and interpersonal relations. What the company should consider is to what extent these informal deviations from theoretical safety procedures are functional to the maintenance of production standards. If they are, then safety procedures may have to be altered (not lowered) so as to render them more compatible with expectations regarding production. If, however, the short-cuts are not in fact enforced informal adjustments to the need to maintain production at a given level, then the old problem of the conflict between group norms and the theoretical safety procedures should be dealt with by means of group discussions with the men, conducted by the training department and by specific guidance for Supervisors in this regard. Furthermore, what the men may be quietly grateful for but which they would probably never request themselves, and which might also reduce levels of anxiety, are forms of regular medical or health check-ups relating to the effects of inhaling acids and gases, lead-poisoning, etc., etc.

12.2.13 Salaries

In regard to the major issue of salaries, our recommendations have already been suggested. The full analysis of our results has suggested that pay may be somewhat more important in the job values of the typical Technician that was originally suspected. However, the fact remains that the issue of remuneration was not anywhere near the most important factor in its relationship to the decision to leave. Obviously every man has his price, and it is possible to buy labour stability in virtually any type of organisation. However this is a negative solution and will not necessarily diminish employee-frustration and raise employee morale, if nothing is done other than raising pay. Our own feeling is that the salary scales at the company should keep pace with the rising cost of living, and remain competitive vis-à-vis

other similar organisations and industries in the country. Salaries appeared to be most critical for somewhat older shorter service employees, probably with high family responsibilities and expensive housing needs. Some form of allowance or adjustment for men in this position might be worth considering.

It should be borne in mind, generally, however, that an overall increase in pay might even make it easier for a Technician to obtain highly-paid employment elsewhere. High pay is in itself a form of recommendation for a man seeking alternative employment. Thus, in our view, raising salaries in general should not raise hopes of reducing turnover very significantly.

12.2.14 Shift Work

In regard to shift work there are certainly no solutions. Obviously, the recruitment interviews must concentrate on establishing whether or not a potential recruit's personal circumstances are likely to cause him to be unduly frustrated by shift work. The role of a Welfare/Liaison Officer might very well be very important here. The close association in our results between frustrations in regard to shift work and anxieties regarding physical dangers and dangers to health may mean that if some of the danger and health anxieties can be combated, the degree of frustration with shift work may also decline a little. This is not likely to solve the problem, however, which is endemic to shift work in all organisations

Finally, we would wish to point out, once again, that this study, although conducted in considerable depth, is nevertheless in the nature of a preliminary investigation, for the simple reason that the major emphasis was on the ex-employee and not on the labour force in current employment. For this reason some of our suggestions and conclusions in regard to the organisational structure of the company and communication within the company are tentative and are offered for discussion and evaluation rather than as dogmatic statements of fact

or necessity. In the absence of a systematic investigation of the company structure, which is, of course, a very time-consuming and complex exercise, we cannot, for example, say whether or not some of the problems we have isolated are not perhaps functional for the maintenance of equilibrium or harmony within the organisation and whether or not steps to combat such problems may lead to other problems arising at different levels in the organisation. This is always a possibility in any complex inter-related functioning social whole. Our suggestions should be read with this possibility in mind.

We would also like to emphasise, once again, that solutions to the problem of labour turnover among whites at this level of employment cannot possibly be simple in a South African context. The effects of fuel shortages on economic growth in the country, if any, in future months (and possibly years) may very well create more favourable circumstances for employers of whites at Operator level from now on. Obviously no concrete predictions can be offered. If, however, the economy of South Africa, and more particularly of Natal, were to grow at the rate set in the Economic Development Programme, then the long-term implications for employment of whites at third and perhaps second grade Technician levels are clear. The implications are that these are the types of work which ultimately are destined to be taken over by non-whites.

It is freely conceded, however, that the need to recruit whites as potential Foremen and Supervisors does mean that problems of labour turnover at the moment have to be dealt with as effectively as possible.

Our final comment concerns the broad image of the company among ex-employees. The company will no doubt be heartened to know that among virtually all ex-employees there is a very sound image of the company as being progressive, and also as being a sympathetic, warm and friendly place in which to work. This does not minimise the frustrations felt by the men as outlined to us. However, it is important to know that many of the men conceded that they would not be averse to working in the company again.

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A P P E N D I X

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

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LABOUR TURNOVER STUDY

| Interviewer | Time and Date of Visit | Outcome of Visit |
|-------------|------------------------|------------------|
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| | | |
| | | |

ADDRESS OF INTERVIEWEE:

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SECTION C.

PERIOD AT THE COMPANY:

Turning now to your time at the Company, could you tell me what for you, were the major satisfactions and dissatisfactions?

6a. First of all, the major satisfactions, i.e. the aspects you liked most. (PROBE)

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6b. Secondly, the major dissatisfactions, i.e. the aspects you liked least of all. (PROBE)

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7. I would like you now to think back to your time at the Company: put yourself in the work situation there, get the feel of it, and then very quickly work through these words, ticking those which were relevant to the work set-up - those that ring a bell for you. Do not spend too long on any one word.
(INSTRUCTION: Present list of words).

8a. How did you feel about what Management expected of Technicians in the work set-up?
(INSTRUCTION: Here probe to find out what pressure there was from those above them).

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8b. How did your fellow workers feel about what Management expected of Technicians in the work set-up?

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9a. How did you feel about relationships and contact between Technicians and Management?

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9b. How did your fellow workers feel about relationships and contact between Technicians and Management?

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10a. Did you have contact with some of the senior people in the company, i.e. the Personnel Manager, or perhaps the Manager himself?

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10b. What were your feelings about this?

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- 11a. What channels are available for a worker to make a suggestion, lodge a complaint, or clear up a misunderstanding?

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- 11b. Is this method satisfactory? Any suggestions for improvement?

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- 12a. Do you feel that you, yourself had ideas that could be helpful to (i) the other technicians, (ii) the foreman, or (iii) the manager?

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- 12b. Do other workers have helpful suggestions for improvement?

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13. How are the other technicians like you, or different from you? (Projective)

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14a. Do you remember any of the other workers on your shift who left while you were there? If so, what were their reasons for leaving?

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14b. Was there one thing that happened or did things usually just build up? How?

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15. Did your fellow workers encourage you to work or did they distract you?

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16. Did you see your job as being important or not really important? (INSTRUCTION: Probe for reasons).

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17a. Could you give me your feelings about the promotion prospects at the Company?

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17b. Did everyone have an equal chance to get ahead?

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18a. Did you feel a permanent career at the Company was worthy of you or not?

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18b. What about the job at the Company attracted you most?

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18c. How did you come to apply for the job?

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19. What type of job did you have in mind when you left school?

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20. How does work in the Company compare to an office job?
(Preference, feelings of status).

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21. Turning to a different aspect of your work there, what effect
did shift work have on you in general?

(INSTRUCTION: Elaborate possible effects, and probe for
effect especially on his home life).

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22. Did you have much contact with your fellow workers after work-
ing hours, or not? If so, what type of contact, and how did
you feel about it?

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23a. Talking about your fellow workers, was there a good spirit at work?

(INSTRUCTION: Investigate a feeling of togetherness).

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23b. Did you feel comfortable with your fellow workers, or not really?

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24a. How did your wife/girlfriend/girlfriends feel about your work at the Company?

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24b. How does she/they feel about your present job?

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25a. I feel another important aspect of the job should be investigated, viz. the pay. How did this rate alongside that of previous jobs?

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25b. How did the pay at the Company rate when one considers the type of work that had to be done?

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26. What factors initially made you think of leaving the Company?

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27. What factors finally made you decide to leave?

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28. Noting these reasons, could you rank your reasons in order of importance for your leaving?

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29. What job did you aim at or hope to get when you left the Company?

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30. Are there any conditions under which you would return to the Company or another refinery?

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31. Do you think the job of process technician should remain a white job or could it be opened up for non-whites?

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32. We believe that management in all refineries want to keep white process technicians in order to recruit from them for middle management positions. Was this your impression while you were at the Company, or not?

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SECTION D.

We would also like to know something about your jobs since leaving the Company.

33a. Job mobility since leaving the Company.

| NAME OF PLACE | COUNTRY/ PROVINCE | DATE ARRIVED | DATE LEFT | PERIOD STAYED | OCCUPATION | EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY | REASON FOR LEAVING |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|------------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------|
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33b. Income for each job held - to the nearest R50.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
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8.
9.

34. In your present job, how do you find your fellow workers?

(INSTRUCTION: Probe to find out whether and how he gets on with them).

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35. How does it compare with the Company job, in ways which you feel are important?

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36. Different people value their job for different reasons. Could you read through these aspects of a job and rank them in order of importance to you.

(INSTRUCTION: Present the list).

37. Think of your 3 closest friends - not relatives - we do not want names or to know who they are. Could you tell me what jobs these 3 close friends do?

(INSTRUCTION: Probe for details).

- 1.
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- 2.
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- 3.
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38. I see you have moved around a lot/very little in the job field. What type of job would you like to end up doing as a permanent career? Have you any ideas?

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JOB VALUE

RANK THE FOLLOWING IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO YOU:

A SECURE JOB

GOOD FRINGE BENEFITS AND SERVICES

OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT

A GOOD SALARY OR WAGE

HAPPY WORKING CONDITIONS

SYMPATHETIC AND CONSIDERATE MANAGEMENT

JOB WHICH IS RESPECTED IN THE COMMUNITY

JOB IN WHICH YOU CAN DO WORTHWHILE CREATIVE WORK

TICK THOSE WORDS WHICH WERE RELEVANT TO THE WORK SET-UP - THOSE THAT RING A BELL FOR YOU.

WORK QUICKLY THROUGH THIS LIST.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. EXCITING | 21. HARMFUL |
| 2. FRIGHTENING | 22. LIMITED FUTURE |
| 3. NOISY | 23. REWARDING |
| 4. ABSORBING | 24. RUSHED |
| 5. DIFFICULT HOURS | 25. FAIR |
| 6. ADMIRER | 26. DULL |
| 7. DANGEROUS | 27. EFFICIENT |
| 8. TENSE | 28. UNCOMFORTABLE |
| 9. SATISFYING | 29. DISSATISFIED |
| 10. DIRTY | 30. RELAXING |
| 11. EASY | 31. BOSSED ABOUT |
| 12. NAUSEATING | 32. IMPORTANT |
| 13. ROUTINE | 33. NOT ADMIRER |
| 14. MODERN | 34. INTERESTING |
| 15. DEAD END | 35. BORING |
| 16. UNFAIR | 36. RESPONSIBILITY |
| 17. FRIENDLY | 37. HOT |
| 18. TIRING | 38. LOW STANDING |
| 19. IMPERSONAL | 39. GOOD FUTURE |
| 20. GOOD STANDING | |

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL
DURBAN

Some of the following questions have already been covered in an interview with you. Other questions are new. Please answer each question as fully as possible, and feel free to include any additional comments. The forms will be used ONLY by me and are strictly CONFIDENTIAL. Please return as soon as possible. (If you have any questions you can reach me at 352461 ext.404, or, if no reply, ext.369). Thanks very much.

Carol Weaver.

1. On which shift and unit at the Company did you last work? If Integrated Unit, please specify which section.

2. What was the last position you held before leaving the Company ?

3. What was the basic salary you last earned? -----

What was the gross salary you earned with shift allowance, and travel allowance included? -----

4. What was your average take-home pay? -----

Does this include overtime? -----

5. Do you live in a flat or house? -----

Do you live with relatives? -----

6. Do you rent or own a flat or house? -----

7. How much is your rent or payment each month? -----

8. Have you received any form of housing assistance from the Company? If so, what type of assistance?

9. Are you presently employed? ----- If so, for whom? -----

----- What sort of work are you engaged in? -----

10. How long have you been in your present job? -----

11. What is your total basic salary at present? _____

12. What is your current average take-home pay per month? _____

Does this include overtime? _____

13. Are there any side benefits with your present job which you feel are important?

14. Are you working shift at the present time or do you only work days?

15. Would you say the scope for promotion in your present job is
poor _____ average _____ good _____ excellent _____

Please check one.

16. How does your present job differ from your work at the Company in ways you think are important?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

17. Do you plan to stay in your present job permanently? _____

If not, what sort of job would you hope to find? _____

18. If you are actively looking for another job, what type of job are you looking for?

19. Would you be interested in any particular side benefits in another job? If so, what kinds of benefits?

20. Are there any conditions under which you would return to the Company?



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